

## ORLESTONE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Orlestone Parish Council's Meeting held on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> December 2023 at 7pm in Hamstreet Sports Pavilion, Pound Lees, Hamstreet.

**Present:** Parish Councillors: Andy Othen (Chairman), Mike Wady (Vice-Chairman), David Farrell, Sid Gittens, Steve Newton, Sadie Mitchell, Basil Smith, Mags Wellsted-Boorman, David White and the Parish Clerk (Sue Stiffell).

Public Comments & Observations: *This being an opportunity for parishioners to speak or ask questions.* No comments or observations were brought forward.

- 1. Apologies:** Apologies were received from Kent County Councillor David Robey, Borough Councillors Aline Hicks and David Ledger.
- 2. Declarations of Pecuniary Interest** (relating to items on this agenda made in order to comply with the Kent Code of Conduct): None were made at this point from Councillors present.  
**Declarations of Significant Interest** (relating to items on this agenda made in order to comply with the Kent Code of Conduct): The following declarations of interest were received: Sid Gittens, Basil Smith and David Farrell members of The Hamstreet Men in Sheds, Mags Wellsted-Boorman: HDSL A Member, David White: Allotment Holder.
- 3 Minutes From OPC's Meeting Held on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2023: To be Authorised as Being A Correct Record:** Sid Gittens proposed that the minutes from the meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2023 be accepted as a correct record and signed/authorised by the Chairman of the current meeting. David White seconded this proposal which was agreed by those present.
- 3. Matters Arising From The Minutes of The Meeting Held on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2023:**  
**Sewage Works:** No further reply had been received regarding the Clerk's enquiry as to whether there was a planned extension to the sewage works in Warehorne Road. During the past week there had been further problems reported and the following email had been sent to John Mealey, the Engagement Manager at Southern Water on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2023.

*'Members of Orlestone Parish Council are extremely frustrated by the lack of information and communication being provided to them regarding various issues and works that have been taking place in Hamstreet by Southern Water. Please could you ask that the Parish Council is kept fully informed about what is occurring in the parish. I am daily being asked for information which I cannot provide. If you wish I can always pass these queries on to you and provide residents with your contact details.*

*On Sunday 26th November a resident who lives near Pound Leas Recreation Space in Hamstreet was informed that Southern Water had a situation classified as an emergency and had vehicles waiting at Pound Leas Car Park needing access to the area around Hamstreet Sports Pavilion. Raw sewage needed to be pumped out to prevent ground contamination. The resident gave authority for them to cut the padlock to gain access. At no time were the Parish Council informed or kept up-to-date with the works taking place and had to rely on the resident to inform them what was taking place. I am assuming that the padlock will be replaced with a new one with keys and the damage to the grass areas will be repaired.*

*Work is now being carried out on the road, The Street, outside Pound Leas Recreation Space to the drains. The pipe between The Street and Hamstreet Allotments is being re-lined as the structure of the pipe is failing. The roadworks on the main road are due to diversion of sewage whilst the works are being carried out. Orlestone Parish Council have received no formal notification of these works, either by courtesy or as the owner of the Hamstreet Allotments and had to speak to the contractors to gain any information.*

*Today, Saturday 2nd December, a resident who lives opposite Pound Leas Open Space had their dog knocked over by a vehicle. This was caused by the contractors working on the road not replacing the fencing to their property properly; consequently, their dog was able to get out of the garden and unfortunately got knocked over by a passing vehicle. A member of Orlestone Parish Council has put in an official complaint and the emergency reference number is 4611299. This same elderly resident had to deal with raw sewage beneath their home a few weeks ago.*

*The number of tankers visiting the sewage works just off Warehorne Road is unbelievable and extremely disturbing to those who live nearby as they attend at all hours of the day and night. No reply has been received to my question asking if this is to be enlarged, it is obviously not coping and needs to be improved.*

*Is it possible to have a formal statement that the Parish Council can put out to residents. Members also ask if a meeting can be set up between themselves and Southern Water representatives to discuss this and other matters.'*

A reply to this email had been received that morning (4<sup>th</sup> December 2023) saying:

*Thank you for your email, and firstly, I'm sorry for the disruption you and the community are currently experiencing.*

*A number of these issues are the first I have been made aware, so I will investigate and get back to you ASAP.*

*I also received an update over the weekend regarding the tanker movements out of hours. Our contractor (MTS) were taking additional tanker movements, as our sludge thickening plant on site was being repaired. When the sludge thickener is running, we have two sludge loads a week, when it is out of action, we need to take three loads every day because the sludge in the aeration lane is very thin. If this isn't done, the effluent from the treatment works will deteriorate and fail.*

*However, these additional tanker movements were being taken very late or early hours. As soon as we were made aware of the disruption, our site manager requested they are stopped at unsociable hours and stressed we need to minimise the impact on the community.*

During discussion it was noted that for a number of years there had been a minimum of three tankers a day visiting the sewage works in Warehorne Road and that this was not a new occurrence as the email indicated. It was noted that the road was not designed for this level of traffic or the weight of the tankers. The road and footpaths were being damaged. Disappointment was expressed that not all the points raised had been answered. The Clerk was asked to request a meeting with representatives from Southern Water so that various issues could be discussed including damage to the track alongside the allotment plots.

There was also concern that when the construction of the new dwellings in Warehorne Road and Ashford Road were complete and the new homes inhabited; the existing sewage works would not cope and there would be constant aggravation and emergencies similar to what had been occurring during the past three months.

The Clerk was asked to investigate what the planning conditions were for both developments regarding Southern Water and if any agreements had been breached and if any funding had been provided to improve the works in Hamstreet and if this had been spent.

