

EASTLING PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Assembly of the Parish Meeting for Eastling held at Eastling Village Hall on Wednesday 24th April 2019

Present: Cllr Jimmy West (Chairman), Cllr Paul Ainsworth, Cllr Julia Bailey and Cllr John Payne; and Mrs Wendy Licence (Clerk).

Also present were Ward Member Colin Prescott and fourteen members of the public.

Cllr West welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies had been received from Cllr Paul Adams, County Councillor Andrew Bowles

1. Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 26th April 2018

It was **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY** to accept the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 26th April 2019 as a true record. Cllr West duly signed the minutes.

2. Matters Arising from the minutes

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

3. Report of the Chairman of Eastling Parish Council

Cllr West reported:

The Council has adhered to its established pattern of bi-monthly meetings in the year, with a very satisfactory attendance record for all five Councillors. The Council is non-political.

Elections to the Council took place this year in 2019. This year, after many years of service on the Council Nigel Bickerdike decided to step down as he and Anna are leaving the village to retire elsewhere. I would like to record our thanks for all the contribution and insights that Nigel has given to the Council during his period of Office. In particular Nigel led our efforts over the years to get the speed restrictions through the village. We then went through a formal process of finding a replacement, and after appropriate advertising, I am very pleased to say that Paul Adams has been co-opted onto the Council. Full Elections will be held again in 2022, although there maybe vacancies on the Council before then, due to retirements. As a reminder, anyone is welcome to attend Council meetings, who would like to get more involved.

Parish Council Clerk. We are fortunate now to have Wendy Licence as our Clerk. Wendy was appointed in December 2016, following an extensive search for an experienced Council Clerk. Wendy is Clerk to a number of other councils, and attends regular training and update seminars to keep abreast of all that is required by statute for the proper governance of Parish Councils. The Council is obliged to have its own website

www.eastlingpc.kentparishes.gov.uk/. On that is published all the agendas and minutes of Council meetings and all our regulatory and financial information etc. This website is maintained by Wendy. The Council is a member of the Kent Association of Local Councils [KALC], a body that is particularly useful for training and keeping us all up to date. On the financial side all I need to say, as our treasurer will shortly report in more detail, is that the cash management and budgeting are robust. There will be no change in the Precept this year. It will raise about £5,100, being £35 a year for a band D property in Eastling.

Planning applications have been few, which is not surprising as Eastling is in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and thus subject to severe restrictions on development. Eastling

Parish Council has viewed and commented on a number of applications favourably and a few unfavourably, but it is Swale Borough Council (SBC) which makes the decisions and sadly occasionally the Council's opinions get rejected or upheld by SBC.

Alan Willson continues to do an excellent job in looking after **Neighbourhood Watch**, liaising with the police where necessary and helping out villagers in many ways. Thanks to Alan for the excellent work he does in the village on many fronts, and helping to keep us all safe.

Highways. Council continues to report issues to KCC, and batter them with follow up letters, calls etc. we have made numerous reports and letter concerning the Z Bend flooding. We still await action. Potholes have been terrible this winter, as they are all over the county. The major potholes on the Otterden Road toward Frith, have last week been repaired, which is pleasing to see. Significant repairs have been completed in the much used Newnham Lane. Work is planned to begin on May 8th, down The Street [from the pub] to the 2nd Z bend on the way to Faversham. It will take a week and the road will be closed, and residents will be asked to park their cars off the road for this period. Anyone can report any Highway problem themselves online, through www.kent.gov.uk I would urge you do this. KCC are pretty responsive, and you can track progress.

The Village Website The village website is www.eastlingvillage.co.uk. and is run by Paul Ainsworth. We are pleased with the Website for Eastling Village; it has been operating for nearly 3 years. Please feed in any comments, news, or events you may have to the administrator. He can only put up information he is told about, so do be in contact with him with information and photos. In addition, the council has its own website www.eastlingpc.kentparishes.gov.uk which has all the details directing concerning the work, constitution, and regulations etc of Eastling Parish Council. This is run by our Clerk, Wendy Licence. There are links between the two websites.

Footpaths. The Council strives to work with local famers, to keep paths in good condition. Ben Binder manager of the Belmont Estate works particularly hard to maintain the paths and bridleways. He provides regular reports to the council, for which we are very grateful. If you spot any problems, fallen trees etc then please let Ben know. The trenches around most of the fields dug by the Belmont Estate are to stop "Hare Coursing". Unfortunately some is still occasionally taking place. If you see this happening, please report it to the police, rather than approach the offenders yourself.

There has been some concern about the signs that appeared last year in the valley indicating that Rat Poison has been put down, the head of Belmont Shoot has been spoken to by a member of the Council, and he has been assured that the signs have been removed.

Belmont Estate has been concerned that people, often with dogs, have been walking across the crops and not keeping to the "right of way" paths. A note in the Good News magazine has been made reminding walkers to keep to the proper paths.

Swale Borough Council. We are fortunate to have had Colin Prescott as our local representative and Andrew Bowles the leader of SBC and a member of KCC. The Council is grateful that both take an active interest and play a part in the issues concerning Eastling, along with their other wider responsibilities. I have also noted that our MP, Helen Whately is working hard on our behalf in this her Constituency. Colin Prescott has decided not to stand again for this our East Downs Ward in the May elections, so we look forward to welcoming a new Councillor after that date. I am sure we would all like to record our thanks to Colin for all the hard work he has done over the years both in the village and on Swale Borough Council

4. Financial report of the Parish Council

Cllr Payne reported that the Independent Internal Auditor will audit the Parish Council's accounts. The Precept for 2018-19 was £5,136 and the Council also received £230 VAT refund and a KCC Member's Grant of £405. Donations of £386 and a grant to the village hall of just under £1,300 have been made. The total expenditure for the year was £4800 and

£1,000 has been earmarked for the Village Hall. The reserves of £5,000 have been carried forward.

Cllr West thanked Cllr Payne for his work on the accounts.

5. To receive reports from local organisations

Mr Binder, the Farm Manager reported that all footpaths have been marked and the article in the Newsletter has worked as walkers are no longer cutting across the fields and damaging crops. The church path will be strimmed soon. What has happened to the drains at Prospect Place?

Cllr West reported that all the drains have been cleared. The flooding issue at the Z-bend is still to be done.

Mr Binder said the water just runs down the hill. When the field gets flooded the tractor brings mud onto the road. The drains need regular cleaning especially in winter. The Z-bend has Milton pipes which need to be dug out.

Cllr West said the Council is working with KCC on the issue, problems should be reported online to KCC Highways via the KCC portal.

Cllr West thanked Mr Binder for attending and for his report.

SBCllr Prescott reported that he will not be standing in the next elections due to ill-health.

Cllr West on behalf of the parish, thanked SBCllr Prescott for his work and wished him well in his retirement.

6. To receive questions and comments from parishioners.

Mr Willson said the Council had removed the grant funding for the defibrillator. The Council has given grants to the Village Hall and should fund the defibrillator.

Cllr West said that Mr Willson had taken over the running of the defibrillator, the Council can discuss future funding.

SBCllr Prescott said Swale Member's Grant Fund could contribute towards the running costs.

Cllr Bailey said the Village Hall Committee applies for a grant from the Parish Council, it is important to make an application for a grant.

A resident asked if the number for the defibrillator could be published.

Cllr West thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.35pm.

Signed as a true record of the meeting

Chairman

Date: 22 April 2021