

NEWINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Assembly of the Parish held on 17 May 2022
in Newington Village Hall.

Present: Cllr Richard Palmer (Chairman), Cllr Tony Mould (Vice Chairman), Cllr Ruth Brown, Cllr Steve Godmon, Cllr Stephen Harvey, Cllr Elaine Jackson and Cllr Eric Layer; and Mrs Wendy Licence Clerk.

Also present were County Councillor Mike Baldock and Ward Councillor Alan Horton.

Cllr Palmer welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. Apologies for Absence

No apologies had been received.

2. Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 25 May 2021

Cllr Harvey **PROPOSED** to accept the minutes as a true record of the meeting; **SECONDED** by Cllr Layer: **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY**. Cllr Palmer duly signed the minutes as a true record.

3. Matters Arising from the minutes

There were none.

4. Report of the Chairman of Newington Parish Council

Cllr Palmer reported that the Council had worked through COVID thanks to the Chairmanship of Cllr Mould and that Council had resumed face-to-face meetings last May with the ending of the legislation permitting remote meeting, and has practised due diligence throughout its meetings to ensure Councillors and members of the public have been kept safe from Covid.

We have continued to publish the Village Voice online with a printed version delivered quarterly thanks to the commitment and sterling work of Cllr Mould.

We welcomed Ruth Brown onto the Council in February.

Recreation Ground

The official opening of the play area extension was on Saturday 3 July, this took place in a socially distanced way, complying with Government restrictions and it was an opportunity to publicly thank all those who had helped with the project. The Parish Council, in conjunction with the Friends of Newington Recreation Ground had worked together on this project. The Council has been successful in obtaining benches from the Swale Welcome Back Fund for the Recreation Ground and two residents have bought benches as well.

A competition was held to paint a mural on the garage and Hetty Godmon, a local student, painted a mural on one side and this received numerous positive comments, thank you Hetty. Thanks also go to Tony and Sandra Mould for painting murals on the other sides. This project made a great improvement to the area and together with other improvements, it has made the Recreation ground a place where people want to go to,

Children and staff from Newington School have helped plant saplings at the Recreation Ground. This was overseen by Mr Marshall, a local contractor, who gave his time for free and also Councillors. Our thanks go also to Dr Simon Springate, a local ecologist, who drew up a planting scheme and has also managed the re-wilding project around the Pavilion and at the churchyard.

Further work has been carried out to continue with the upgrading of the Pavilion. Flooring has been laid in the entrance lobby, Community Sports Room, changing room and toilet; the old water tanks have been decommissioned and the immersion heater has been removed; a new sink and water heater have been installed in the toilet. With the lifting of Covid restrictions, the Pavilion is being used again, there are regular groups including the Swans Ladies Fitness Group and the Youth Club. Bredhurst Junior Football Club play regularly and are also holding a Soccer School for younger children. The venue is also ideal for small parties and we have had several bookings. The Pavilion is competitively priced for local people.

The facilities at the Pavilion are looked after by Bob Jackson, our caretaker and we are grateful for all his help. We are also grateful to Ross Burrows, the track gate keeper, and to Ryan and Shelley Malone, the litter pickers, who help keep the Recreation Ground and parts of the village clean and tidy.

The continued improvements to the Recreation Ground, Play Area, Pavilion and Community Woodland have all helped to encourage greater use of the amenities within the village. We have laid a proper surface to the entrance at the top gate and we will replace the rest of the fencing around the Pavilion this summer. The next project is to replace the old adult exercise equipment, we have grants of nearly £15,000 towards this, and we are currently seeking the views of residents regarding the type of equipment to be installed.

Community Woodland

The Council has embarked on a management programme of the Community Woodland and following the advice from the Forestry Commission work started to fell trees to allow woodland plants to thrive. Thanks go to Stephen for his help in liaising with the Forestry Commission.

Highways

Following a public consultation some years ago, the Council drafted a Parish Highways Improvement Plan to help make the roads in the village safer. Councillors did continue to pursue and this has culminated in the centre of the village being designated a 20mph zone, including the High Street, the A2, which is a major road, and this is unique to get a 20mph zone on a major trunk road. Bull Lane has been made one-way; this was a KCC Highways accident reduction measure. Posts were installed outside Charlotte Court to help prevent inconsiderate pavement parking and to keep pedestrians safe. The road improvements were carried out at no cost to the parish.

Air Quality

We have continued to work with Swale Borough Council regarding Air Quality issues within the village, we are facing the threat of further developments, and this fits in well with the Climate and Ecological Emergency declared by Swale in June 2019. The danger of pollution to health was tragically highlighted by the death of nine-year old Ella Adoo-Kissi-Debrah when the findings of the Coroner, in December 2020, found that traffic pollution was a factor in her death. We have a duty to our residents and there are lots of children and young people who walk along the A2.

The Council has commissioned reports on Air Quality and has used this to object to developments within the parish. This was one of the wisest moves the Council has made as just after the report was published the application for further development at Eden Meadow was withdrawn.

