

OXBOROUGH PARISH COUNCIL

2024/5 MINUTES

Ordinary Meeting held at the Village Hall, Oxborough
Wednesday 13 September 2023, starting at 7.30pm

PRESENT:	David Hotchkin	Chair
	Simon Willies	Vice Chair
	Graham Allison	Councillor
	Martyn Cockerill	Councillor

11 Members of the Public

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and before starting with the open forum he spoke for a time about Mr. Ian Monson, recently retired Councillor of Oxborough, who served for 40 years, during which time he was also the County Councillor, the District Councillor and a long-standing committee member of the village hall. Cllr Hotchkin recalled how he had put on barn dances at his Caldecote Farm, allowed his field to be used as a cricket field for many years, the same field also used on bonfire nights, his grazing field (now the village green) to be used for numerous village fairs and similar events, frequent grass cutting, tree maintenance and hedge cutting all generously given for free. The clerk presented him with a stained-glass of a snowy owl (produced by Helen Taylor) finished with an inscription, a bottle of prosecco and a John Lewis voucher. Mr. Monson acknowledged the Chair's thoughtful words and expressed his thanks for the gifts.

Open Forum (questions regarding the Agenda)

Concerning Agenda item 8b.iii Mr. Dave Watkins strongly objected to the suggestion that the PC would pay the outstanding balance on old invoices, until a sufficiently detailed analysis had been carried out, questioning how other villages had managed the old telephone boxes, why BT had not carried out a full disconnection at the point the PC took over ownership, whether the electric supply had been an option, urging the PC to go to appeal to a higher authority in NPower (CEO) to ask for the charges to be waived, to copy in Ofgem in all communications and to request advice from Ofgem. He offered to carry out the detailed analysis. Cllr Allison asked the Chair if he could respond to the questions straight away or during the agenda item, adding that he had been asked to renovate a number of other village phone boxes at the time. Mrs. Willies spoke about her time working in the Chairman's office at British Gas, and she fully supported Mr. Watkins' suggestion to contact the top person at NPower. Concerning Agenda item 7 (point f) Mrs. Cate Tomlinson demanded the Chair apologise for his comment made about her husband, Mr. Tristan Tomlinson, which has been minuted and placed in the public domain following the meeting held 12 July. After a few exchanges, the Chair said that he had not intended to cause offence and he apologized, adding that he would write him a letter of apology which would be placed on the PC website.

1. Apologies for absence

Cllr Lambert was too unwell to attend and Mr. Mike Nairn, former Breckland District Councillor had also made apologies for unattendance, as although he had been invited to the meeting to receive thank-you gifts on his recent retirement, he had just become unwell with a heavy cold.

2. Declarations of Interest

None

3. Declarations of recording and social media use

None

4. To approve the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held 12 July 2023

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

5. Matters arising

- i. Cllr Willies asked the clerk whether there was a date yet for when the mobile food store would be visiting Gooderstone - not yet.
- ii. Cllr Willies reported that the Road Safety Group had been formed with just 3 members and that no meeting had been set, and although he had requested resources including the children 'bin stickers' from NCC Councillor Fabian Eagle he had not received a response. The Chair confirmed that he had handed over the management of the SAM2 sign to Cllr Willies who had already replaced the batteries.
- iii. Cllr Willies expressed his concern that the insurance on the SAM2 sign might be deficient (as the sum assured is £3150, the original purchase price). The clerk was instructed to contact Westcotec to request a quote for a replacement unit and in the meantime contact the insurers to discuss the issue.
- iv. The Chair spoke about the recent installation of the new park benches, with thanks to the Hartley and Lambert families for the purchases, and a big thanks to Cllr Cockerill for so speedily completing the job.
- v. Cllr Willies asked whether the question of accepting Mr. Watkins offer to take on the Npower/E.on issue should be discussed at this point or at the agenda item: it was agreed to wait until Accounts.

