

**Minutes of the Council meeting of Lympne Parish Council
held on Wednesday 13th March 2024 at 7 pm at the
Committee Room, Lympne Village Hall Aldington Road Lympne.**

MINUTES

Present:

**Cllr A.Beales (Chair) Cllr.M.Potter Cllr.J East
Cllr. C. Yates (from 1915hrs)**

Also In attendance:

Mr J Lawrence (Parish Clerk), District Cllr Jeremy Speakman and two members of the public.

- 1. APOLOGIES. Members are reminded of the need to tender apologies with the reason for absence direct to the Clerk if they are unable to attend.**

Cllr. M . Boor

Cllr. D Burden

No other apologies received.

- 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

- a. **To declare any personal interests in items on the agenda and their nature.**
- b. **To declare any prejudicial interests in items on the agenda – any councillors with prejudicial interests must leave the room for the relevant items.**

No declarations made

- 3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING- Held on 15th February 2024**

The minute of the previous meetings were accepted by members present and signed by the chair.

- 4. QUESTIONS RECEIVED FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC- PUBLIC SESSION.**

It was agreed at this point to allow Mr Burles to speak on item 16. His full report can be read at Appendix one. In addition comments made by the chair of the parish council can be read at Appendix two. It was agreed at the end of the discussion that the parish council would be pleased to hear an update from Mr Burles after his meeting with the District Council which is due to take place on the 12th or 19th of April. The Council further commented that without having seen an official planning application that they were not in a position to make official comments at this stage and reiterated that the comments made by the chair of the council at Appendix 2 are his own personal comments.

- 5. REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE SPEAKERS**

- a. **KCC Councillor- Jenni Hawkins**

Not present

- b. **District Councillors Wing/Speakman**

Report from Cllr Speakman at appendix 3

c. KCC Warden Giles Barnard
No contact

6. CHAIRS REPORT-

**Update from the Chair on any relevant information affecting the Parish.
Summary of Written report supplied Cllr Boor who was unable to attend.**

Otterpool:

- Financing for Otterpool development is uncertain, with Homes England and private companies being considered.
- Drainage issues due to the River Stour are causing delays in development.
- Discussion about allotments site, potential early release of land, but uncertainty as it's Homes England land.

Affordable Housing:

- Concerns raised about the lack of truly affordable housing in Otterpool.
- Local Parish Council (LPC) exploring options for affordable housing within village boundaries.
- Cabinet Member Rebecca Shoob expressed interest in addressing the issue.

Solar Farm:

- Planning application imminent for Court-at-Street solar farm with battery storage.
- Concerns raised by local residents; preparation needed for response.

Otterpool Litter:

- Meeting held to address litter issue with strategic and local approaches discussed.
- Focus on human waste dangers and discussions with leasehold owners and site management.

D Day Beacon Lighting:

- Contact made with St Stephens and Castle regarding beacon lighting.
- Await response from St Stephens; Castle committed to attend meeting.

Closed Footpath:

- Footpath now open after sign removal by UK Power Networks.
- Cable issue remains unresolved with BT; temporary solution implemented.

Aggressive Dog Report:

- Aggressive dog belonging to a parent with kids at playgroup addressed; monitoring ongoing.

Playing Field Committee:

- Meeting held to plan volunteer day for field works.
- Discussion on pond and memorial bench request; potential sponsorship of picnic bench suggested.

Lympne Village Hall Committee:

- Playgroup ownership transferred to limited company; funds released to Village Hall Charity.
- Funds earmarked for child care projects; plans to extend play area discussed with LPC consultation.

7. MEMBERS REPORT-

Members who have attended meetings on behalf of the Parish Council will supply an update.

No matters raised

8. Clerks Report

No matters raised for action

9. CORRESPONDENCE AND COMMUNICATIONS

No matters raised from correspondence in circulation.

10. PLANNING-

REFERENCE	LOCATION	DETAILS	Comments
<u>24/0194/FH</u>	Oathill Barn, Aldington Road, Lympne, CT21 4LX	Change of use from commercial office to residential dwelling	No objections raised
<u>24/0250/FH/TCA</u>	Lympne Hall, The Street, Lympne, CT21 4LQ	Works to trees in a conservation area comprising of T1 Cherry south facing limb remove back to main trunk, T2 Chery Fell, T3 Yew crown reduction by 1 metre in height & lateral limbs, T4 Silver Birch crown reduction by 2 metres in height & 1.5 metres laterally, T5 Bay reduce height by 2.5 metres and trim sides.	No objections raised

11. FINANCE

a. Breakdown of expenditure/income since last meeting-

No issues raised.

b. Authorisation of Payments- Members will review the list of invoices for payment two Councillors to authorise the payments online.

