

Ovington Parish Council
Minutes of meeting held Sunday 23rd February 2025 -5pm
Ovington Village Hall

In attendance: Cllr Peter Levett (Chair), Cllr Shaun Hanson, Cllr Nigel Parkes, Julie Parkes (clerk).

1.Apologies: Cllr J Harper

2. Declarations of interest:

2.1 No declarations of interest

3. Minutes of previous meeting:

3.1 Minutes of the meeting of 3rd November 2024 were signed as an accurate record of the discussion in the meeting by Cllr Levett.

4. Matters arising: covered on the agenda

5.Finance report:

5.1 Cllr Parkes presented the finance report as follows:

- Durham County Council have acknowledged receipt of the precept submission; this will be paid in April @ £2,790.
- The request for reimbursement of VAT @ £453.00 has been received and is included in the account sum below.
- The account balance is £5009.45 (as of 21.01.2025)
- Forecast future payments before 31st March 2025 are £654 (this figure includes replacement of the parish council's printer and purchase of a new flag and rope). End of March forecast is approximately £4,300.
- Discussed also was the potential replacement of flower tubs that have been reported to be in poor condition, it was agreed to survey the tubs this will affect the forecast figure.

5.2 Grass Cutting Contract: Cllr Parkes has spoken to GHC (the contractor) who have agreed to cut the grass in 2025 for the same price as 2024 in recognition for prompt payment by the council.

6. Planning issues

6.1 No new issues of note to report

6.2 Concerns have been brought to the attention of the council in relation to debris on the road and pathway next to the skip adjacent to Fairways used by the contractor working there. Cllr Parkes agreed to make the resident aware of the issue.

7. Conservation area

7.1 Cllr Hanson having pursued Brian Harris from Durham County Council for an update in relation to the conservation area application reported he had just received an email from him apologising for the delayed response. Brian Harris' email stated that 'legal were still silent' but he had spoken to his line manager and hopefully a decision will be made before the end of March.

8. Broadband Update

8.1 A number of people in the village have now been connected by Go Fibre with a rolling programme to follow.

8.2 There has been a well attended meeting in the village hall with representatives of Go Fibre, DCC and Tim Blades from BDUK; with a promise by Tim Blades that contractors and BDUK would work with the village to achieve the best outcomes.

8.3 There has been an issue regarding a third pole to be located on the village green on the western border. At the meeting with BDUK and conversations had by Cllr Levett it was concluded that this pole was not required and would not sit sympathetically with the maypole. Cllr Levett reported he had observed contractors arriving and digging a hole for the third post. Cllr Levett spoke to the contractors to advise it had been agreed this was not required and they filled in the hole. It would appear there had been some miscommunication; however, it was agreed that some vigilance was required. The meeting thanked Cllr Levett for his intervention.

8.4 Cllr Hanson proposed a vote of thanks to Cllr Parkes for his dogged determination to bring superfast broadband to the village.

8.5: Cllr Hanson raised an issue in relation to poor reinstatement works outside of Appletree Cottage Cllr Hanson will speak to the contractors.

9. Hugo Fox

9.1 Hugo Fox has contacted OPC regarding them being able to set up a gov.uk. domain, however, upon further investigation this would be more cost effective for larger councils and would incur significant expense for OPC

10. Any other business:

10.1 Maypole flag and rope: Cllr Levett advised that a new flag was required as the current flag had been severely storm damaged, he also advised the rope needed replacing and suggested using 8mm paracord rather than 5mm. OPC agreed to source a replacement and Cllr Levett and Cllr Parkes will take this forward and circulate the information for approval.

10.2 Replacement flower barrels: Cllr Parkes had been approached by a resident who brought to his attention the poor condition of some of the flower barrels. Cllr Parkes and Levett will review the condition of the barrels owned by OPC and advise as to replacements required.

10.3 Tree inspection: Cllr Parkes advised that the last tree inspection by Durham County Council was three years ago. He has noticed a few apparently dead limbs, albeit Cllr Levett pointed out that the trees had withstood recent storms. It was agreed that Cllr Parkes contact Durham County Council to remind them that another inspection is due.

10.4 OPC printer: The Epson printer owned by the parish council has broken given its age it was agreed to replace the printer rather than attempt a repair. Cllr Parkes will take this forward, in the meantime the clerk will use her own printer

10.5 Maypole benches: Cllr Hanson advised that the Maypole benches situated on the green were looking worse for wear: it was suggested to rotate the benches to extend their life.

10.6 Forthcoming Parish Council Elections: Parish Council elections will be held on 1st May; it was discussed that there is no automatic roll over of candidates and all current councillors wishing to stand would need to complete a nomination pack. Cllr Parkes advised that he would not be standing as a councillor due to his impending house move. The clerk will obtain nomination packs from Durham County Council. Councillors discussed the need to encourage new people in the parish to stand for election to ensure a broad representation. The clerk agreed to produce a newsletter aimed at encouraging people in the community to consider becoming a councillor alongside information about the impending election timetable. The clerk will circulate a draft for approval then print the newsletter for a leaflet drop and post on Hugo Fox and the notice board.

10.6 Resignation of clerk: due to an impending house move the clerk will stand down from this voluntary role. It was agreed to include in the newsletter a plea for someone to step into this role.

10.7 Annual Parish Council meeting: the clerk has confirmed that the window for this meeting is between 7th -22nd may 2025: for uncontested councils the meeting could take place on 7th May as long as the three day notice period is recognised.

10.8 Telephone kiosk: nothing further has been heard from BT regarding the decommissioning of the telephone box which they had indicated would occur 'early 2025'. OPC wish to establish the telephone box as a community asset including housing the

defibrillator: funds are available from the Village Hall to re establish a red telephone box. The clerk agreed to contact BT regarding an update, BT had indicated a notice would be placed on the telephone box in line with planning process including the required consultation period.

11.Date and time of next meeting: Sunday 13th April 5pm Ovington Village Hall