6. Planning Matters

- a) TRE/2023/0210/TCA Oxburgh Hall: Dead Cherry & Ash Tree are within falling distance of the internal footpath - PA approved
- b) 3DC/2023/0206/DOC Excavation Site Oxborough Road PE33 9QH (applicant Mr Alan Boswell), proposal Discharge of Conditions 3,4,5,10 & 11 on 3PL/2021/0248/F. Status- undecided
- c) The Chair spoke about a very recent application from Anglian Water, which has already been rubber-stamped (following on from the ongoing expansion of the water supply in the area).
- d) The Chair mentioned that the PC had just the day before applied to have the chestnut tree (closest to the bus-stop end of the village green) taken down due to disease. Cllr Allison asked if the entire tree would be removed and the Chair confirmed this, adding that a replacement tree would be planted.

7. Correspondence Received

- a) Norfolk Police: see website
- b) NCC: see website
- c. Breckland Council: see website
 1. Email from Gabriella Crittenden (Community Enabler) - 'share some information about the work we are doing across Breckland Communities, how we can support your Parish, & our upcoming Mental Health training opportunities' - request to attend as part of the agenda. **Cllr Willies suggested this would be a good idea and that it would be good to have it as an Agenda item at the next meeting. All other Councillors agreed.**
 2. Breckland Council are seeking your views on their draft Local Validation List (LVL) - go to the link: <https://www.breckland.gov.uk/planning/local-validation-list>
- d. CGM: We are writing to let you know the exciting news that, as of the 4 May 2023, CGM Group (East Anglia) Ltd has been acquired by Nurture Landscapes Limited and is now part of The Nurture Group, for more details please see letter attached. **Cllr Willies asked if anything was known about this company and Cllr Cockerill pointed out that one of the original family members of CGM would be working in the new company, suggesting that Oxborough would continue to receive a reliable service.**
- e. Npower:
 1. "...please note that the invoices are still due and payable, regardless of the invoices not being received, I cannot comment on why the invoices have never reached you, however these have since been sent across to you via email, so they are still correct and payable. I will update the account to confirm the payment for £70.35, however we will still require payment for the old Eon invoices also".
 2. Npower notification of increased price of tariff from 1 Sept 2023 onwards (from 33.80p/kWh to 50.188p/kWh)
- f. Email from Mr. Tristan Tomlinson: "Following Cllr Hotchkin's suggestion that I would be stupid enough to want to take the SAM2 sign apart, I hereby rescind my offer to help with the sign. I am deeply offended by Cllr Hotchkin's suggestion which is now a matter of public record".
- g. Burial Ground (Environment Agency recommend that the PC obtain the services of a suitably qualified person to assist in preparation of the applications for planning and permitting applications for cemetery developments):

	Tier 1 Fees (excl. VAT) Quotes valid 3 months.	TOTAL
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McCloy Consulting	Site Investigation design review and 1-day supervision	£500	Water Feature Survey	£450	Hydrogeological Risk Assessment Report	£1550	£2500
1. OPC to provide the use of an excavator 2. £400-£700 for travel and subsistence. 3. Hard copy of report £25.							
TGMS Ltd	To commission a BGS Detailed Geological Assessment Report	£494	Tier 1 risk assessment report and liaison with the Environment Agency			£1155	£1650
1. No additional fees indicated in quote							
The CDS Group	EA preliminary survey	Free	T1 fee (approx)	£1900	EA review	£800	£2700
If the EA data looks good, we would advise a pre-app where the likes of Historic England would be consulted. To protect against significant cost which could be forthcoming with archaeology investigations, but again before spending money on committing yourself to planning these items need to be addressed step by step early doors							
Harrison Design Development Ltd	Tier 1 groundwater survey and some trial pits	£1200 for a site visit					
Smith Grant	Site Inspection + 1 day trial pitting	£1455	T1	£1000	Project management & Purchase of Groundsure environmental report	£445	£2900

8. Accounts

a. To receive bank balance and reconciliation

The councillors considered budget vs. actual (Appendix A), and the clerk asked for any questions: Cllr Willies pointed out that the payments for E.on electric bills and Westcotec maintenance check should be added to the Budget plus the third column should be renamed variance. **The clerk will make these amendments.** Cllr Allison noted that the hedge cutting figure in the Budget is not correct and the clerk agreed but that this budget figure would be exceeded by the anticipated actual cost. Cllr Allison queried the budget figure for grass cutting, as this had already been exceeded. The clerk confirmed that each cut is £100 plus VAT and that the significant increase had not been anticipated at the time the budget was set. Cllr Willies proposed to receive the accounts, seconded by Cllr Hotchkin, all in favour.

