

**Ovington Parish Council**  
**Parish Council Annual Meeting**  
**Ovington Village Hall**  
**Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> May 2023**  
**Minutes of Meeting**

**Attendees :** Cllr Peter Levett, (Chair) Cllr Nigel Parkes (RFO), Cllr Shaun Hanson, Cllr Jo Harper, Julie Parkes (Clerk)

**Additional attendees:** two members of the public to raise issues re broadband, grass cutting, Parish Council website, update re conservation area status.

**1.Apologies:** no apologies

**2.Declaration of interests:** no declaration of interests.

**3.Minutes of previous meeting:** confirmed as accurate and signed by Chair

**4.Election of Chair:**

**4.1:** Cllr Levett was re nominated as Chair proposed by Cllr Parkes and seconded by Cllr Hanson and Cllr Parke is to continue as RFO.

**4.2** The current vacancy on the council was discussed and notification given of someone who may be interested in joining the Parish Council. The Clerk will contact Durham Electoral Services to instigate the application process.

**5.Outgoing Chairmans annual statement:**

**5.1** Cllr Levett's report outlined the work of OPC in the past year covering planning, conservation area status, tree conservation noting thanks to the Johnson family who repaired the village green road at their own cost. The report is attached as Appendix 1.

## **6.Review of Statutory Documents**

**6.1** Annual AGAR return: the RFO presented the completed AGAR submission that had been reviewed by Richard Burt for audit prior to submission to Mazars the external auditors. Mr Burt confirmed the accounts were accurate. The AGAR documents were signed by the Chair and the clerk will submit them via e mail to Mazars. It was confirmed that the annual governance statement was also accurately completed.

The clerk will provide public notification of the display of accounts and ensure they are available on the notice board and website. This cannot be before 5<sup>th</sup> June to comply with the requirements of the audit and must be identified as unaudited accounts.

**6.2** Standing Orders: The clerk has reviewed the standing orders for 2023; these were circulated prior to the meeting and signed off by the Chair. The Clerk will upload to Hugo Fox.

**6.3:** The RFO provided copies of the revised asset register of OPC

### **Finance:**

**7.1** The May finance report is attached as appendix 2.

### **Planning Update:**

**8.1** There were no updates on current planning issues

**8.2:** Issues reported at the last meeting re water running onto the lane from the new development at Paddock View; there is currently no further update Cllr Hanson has had no contact and will speak to the resident who raised the concern for a further update.

## **9.Conservation Area**

**9.1** A resident attended also requesting an update as to the progress of the conservation area; also requesting clarification if the land owned by the Peat family was still included in the plan. OPC confirmed an understanding that it is included and was also in the original plan.

**9.2** Cllr Hanson confirmed he had contact DCC for a further update, the person leading the process has left and therefore he has contacted Brian Harris by e mail and left a voicemail but has not had a reply. Where things were left at the last update was that everything had been signed off and it was with the DCC legal team. Cllr Hanson confirmed that residents would all be notified once the final outcome has been received in accordance with DCC process. It was discussed that the process had been very frustrating and OPC have continually chased DCC for progress and with a lack of timely response.

## **10.Broadband**

**10.1** Two residents raised concerns re the standard of broadband in the village and that it certainly was not conducive to supporting people working from home and children and young adults where school work is increasingly on line. Alternative providers such as EE were discussed, it was acknowledged speeds are variable dependent upon line of sight from the village to the masts. It has been noted by residents that Go Fibre have commenced work along the A67 and concern that Ovington is missing out

**10.2** Cllr Parkes provided an update and assurance that OPC have continually chased Digital Durham and the local MP re lack of appropriate access to broadband. The update last received from Ali Walker at Digital Durham confirmed that a contract was awarded last September to Go Fibre of which the work ongoing currently along the A67. Ovington is not included in this phase. OPC understanding is that Ovington will be in the second contract phase.

The procurement for the second contract (that may result in gigabit broadband for Ovington) is expected to be awarded to a supplier late spring/early summer OPC expect to know more about the outcome for Ovington late 2023. (the voucher amounts have also increased to £4,500 per property. ).

OPC will continue to pursue the issue with Digital Durham and will update residents in relation to any new information..

**10.3** It was discussed re the potential removal of the telephone box and the hope at some point the defibrillator can be housed in a traditional red telephone box. A resident questioned the fact that some residents may not have 4G phones, however, it was also discussed that according to BT the phone had been used only once in the past few years. It was suggested it was important to achieve a balance between the housing of the defibrillator v the rarely used telephone line.

## **11. AOB**

**11.1** A resident raised an issue that it was difficult to find information on the web site and minutes with a confusion over draft /unconfirmed and confirmed The clerk said she would go into the website and address this issue

**11.2** A resident raised concerns re the standard of grass cutting particularly at the top of the village. The resident noted that the contractor had a new mower and that it did not appear to do as good a job and the standard was variable around the village. Concern was raised that after the contractor had cut the grass the resident had spent hours re cutting and tidying. Cllr Parkes said he had already mentioned to the contractor that there appeared to be a lot of residual grass cutting left and that the contractor had explained that the grass itself was extremely wet at the time and that the issue should improve with the dry weather. Cllr Parkes said he will speak to the contractor again and will monitor the standard of cutting.

**12. Date and time of next meeting:** 19<sup>th</sup> September 6.30.

Appendix 1.

### Chairman's report 2023

The last 12 months has been a bit like the previous 12 months as far as the parish council is concerned with the council keeping track of various planning applications within the parish and monitoring ongoing issues such as the broadband and the conservation area.

We intended to replace the glass KX100 telephone box with a classic red K6 box. We had one sourced and had agreement in principle from Durham County Council, we also had a promise of funding from our local county councillor's budgets, however we hit a major stumbling block with BT who 'moved the goalposts' only months before and wouldn't allow us to either adopt or change the existing KX100 box.

The unadopted road around the green was 'refurbished' by Johnson Construction with them supplying materials, machinery and labour at no cost to either the parish council or the residents. Thank you Henry, Ray and Penny.

The trees around the village green have been inspected and declared safe by Durham County Council and the bridge has had a visual inspection, again by Durham County Council and declared structurally sound however they intend to do a full inspection later this year.

Finance report:

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