



"Not for self"

Oswestry Rural Parish Council

Minutes

of the Ordinary meeting

held at 7 pm on Thursday 25 January 2024 at Trefonen Village Hall

Present:

Cllr Peter Richardson (Acting Chairman), Cllr. Bob Kimber, Cllr Martin Jones, Cllr. Steve Watts, Cllr Peter Davies, Cllr Roger Jones, Cllr Paul Milner, Cllr Iain Campbell, Cllr Mike Weston

Clerk to the Council:

Kathryn Lloyd

In attendance:

Approximately one member of the public

Cllr Joyce Barrow

1858 Chairman's Welcome

Cllr Peter Richardson welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised he was acting Chairman in Cllr Martin Bennett's absence. He advised members Cllr Bennett had been taken poorly and wished him a swift recovery.

1859 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from:

Cllr Martin Bennett

Cllr Roger Jones

Cllr Jas Singh

Cllr Chris Woods

1860 Police Report

Cllr Peter Richardson advised members PCSO Charlie Ironmonger had sent his apologies for not being able to attend. He read the Police report for December 2023 provided by Oswestry Rural South Safer Neighbourhood Team.

01/12/2023 – Vehicle Crime. Theft of tools from vehicle.

01/12/2023 – Theft from vehicle.

04/12/2024 – Road Traffic Collision at the Traffic lights on the A483

Highways other 18, assault 3 and domestics 5.

Cllr Martin Jones advised members that he had attended a meeting before December 2023 which was also attended by Ms Greenaway and Police Crime Commissioner John Campion. He advised that St Martins Village with a population of more than 4,500 residents were served by one Police constable and two PCSO . These officers were also responsible for the surrounding villages including Gobowen. He advised there were issue with

Ketamine abuse, and this had been confirmed by Shropshire College and schools in the area. According to Ms Greenaway this was not an issue.

He also raised concerns with vaping and advised two distributors for vapes had been closed down. He noted that the PCC were increasing the precept to the maximum level permitted for this year and next and the police were concentrating on the main concerns relating to speeding.

1861 Shropshire Council Report

Cllr Joyce Barrow provide the following update:

The administration are looking to finalise the budget. There are some very difficult decisions that need to be made. 80% of the council budget goes on social care, Due to increased demands in social care (in year pressure of 30m plus) the savings target will be higher again next year. In short, before long, social care will consume all the budget. meaning there is just 20% left for all the other services the council runs. 1 in 5 councils in England have said, they will go bust this year or next year. The savings that were promised for this year have almost been achieved, but it is getting harder and harder to make a balanced budget. We have banked or have plans to bank £41m, 90% of the savings but still aiming for 95% which is around £46m. We will certainly be pushing for 95% but inflationary costs are not going away .Other groups brought forward alternative budgets, but they would not have provided a balanced budget, and one would have meant spending a lot more money. One group wanted to spend all our reserves, which would not be a good financial move.

Cabinet agreed parking charge increases last week, hoping to encourage people to change behaviour and to raise additional income for spending on the maintenance of car parks. Outside of Shrewsbury parking charges will rise by a set 20p per hour, though many car parks will remain free.

Since the update, there have been two call ins to committee; car parking charges and The Quarry. Retailers feels that an

.increase in parking charges will affect trade. The Cabinet has agreed to build a swimming pool / outdoor centre, but no decision has been made on The Quarry.

16,500 streetlights have been converted to LED lighting so far.

1862 Public Participation

None

1863 Minutes

The minutes of the ordinary meeting of the Parish Council held on 30 November 2023 were considered for approval.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED that the minutes be APPROVED and ADOPTED as a true record.

1864 Disclosure of Pecuniary Interests

In accordance with Section 29 of the Localism Act 2011 Members were informed they are personally responsible for deciding whether they should disclose an interest at this meeting. Members were also reminded they should not make decisions with a closed mind and must declare a bias and not vote on matters where their decision could be pre-determined.

