

NEWINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on 25 March 2025
in the Newington Room, Newington Village Hall

Present: Cllr Tony Mould (Chairman), Cllr Stephen Harvey (Vice Chairman)
Cllr Michael Barlow, Cllr Ruth Brown, Cllr Eric Layer, Cllr Richard Palmer, Cllr Jamie Watson and Cllr Barbara Weight; and Mrs Wendy Licence (Clerk)

Also present was County Councillor Mike Baldock

Cllr Mould welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. COUNCILLOR VACANCIES

Cllr Mould **PROPOSED** that Mr Jamie Watson be co-opted to the Parish Council: **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY**. Cllr Watson signed his Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Cllr Elaine Jackson (holiday) and Cllr Chris Palmer (at another meeting: apologies accepted).

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND LOBBYING

Cllr Brown declared a pecuniary interest in item 13, as her husband is employed by a lighting contractor.

4. MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 25 FEBRUARY 2025

i. To consider the minutes of the meetings and if in order sign as a true record

Cllr Weight **PROPOSED** to accept the minutes of the meeting held on 25 February 2025 as a true record; **SECONDED** by Cllr Layer: **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY**.

Cllr Mould duly signed the minutes.

ii. Matters arising from the minutes (except those issues appearing under specific headings)

Overgrown foliage in Bull Lane affecting streetlight:

Cllr Mould reported that the Officer has visited site and noticed two trees which are affecting the streetlight. A job has been raised to have both trees pruned back to give 2m clearance from the streetlight to allow the light fall to be clear to the footpath.

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No members of the public were present.

6. VISITORS

i. County Councillor

KCCllr Baldock said it is the period of purdah. An update on the Kent County Council budget had been given at the last meeting.

Cllr Harvey said Larissa Reed, Swale Chief Executive Officer had sent out a document with jointly agreed proposals for devolution and asked what had been proposed.

KCCllr Baldock reported that Swale Borough Council has expressed an interest; the Swale/ Ashford/ Maidstone model would be preferable. There have been some good questions

regarding the changes in Local Government and Swale is seeking clarification of costings which have been estimated at £19,000,000.

Cllr Mould thanked KCCllr Baldock for attending and for his report.

ii. Borough Councillors

SBCllr R Palmer reported that the main issues raised have been regarding fly tipping in Bricklands and HGV traffic. SBCllr C Palmer has also been dealing with NHS issues.

Cllr Mould thanked SBCllr R Palmer for his report.

7. PLANNING

i. To receive an update

Cllr Harvey asked the Clerk if she has given Cllr Watson a copy of the planning report he had sent out at the weekend.

The Clerk said she had not been sent the planning report.

Cllr Harvey reported that Dandara has arranged a meeting regarding the proposed development at Pond Farm. There is no planning application to object to and if the proposals are in line with the planning consent given by the Inspector it will go through; if different because residents have made the suggestions, the Council would support it.

ii. Ref: 25/500761/FULL

Address: Land West of Church Lane Newington Kent.

Proposal: Erection of 90 no. residential dwellings, together with associated access, open space, landscaping, drainage, infrastructure works and earthworks, and the provision of car parking spaces for existing residents.

Cllr Harvey **PROPOSED** the Council objects to the planning application: **SECONDED** by Cllr Layer: **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY**.

Cllr Harvey informed members that he had engaged Railton at a cost of £1350 plus expenses to write a report and that Traffic Watch has been commissioned to conduct a two-day traffic survey cost £1,100. The traffic survey should have started tomorrow but when the company came out, they found a **ROAD CLOSED** sign. We have checked this; Southern Water did have a permit which ended last Thursday.

ACTION: Clerk to contact Southern Water

Cllr Harvey said the cost for an abortive trip will be £250. Swale has changed its protocol and comments on the planning portal are anonymised.

KCCllr Baldock said he has raised concerns with the Chief Executive Officer and the Head of Planning, this had been implemented without consulting Councillors. It is quite a drastic change because you are unable to get a picture of where the comments are from.

Cllr Harvey reported the proposal for 2,500 homes in Bobbing is ongoing, the school provision is non-sensical because it uses 2011 data. Bull Lane: the Council did not object to this but thankfully the Conservation Officer has objected to the application. Oakhill House: approved. The Wheatsheaf: the Lawful development certificate has been rejected. Land at Eden Meadow: awaiting a decision. Aile Homes has acquired the land at the back of The Tracies and is planning four hundred homes.

Ref: 24/504613/FULL

Address: The Pheasantry Wardwell Lane Lower Halstow Kent ME9 7ER

Proposal: Change of use of agricultural land to 2no. Gypsy/Traveller pitches each with 1no. mobile home and a touring caravan including a shared day room and 6no. parking spaces.