See appendix 4 for list of agreed payments

c. Additional quotes for authorisation (to be advised at the time of the meeting)

No additional matters raised.

12. RATIFICATION OF DECISION TO APPLY FOR WINTER SUPPORT GRANT FOR LYMPNE LUNCH CLUB

The clerk informed members that a successful bid for £500.00 for the lunch club would be paid to the Council for transfer to the Lunch Club.

Members agreed unanimously to ratify the actions taken.

13. LITTER UPDATE-OTTERPOOL LANE

It was reported that the clearance of Otterpool Lane should be taking place at the end of March early April. The Clerk is continuing to try and make contact with a link person for the industrial site but has had no response thus far. Actions to continue.

14. OTTERPOOL GARDEN TOWN- UPDATE if available

See chairs report for latest update- It was commented by District Cllr. Speakman that the plans for the Garden Town would not be described as stalled and that progress is being made.

15. LYMPNE AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROJECT

It was proposed to engage with this project and ask for an initial input to consider entering into a partnership.

It was agreed unanimously to start the engagement process.

The Clerk was instructed to make contact and arrange an input.

16. PROPOSED SOLAR FARM- COURT -AT-STREET- UPDATE

See appendix 1 and 2 for details-

It was agreed that as there are no applications to consider at this time that the Parish Council will make no additional comments at this time.

17. COUNCILLORS WALKABOUT DAY-

It was agreed that this should take place in the warmer months and would be away to identify areas for attention in the Parish and also to review Parish Council assets.

18. ANY OTHER MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION AT FUTURE MEETINGS

- a. Clerk to report the prolonged flooding which occurs when ever there is heavy rain along the Aldington road towards Pedlindge.
- b. To report any defective street lights to the District Council

19. DATE OF NEXT MEETING Thursday 18th April 2024, 7pm at the Lympne Village Hall Committee Room unless otherwise advised.

Noted

20. Closed Session- Village Shop Update

It was noted that the village shop is being run by a volunteer, who used to own the shop, as the owner is away visiting family due to a death for a month. Further discussions with the shop keeper will take place on his return.

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 2030 hrs.

Appendix 1-

Report from Mr Burles regarding Solar Farm proposal:

COURT-AT-STREET SOLAR PROPOSALS

Lympne Parish Council update - March 13th 2024

1. In November, Sir Christopher Edwards and I held a meeting with Jim Martin, the leader of FHDC, and colleagues to express our views on the prospect of the Court-at-Street solar development and to share an initial investigation into the viability of solar panels on Otterpool Park rooftops.
2. On December 13th a Cabinet meeting of FHDC agreed to explore further the development of a 48 acre solar facility on high quality arable land in Court-at- Street, together with the possibility of a second solar development of 35 acres on adjacent land of similar quality.

The paper on which the decision to explore further was based stated that **'There is clear local and national support for a proposal of this nature'**.

3. Since when, Sally Edwards has conducted a survey of Court at Street residents which established that there was no such local support
4. In a follow-up meeting with Jim Martin on March 1st, attended by Michael Howard, Christopher Edwards and myself, the absence of local support was raised, together with the potential use of alternative land

Away from Court-at-Street, within the Otterpool 'red line', together with the virtues of solar generation on Otterpool Park rooftops, as part of an integrated sustainable living development.

The outcome of the meeting was sufficiently positive as to warrant a follow-up, more detailed meeting, on April 12th, to be attended by Jim Martin, other council representatives and external consultants.

5. Since the March 1st meeting, Jim Martin has written stating 'Please let me confirm that all the roofs at Otterpool will be sites for solar panels, there is no disagreement on that point. We are fully agreed on that point'.

Meaning that the objective of the next meeting is to demonstrate that the effective use of Otterpool rooftops should negate the requirement to generate solar energy elsewhere and that such use of Otterpool rooftops will create significant financial and other benefits for both the council and the community.

ENDS

Personal report from Cllr Mike Boor regarding the proposed Solar Farm-

Initial Observations on the proposed Court -at - Street Solar Farm

The proposal for a Solar Farm at Court-at-Street was prompted by the ongoing plans to construct Otterpool Park.