None declared

1865 Dispensations

None requested.

1866 Declarations of Acceptance of Gifts and Hospitality

None Declared

1867 Planning Matters

a) Planning Decisions

The following planning decisions were **NOTED**:

Planning Application Details	Planning Proposals
23/04480/FUL Bwlchygwynt, Wern Y Wiel, Treflach, Oswestry, Shropshire, SY10 9HS	Conversion of outbuildings and tool shed to annex ancillary to the main dwelling. Decision: Withdrawn
23/04583/CPE Unit 1, Woolston, West Felton, Shropshire, SY10 8HY	Reference: 23/04583/CPE (validated: 23/10/2023) Address: Unit 1, Woolston, West Felton, Shropshire, SY10 8HY Proposal: Application for a Certificate of Existing Lawful Use for the use of building for B8 storage Decision: Certificate - Not Lawful
23/04584/CPE Unit 3, Woolston, West Felton, Shropshire, SY10 8HY	Application for a Certificate of Existing Lawful Use for the use of building and yard for B8 storage Decision: Certificate - Not Lawful
23/04585/CPE Unit 4, Woolston, West Felton, Shropshire, SY10 8HY	Application for a Certificate of Existing Lawful Use for the use of building for squash court and associated facilities, and garaging. Decision: Certificate - Not Lawful
23/02975/FUL Residential Conversion Of Outbuilding At Canal View, Maesbury Marsh, Oswestry, Shropshire	Refurbishment, conversion, and alterations to create new dwelling. Decision: Grant Permission
Hopton Villa, Maesbury Marsh, Oswestry, Shropshire, SY10 8JA	Erection of a single storey extension and internal alterations, formation of vehicle hardstanding and associated drop kerbing Decision: Refused
23/04586/FUL Weston House Mill, Weston, Oswestry, Shropshire, SY10 9ES	Erection of additional commercial building and all associated works Decision: Grant Permission

b) Planning Applications

The following planning applications were considered for comment

Planning Application Details	Planning Proposals
23/05178/AGR Trefarclawdd Farm, Trefarclawdd, Oswestry, Shropshire, SY10 9DE.	Erection of agricultural storage building to be used to store feed and all associated works. FOR INFORMATION PURPOSES ONLY
23/05155/EIA Morton Ley Farm, Morton, Oswestry, Shropshire, SY10 8BG	Extension to an intensive poultry unit including silos and all associated works Cllr Martin Jones commented this has been on for months and he does not support it. It is too large for the site and causes ecological damage to waterways. Cllr Ian Campbell suggested a moratorium on poultry units. It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED to object on the basis that the site is already too large and would cause further ecological damage to waterways.
23/05473/CPE Warehouse Known As Unit 2, The Barns, Woolston, West Felton, Shropshire	Application for a Certificate of Existing Lawful Use for the use of building and yard for B8 storage FOR INFORMATION PURPOSES ONLY

Planning Application Details	Planning Proposals
23/05108/FUL Henblas, Rhydycroesau, Oswestry, Shropshire, SY10 9BD	Conversion of outbuilding to holiday let. Cllr Martin Jones expressed concerns given the number of holidays and felt this was oversaturated. Cllr Peter Davies felt it would support the local area/shops. It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED to support this application at it will be good for the area and bring money to the area.
23/05529/PAAFC Treflach Farm, Treflach, Oswestry, Shropshire, SY10 9HX	Application for prior approval under Class R of the General Permitted Development Order 2015 (Part 3 of Schedule 2) for the change of use of an agricultural building to flexible commercial use. Cllr Bob Kimber commented this was part of the diversification of the farm. Concerns were raised with the wording of “flexible commercial use” as members felt it was rather ambiguous. It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED to support this application .
23/05383/VAR Trefonen C Of E School, School Lane, Trefonen, Oswestry, Shropshire.	Variation of Condition No. 2 attached to planning permission 10/01130/FUL dated 17 May 2010 to allow for the retention of the Childrens Nursery Demountable accommodation for a further temporary period of ten years. It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED to support this application.
24/00086/LBC East Farm, Crickheath, Oswestry, Shropshire, SY10 8BP	Demolition of brick wall and repair/ replacement of decayed historic timber frame gable end with new oak frame and hempcrete infill panels and connected ancillary works. Insertion of bathroom and connected ancillary works. Cllr Martin Asked what LBC meant. It was thought Local Building Certificate / Control. It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED to support this application.

