

OXBOROUGH PARISH COUNCIL

2023/6
MINUTES

ORDINARY MEETING held at the Village Hall, Oxborough
Wednesday 15 March 2023, starting at 7.30pm

PRESENT:	Simon Willies	Chair
	Bernie Chapman	Vice Chair
	Graham Allison	Councillor
	Jackie Lambert	Councillor
	Ian Monson	Councillor
	Mike Nairn	Breckland Council Councillor
	Fabian Eagle	Norfolk County Council Councillor

9 Members of the Public

Before the meeting began, the Chair issued the usual reminder for everyone to keep comments relevant and be respectful of those in attendance. He added that on behalf of the Parish Council he wanted to express thanks to Councillor Mike Nairn, who had been the Breckland District Councillor for many years but had recently taken the decision to not stand for re-election for the Bedingfeld Ward on 4 May.

Open Forum (questions regarding the Agenda)

Mr. David Hotchkin questioned item number 15, saying he could not understand why the PC persisted in doing NCC Highways business, as only they have the authority concerning parking permission. The Chair responded that there had been an interest in the issue, which is why it was included on the agenda. Ms. Jo Edgington asked a question concerning item number 14, about whether the herbicide used on the verges is wildlife friendly. The Chair responded that the same treatment had been used since the very start, with no apparent ill effect. Mr. Andrew Le Clercq asked why the matter of the swift tower was not included on the agenda and the Chair agreed that this was an oversight. Cllr Allison requested a copy of the documents being used in the meeting - the clerk passed him a pack.

1. Apologies for absence

None.

2. Declarations of Interest

None.

3. Declarations of recording and social media use

None

4. To approve the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held 18 January 2023

The draft Minutes had been circulated and displayed on the Notice Board (and PC website). Cllr Monson proposed that the minutes should be accepted, seconded by Cllr Chapman - all in favour- the minutes were signed by the Chair.

5. Matters arising

a. Cllr Willies asked Andrew Le Clercq if there had been any progress made concerning re-establishing a hibernaculum - not yet.

b. The Chair thanked Cllr Fabian Eagle for awarding Oxborough with a swift tower and although it was not on the agenda, he asked him to speak about it. Cllr Eagle advised that the tower measures 5m and that he will organise for a contractor to install it into a grassy location (secured into ground with screws) so the PC would need to agree on the positioning. The clerk would mark this on a google map and email Cllr Eagle as soon as possible, as ideally the swift tower should be erected by the end of March. If the PC think that after a few years it is necessary to relocate it, that is fine. Cllr Lambert asked him where swifts would prefer to nest and he said close to their colony; although the birds have always relied on residential buildings to nest and breed the population has declined in recent years. Cllr Allison asked if the birds should be undisturbed, and Cllr Fabian suggested that they prefer open space to enable easy access to their nests. The Chair asked Councillors to consider all of this and let the clerk know about their suggestion for a possible location as soon as possible.

6. District Councilors Report

Cllr Nairn told the council that if people had not yet received the alternative fuel payment, that they should check the link on the BC Facebook page. He confirmed that he has asked if Oxborough and local villages could be added to the mobile food store which has proved very popular. BC has scored well in a recent satisfaction survey for the east of England. The Budget was set, and council tax bills should be issued to householders this week - with a 4.99% increase. There is still time to access the pot of money for Inspiring Communities schemes, just check online. And the District Council is currently recruiting for various roles at the Dereham and Thetford offices. The Chair thanked him for his report. Cllr Monson expressed his sadness at his departure but had a few questions. He asked how the food bank had been funded: a combination of support from Norfolk Community Foundation, Morrisons supermarket and BC grant funding. He pointed out that there is a lot of rubbish dumped on the verges of the main roads throughout the county, notably the A47 at Fransham and asked who is responsible for the cleanup. At this point Cllr Eagle answered as although Highways are responsible for the roads, it is Highways England who must handle the problem. Cllr Nairn agreed, adding that the same is happening on A134 and A10, in fact all over, and there is a campaign for people to submit dashcam evidence plus a push to increase the current fine of £400.

7. County Councillors Report

Cllr Eagle advised that the council tax had been increased by 4.99%, adding that £1.4 billion is spent on adult and children social care. Devolution plans are unfolding, and the consultation remains open until 20 March - he urged everyone to make their views known (he had brought along to the meeting a number of copies for villagers to read and complete). An infrastructure fund is being used to create new businesses and projects throughout the county. There is a creative digital media centre on the high street in Watton (which will improve the footfall of the town and contribute to preventing the further brain drain from Norfolk) and he added that the gaming industry generates more income than film. The Chair thanked him for his report. Cllr Monson asked his opinion on the issue of electing a mayor. He responded that he is in favour but that he sees potential problems which need fixing, as creating a new tier in government will cause challenges, both positive and negative. Cllr Willies suggested that the large sum of money on offer would be the true incentive and Cllr Eagle agreed that the additional £20m per year for the next 30 years was a prime factor.

