

EASTLING PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Assembly of the Parish Meeting for Eastling held in Eastling Village Hall on Thursday 11 April 2024

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 thirteen members of the public.

Cllr Bailey welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 11th April 2023

It was **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY** to accept the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 11 April 2023 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 reported that KCCllr Lehmann and SBCllr Thompson have been supportive over the past year; KCCllr Lehmann has sent apologies for not attending the meeting and has given an update on the bin collections. There have been problems with bin collections since the change of contractor.

After the elections in May 2023, there was a vacancy and Barrie Neaves was co-opted to the Council. The Council meets bi-monthly and now meets in the hall due to increased attendance by members of the public since a potential village green has been raised. The Clerk obtained funding for the Coronation Celebration which was an excellent event with the cake sale raising £355.

Highways Improvement Plan: unfortunately, it was not possible to get a reduction in the speed limit in Newnham Lane because of the stretches of road with no houses. It would have cost approximately £5,000 to reduce the speed limit for a few yards.

We welcomed Sarah Neaves as landlady to The Carpenters Arms, Sarah and her staff are doing a good job. There is concern regarding the parking on the junction of Kettle Hill Road with The Street. The church car park has a restrictive covenant on it for church use only. There has been flooding by Prospect Place which has been reported to KCC Highways, the drains have now been cleared. The problem is caused by mud from the fields. If there is a problem the Council can contact KCC Highways direct.

#- Water used to run into a pond at Prospect Place and this took the water.

#- The fields are not ploughed deeply any more, they are just harrowed so the water runs off them.

Cllr Bailey said that the village used to have three websites, now this has been streamlined and there are two the Parish Council website and the village hall website.

There is a Working Group looking into the feasibility of a village green, consideration is being given to costs, planting and maintenance and how to consult with residents. The Belmont Estate will not sell the land and they will only lease the land if there is majority of residents in the village in favour of a village green. Everyone will be consulted and this will happen at the end of the summer.

#- To ask if you want a village green will be difficult if you don't know what it will be or what the options are.

Cllr Bailey said a clear proposition will be put to residents.

#- A specific proposal and cost must be given. There are twenty-three properties close to or adjacent to the land, and the proposed village green will affect them most, will it be a weighted vote? Also, it does not affect everyone's Council Tax bill evenly.

Cllr Bailey said a weighted vote is an issue and to formulate this and take into account Council Tax figures would be difficult.

4. Financial report of the Parish Council

Cllr Payne reported the precept for 2023-24 was £5,196 making no increase from the previous year. The Council purchased the phone box.

#- Can there be a library in the phone box?

Cllr Bailey said this had been done before but the books got damp.

#- The books got damp before the phone box was renovated.

Cllr Payne reported that there is one member of staff, the Clerk, there is a maintenance contract for the church path and around the village sign. The Clerk secured a Lottery Grant of £634 towards the celebration. The cake raffle raised £355 and this was donated to the Faversham Food Bank. 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.

The internal audit will take place on 30 May and the AGAR will be submitted afterwards. The current precept will be £5,197 an increase of £1. Next year's precept will be agreed in January 2025 and could include the cost of the village green.

5. To receive reports from local organisations

None were received.

6. To receive questions and comments from parishioners.

#1- Will planning permission be needed for a village green as it will be a change of use? Does the Council have any influence over this?

Cllr Adams said pre-application advice has been sought and the Council is waiting for confirmation of this.

#2- Belmont is a trust and charitable. They have a criterion as to what they can do with their land, is this a conversation to have with them? Also, could something different be considered? There is funding available to rewild parts of fields.

Cllr Bailey said it could be an open space maintained by Belmont. The Council has asked questions and is waiting for a response. Belmont are not thinking of any major changes such as structures on the land.

7. Presentation of KALC Community Award

Cllr Bailey said that Jimmy West retired from Eastling Parish at the elections in May 2023. The KALC Community Award is given in gratitude for his long service to the Council of over twenty years as a Councillor and Chairman for fifteen years; and also, for his service on the Parochial Church Council for over forty years.

Cllr Bailey thanked everyone for attending.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.45pm.