NOTE: Planning applications not listed above that are received after the issue of this agenda and included on Shropshire Council's website will also be considered to meet response timeframes.

Planning Application Details	Planning Proposals
24/00196/CPL Arosfa, Croesau Bach, Oswestry, Shropshire, SY10 9AY.	Application for Lawful Development Certificate To extend the bathroom into the rear garden, to create a level access shower area. FOR INFORMATION PURPOSES ONLY
23/02900/FUL Tramway Farm, Crickheath, Oswestry, Shropshire, SY10 8AH	Installation of a 1108 kw ground mounted solar array and all associated works Decision: Refuse Members noted this application had previously been supported by the Parish Council.

1868 Clerk's Report

Members **NOTED** a written report from the Clerk on action taken following decisions made at previous council meetings. Members **AGREED** for all completed actions to be removed from the report.

1869 Financial Matters

Members considered for approval income and expenditure from December 2023 (retrospectively), I & E Balances to date, and financial outturn position. The Clerk advised a small number of minor changes had been made to the forecasted outturn position at the Finance Committee meeting which had been approved.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED that the income and expenditure to 31 December 2023 and the balance to 31 January 2024 of income received to date of £55,234.01 and gross expenditure to date of £55,607.68 be APPROVED.

Members NOTED the financial outturn position for 2023/24

b)Bank Reconciliation

Members considered for approval the bank reconciliation at 31 December 2023.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED that the bank reconciliation statement to the 31 December 2023 be APPROVED.

c)Payments for January 2023

Members considered for approval the following provisional payments for January 2024:

Supplier	Details	Total £
Society Local Councils of Clerks	Clerk Membership 1 January 2024 - 31 December 2024	188.00
Scottish Power	Electricity Charges 30/09/2023 - 31/12/2023	949.74
EE Limited	Monthly Mobile Charge 11 November - 11 December 2023	13.73
HSBC	Bank Charges 30 November to 29 December 2023	10.00
Mark Evans	Bus Shelter Cleaning 1 January 2024 (Morda, The Terrace, Trefonen, Treflach)	60.00
Colin Turner	Bus Shelter Cleaning January 2024	25.00
Kathryn Lloyd (The Clerk)	Clerk's pay and allowances January 2024	1,515.78
HMRC	PAYE / NI Clerk Pay January 2024	286.65
Printerland	Xerox High Capacity Tones Pack CMYK	354.91
EDG Ltd T/A Water Treatment Services	Water Testing -Samples, certificate, and courier collection January 2024	318.00
TrefonenVillage Hall	Hire of Hall July 2023 - November 2023	90.00
Evolution Arbtech	Arboricultural Work - All Saints Churchyard - Tree work	575.00
Evolution Arbtech	Arboricultural Work - The Cliff Face - Rhydycroesau	575.00
Kathryn Lloyd (The Clerk)	Reimbursement - Agenda & associated documents January 2024 and incorrect postage on Tender received	27.80
Kathryn Lloyd (The Clerk)	Reimbursement for A4 paper 4*£ 4.29	17.16
Total		5,006.77

The Clerk advised a number of minor changes had been made which had been AGREED by The Finance Committee.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED that the provisional payments for January 2024 be APPROVED.

1870 Finance Committee

Cllr Peter Richardson advised members the Finance Committee had meet earlier in the day with the meeting being quorate. It was an interesting meeting and covered: The Budget , Precept, Reserves, Shropshire Council Local Government Pension Scheme (Part 2), CILCA Training, Grant Policy, Grant applications and Parish Newsletter subject to Finance agenda.

