

Ovington Parish Council  
Notes of meeting held 11/01/2022  
Ovington Village Hall

**Councillors present:** Peter Levett (Chair), Shaun Hanson, Nigel Parkes, Julie Parkes, Jo Harper.

**Invitee:** Eddie Peat (representing Trustees of Wycliffe Estate.)

**1.Apologies:** non

**2.Declaration of interests:** non

**3.Notes of previous meeting:** meeting notes confirmed as an accurate record of the discussion

**4.Matters Arising:**

**4.1:** Village Green access road – OPC are unable to establish ownership of the access road further to contact with the land registry and Durham County Council to continue to pursue.

**4.2:** Conservation area: agenda item

**4.3:** Broadband: agenda item

**4.4:** Dog waste bins: councillors have placed approximately 15 dog waste notices around the village: early observations are that the issue has improved.

**4.5:** Memorial bench OPC have spoken to residents concerned.

**5.Update from Eddie Peat on behalf of the Trustees of Wycliffe Estate:**

**5.1:** Tipping issues: the Trustees have asked EP to speak to residents adjacent to Trustee land; residents spoken to previously have responded well. EP to remind residents that tipping is a criminal offence and there are services available, for example Rotters to deal with organic waste.

EP requested the cooperation of residents in respect of overgrown vegetation that may overhang property. Trustees are willing to give permission where there is a risk of damage to property or obstruction of light for example, provided there is evidence of a safe method

of working. EP advised that Trustees are not willing to take responsibility where vegetation on **Trustee land causes damage to property.**

5.2: Discussion re conservation area application: OPC expressed the view that it was an opportunity to work together to support the enhancement of the local landscape. EP advised that Trustees had voiced some reservations: he explained that the woodland is designated as commercial woodland and therefore a financial asset to Wycliffe Estate and that conservation area status may negatively affect any commercial value, albeit acknowledging that the land was difficult to manage with some areas not easily accessible. Discussion ensued with regard to potential opportunities for Wycliffe Trustees, would it open a gateway for additional grants. It was agreed that there is a need to understand the planning controls in relation to ancient woodland as opposed to the usual planning controls affecting residential areas and agreed that the boundary proposed by OPC was logical.

It was agreed that it was important for Brian Harris (DCC officer supporting this work) to attend a public meeting to articulate the advantages a conservation area could bring. OPC will ask BH to include broader stakeholders in consultation and for contact to be made via EP.

5.3: EP confirmed that Trustees own a narrow part of the riverbank that borders properties on the north side of the village green. OPC brought to EP attention fallen trees on that land: EP will investigate.

5.4: Whorlton Bridge: EP updated that testing work has been ongoing and OPC could liaise with George Stansey from Whorlton who has also written to Alan Patrickson who is the lead at DCC, for updated information. Whorlton residents have requested that further to the outcome of the recent inspections if the bridge could be opened to cyclists and pedestrians.

Point of concern raised that some walkers are finding themselves in the wrong place as there is no footpath signage re the bridge. EP asked if the Chair could write to MP Dehenna Davison by way of support; this was agreed.

5.5: OPC raised an issue re removal of directional arrows on footpaths on land owned by Wycliffe Hall EP provided details of the land agent to enable OPC to make contact; Sam Winross ([sam.windross@bhssporting.co.uk](mailto:sam.windross@bhssporting.co.uk))

**Action:** Chair 5.4, 5.5

## **6. Finance Update:**

6.1: Precept- RFO advised that this has been maintained at the same level for the past 3 years and proposed a 2.5% increase to mitigate increased costs. OPC agreed that this was reasonable. RFO to return precept to DCC who have confirmed that as currently OPC have not got a Clerk this will be accepted without the usual clerk's signature.

6.2: As of 1/11/2022 there is £447.69 in the current account with approximately £230 of VAT to be reclaimed. There is £3800 in the current account.

**Action:** 6.2: RFO to submit precept

## **7. Planning:**

**7.1:** The meeting was advised that Amy Williamson has left DCC and temporarily her caseload is being managed by Steve Pilkington.

**7.2:** In relation to the ongoing application regarding the house adjacent to Moor View the landscape officers report has raised concerns and further discussions are ongoing between DCC and the developer.

## **8.Conservation Area:**

**8.1:** OPC discussed the proposed consultation letter and process received from Brian Harris:

- concerns that the letter heading is negative in tone
- FAQ need to include benefits as well as negatives
- The contextual information is poor given that OPC have provided a document that provides detailed information on the historical legacy and rationale for the proposed boundary: this needs to be shared with residents.
- Options need to be available for those who may be unable to access the DCC portal
- BH advised that DCC were unable to do a face-to-face consultation process due to current restrictions. OPC agreed the need to challenge this in terms of ensuring an appropriate level of information to residents and to provide the opportunity for detailed responses to questions.

### **Action:**

OPC agreed that SH will write to BH with proposed amendments to the letter and process for further agreement with OPC

## **9.Broadband update:**

**9.1:** D Bottoms has provided update but no change since last meeting.

**9.2:** OPC discussed the fact that after 2025 BT will not maintain landlines; agreed the need to understand how this will be achieved and what mitigations will be put in place. To discuss further at next meeting to provide an opportunity to gain further information.

## **10.Clerk Position:**

AW, former clerk has been very helpful and has downloaded all files onto a memory stick and relevant files and has offered to help any new appointee.

No further progress re a replacement and Chair is still awaiting response from a potential candidate. It was agreed that this issue needs a speedy resolution.

JP offered to stand down as councillor and take up the role of clerk as a voluntary role.

OPC agreed to this proposal.

**Action:** JP to take forward relevant actions

**A.O.B:**

**11.Village Green:** it was suggested that in order to protect the green as a place of recreation in line with national principles OPC will explore a simple policy that will provide the rationale and some simple rules for usage. There are examples other local parish councils that will be shared. OPC agreed that it is important for the usage of the green to be maximised providing the visual impact is maintained and the green is kept neat and tidy.

**Action:** JP to research examples

**12. Queens Platinum Jubilee:** June 2/4/5<sup>th</sup>. Suggested that OPC and the Village Hall Committee work together to plan an event; (next village hall committee is mid-February) discussed the success of the VE day event and if music could be provided in a similar way. OPC requested discussion at next village hall meeting.

**Action:** Chair and NP

**Date of next meeting;** 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2022 6.30pm Village Hall.

**Summary of agreed actions: OPC meeting 11/1/2022**

<b>Meeting note</b>	<b>Action</b>
5.4	Chair to liaise with G Stansy/Alan Patrickson and write letter of support to MP Dehenna Davison re Whorlton Bridge
5.5	Chair to make contact with Sam Winross regarding public footpath signage issues on Wycliffe Hall land
6.2	RFO to submit precept to DCC
8.1	SH to respond to BH on behalf of OPC with comments regarding his proposed letter and consultation process for Conservation status
10	JP to resign as councillor and take forward any required actions re clerk role
11	JP to circulate examples of Parish Council policies re village green
12	Chair/ NP to discuss Platinum Jubilee celebrations with village hall committee