

EASTLING PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Assembly of the Parish Meeting for Eastling held in Eastling Village Hall on Thursday 10 April 2025

Present: Cllr Julia Bailey (Chairman), Cllr Annie Adams, Cllr Caroline Gilbert, Cllr Barrie Neaves and Cllr John Payne; and Mrs Wendy Licence (Clerk).

Also present were County Councillor Rich Lehmann, Ward Member Terry Thompson and fourteen members of the public.

Cllr Bailey welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 11 April 2024

It was **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY** to accept the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 11 April 2024 as a true record, Cllr Bailey duly signed the minutes.

2. Matters Arising from the minutes

There were no matters arising.

3. Report of the Chairman of Eastling Parish Council

Cllr Bailey thanked Mr Jimmy West for attending the meeting, he had been the recipient of the KALC Community Award in 2024.

Cllr Bailey reported that the Council meets six times per year. There had been significant problems with bin collections and Cllr Gilbert worked hard to help resolve the issues.

Cllr Gilbert reported that she has met with SBCllr Thompson to discuss concerns and that KCCllr Lehmann had been very active. Swale Borough Councillor levied fines against Suez and matters improved; rounds were reconfigured, crews moved and different sized trucks were used. There are no issues now.

Cllr Bailey thanked Cllr Gilbert for her sterling work and also KCCllr Lehmann.

Cllr Bailey said the Council worked hard on greenspace provision for the village. The Belmont Trust had made an offer of land to become a green space. Cllr Adams was the Chair of the Working Group.

Cllr Adams informed the meeting that the Working Group was comprised of Parish Councillors and villagers: Cllr Payne, Cllr Neaves, Mr Stephen Barnes and Ms Sarah Neaves. The project was delivered with very detailed work in the design details and a proposal was drawn up to be put forward to The Belmont Trust. Unfortunately, The Belmont Trust withdrew its offer because some villagers approached the Trustees direct. We were very disappointed and it felt like the Parish Council had let residents down. A huge amount of work went into the project over the course of a year.

Cllr Bailey said the village went through this about twenty years ago. The current project workings, including costings, are encapsulated on the Parish Council website. The Parish Council has been proactively engaging with Swale Borough Council regarding fly tipping in the parish.

Cllr Neaves reported that the rubbish dumped in Kettle Hill/ Mill Lane has been removed this week; there had been asbestos left there which took longer to clear. Other sites have been cleared. Building rubble has been dumped in Foxen Lane between Newnham and Frith. Residents are encouraged to report fly tipping to Swale Borough Council either online or by phone.

KCCllr Lehmann informed the meeting that Swale Borough Council has successfully prosecuted fly tippers, this has been mainly because covert CCTV had been installed. Signs have also been erected in some areas to deter fly tipping. If anything has been reported and has not been cleared, inform KCCllr Lehmann to pursue.

Cllr Neaves asked if the Belmont Estate would consider installing posts to deter fly tipping. Cllr Bailey reported that there had not been many planning applications over the past year. It is important for residents to let the Parish Council know their views and also to comment on the Swale Planning Portal. The Council is aware that the appropriate notices had not been displayed regarding The White House. There is an improved Highways reporting system and the Parish Council has lines of communication with Kent Highways; details of road closures are put on the Parish Council website. The village website has been discontinued and all information is now on the Parish Council one.

4. Financial report of the Parish Council

Cllr Payne reported that the precept for 2024-25 was £5,197 with no increase for band D properties from the previous year. This year, the precept has a slight increase but because of the way the precept is calculated, there is no increase in the additional council tax for band D properties. Discontinuing the village website has saved £240.

The Council continues to maintain the church path and area around the village sign for the benefit of parishioners. The Council owns the red phone box.

The Council made a grant of £100 to Swale Citizens Advice which helps residents in the parish and £250 to the Kent Surrey Sussex Air Ambulance. Consideration can be given to other charities which help residents.

The internal audit will take place on 2 June.

Cllr Bailey thanked Cllr Payne for his report.

5. To receive reports from local organisations

Mr Binder, Belmont Farm Manager, said there is a lot of dog fouling on the footpath at the end of Newnham Lane to North Court, and asked if a dog bin could be installed.

Cllr Bailey said Swale Borough Council had offered a bin but the problem was finding a suitable site and also who would empty it.

ACTION: item for magazine.

Mr Binder reported that sheep are lambing and dogs must be kept on leads when in the field. Walkers are making an unofficial footpath across the field by Divan Court and North Court, please can people keep to the Public Right of Way. If there is an issue with a foot path or the woods, it is easiest to report this on Whatsapp. Concerns have been raised regarding the gas guns, these are vital as the pigeons are such an economic problem for the farm; consideration is given regarding the timings to minimise the disturbance to residents.

Sarah Neaves, Carpenters Arms was unable to attend but sent the following report:

Mads and I have been running the pub for nearly two years as we did not want to see it closed down. This started off as a hobby but soon realised it is a full-time commitment!!!

The biggest obstacle thus far is finding the right chef and we have had to kiss a few frogs in order to find our princess Phil who is producing excellent cuisine.

We aim to use fresh local seasonal produce as frequently as possible. To add on to this we are now excited to announce that we have developed our own kitchen garden which will supply our own grown vegetables and flowers, this will complement the seasonal menu changes. The pub being open has offered many job opportunities to local people and at present we employ up to nineteen.

We are very grateful for the local support we receive however for this beautiful village pub to be successful we need the bums on seats and also a few more friendly faces will always be welcomed.

Please keep an eye out on our advertising board for all our upcoming events.

6. To receive questions and comments from parishioners.

A resident thanked all who had put a lot of work into the proposed Community Space, the final plan was fantastic

Cllr Bailey thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.34pm