Cllr Peter Richardson advised members that the CILCA training required a commitment from the Clerk of 200 hours to complete and agreed for this to be funded by The Parish Council. Dodleston Parish Council has agreed to contribute £800 towards this, equating to 20% based on 4 hours per week.

The Finance Committee considered the Grant Policy and agreed for applications to be considered in January and July each year as long as it does not exceed the £3,000 budget. Cllr Martin Jones asked whether it would be restricted to one opportunity each year and not twice. The Council will not discriminate but is well aware that a number of organisation are using the grant system as an annual means of topping up their balances. Also, a number are asking for considerable amounts of funding and the previous agreed limit of £500 should remain to allow for at least six applications to be successful each year.

The Parish newsletter budget has been set at £2,500. However there has not been any newsletters for a number of years either web based or social media.

The Finance Committee considered the precept and agreed a recommended increase of approximately £5,000. The Committee was conscious there has been a number of reductions in previous years and no increase in the last two. The Council is utilising its reserves and should start to make an increase now.

A number of options were considered, and it was agreed a precept request of £39,600 is appropriate. Cllr Maritn Jones asked what percentage increase this amounted to, and the Clerk confirmed 14.56% .

1871 Cemetery Fees

Cllr Peter Richardson advised the Finance Committee had viewed the current cemetery fees. In view of the cost of living expenses it recommended no change to the fees.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED not to make any increases to the current cemetery fees.

1872 Draft Budget and Precept 2024/25 and Earmarked Reserves

a, b)Members considered the draft budget for 2024/25. The Clerk advised there had been a number of changes since the original papers had been issued including a change to the Grounds Maintenance Contract being considered under a Part 2. The Clerk advised that it has been made clear there is insufficient CIL funding available to cover the future CIL funded plans. The cemetery works are estimated at £47,500. There is £112,417 CIL funding, however, this was earmarked for other projects in November 2021. A gross expenditure budget of £176,045 is proposed with a draw down from general reserves of £15,228. There is forecasted income of £8,800 including interest of £4,000 from fixed term bond / investments and CIL fund of £112,417. A precept of £39,600 is required to set a balanced budget. This is an increase of £5,078 from 2023/24 and an increase of 14.56%. The cost per household is £2.79. It should be **NOTED** the tax base increased from 1691.22 to 1693.41

The Clerk advised that whilst the Council may be holding funds in reserves these will be drawn down from. The operational budget requirement in 2023/24 was approximately £55,000 with only £34,522 being meet through the precept. This concern was also noted by the internal auditor.

The Clerk advised that the Strategic Plan should be reviewed together with earmarked reserves to identify those plans not being progressed so these can be unmarked and used for projects being taken forward. These will need to be considered with general reserves.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED to APPROVE a gross expenditure budget of £176,045 for 2024/25. In line with the budget setting process involving estimated expenditure / income and use of reserves, a precept of £39,600 was APPROVED. Members AGREED reserves for 2024/25 which will require further review.

1873 Grants

a) Members considered the draft Grant Policy Report provided by Cllr Martin Bennett . The recommendation by Finance Committee is to accept applications twice a year with a maximum award of £500.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED to accept the Grant Policy Report for applications twice a year with a maximum limit of £500.

b) Members considered a grant request of £1,500 from Morton Playing Field Committee. Cllr Peter Richardson expressed that the request for £1,500 was too much. As discussed earlier the grant award limit is £500 apart from exceptional circumstances. Cllr Martin Jones stated the committee had received funding previously. Grants should be one off award and are not a source of income. Cllr Mike Weston thought requests should be for a specified use. The Clerk advised the request specified the grant was for mowing and the reseeded of grass. The Clerk confirmed she had the accounts detailing expenditure and income which showed the main source of income was the Parish Council.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED not to support the grant request of £1,500 from Morton Playing Fields Committee. There was one abstention.

c) Members considered a request from Morda and Sweeney Village Hall for support towards an AED. The Clerk advised Cllr Martin Bennett had replied to the original request advising the Council were considering AED's within the Parish. It was noted an AED was located at the Village Shop Morda.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED for the Clerk to request the applicant to complete the Grant application specifying the amount. This will be considered at the March 2024 meeting.