Large amounts of public money have already been spent on the Otterpool Park Project but to date no construction has taken place. Tier 1 planning was rushed through by F &H council in April 2023 just prior to the local elections in May 2023 which saw a change in the council leadership.

Following a detailed review of monies spent to date and a review of how the estimated peak debt of 220 million could be funded it was decided that it was not viable for F&H alone to finance the project and a strategic partner would need to be found. Since May 23 both Homes England and Crown Estates have expressed an interest in the project (Homes England own land within the boundary of the proposal) but as of February 24 no agreement has been reached with either party, and the project is currently 'stalled'. The term stalled is significant as current Government Policy has set area targets for new house construction which may result in Government funding from the DLUHC for the project. As an alternative F&H are in discussion with a number of Private Companies as possible partners.

Considering Government Housing targets and the large amount of money already spent by F&H most parties agree that the project, in at least some form is now too big to fail.

It is unlikely that if and when a partner is found, housing or other units will be complete for a number of years, for several specific reasons.

1. Certain infra structure particularly the treatment processes for foul and surface water must be in place before any significant numbers of buildings can be inhabited.
2. Adoption of a 3 tier planning process means no detailed approval has been given for any significant parts of the development, and as to date no 'builder' has been appointed detailed design, submission, consideration and approval will take considerable time from an as yet unknown date.

Although the Court-at-Street Solar Farm proposal is a separate project from Otterpool its justification is wholly linked to Otterpool so all the above is relevant.

This justification is based on the premise that until all construction is completed, when all suitable roof space will be fitted with solar panels, there will be an overall green energy deficit for the project, and that the solar farm will fill this deficit.

No application has yet been made so no final proposals are confirmed, however the project appears to be that the farm will include batteries to ensure a 24/7 supply directly to Otterpool in preference to the generated/stored electricity being primarily fed into the grid. Once the full roof mounted solar panel potential for Otterpool has been delivered the Solar Farm will be removed

As a Parish Council we should support the majority view expressed by the residents. As

we have found in the past actually determining the views of the residents is not always easy. The only views expressed so far are anti the proposal as it is understood to be at the moment.

I Think it would be useful as a council, to form an opinion prior to submission of the application in an attempt to have some input into the application (there has been no official request for our opinion or public consultation to date that I am aware of)

Jim Martin has been very open about efforts to resolve the Otterpool issues and I quote from a Green Party Statement regarding Otterpool from 2023.

'Otterpool will likely eat up much of the open space between Folkestone and Ashford, with the loss of prime agricultural land. Even while accepting the need for more housing, we wish that Otterpool did not need to go ahead but, regrettably, go ahead it will. But that does not mean that there isn't still much to fight for and much that we cannot improve. If, with your support, we are successful in our efforts we will not just create a community to be proud of in Otterpool, with benefits for the whole district, but also one that sets an example for others all over the UK and beyond to follow'

It seems highly likely that as things stand at the moment a planning application for the Court-at-Street Solar Farm will be made supported by F&H as they see it as a 'green option' with the added advantage of up front monies which will go a little (very little!!) way to offset against the current Otterpool spend deficit.

The proposed location is outside the current Otterpool Red Line on high value agricultural land.

The site will provide the District with an income well in advance of any development income from Otterpool.

The Parish may be offered a sum of money for the benefit of the Parish.

It is not clear what the tariff arrangements will be regarding supply to new residents of Otterpool site as a whole will still have to be connected to the grid.

The site is outside the red line and effectively is sprawl – even before anything is built on the actual site High value agricultural land will be lost.

It will reduce even further the green areas in what is a rural environment.

The Solar Farm will be complete well in advance of any substantial Otterpool works are complete to receive the generated power. Otterpool LLP claim the solar farm will provide power to the site for the actual construction process, this seems to be a bit spurious, as apart from site offices, most energy requirements are for construction vehicles and plant powered by diesel.

Because of the above I do not believe the Solar Park will not be connected to the Grid.

No doubt there will be a viability clause in the application, the solar farm operators may decide it is more profitable to feed to the grid and not Otterpool, F&H will say this will not be allowed – where there's a lawyer there's a way.

The presents of the Solar Farm may lead to developers arguing that roof mounted panels need not be fitted.

How can a solar farm site submit a planning application when no tier 2 or 3 application has been made for the site it is supposed to serve, and no date has been agreed as to when the tier 2 and 3 applications will happen.