b. To consider authorisation of payments and to sign cheques

a) Payments

TSB standing bank monthly bank charge of £5.

i. NALC membership £82.92

ii. Royal British Legion donation £30

The Chair asked the council to consider the payments listed above and he proposed that the payments should be made, which was seconded by Cllr Cockerill, all in favour. The clerk pointed out that the poppy wreath had not yet been received, so the cheque would remain undated in the meantime.

iii. E.on outstanding balance £219.99

A discussion followed on, with each Councillor stating their own position on the question of paying, or not paying, the outstanding balance. The consensus was that no payment should be made and that the offer made by Mr. Watkins should be accepted. The debt collector letter (Sonex3), received 16 June 2023, had not yet been followed up by the company and to clarify, there is no deadline for payment. The Chair proposed that the outstanding balance should not be paid, seconded by Cllr Allison, all in favour. The clerk will supply all paperwork to Mr. Watkins.

b) Receipts

None. The clerk advised the council that she had recently submitted a VAT return for £398.90.

9. Highways

a) ENQ900232720 - Swaffham Road, Road markings - response from Hannah Denney, Area Technician: I have discussed the issue of the faded 'SLOW' road markings with the sector team, it has been previously agreed these markings would no longer be installed in 30 MPH speed limit areas. Other Parishes have paid to have these put in again from their own budget. **Cllr Willies suggested that the PC find out how much this would cost; the clerk will make an enquiry.**

b) ENQ900232721 - Swaffham Road, Verges - Update from Hannah Denney: The verge cutting schedule has begun for this year, our teams are going out over the coming weeks if they have not already attended this site.

c) ENQ900238607 - verges on Ferry Road very overgrown (email received from Karen Callard - Bramble Cottage - advising the PC of this situation). New Status: We have assessed that the defect does not currently meet our intervention criteria. We will continue to monitor as part of normal scheduled inspections. **Cllr Willies queried whether any inspection was actually carried out and Cllr Hotchkin confirmed this, saying that aggregate is added to the surface and the verges trimmed occasionally. Cllr Cockerill spoke about how, over the years, the local residents had done what they could to maintain the appearance of the road verges.**

10. Report from PC representative to the Village Hall Committee

The BBQ event held during August was a busy and successful affair, the weather being extremely kind and since then, a packed Mexican Dominoes evening has raised a further £150 towards the village hall funds; the next date is 1 November, entry fee £5 which includes complimentary chips & dips. The next Quiz night will be a Halloween Special, on 25 October. Planning for the Christmas Fair is still in the early stages but please reserve the afternoon of Saturday 18 November to come along to this very festive event. And finally, the Annual Village Breakfast will be held on Sunday 26 November, more details to follow soon including how to buy your tickets.

11. To consider allowing Councillors 7 days after the receipt of the draft minutes to suggest amendments before publication.

Cllr Willies thought this a good idea, but that draft minutes must be published as these belonged in the public domain. Cllr Allison suggested that the wording should be amended to 'up to 7 days...' and Cllr Cockerill agreed, although he thought 3-4 days should be sufficient. The clerk added that the draft minutes were typically completed within just a few days following the meeting and Cllr Willies suggested the maximum number of days should be 5. So, the Chair amended the proposal to read 'allowing Councillors up to 5 days after receipt of the draft minutes to suggest amendment before publication', this was seconded by Cllr Cockerill, all in favour.