1874 Cemetery Working Group

Cllr Mike Weston advised members that a meeting had taken place at the cemetery in November 2023 attended by Cllr Peter Richardson, The Clerk , himself and Mr Nicholas Richards from David Davies and Sons Funeral Directors.

A number of issues were discussed which led to a cemetery report with the following proposals:

Adopt or reinforce a policy for / to:

- Larger plot sizes for future burials (10 ft x 5 ft)
- No Reservations and/or Pre Purchases of plots
- Sponsored trees be maintained by the sponsor with failure to comply resulting in potential removal / relocation of tree(s)
- Facilitate a booking arrangement for Funerals in the absence of the Clerk
- Preclude the use of oversized American style coffins
- Remove any pathways located over both occupied and vacant plots and to replace with turfed or seeded grass
- Agree to the Commission work for Trial Pits (to assess the water table in the field)

Cllr Peter Richardson advised members of a number of recent issues with reservations including the collapsing of graves / damage. Plots will be allocated sequentially. Local cemeteries including Oswestry and surrounding parishes have already ceased reservations and this will follow best practice. There are a number of concrete pathways which encroach on graves. These will be removed, and the area seeded with grass. A budget has been agreed for this work. A booking system will allow funerals to be agreed in the absence of the Clerk. However, these will only take place when the Clerk is available to oversee the process. American sized coffins will not be allowed due to the plot size required. The fence between the cemetery and spare land can be taken down and the Funeral Director has agreed trial pits can be dug when work is undertaken for the next burial. There will be a nominal fee for this. Cllr Peter Richardson recommended these proposals to be agreed by members. .

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED for the proposals to be implemented with immediate effect / practicable.

1875 Environment Working Group

a)Water Pollution

Cllr Iain Campbell provided an update to members on the water pollution tests. A second set of tests along the River Morda had been undertaken. He was able to link up with the courier enabling the tests to comply with time and temperature requirements. All tests were performed at the same sites as the previous tests and every sample was beyond the scale. The benchmark being used is whether the water is safe to swim in and it was concluded not at all. Dilution tests were performed in an attempt to obtain a value. Some samples contained a mix of bacteria, faeces matter and bugs. Some of the bugs causing serious gut issues and meningitis.

Cllr Iain Campbell reported the water test performed at the bottom of Trefarclawdd Farm (test 3) provided a horrendous readings . He is waiting for Ph values. The message to dogwalker is to consider whether to allow their dogs to swim in the river. He is looking for tests to be undertaken before and after the sewage works and to assess the results. The Planning authorities need to be aware and recognise the issues. There are other streams which run into the river. Cllr Peter Richardson asked if signage /warning of unsafe water should be situ. Cllr Joyce Barrow expressed that members of the public need to know what the Parish Council is doing through the local papers / press release. Cllr Bob Kimber asked where the Environmental Agency would be in this given, they are responsible for Rivers. Cllr Mike Weston suggested waiting for the next set of tests and asking for further dilution and Ph values. Cllr Martin Jones advised there would be ongoing communication with other Groups including Up Sewage Cree, reviewing data, and assessing how it matches to the Parish Council's results.

b) Trefarclawdd Farm

The Clerk read the email sent by Cllr Roger Jones asking whether the Environmental Working Group (EWG) will undertake a regular meeting with Richard Corbett. He advised he will meet with him on behalf of the residents. Cllr Iain Campbell volunteered to attend on behalf of the Parish Council .