The Chair once again thanked both Councillors for their reports and fielding questions, and they both took their leave of the meeting at 8.08pm.

8. Planning - motion to consider whether the PC should respond to any of the planning applications, and if so, what to respond

1. TRE/2023/0061/TCA, Hall Farmhouse, Walnut tree felling, due to proximity to neighbours building and septic tank, Miles Griffin.

9. Finance

a) To receive bank balance and reconciliation.

The Councillors considered the statement (Appendix A) and Cllr Monson proposed to accept the reconciliation, seconded by Cllr Lambert, all in agreement.

b. To consider authorisation of payments and to sign cheques:

Payment:

1. TSB bank fees -£10
2. Oxborough Village Hall- annual hire fees £78 (13 hours x £6)
3. CGM- hedge cutting -£326.39 plus VAT
4. Clerk's salary £1430 (£1144 nett plus £286 Tax)
5. Clerk's expenses £173.94
6. Ewing Accounting Services invoice - £66 plus VAT

Receipts: None.

The payments were reviewed and cheques signed by Cllr Willies and Cllr Monson.

10. Correspondence Received

- a) Norfolk Police (see website)
- b) NCC (see website)

1. Pai Masendu, Business Development Officer, enquire about the potential to advertise Adult learning courses in Oxborough and surrounding areas in the Parish magazine or newsletter. **Councillors agreed that this could be of**

benefit to the village, and the Chair suggested promoting any courses offered on the village website, Facebook page and village newsletter.

c) Breckland Council:

1. Email message from Mike Nairn, Member for Bedingfield Ward and Chairman: 'I am writing to advise you that I will not be standing for re-election for the Bedingfield Ward on the 4 May 2023. I feel that at the age of 72 going on 73 that it is time to call it a day and make way for younger candidates.' Cllrs agreed that a letter of thanks should be sent to Mr. Nairn, bearing in mind just how long he had been the District Councillor for Oxborough. Clerk will action.

2. Parish Council Elections May 4, 2023: Publication of Notice of Election - 24 March 2023. Completed Nomination papers must be delivered by hand to the Returning Officer at the main Breckland Council Offices in Dereham. It is an individual's responsibility to ensure that their nomination paper is received by the deadline - 4 April at 4pm, 2023. (Nominations close - Please note that any Nomination Papers received after this time will be rejected). Publication of Statement of Persons Nominated 5 April 2023 (a copy will be sent to clerk by email on 5 April 2023). Election Day is 4 May 2023 (7am to 10pm). It is worth pointing out to your members and any prospective candidates that all three forms: 1a Nomination Paper, 1b Home Address form & 1c Candidates consent to nomination MUST be returned by the close of nominations otherwise the nomination will be rejected. Please also note that all the document pack should be returned including the sections relating to the relevant legislation (Pg 10 -13 of the Nomination Pack).

3. Breckland Design Guide: This work follows on from the Breckland Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment which was completed last year and is part of the process described in the National Model Design Code. The Design Guide will become a Supplementary Planning Document "The Breckland District Design Guide" as well as inform the update of the Local Plan. Input from Breckland communities is essential to the success of this piece of work and we would like to invite you to complete a simple survey. The attached information pack provides further information about the project.

d) Email from Charles Howard-Vyse concerning (i) the BC match- funding available for coronation flagpole: 'think this is a splendid initiative and suggest the village hall environs ...outside the Church...definitely contribute cash to such a campaign' and (ii) the matter of the muddy condition of The Green: 'part of the problem is the amount of leaves that fall from the overhanging sycamores...NCC would agree to remove the trees of the overhanging boughs that contribute to the issue...landowner permission would be freely given for such a pruning'. This email was received too late to include in the meeting held 18 January but was used in the discussions of these matters.

e) Rural Services Network: The purpose of the survey is to understand more about rural household budgets at, what is, a very difficult time for many. Results from the survey will help us to engage more effectively with Government Departments, MPs and other policy makers.
https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/Rural_Households_Cost-of-Living

f) Email letter of thanks from PCC Church Warden, Julie Wood, for the annual donation made to St. John the Evangelist church.

g) Age UK Norfolk - email from CEO requesting a donation (see website)

h) CGM quote for grass cutting (Spring 2023 onwards)- £108 nett per cut (17 cuts) plus £54 nett per herbicide treatment (x2). Clerk pushed back immediately, questioning how the charge could be tripled. Second quote received for £100 per cut and £50 per herbicide treatment = £1600 plus VAT.

i) Clerk sent RFQ to <https://www.countrywidegrounds.com/> for grass cutting quote. £2610 plus VAT.

j) Clerk sent RFQ to info@kewgrasscare.co.uk for grass cutting quote. £2760 plus VAT.

k) Email from Cllr Fabian Eagle: I have decided that Oxborough will have one of the Swift Towers. Which I hope the parish will accept. A location will be needed and one that will be attractive to the future occupiers as well. Hopefully it will be erected at the end of March.

l) Email from Wendy Baker enquiring about access to Oxburgh Woods (nature reserve near White Bridge) - clerk requested information from the Councillors: Ian Monson thought that Tony Cousins and his son had opened them up to the public in a limited way but since then, they have been owned by one or two other people and he did not think they are so amenable.

m) Meeting held between NT staff (Estate Manager, Eloise Balcombe and Donna Baldwin, General Manager) and Cllrs Ian Monson and Jackie Lambert, with the clerk present, to have informal initial discussion following the PCC request for burial land to be made available. The NT has been using this area for car parking since 1987.

n) Mrs. Jackie Palmer-Hibbert requested to hire the green for a Car Boot Sale in July.

11. Highways

1. Temporary Traffic Regulation Order (STRO7797) affecting the East End from 685m west of its junction with Watermill Lane for 20m westwards in the PARISH OF GOODERSTONE to facilitate Anglian Water new connection

works. The road will be temporarily closed (except for access) from 21-23 February 2023 for the duration of the works expected to be about 3 days within the period.

2.TTRO for C42 Foulton to Didlington Road / junction with Beckett End, for Openreach, 9-10 Feb

12. Consider the potential of future burial ground as requested by the PCC

The Chair asked Mr. Charles Ashley, PCC Church Warden, to put forward his point of view on the matter. He started with saying how he had emailed the clerk (as follows): 'We may have between 10 and 20 spaces left (depending on how it is assessed), so it could be anywhere between say 2 and 5 years before we hit crisis point. It would be wise to plan ahead so we can consider what other steps are required such as planning consent and boundary treatment (hedge, fence or wall), so it would be helpful to have a firm date to work towards. However, you would no doubt wish to give the Trust reasonable notice for them to reorganise their parking arrangements, so the winter months are probably best for this'.

Cllr Allison had been carefully reviewing the historic documents and informed the council of the following information. The land in question had been purchased in 1951, without any covenant attached and for no special purpose/use. In 1983 the National Trust asked to purchase or buy the land and the lease agreement was completed in 1987, which included covenants: in the event of cancelling the lease, to reinstate the boundary treatment and to pay the annual rent in advance, within 21 days of 6 May. Unfortunately over the years, payment had been made late over and over again, so that the rent is now being paid in arrears. The lease was informally extended in 1997 and then subsequently every 10 years. In addition, the agreed incremental increase in the payments has not been in line with the original contract. The Chair suggested that as the National Trust had continued to pay an annual amount, this implied consent to the contract, whether expired or not. Cllr Allison added that he had located a letter from a solicitor which mentioned an easement (right of way) over the land - Councillors discussed this briefly, commenting that this easement had not appeared to have been enforced during the time of the lease. Cllr Allison continued with his summary, that the land had never been consecrated, that the PC should be aware that planning permission would be required for the land to be used as a burial ground, that the land could only be sold as agricultural land, and that the Environment Agency (EA) would need to be consulted concerning the water table level and other related matters. He had made enquiries with the EA and been advised that the cost would be £2708.

Cllr Monson asked the clerk to read out her report on the meeting held between the NT and OPC on 23 Feb:

'Firstly, ideally the NT would prefer to retain the area for car parking but appreciate that the PCC has a need for additional burial ground. It was recalled (by PC Councillors) how the area of land had been bounded by a chain link fence with posts, and that once the lease was agreed, the area was marked with flagstones. At this point, Louise posed the possibility of the NT purchasing the land from the PC. Cllr Monson suggested that maybe just a portion of the land would be sufficient for the Church needs, as after approximately 70 years, burial sites can be 're-used' (older headstones removed and placed onto a designated area). Cllr Jackie Lambert agreed, mentioning other local Churchyards (e.g. Gooderstone) which had carried out this practise. Louise pointed out that the NT were in the process of looking ahead (3-5 years) to making changes to the car park (possibly including hard standing as areas of the existing car park are seasonal - water logged at certain times) so the NT would not be keen to spend money on a wall, rather favouring less expensive boundary solution. It was mentioned that there is a covenant on the land, but that no one present was aware of the details or possible implications'. Eloise Balcombe (Estate Manager) responded as follows:

