

Ovington Parish Council Meeting

Tuesday 26th March 2024

Ovington Village Hall

Minutes of Meeting

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

1.Apologies: Cllr Jo Harper

2. Declaration of interests : no declarations of interest

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

4. Correspondence: no new correspondence not covered within agenda

5. Finance update

5.1 Accounts and forecast: The RFO reported that there was £794.06 in the OPC current account and £4083.53 in the reserves account. The RFO confirmed that the claim for VAT reimbursement had been paid in full at £710.08. (included in the reserve account figures). The new precept will be paid in April into the current account.

5.2 The annual AGAR return is again looming, The RFO will complete the return and have it ready for review at the May meeting.

5.3 Virgin Money notification of account changes: Virgin Money have notified the RFO of their intention to remove accounts with passbooks, for them to be replaced by digital accounts. The RFO has visited the bank to further discuss how this can work for a parish council whilst complying with the standing orders and required signatories. The RFO is able to open the digital account online, movement of money clearly needs to be evidenced as being authorised by OPC and the designated secondary signatories. The clerk will investigate protocols used by other smaller parish councils to inform revision of the standing orders and to ensure compliance with audit requirements. Along side this OPC agreed to further explore online banking to enable BACS payments.

5.4 Grass cutting contract: approximately five weeks ago the current contractor Mill Gardens contacted OPC to advise they would no longer provide a service to the village. The RFO had further discussions with Mill Gardens who advised that they could provide a service increasing the price from £130 per cut to £205 (plus VAT). The question was asked, in the short term could the contractor

cut the grass monthly (to enable the council to explore alternative options) – this was not acceptable.

OPC agreed to make contact with alternative providers who provide services to neighbouring villages to explore a more cost effective option with a view to receiving alternative quotes within two weeks and meeting to evaluate and hopefully award a new contract. The Chair agreed to take this forward.

6.Planning Updates:

A householder in the village instigated a householder appeals process against Durham County Councils decision to refuse planning permission. The independent inspector refused the appeal. (documents on the DCC portal)

7.Conservation Area :

Cllr Hanson has both phoned and e mailed Brian Harris the lead officer, requesting an update with no response other than an automated annual leave message. Cllr Hanson will send a reminder for immediate attention upon return from leave. If there is no response Cllr Hanson will escalate to D Sparks who heads up the design and conservation team to complain in relation to the process and to seek a position statement.

8.Hunt Activity:

8.1 There have been two recent episodes in relation to Zetland Hunt going through the village where the pack of hounds have been completely out of control with no sign of hunt personnel. Hounds have ‘invaded’ gardens, farmland where no permission has been granted showing no regard for peoples property, pets and livestock. OPC understand that some residents have approached the police to report their concerns.

8.2 As OPC own the designated village green it was agreed to write to the Zetland Hunt to make it clear that neither personnel or hounds have permission to access the village green with infringement being escalated.

9.Broadband:

Once again OPC have contacted Digital Durham for an update only to receive another non committal response. Tim Blades (BDUK) is in the process of reviewing provider data to establish communities for project gigabit workstreams (voucher and contracts). Digital Durham confirmed Ovington had not been forgotten, that there were regular meetings with Tim Blades and as soon as there was anything to share they would be in touch which hopefully would not be in the too distant future. It was agreed that Cllr Parkes contact BDUK directly for a response.

10. Village waste bins: Cllr Levett has spoken to DCC who confirmed that they are being emptied; the new bin near Cliffords View is being well used.

11. Annual Parish Meeting:

Annual Parish Meeting

OPC agreed a date of Tuesday 14th May 7 pm in the Village Hall. To place a notice in the notice board and on the web site. The annual meeting of OPC will commence at 6.30pm.

12. Newsletter:

OPC agreed that a newsletter was overdue however, there had been little new to report. Agreed to await a response regarding the conservation area and hopefully provide an updated newsletter in the next three weeks.

13. AOB.

13.1 Noticeboard: OPC agreed it needs some updating and maintenance: commercially available ones were very expensive but this will be explored. OPC also discussed if the current position is the best place

13.2 Archives: A previous Chair of OPC has discovered some original archives of OPC going back to the late 1930's. It was discussed if OPC could create an archive of interest: Cllr Hanson agreed to review.

13.3 Date and time of next meeting: May 14th 6.30 Ovington Village Hall