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED for Cllr Iain Campbell to represent the Parish Council and attend regular meetings with Richard Corbett to discuss issues with Trefarclawdd Farm.

The email also advised a resident had received a letter from Tracy Darke, Assistant Director of Shropshire Council. Cllr Roger Jones feels this is out of order and require reply. Cllr Roger Jones has advised he will respond to the resident and issue a letter to the Council for approval. The Clerk has not had sight of the letter.

c) Vyrnwy Frankton Connection

Cllr Martin Jones advised members a response had been received from Helen Morgan MP regarding the Vyrnwy Frankton Connection. The Clerk has shared this. A response has also been received from the company which suggested the reason for going overground is that it is 6 x 10 times less expensive and creates less disturbance to archaeological issues / damage. However, Cllr Martin Jones stated this will have a detrimental effect for those affected.

Helen Morgan MP suggested reviewing properties affected together with areas of natural interest / beauty. He believes company is seeking to maximise returns to shareholders. He felt the company should be made to work with Communities and Councils. The Company has stated the consultation has been in line with Government requirements. There will be future consultations including online.

1876 Casual Vacancy

Cllr Peter Richardson advised the casual vacancy had been advertised following the resignation of Cllr John Davies. There has been no call for an election and the vacancy will be advertised through Co-option.

1877 Correspondence

a) Members **NOTED** Shropshire Council's Potential Grants for properties affected by Storm Henk.

b) The Clerk advised members that a response had been received from Oswestry Town Council relating to Planning Application - 23/04776/REM Development Land Off Mile End Roundabout. The Clerk, Arren Roberts confirmed the Town Council had not been consulted on this matter.

c) Members **NOTED** the letter from Crane Quality Counselling seeking financial support. Members felt this was a standard letter and **AGREED** not to support this request. The Clerk will submit a grant application to complete,

1878 Consultation

a) Members **NOTED** the Shropshire Council budget Consultation 2024/25 and survey (closing date 28 January 2024).

1879 Date for Next Meeting

Members **NOTED** the next meeting will place on Thursday 29 February 2024 at Trefonen Village Hall

PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960

Pursuant to Section 1(2) of the above Act and due to the confidential nature of the following business to be transacted it was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the public and press should not be present.

1880 Staffing / Pension

Cllr Peter Richardson advised members that the Finance Committee had discussed membership of the Shropshire Council Local Government Pension Scheme for the Clerk. The internal auditor had recommended the Council and Clerk explore alternative options. The Clerk advised she had submitted a draft report to the Finance Committee. An actuarial report would have to be produced to calculate the annual percentage contribution. The average is 18.4%, however, when calculated this may be lower or higher. Should the Council decide not to join it would be liable for the cost of the report which ranged from £2,500 to £4,000. The Clerk advised that as she has a vested interest she should not be involved in the process. Given the potential financial implications the Council may be subject to, The Clerk recommended seeking financial advice from an expert. Cllr Mike Weston suggested the Council contribute the 18.4% contribution to a pension fund. Cllr Peter Richardson advised the national scheme which people opt out of is (NEST).

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED for the Council to seek a Pension Consultant to provide advice regarding a pension for the Clerk.

1881 Grounds Maintenance Contract

a) Members **NOTED** the tenders received for the three year Grounds Maintenance Contract for 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2026.

b) Cllr Peter Richardson advised members that the submitted tenders for the three year Grounds Maintenance Contract (1 January 2024 to 31 December 2026) had been opened in the presence of two councillors, himself, and Cllr Bob Kimber. Only one tender was received from Liam Royce - Garden & Property Maintenance.

This was extremely competitive (Up to a charge of £5,920) and given the excellent work undertaken during the current contract recommended him as the preferred supplier.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED to award the three year Grounds Maintenance Contract covering the period 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2026 to Liam Royce of Garden & Property Maintenance

1882 Planning Enforcement

There were no Planning Enforcement cases reported.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at 8.26 pm

Signed: _____
Chairman

Date: _____