#### **4. Members Updates**

**War Memorial:** Sid highlighted that now planning permission had been granted quotations could be sought for the work. During discussion it was agreed that Sid would try and obtain at least two quotations for the work.

**Christmas Community Celebrations:** It was noted that Mike was organising the Christmas Tree to be put up at Forge Gardens and he would be purchasing a thank you gift for the resident who kept an eye on the information centre/bus shelter in Ruckinge Road.

**Christmas Lights Display Competition:** Those present agreed that the annual competition would be held as in previous years and members would pass to the Clerk their choices of the best Christmas Light Display in the Village. These would then be voted upon by members with a winner and 2 runners up being chosen. It was agreed that the winners would each receive a voucher.

**Chairman:** Andy asked those present if Therouanne should be sent a Christmas message and a gift. During discussion it was agreed that Hamstreet Vineyard be contacted and asked if they could send three bottles of their wine, this would be accompanied with a message saying 'Happy Christmas from your twinned village Hamstreet. Hoping to strengthen our relationship in 2024'.

## 5. Finance:

### **Purchase of Land To Extend Pound Leas Open Space; Review Loan Requirements and Consultation Update:**

A business review was circulated to those present. Following discussion, it was resolved to seek the approval of the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to apply for a PWLB loan of £200,000 over the borrowing term of 49 years for the purchase of land beside Pound Leas Open Space. It was estimated that the annual loan repayments would come to around £15,340.

Once the paperwork has been completed the Clerk will send it to the NALC who are required to approve it. It was noted that the council tax precept would need to be increased for the purpose of the loan repayments and other costs relating to the purchase of the land. It was noted that:

- i) Precept increase consultation took place during the month of November. This was done via letters sent to each household in the parish explaining that the parish council wished to purchase land beside Pound Leas Open Space, why the land was being purchased and how this would be achieved. Copies of this letter were posted on the Parish Council's noticeboards, the local coffee shop and general store.
- ii) A consultation/presentation took place on Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> November 2023 between 11am and 3pm in Hamstreet Sports Pavilion.
- iii) Information on the project was provided on the Parish Council's website page and Facebook page.
- iv) Comments were invited at the presentation, via email, letter and through an online survey.

Ashford Borough Council had been informed of the project and that Orlestone Parish Council would be increasing their Precept if the consultation was favourable. Information had been provided by Ashford Borough Council which noted that an increase of £8,000 to the existing Precept would result in an average of £1 a month increase. Their finance department reported:

The Parish amount charged to bill payers is calculated by the Precept amount (£20,272) divided by the council tax base (637) therefore your charge for this current year was £31.82 for Band D properties. Band D properties are considered to be the average and then multipliers are used to calculate the other bands. By increasing the precept to £28,272 this will mean that the amount charged to rate payers in Band D properties will be £44.38. Please see a table below showing how the increase in Precept amount will affect the other bands:

	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E
Current Charge	21.22	24.75	28.29	31.82	38.90
Proposed	29.59	34.52	39.45	44.38	54.25
Increase	8.37	9.77	11.16	12.56	15.35

On reviewing the estimated loan repayments, those present agreed that the Precept be raised by £12,000 which would relate to an average increase to a band D property of £1.39 a month. The shortfall of approximately £4,000 could possibly be covered by the Parish Council's reserves. Potentially the Precept would need to be increased again in the future to cover repayments or the HDSLAs could be approached for cover any shortfall in repayments. It was agreed that this needed further discussion if approval for the loan was granted. Ashford Borough Council had informed the Parish Clerk that raising the Precept by £12,000 that:

£20,272 to £32,272 will see the Band D increase from £31.82 to £48.60 which is an increase of £16.78 this equates to 52.72%.

**Consultation Update:** The closing date for comments had been 30<sup>th</sup> November 2023. Comments on the proposal had been invited by post, email, via an online survey and at the consultation/presentation held on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

**Results:**

- The Chairman had circulated details of the online survey which had only received one negative vote which had been counterbalanced by a positive comment so it was believed that the negative vote had been an accident.
- 2 emails of support for the project had been received and one negative comment had been received from residents.
- The Consultation/Presentation had received a steady stream of visitors. Those who had attended had been invited to write their thoughts down on the project. There had been no negative comments made regarding the purchase of the land and the increase of Precept to pay for a loan so that the land could be purchased during the event.

**Budget Review/Update:** Had been circulated prior the meeting and paper copies were made available to those present. A forecast of income and expenditure for the next financial year had also been circulated and paper copies were made available to those present.

**Precept Consideration For The Next Financial Year 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025:** During discussion it was unanimously agreed that the Precept be raised by £12,000, from £20,272 to £32,272; this would enable funds to be available to pay off a PWLB loan, should it be agreed. It was highlighted that the Precept had not been increased significantly for over ten years and that an average increase of £1.39 a month for a Band D property was affordable.

**Authorisation of Cheques:** The following cheques were authorised for signature with the Chairman having delegated authority to approve cheques if required before the next meeting.

To	For	Amount	Cheque No
Cosy Kettle	Refreshments for Community Xmas Celebration	125.00	1809
HDSLAs	Refreshments for Community Xmas Celebration	139.00	1810
Clerk	Reimburse Cost of Christmas Light Competition	100.00	1811
M Wady	Reimburse Cost: Xmas Tree etc	146.46	1812
<i>Post Dated Cheque</i>			
Clerk	Salary for January 2024	520.00	1813
Clerk	Use of Home as Office Jan '24	120.00	1813

**6. Date & Time of Next Meetings:**

Parish Council Meeting: Monday 5<sup>th</sup> February 2024 at 7pm

Meeting Concluded 7.32pm

Chairman's Signature: