**Offton and Willisham Parish Council**

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held at Offton & Willisham Village Hall on Thursday 20th February 2025 at 7:00pm.

Present: Cllr A Cox Cllr S Frost

Cllr B Wilcox Cllr L Seddon

Cllr T Wells (Chair)

3 Members of the public

Clerk - T Davis

**ACTION**

| 1.  a)  b)  c) | **Meeting Administration**  The Chair Opened the meeting and welcomed everyone  Apologies were given by Cty Cllr Oakes, Cllr Kerry, Cllr Eves and Cllr Pinson-Roxburgh  No declarations of interest were given |  |
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| 2. | **To approve the draft minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 7th January 2025 and the Chair to sign as a true record**  It was Unanimously AGREED for the Chair to sign the Minutes. |  |
| 3. | **Public Participation Section** (To hear reports form the County and District Councillor and comments from the Public and invited guest speakers)  No members of the public wished to speak |  |
| 4. | **NSIP Planning Consultation from National Grid - Norwich to TIlbury, Closing date 3rd March**  The local pylon group had brought a recommended objection response to the Parish Council to discuss and review. Council went through the details of the objection and made two minor amendments.  The response is as follows:-  ***The Offton & Willisham Parish Council wishes to formally submit its response to the current consultation regarding the National Grid's proposed infrastructure project. We note with deep concern that, despite three previous consultations, the feedback provided by the Parish Council and the wider community has not been addressed. In particular, our repeated calls for the exploration of alternative options, such as High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) undergrounding, offshore coordination, or the upgrading of the existing grid using the latest available technology, have been ignored.***  ***We acknowledge the minor modifications to the route for burying the existing distribution network cables. However, no reference has been made to the substantial concerns raised by the Parish Council in previous consultations, particularly regarding the significant adverse impact on the village due to the proposed pylon installation.***  ***Key Concerns of Offton Parish Council:***   1. ***Severe Disruption to Village Access – During construction, the village will effectively be divided, blocking both main entry and exit points, severely impacting residents, businesses, and emergency services.*** 2. ***Impact on Local Farms – At least two farms within the village will be bisected, rendering them unviable and threatening the livelihoods of those dependent on them.*** 3. ***Blight on Residential Properties – Homes in proximity to the pylons will suffer from long-term blight, affecting property values and residents’ quality of life.*** 4. ***Loss of Ancient Trees and Hedgerows – The project will result in the irreversible destruction of a significant number of ancient trees and hedgerows, damaging biodiversity and the rural character of the area.*** 5. ***Long-Term Economic and Visual Damage – Upon completion, the village will be left with intrusive pylons dominating the landscape, negatively affecting farmland productivity, profitability, and property values.***   ***Parish Council’s Position and Suggested Alternative:***  ***The Parish Council strongly supports the undergrounding of new cables along the entire route. This would mitigate the need for intrusive pylons, preserve the local environment, and prevent significant social and economic disruption. National Grid’s recent promotion of Offshore Hybrid Assets demonstrates that offshore routing is a viable and preferred option for the N2T project. The fact that this alternative was not presented during any of the previous three consultations suggests a predetermined decision-making process, undermining the integrity of the consultation.***  ***Concerns Regarding the Consultation Process:***   1. ***Lack of Alternative Options – The consultation process failed to provide meaningful alternatives despite the existence of feasible solutions, including offshore routing and undergrounding.*** 2. ***Inaccessible Consultation Sessions – Meetings were held during working hours and in locations that were not easily accessible for many Offton & Willisham residents, effectively limiting community participation.*** 3. ***Lack of Acknowledgment of Previous Submissions – The Parish Council’s prior submissions have not been acknowledged or responded to, raising concerns about whether community feedback is genuinely being considered.***   ***Given the significant and lasting impacts on our village, we urge National Grid to reopen the consultation process and properly assess alternative solutions. We request that serious consideration be given to undergrounding or offshore routing, which would align with modern infrastructure planning practices and respect the needs of affected communities.***  ***We look forward to a response that addresses these concerns directly and comprehensively.***  It was Proposed, Seconded and Unanimously AGREED for the clerk to submit this objection in it’s entirety to the consultation before the closing date. In addition, it was AGREED that the following be sent a copy of the submission:-  Environment Minister  Energy Minister  Local MP  CEO OFGEM  CEO National Grid  Suffolk County Cllr for NSIPs  Cty Division Cllr  District Ward Cllr |  |
| 5. | It was Unanimously AGREED to postpone the meeting of 4th March until 18th March |  |