Jubilee Fete and Picnic

The Council is pleased to be organising this event to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Tony, Elaine and Stephen have worked extremely hard to make the day a truly memorable occasion for the village. The event is on Saturday 4 June starting at 1.30pm; a fancy-dress competition at 2pm and a dog show at 3pm. There will stalls, live music and a tea tent giving away free teas and coffee.

I am grateful that all Councillors are on Committees and Working Parties and that they also represent the Council on external bodies. The Councillors all work well together for the benefit of the community and give freely of their time and energy to help make Newington a better place to live. The main driving force for all of us is the community.

I would like to extend special thanks to:

Tony Mould for his support as Vice Chairman and for his work on the Village Voice.

Stephen Harvey as Chairman of the Planning Committee for his hard work throughout the year, keeping a watchful eye on planning applications in the parish.

Elaine Jackson as Chair of Amenities for her hard work; the Amenities Committee is the back bone of the Parish Council and is all about doing things and representing the community.

Steve Godmon Chairman of the Finance Working Party for overseeing the Council's spending and budget.

Eric Layer Chairman of the Churchyard and Cemetery Working Party; for enthusing the Working Party and ensuring these areas are kept in good order. Cllr Layer also carries out a regular sight check of the play equipment, including re-tensioning the zip-wire and he also meets contractors onsite.

Cllr Harvey proposed a vote of thanks to the Chairman for his sterling work.

5. Financial report of the Parish Council

2020-2021

The Independent Internal Auditor completed the audit of year-end accounts to 31 March 2021 on 8 June 2021 and the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) and supporting documents were submitted to PKF Littlejohn immediately after the June Full Council meeting. Details of the annual return and finance documents can be viewed on the Parish Council website

2021-2022

Income

The Precept for 2021-22 was £54,256, the additional council tax for band D properties in the parish being £54.85 with no increase from the previous year.

The forecast budget requirement for the year was £173,813 (ex VAT) which included the extension of the play area.

Total receipts were £224,521 which included a VAT reclaim of £25,777.

Grants received:

- £60,000 towards the play area extension from the Friends of Newington Recreation Ground;
- £49.50 from Cllr Horton's Member Grant Fund towards the ceremony to officially open the play area extension;

- £750 from Swale Borough Council towards the installation of a defibrillator at the Recreation Ground, the defibrillator has been generously donated by Medi Aid (UK) Ltd;
- £5,000 from The Queenborough Fishery Trust towards adult exercise equipment (project expected to be completed in 2022).
- £3,184 from KCC towards further refurbishment at the Pavilion.
- £2,000 KCC Covid grant
- The Council was also successful in obtaining an easy-access picnic table and two benches for the Recreation Ground (£3,991) from The Swale Welcome Back Fund; this does not appear in the accounts as it was paid for directly by the Borough Council. £1,927 was received from two residents for benches at the Recreation Ground.

The Council also received £63,791, being the balance of the S106 money from the Persimmon development and this was used for the play area extension and will also go towards other projects at the Recreation Ground.

With COVID restrictions being eased, receipts from hire of the Pavilion were £715, an increase from the previous year (£160) when the Pavilion had to be closed for a period due to the pandemic and Government restrictions. Cemetery receipts were £1,856.

The bank balance at 31 March 2022 was £109,246.

Expenditure

Total payments were £180,595 (ex VAT). This includes the extension of the play area £110,158; extensive work on the track and car park £3,368; Pavilion refurbishment £5,515; £2,000 for tree work at the Community Woodland as recommended by the Forestry Commission; £2,000 signage; and £1,165 on expert advice to evidence the Council's objection to a planning development.

Annual Governance and Accountability Return

The Independent Internal Auditor will conduct the audit of year-end accounts to 31 March 2022 on 30 May and the Council will sign off the AGAR at its meeting on 28 June for submission by 1 July.

2022-2023

The budget for 2022-23 has been set at £66,793 and the Precept requirement for the year is £58,472. The additional Council Tax for band D properties in the parish is £55.40, an increase of 1%.

The Parish Council continues to improve the amenities within the village and to work for the benefit of its residents.

Wendy Licence

Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer to Newington Parish Council

May 2022

Cllr Palmer said the Council has obtained good grant funding; the Clerk has obtained grants from The Queenborough Fishery Trust towards the adult exercise equipment; Swale Borough Council towards the installation of a defibrillator at the Recreation Ground; KCC grant towards upgrading the Pavilion; picnic table and benches from the Swale Welcome Back Fund; and the KCC Covid grant fund.

Cllr Godmon reported the new online bank account is working well.

6. The Wickham Trust

A representative of The Wickham Trust was unable to attend but sent a copy of the audited accounts and the following report:

As you are aware Covid has resulted in significant restrictions to people's activities and freedoms nationally. This effect is demonstrated in the village by the reduction in requests to the Wickham Trust for funding during 2021 and is showing little sign of recovery. Only four grants were made in 2021.

Cllr Palmer thanked Mr Dudley for the report and accounts.

7. To receive questions and comments from parishioners.

No parishioners were present.

8. Any Other Business

Cllr Jackson thanked the Clerk for her hard work on behalf of the Council.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 7.20pm

Signed as a true record of the meeting:

Chairman
Date: 31 March 2023