'As discussed, losing this area of land would have a large impact on our car parking arrangements, therefore we would be interested in exploring the options available to enable our continued occupation whether that be through a purchase or further lease over whole or part. Just to confirm re. the wall, (apologies if I wasn't clear), I was more acknowledging the expense of walls rather than saying we would be opposed to the installation of an additional wall. Perhaps once we have a clearer picture on the timescales and likely future of this land we can discuss practicalities such as this in further detail'.

Mr. Ashley was asked for his further comment and he said that as the Church is Grade 1 listed, planning permission would definitely be required, as would applying for a Faculty to carry out any movement of headstones which would be very unlikely granted seeing as how so many date back to the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. There are a number of legal issues to consider including the realistic possibility of fines being imposed. There is the question of access between the existing and proposed new burial sites and he suggested that a yew hedge might provide an attractive boundary with an effective footpath to allow safe access for users. A lot of forward planning is going to be required.

Councillors discussed the reports, Cllr Chapman noting that Cllr Allison had made a good point concerning the EA and that probably the first course of action would be to determine the level of the water table, to see if the area would be viable as a burial ground. Cllr Allison pointed out that the car parking area is quite squelchy which might

indicate a low water table level. The Chair asked who would pick up this initial cost and Mr. Ashley suggested that first an informal discussion with the Planning Department should be had to determine whether the information concerning the water table was required. Cllr Monson added that as the PC own the land, that the PC should have this discussion and that probably the ground would comprise chalk; the current agricultural cost of a ¼ acre of land is around £2500. Cllr Chapman suggested that Mr. Ashley should be kept informed at all stages. Cllr Monson proposed that the PC consult with the Planning Authority to see if the land is suitable for a graveyard. This was seconded by Cllr Lambert, all in favour.

13. MOTION TO REVIEW POLICY DOCUMENTS:

A. RISK ASSESSMENT (REV G)

The Chair asked that the section 'Banking' needs to be updated to indicate that now there are 4 Councillors as well as the clerk who are signatories. **Updated to Rev H.**

B. FINANCIAL REGULATIONS (REV C) No Change.

C. STATEMENT OF INTERNAL CONTROL AND ANNUAL REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNAL CONTROL (REV B)

The Chair asked for punctuation changes to section 'Payment Controls' and the word 'Ladywell' to be removed from Payroll Controls. **Updated to Rev C.**

14. Motion to consider 3 x grass cutting quotes and select contractor

CGM (£100 per cut and £50 per herbicide treatment) total £1600 plus VAT, Countrywide Grounds total £2610 plus VAT and Kew Grass Care total £2760 plus VAT. Cllr Lambert observed how the last two quotes were much more than the CGM quote and Cllr Allison pointed out that the number of cuts carried out must depend on the growing conditions (although he added that CGM even cut the grass during last year's drought) and that he was disappointed at the significant increase in price, as originally OPC had been the first customer of CGM, which had been reflected in the special price charged over the years. Cllr Chapman pointed out that it made uneconomical sense for CGM to charge just £38 per cut. Cllr Monson proposed to accept the quote from CGM, seconded by Cllr Lambert, 4 in favour and 1 abstention, motion passed. The Chair suggested that 15 cuts might be too much, asking the clerk to enquire whether it would be possible to reduce the number of occasions. And Cllr Allison noted that the grass should be retained short for the sake of dog walkers plus the grass should be cut ahead of the dog show (as in the previous years).

15. Review the situation of the increasing number of vehicles regularly parking on the Pound

Cllr Chapman began with saying that the PC cannot prevent vehicles from being parked on the Pound, but he agreed that the volume of cars parked has increased. Cllr Monson observed that Mr. Hotchkin's comments during the Open Forum were correct, but that he had not suggested parking should be banned somehow, only that the space is an attractive area at the centre of the village and that perhaps visitors might be deterred from parking all over it and spoiling the view. Cllr Lambert agreed with these comments, adding that a similar spot in Cockley Cley is free from parking because of the small signs which ask for no parking. Cllr Chapman observed that pub employees take up customer parking spaces and perhaps staff might chose to park at the rear of the pub (near the chalets). Cllr Monson asked if a further sign could be placed on the village green railings to encourage visitors to park at the village hall and Cllr Allison reminded the council how it had previously been suggested to the pub that their staff park in this alternative location, but that none were willing to do this as it would mean walking a distance in the dark at the end of the evening.