Cllr Harvey **PROPOSED** to respond: Given the correspondence which shows the intended use of the two caravans is for the existing family and the soon to be married couple, we have no objections on condition the enforcement action is carried out to remove the caravan: **SECONDED** by Cllr Barlow: **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY**.

iii. Ref: 25/500551/FULL

Address: Plots 21 And 22 The Pheasantry Wardwell Lane Newington Kent ME9 7ER

Proposal: Change of use of land to use for the provision of 4no. gypsy and traveller pitches including the stationing of 4no. static residential units, 4no. touring units, and erection of 3no. day rooms, together with the formation of access road(s) and the provision of structural landscaping and parking (part retrospective).

Councillors considered the application and **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY** to object to the proposals.

Newington Parish Council objects to the application. Whilst we support the two units for the existing family, we object to the extension of the site and request that the matter be considered by the Planning Committee.

Cllr Mould said there will be a Planning Committee meeting on Wednesday 16 April at 7pm in the Newington Room.

Cllr Mould thanked Cllr Harvey for his report.

8. AMENITIES

To receive the minutes of the meeting of the Amenities Committee held on 18 March 2025 and consider the recommendations

Cllr Layer said the Council decided not to proceed with the basketball hoop and it is being ascertained if the grant from the Active Kent & Medway Small Grant fund, £500, has to be returned.

Cllr Harvey asked if it could be used for children's activities in the summer.

ACTION: Clerk.

Cllr Layer reported that a grant of £2,000 has been awarded by the Queenborough Fisheries Trust towards youth provision in village.

The ladder has been delivered and will be stored in the garage.

Cllr R Palmer said he still has the litter pickers, some need to be returned to the Plymouth Brethren Church.

Cllr Layer said the fallen tree on ZR61 has been reported to KCC PROW and is awaiting allocation to an officer.

Cllr Harvey said there are no signs for the footpath.

ACTION: Clerk to report.

Cllr Layer reported that the ashes area has been refurbished and looks good. The quotation to install the village sign has been received.

Cllr Mould **PROPOSED** to accept the quotation of £76 for a 150 x 150mm tanalised post is £76 and £365 for a purpose made ground socket: **SECONDED** by Cllr Layer: **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY**.

Cllr Layer reported the Council is waiting for advice regarding whether planning permission is needed to install the notice board by the bus stop.

VE-Day memorabilia: Cllr Mould **PROPOSED** not to progress with this due to the cost involved: **SECONDED** by Cllr Layer: **7-FOR, 1 AGAINST- MOTION CARRIED**.

9. SWALE BOROUGH COUNCIL LAND

The Clerk reported that the previous intention was to remove the restriction and proceed with the transfer of land. The solicitor is liaising with Swale to confirm this is still the intention.

Cllr Harvey asked the Clerk to ascertain what the restriction was and ask for Swale to clear the leaves and dead foliage on the track.

ACTION: Clerk

10. VILLAGE VOICE AND MEDIA

Cllr Mould reported that the next edition of the Village Voice will be an online version and will include help for the fete; article on the Spring Clean; the refurbished ashes area at the Cemetery and planning.

Cllr Layer said the Allotments Association wants to include an article.

11. FINANCE

Cllr Mould reported that the Council has received £1,000 from the Parishes Support Grant and will be passed on as £200 for Newington Lunch Club, £200 for Newington Bingo Club and £600 for Cornerstone Café.

The Clerk was thanked for obtaining the grant.

i. Cheque list: to consider invoices for payment

Payee	Reason	Amount
Commercial Services Ltd	Recreation Ground maintenance	£278.95
Swale Borough Council	Grounds maintenance	£4,706.30
Lunch Club	Parish Support Grant	£200.00
Bingo Club	Parish Support Grant	£200.00
Cornerstone Café St Mary's Church	Parish Support Grant	£600.00
DCK Accounting	Payroll fees – Mar	£36.00
Mr R Malone	Litter Picking Recreation Ground - Mar Litter Picking	£543.20
Mr MJ Marshall	Cemetery and Churchyard maintenance - Mar	£625.00
Mr R Burrows	Track gate keeper- Mar	£100.00
Mr R Jackson	Honorarium	£329.90
Mr A Mould	Village Voice expenses	£55.00
Sign of the Times Ltd	Repair of village sign	£960.00
Swale Borough Council	Printing Village Voice	£124.00

Cllr Layer **PROPOSED** to make the payments; **SECONDED** by Cllr Weight: **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY**.

ii. Finance report

Cllr Mould said the finance report is taken from the accounts which are in the prescribed format that the auditor accepts. The Council also has a credit card; the Clerk shows the receipts and the statement is signed off.

12. CHANGES IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Item covered earlier in meeting.

Cllr R Palmer said the preferred option is the Swale/ Ashford/ Maidstone proposal.

13. STREET LIGHTS

The Clerk reported that she is still waiting for confirmation from UKPN that Equans can be appointed as contractor for the street lights.

