

Otterford Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 9 January 2024 at 1930 hrs in Otterford Parish Hall

Present: OPC Councillors Mike Canham (Chairman), Charlie Field (Vice Chairman), Lucy Montgomery, Simon MacLeod and John Marsden, SC Councillor Henley, two parishioners and the Clerk.

Item	Detail	Action
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Community Time

Mr Godsmark attended on behalf of the Trustees of the Otterhead Estate Trust. He reported that the hydro electric equipment was now working but the leat was leaking. The annual snowdrop walk would be on 10 February. The Somerset Wildlife Trust had received a grant from the FIPL towards new fencing and hedging in the Bishopswood Meadows and Jan Hobbs Nature reserves. The Meadows were to have a new information/noticeboard.

Mr Crilly voiced his objection to the parish raising a precept. This was an item for discussion later in the meeting but his objection was noted.

Cllr Henley referred to the published list of options for cuts to/withdrawal of council services. Few would directly affect the parish, but the following were relevant:
Reduction of highways maintenance, eg gulley clearance, road sweeping, verge cutting; replacement of broken recycling boxes with bags; and closure of 5 (unspecified) recycling centres. The Council would also be looking to decapitalise, ie sell assets, and there would be some staff redundancies.

Reports from other organisations

None.

1. Apologies

None.

2. Declarations of Interest

Cllrs Montgomery and Canham are OPC-nominated (Nominative) Trustees of the Otterford Charity. Cllr Canham is Chairman of Otterford Parish Hall Committee. He is Chairman of the BHPN and is a member of the Steering Group, and of the Blackdown Hills Natural Landscapes (formerly AONB) Management Group.

3. Meeting of December 2023

3.1 The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed and signed.

3.2 Matters arising

4.1 – objection not yet sent – awaiting comments from Lisa Turner, planning officer of the Blackdown Hills National Landscapes

Clerk

5.1 – It was agreed to add one additional post at the top of the bridleway but not one at the bottom of the path because of access issues.

Clerk

5.3 –Brazier pole still in situ – field too wet to remove with a digger/tractor.

Clerk

- Clerk had sent proforma for Cllr's inspections to Cllr Montgomery

- benches still to be investigated

Clerk

- Clerk had received a quote of £1799.12 (a £200+ increase) for the playing fields grass cutting from SC. The Council agreed to accept this.

Clerk

4. Planning

4.1 No new, granted or refused applications.

5. Other matters

5.1 Projects/activities/events – update.
An updated list was circulated and noted.

5.2 Climate & The Environment Project- Update on Project Action Plan

The update was noted. No known progress re the thermal imaging camera – Clerk to check. [After-meeting note: Richard Smith had missed the first training session because of illness, but attended the second a couple of days after the meeting.]

Clerk

5.3 Local Community Network (Chard and Blackdown)

Noted the very late arrival of the minutes of the October meeting, and the need to correct Cllr Montgomery's attendance to 'core member'. Minutes do not reflect much progress since the earlier meeting, and content remains very general.

The next LCN meeting was on 17 January. Only Cllr Canham could attend, but only if he could secure a lift as he was still unable to drive.

5.4 CBO 2

Cllr Canham gave a verbal update – a number of volunteers had come forward, but it is not yet clear if these are sufficient to progress the project.

6. Correspondence

None.

7. Financial matters

7.1 3rd Quarter Summary of Receipts and Payments

Noted.

Clerk to amend to include specific reference to the Holman Clavel loan.

Clerk

7.2 2024-25 Budget and Parish Precept 2024-25

The draft budget was noted, with proviso that some figures were provisional. SC would not be agreeing their 2024-25 budget until 20 February, which made it difficult to predict what impact the cuts would have on OPC.

The Council considered whether to raise a precept. It was noted that virtually all the Council's income is from the Holman Clavel rent, and whilst this single source does pose a risk it was felt that existing reserves were sufficient to tide over for a short time if problems arose. It was agreed not to raise a precept next year.

Clerk

7.3 Monthly Financial summary – December.

Noted.

8. Other business.

Water run-off from fields above Higher Woodhayne onto Royston Road had been excessive during the rains. Clerk to mention to Highways.

Clerk

Cllr Canham had been given by Linda Gower some tapes of Somerset voices talking about life in the Blackdown Hills. He wanted to preserve these as historically important and get them converted to MP3 files so they were not lost. It was agreed to pay £20 plus some chocolates to someone who had offered to convert them.

MC

9. The next meeting of the Council will take place at 7.30pm on Tuesday 13 February 2024, in the Wright Room, Otterford Parish Hall.

Penny Hart, Clerk, January 2024