12. To consider giving a key to the padlocks on the green for the use of the village hall committee.

Cllr Hotchkin thought this would be a good idea as the clerk is not always available, but Cllr Allison thought that as the need would only arise when the green was needed for additional parking, it would not be necessary for a key to be held by the VH as he also has a set. Cllr Cockerill thought it might be a good idea to supply the VH with a key, but there should be an agreement put into place concerning parking as it would be unacceptable to see the village green filled with randomly parked vehicles and also the question of parking at own risk. Cllr Allison added that there would be a need to liaise between the VH and PC to avoid any potential clashes of booking, Cllr Willies concluding that in which circumstance there would be an obvious reason to open the village green for parking. The clerk advised that as per the last meeting, she had met with the village hall committee (of which she is a trustee) to discuss the possibility of permitting parking on the green to accommodate any overflow parking requirements when events are being held at the village hall. It was suggested that an area would be roped off, extending from the village hall corner (at the beech monolith, but not on the area immediately closest as this area should be kept clear of parked vehicles), run parallel to the hedge then up to the chestnut tree to the right of Sunnyside - this would accommodate approximately 20 cars. A fee of £15 would be charged by the PC (i.e. separate agreement between the village hall hirer and the PC) for non-commercial bookings at the village hall. Commercial booking fee would be £30 for the day. The Chair made the proposal to giving a key to the padlocks on the green for the use of the village hall committee, but there was no second, so he withdrew the proposal.

13. Discuss the status of the burial ground

The Chair had reviewed all the quotes received for exploratory works to be carried out on the area of land, and had concluded that the PC not only had insufficient funds to meet the costs, but that there is a problem concerning access between the current burial ground and the proposed extension, that diggers would need access over NT land, and if planning approval is received then a new gateway would be needed. Cllr Allison had printed off an attachment from one of the contractors (Smith Grant) which indicated a red line around an area of land which far exceeded the actual plot of land in question (clerk note: this is a mistake made by the contractor - misinterpreting the diagram supplied in the initial tender). Cllr Willies reminded the council that the PCC should

be approached to discuss the issue further. Cllr Cockerill asked if the PCC understood that the land was purchased for their use, but that the PC are not obliged to bear the cost only to make the land available. Cllr Allison stated that there is a preservation order on the existing stone wall which currently marks the boundary of the burial ground. He queried whether there is a current contract between the PC and the NT for the rental agreement. The clerk advised that it had expired some years ago and that she simply requests a purchase order from Oxburgh Hall (for the rent total which the PC discusses and approves from time to time) and then raises an invoice against this. The Chair had information from HMRC concerning the question of increasing burial ground area, which is that the local council has no duty to do this. After a little more discussion, it was agreed that the PC should approach the PCC with the following points included: Access through the existing stone wall; cost of surveys which should be borne by the PCC; application for change of use; application for planning permission; possible charge to the PCC the cost of the land or no charge to the PCC for the land; share quotes received; copy in the NT with relevant communications; review historic solicitor letter which details an easement across part of the land (maybe a Right of Way); determine who owns the strip of land between verge (NCC Highways) and Oxburgh Hall.

14. To consider adding new Councillors to the TSB banking mandate

Cllr Willies proposed that Cllr Cockerill and Cllr Hotchkin should both be added to the TSB banking mandate, and this was seconded by Cllr Cockerill, all in favour. It was deemed inappropriate to include Cllr Lambert at this meeting due to her being unwell and unable to attend, but this will be considered at the next meeting.

15. To arrange a work party to take care of the trees on The Green in their best interest and that of safety to those using The Green

Cllr Cockerill had discussed this with Ian Monson and Oxborough Farms Ltd would be happy to take on this task, with the guidance of other Councillors. Cllr Hotchkin thanked him adding that he thought this type of work could be carried out in house, providing the guidelines issued by Breckland Council were observed. Cllr Allison urged that caution to protect the tree trunks should be carried out and Cllr Willies suggested the use of tree guards. Cllr Cockerill said that the work could be carried out late October/early November (when the farm duties had subsided). The Chair suggested a schedule of works - including bench inspections, tree inspections and pathway inspections and Cllr Willies asked if volunteers should be sought but Cllr Allison preferred to liaise on his own with Cllr Cockerill and he proposed that the offer from Oxborough Farms Ltd should be accepted, seconded by Cllr Hotchkin, all in favour.