14. REPORTS FROM MEMBERS

Cllr Harvey reported that he had attended the last KALC Swale Area Committee meeting and has been elected the Police & Crime Commissioner delegate for the Area Committee. There are now more PCSO's than before. The Chief Executive Officer gave a presentation on Kent Resilience Planning, Parish Councils are being urged to do this.

ACTION: Item for Amenities Committee.

15. CORRESPONDENCE

1. 04.03.25- SBC: JKC Policy round-up
2. 05.03.25- KALC: Newsletter
3. 05.03.25- SBC CEO devolution presentation
4. 06.03.25- NALC CEO bulletin
5. 06.03.25- KALC Training Bulletin
6. 10.03.25- JKC Policy Round-Up
7. 11.03.25- KALC Bulletin
8. 12.03.25- Swale Borough Council: revised parking fees
9. 13.03.25- NALC CEO bulletin
10. 14.03.25- KCC Highways: Road Closure Bobbing Hill
11. 17.03.25- SBC: Policy Round-up
12. 20.03.25- NALC CEO bulletin
13. 20.03.25- SBC CEO: proposed workshop regarding Local Government Reorganisation

16. PARISH COUNCIL PROTOCOL

Meeting Conduct

Cllr Mould said that this is part of the Civility and Respect Pledge. If Councillors are not happy with anything the Clerk or a Councillor has done, they must not talk about it in open Council but should talk to that person privately. Emails- if anyone has a query, they should email just the person concerned, not everyone.

Quotations

Cllr Mould said that it has been suggested that when the Council receives quotations, they should be anonymised before being presented to Council. This will ensure there is no bias.

Cllr R Palmer said this would also depend on the value of the quotations, it might need the Clerk to comment if the quotation is too low.

Cllr Harvey said the advantage is that the information can be put on a single sheet and you do not have to read pages of quotations. It needs to have the specification so that we can see if the quotes match it.

Cllr Brown said that it is good to know who the contractors are, this is due diligence.

The Clerk agreed and said that she always seeks local quotes but does not have the knowledge of local contractors that Councillors may have so would not necessarily be aware of a rogue trader. With regards to the specification, this is always what is agreed by the Council or Committee. The issue with the basketball hoop was that the specification was constantly changed; initially she had obtained quotes for a basketball hoop; a Councillor spoke to a contractor who said there needs to be a hard surface so quotes for this were obtained; and further changes were made at each meeting.

Cllr R Palmer said a tick sheet could be drawn up to ensure the contractor has insurance, etc. High value contracts would need due diligence.

Cllr Mould **PROPOSED** to anonymise quotations: **SECONDED** by Cllr Palmer: **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Emails

A lengthy discussion took place regarding the Clerk copying her emails to Councillors.

The Clerk asked that the HR Committee discuss this.

Cllr Harvey said it needed to be agreed tonight.

The Clerk said she was not happy to copy everyone into emails she sends and was concerned that it showed she was not trusted to send emails on behalf of the Council; it is effectively micro-managing her work; copying emails to Councillors was a major concern as Councillors may respond to an email chain which would not be appropriate; and if Councillors are copied into all emails, they will be overwhelmed and may not read all of them. Furthermore, on Remembrance Sunday a Councillor had asked the Group Scout Leader if the Scouts were coming to the Fete, the Group Scout Leader seemed unaware of the Fete and the Councillor had said he could have shown him the email if he had been copied in. Showing someone an email they had forgotten about would not be conducive to encouraging people to volunteer to help the Council. Everyone had been contacted in August regarding the 2025 Fete.

Cllr Harvey said he could have reminded the Group Scout Leader of the email if he had had it.

Cllr R Palmer said that copying into emails helps check up on whether staff are doing their work.

The Clerk raised concern that this showed the Council did not trust her to do her work.

Cllr Mould said the Council did trust the Clerk.

Cllr Harvey said that he wanted to see all emails and was concerned not to have been copied into the email booking the hall.

The Clerk said that she had booked the hall when he had told her to. If there is a query about correspondence going out, a Councillor can email or phone for an update if necessary.

Cllr R Palmer said that at Swale, copying everyone into emails sometimes causes a problem because there are lots of short responses and the thread of the email gets lost.

Cllr Mould said this should be deferred to the next meeting.

Cllr Harvey **PROPOSED** that there be a one-month trial to copy emails to the relevant Councillors: **SECONDED** by Cllr R Palmer: **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY**.

17. ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Cllr Mould **PROPOSED** that groups be invited to the Annual Parish Meeting bi-annually: **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY**.

The Annual Parish Meeting on Tuesday 27 May before the Annual Parish Council Meeting.

18. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Cllr Layer informed Members that the Allotments Association has agreed to have a stall at the Fete for people to sponsor bulbs for the Community Woodland.

ITEM FOR AMENITIES AGENDA

Date of next meeting: Tuesday 29 April 2025 at 7pm

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.15pm

Cllr Harvey and Cllr Watson signed the Civility and Respect Pledge.

Signed as a true record of the meeting

Chairman

Date: 25 March 2025