What happens when there is a change of government and probable change in regulations.

Conclusions (a personnel view only final LPC position needs to be based on majority Parish view- Consultation?)

I understand why F&H are proposing this scheme, but it seems to be confirmation of our long held fear that financial viability will all ways trump aspiration, and all the grand promises made will be modified or forgotten – I didn't think it would happen this early though!! so I would oppose the application on the grounds of:

Sprawl, and precedence for further sprawl.

loss of agricultural land.

loss of green space in a highly visible area close to an AONB.

No solution has been reached regarding the form of Otterpool financial arrangements.

Lack of any completion date for any part of the Otterpool development able to receive power from the site (could still be years away).

It will just be another solar farm and nothing to do with Otterpool

Its presents will be used in any offset calculation by developers to justify reduced spend on environmental based works that reduce their profit margins e.g. panels on roofs, and green areas.

Appendix 3- District Cllr Speakman's report to Council.

Lympne Parish Council Meeting 13 March 2024

Folkestone and Hythe District Council Councilor's Report

Otterpool

- Solar Park – ongoing design development negotiations continuing with preferred supplier. Primarily it is envisaged that the park will supply electricity to an internal grid which will power initial construction and supply to homes in the first phase of the project.
- Discussions with Homes England and other interested parties are continuing and by all accounts the development is progressing well. Remains on track as the largest housing development in the UK to achieve net zero in use.

Council business

- The New Romney by-election on 22 February resulted in the Ward remaining with Conservatives. Greens came second followed by Labour and the Reform Party.

- The budget for 24/25 was passed by Council on 28 February. Despite inheriting a significant deficit, a balanced budget was achieved without recourse to general reserves. This has been achieved with minimal cuts to front line services. Staffing has been reduced mainly at mid tier level.
- We remain committed to moving from Cabinet to Committee structure but acting on advice that there was insufficient time to properly implement the new structure this coming year, it has been postponed until 25/26
- A tender for the removal of the hoardings on Prince's Parade has been accepted and it is anticipated that they will start coming down very shortly. The hoardings and concrete blocks will be transferred to Otterpool where they will be used as and when necessary.
- The Leader, Cllr Jim Martin has been regularly meeting with representatives of Southern Water, the Environment Agency and KCC to vigorously protest at the continuing abysmal practice of dumping sewage on our beaches. As a result of the action of the water company, there are large swathes of the coastline where the public has been advised not to swim.
- Cllr Jim Martin is also continuing to have meetings with Stagecoach in an ongoing effort to improve services and reinstate cuts to services including the reduced No 10 service to Lympe. I have written twice to the operations manager about this matter but as I have received no response, I have asked the Leader to take it up on our behalf.
- There have been several landslips affecting the Road of Remembrance and some parts of the Coastal Park requiring these areas to be closed off. Work is going on to reduce the weight of the trees and ongoing structural surveys to consider appropriate remedial measures to reduce the risk of further landslips.

Lympne Parish Council

17 April 2024 (2023-2024)

PAYMENTS (AWAITING AUTHORISATION) LIST

Appendix 4

		Cheque No	Description	Supplier					
121	Newsletter	13/03/2024	UNITY TRUST	Newsletter	Sandgate Printers	E	294.00	294.00	
122	Miscellaneous Printing	13/03/2024	UNITY TRUST	Lympne Directory	Sandgate Printers	E	240.00	240.00	
116	Youth Club	13/03/2024	UNITY TRUST	Youth Club Hall Hire	Lympne Village Hall	E	60.00	60.00	
120	Grasscutting	13/03/2024	UNITY TRUST	Grass Cutting	Coleman	S	340.00	68.00 408.00	
117	Litter Bin Clearance	13/03/2024	UNITY TRUST	Litter Bin Clearance	Lympne Village Hall	E	130.00	130.00	
119	HMRC	28/03/2024	UNITY TRUST	HMRC	Lympne Parish Council	Z	265.27	265.27	
123	Newsletter	29/03/2024	UNITY TRUST	Newsletter	Sandgate Printers	E			
118	Clerks Home Office Use	29/03/2024	UNITY TRUST	Wages+Office	Lympne Parish Council	E	26.00	26.00	
118	Clerks Wages (NET)	29/03/2024	UNITY TRUST	Wages+Office	Lympne Parish Council	E	863.20	863.20	
Total							2,218.47	68.00	2,286.47