16. To consider the purchase of personalised mugs to commemorate the coronation of King Charles III

The minimum purchase is 36 mugs (£6.83 per mug) which would be given freely to Oxborough children. Cllr Monson suggested that maybe the PC ought to purchase the next quantity (72) and sell the surplus to offset the costs. But it was agreed that there would unlikely be sufficient interest in paying for the mugs, and bearing in mind the restraints of the budget, the consensus was to abandon this idea.

17. Village Hall Report by Susan Hernandez (PC representative)

Extremely hard work carried out by the Chair, Cathy Warnock and Secretary, Julie Wood has been rewarded recently with the successful grant award of £9,239 from the National Lottery. This money will be used to renovate the lobby area and the work will be undertaken over the next few months. A fundraising evening in support of the recent devastating earthquakes in Turkey and Syria will take place at the village hall on 21 March,

which will comprise a Mexican supper and a game of Mexican Dominoes. With tickets selling at £10 each, a raffle and a bar, it is hoped that £500 will be raised. The plans to hold a Picnic on the Green to celebrate the coronation of King Charles III have been almost finalised so please place a note in your diaries for Monday 8 May, 12noon-4pm and join in the fun & live music.

18. A.O.B.

The Chair asked the clerk to confirm that she had requested each village group to prepare a report for presentation at the Parish Meeting set for 19 April - this had been done. Mrs. Bar Pritchard had passed over a notice concerning consultation meetings being held in Swaffham to promote the 'Get Swaffham Swimming' campaign (the build of a swimming pool) - The Chair relayed this information and the clerk confirmed that the poster would be displayed on the Notice Board.

Cllr Monson advised the council that after 40 years of service as a Councillor in Oxborough, he considered that he had done enough and was pleased to announce that he would retire, and not stand for re-election in May. The Chair thanked him for his long years of service and contribution to not only Oxborough, but to the District and County Council. Cllr Monson concluded with 'you don't always win much, but you try'.

Public participation

19. To receive questions, information or suggested items for consideration at the next meeting

None.

The Chair thanked everyone for their contributions and bid all, goodnight. The meeting closed at 9.23pm

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APPENDIX A	Meeting 15 March 2023				
Report: Accounts reported against the budget quarterly					
IAW Statement of Internal Control and Annual Review of Effectiveness of Internal Control (section Financial Reporting)					
BUDGET 2022/23	Budget	Actual	Outstanding		
Estimated Gross Payments					
Accountants	25.00	0.00	25.00		
Training	0.00	0.00	0.00		
Clerk's wages	1430.00	0.00	1430.00		
Clerk's expenses	224.00	0.00	224.00		
HMRC	0.00	0.00	0.00		
CGM (grass maintenance - 15 cuts plus herbicide)	676.00	769.45			
Hedge maintenance (1 cut) (see Note 2)	334.64	0.00	344.68		
RoSpa	86.40	88.20			
St. John the Evangelist donation	175.00	175.00	0.00		
Royal British Legion donation	30.00	30.00	0.00		
Insurance	162.21	162.21	0.00		
Insurance for playground (see note 1)	164.51	160.78	0.00		
Village Hall Hire/ Zoom meeting	84.00	0.00	84.00		
Bank charges	60.00	60.00	0.00		
War memorial cleaning	0.00	0.00	0.00		
Village Green bench	380.00	0.00	380.00		
External Auditors	0.00	240.00			
	3831.76	1685.64	2487.68		
Estimated Receipts					
Village Green Hire	90.00	160.00			
National Trust Lease	200.00	200.00			
Precept	3292.00	3292.00			
VAT Refund	170.00	2165.09			
Donation towards the Beech tree project	0.00	750.00			
	3752.00	5817.09			
Bank Reconciliation					
Bank Balance b/f	6798.97		3760.64	Estimated	
Add Receipts:				Balance end	
				of financial	
sub-total	0.00			year 2022/23	
Less Payments:					
Bank charges (Dec 2022 / Jan 2023)	10.00				
St. John the Evangelist donation	175.00				
CGM grass cutting	365.65				
sub-total	550.65				
Bank Balance @ 1 March 2023	6248.32				
Note 1: There was an additional insurance for the playground items/fencing: £164.51 which was paid by a villager. The Budget has been updated to include this for the current year.					
Note 2: Hedge cutting quote £326.39 plus VAT					