16. To consider the question of hedge cutting -who cuts and the cost

Cllr Willies recalled how the last hedge cutting was carried out very late and that it would be a good idea to organise the annual cut before winter. Cllr Cockerill advised against leaving it too late as there is a risk of cutting fresh buds. Cllr Allison also said that the cut had been left far too late which resulted in excessive quantities of leaves causing a mess on the road. The clerk had so far received a quote from CGM - £450 plus VAT - which is a considerable increase on the previous year (£326.39 plus VAT). Cllr Cockerill advised a typical charge of £45 per hour for tractor & flail hedge cutting and that CGM have the necessary equipment (i.e., an extendable arm) plus they ought to be able to hand cut around the trees. Cllr Willies understood that 3 quotes are required but based on the discussions just held he would be happy to accept the CGM quote. Cllr Allison added that the previous year 3 quotes had been acquired and that they had all been very expensive compared to CGM. Cllr Cockerill agreed that CGM do a reasonable job but pointed out that the hedge had been left uncut in places the previous year and that if they carry out the job again, then an inspection should be carried out before payment is made. Cllr Willies suggested suspending Standing Orders to allow the council to accept a quote by email, but the Chair disagreed, saying that this decision must be made in full public view. Cllr Willies proposed that the clerk seek a further 2 quotes, and if they both turn out to be higher than the CGM quote, the clerk will accept the CGM quote. If this is not the case then an EGM will be called for only this purpose. Cllr Cockerill seconded this, all in favour.

Public participation

17. To receive information or suggested items for consideration at the next meeting

Mrs. Pritchard advised that there are a number of sycamore trees growing in the south hedge which would need cutting down during the hedge trimming. She also asked if the PC thought it would be prudent to contact Mr. C. Howard-Vyse concerning the working party on the green, as he had brought up this question in his email aired at the previous meeting. Cllr Allison responded saying that he would discuss this with him. Mrs. Stapleton asked if the PC agreed with the proposal concerning the overflow car parking suggested by the village hall and the Chair

responded that this must be put on the Agenda for the next meeting. Cllr Allison asked if either Ryston Runners or the Fox Terrier Rescue organization had booked the green - the clerk confirmed that both events had taken place during 2023, but that no bookings had yet been received for 2024. Cllr Willies suggested that the final bench on the green should be replaced, this would be added to the Agenda for the next meeting. Mr. A. Le Clercq informed the council that 2024 marks the 80th anniversary of D Day and Mrs. Willies suggested contacting Breckland Council to see if there is any funding available for this.

The meeting closed at 9.59pm

APPENDIX A	Meeting 13 Sept 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 2023/24	Budget	Actual	Variance		
Estimated Gross Payments					
Accountants	158.40	0.00	158.40		
Clerk's salary	1430.00	0.00	1430.00		
Clerk's expenses	165.64	0.00	165.64		
CGM (grass cutting x15 plus herbicide)	769.45	840.00	-70.55		
Hedge cutting (x1 cut)	344.68	0.00	344.68		
RoSPA annual playground inspection	88.20	94.20	-6.00		
St. John the Evangelist donation	175.00	0.00	175.00		
Royal British Legion donation	30.00	0.00	30.00		
Insurance	322.99	283.42	39.57		
Bank charges	60.00	40.00	20.00		
Village Hall Hire	84.00	0.00	84.00		
Village green bench	380.00	0.00	380.00		
Cleaning of the war memorial	546.00	0.00	546.00		
Election Costs	1000.00	0.00	1000.00		
E.on Electric	0.00	70.35	-70.35		
Westcotec maintenance check	0.00	102.00	-102.00		
	5554.36	1429.97	4124.39		
Estimated Receipts					
Village Green Hire	260.00	260.00	0.00		
National Trust Lease	200.00	0.00	200.00		
VAT refund on usual expenditure	140.00	0.00	140.00		
Precept	3358.00	1679.00	1679.00		
	3958.00	1939.00	2019.00		
Bank Reconciliation					
Bank Balance b/f	6014.51		TBA	Estimated	
<u>Add Receipts:</u>				Balance end	
				of financial	
sub-total	0.00			year 2023/24	
<u>Less Payments:</u>					
E.on electric invoices	70.35				
RoSPA annual inspection	94.20				
Community First annual insurance renewal	283.42				
CGM grass cutting	840.00				
Westcotec maintenance check	102.00				
Bank charges	5.00				
sub-total	1394.97				
Bank Balance @ 1 Sept 2023	4619.54				