

NEWINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Assembly of the Parish held on 30 April 2019 in the Newington Room, Newington Village Hall.

Present: Cllr Tony Mould (Vice Chairman), Cllr Dean Coles, Cllr Steve Godmon, Cllr Mel Harris, Cllr Stephen Harvey, Cllr Elaine Jackson, Cllr Eric Layer, Cllr Jeannie Milburn and Cllr Richard Palmer. Mrs Wendy Licence Clerk.

Also present were SBCllr Gerry Lewin and SBCllr John Wright, Mr Cliff Curtis (Parish Council nominative Trustee on the Wickham Trust), Mr Dave Fagg (Parish Council nominative Trustee on the Wickham Trust), and twenty-three members of the public.

1. Apologies for Absence

In the absence of the Chairman, Cllr Mould took the Chair.

Cllr Mould Welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies had been received from Cllr Debbie Haigh, Cllr Graham Staff and Community Warden Georgina Springall.

2. Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 29 May 2018

It was **PROPOSED** by Cllr Harvey to accept the minutes as a true record of the meeting on 30 May 2017; **SECONDED** by Cllr Harris: **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY**. Cllr Mould duly signed the minutes as a true record.

3. Matters Arising from the minutes

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

4. Report of the Chairman of Newington Parish Council

Cllr Mould thanked all the volunteers for their contribution of time in delivering the Village Voice; for looking after the Pavilion and the contractors who work to keep the environment safe and pleasurable for all.

Much of what Council delivers is only made possible by kind additional grants provided by County Councillor Mike Whiting and Swale Borough Council's Sports and Activity Grant Fund.. KCCllr Whiting and SBCllr Lewin and SBCllr Wright regularly attend Council meetings and give their support at the next levels of Local Government.

It was a sound year financially with the Council delivering services within budget and utilising 106 monies from the Jones development opposite the school, received in the previous year to deliver the newly refurbished village Pavilion. Work continues here and we are currently refurbishing the children's play area and finishing the new style Pavilion fencing. The 106 money from the Persimmon development will be used to contribute towards play and recreation facilities on the recreation grounds.

Amenities Committee

Cllr Jackson reported that it had been a busy year for the Amenities Committee. When the Newington Festival 2018 was planned, the team were unaware that England would reach the World Cup Final and this impacted on the Festival although it managed to break even. The Festival will not run in 2019 but it is hoped that volunteers will come forward to help run the event in 2020. Anyone interested in helping should contact the Clerk.

Cllr Jackson said a defibrillator has been installed in the High Street and thanked Cllr Palmer and Cllr Milburn for holding a training session for residents, there will be more training arranged and this will be publicised in the Village Voice and on the Council's website.

Pavilion works have been continuing with new external lights and the Committee is now looking at a new footpath to enable disabled access to the Pavilion. There have been regular rentals and a new Youth Club will start on 1 May.

Maintenance of the Recreation Ground is ongoing, a new contractor has been appointed to cut the grass and new five-a-side goal posts have been installed to enhance the amenity. A wonderful group of volunteers gave up their time to paint the play equipment and new seats have been installed on the swings.

The Great British Spring Clean was well supported and another litter pick will be arranged in the Autumn.

Details of anti-social behaviour is highlighted following the reports received from Community Warden Georgina Springall and PCSO John Cork. PCSO Cork is running regular Police surgeries at the Cornerstone Café in the Church and this has proved very successful.

The Council is still trying to get a Tree Protection Order for the oak trees on the recreation ground.

A resident asked how often the grass at the Recreation Ground will be cut.

Cllr Jackson said it will be cut every two weeks in the growing season.

Cllr Mould thanked Cllr Jackson for her report.

Street Lights

Cllr Harris reported that Cllr Haigh has worked hard to start on the project to upgrade the street lights to LED. The Council has ninety-two lights and currently pays for forty-eight thousand kilowatt hours per annum, when the lights have been upgraded the lights will only use seven thousand kilowatt hours per annum. The total cost of the project is approximately £42,000 and the Council is applying for an interest free Government sponsored loan of £30,550. The Clerk is due to receive a commitment letter from Salix confirming approval.

A resident asked what the loan repayments will be.

Cllr Harris said the loan is interest free over five years and will cost approximately £6- 7,000, in year six the savings will be £5-6,000 per annum. The lights were all surveyed and the posts will be brought up to standard where necessary. All lights will have new hoods and once in place there will be no maintenance issues. It is hoped the lights will all be upgraded by September.

A resident asked if the new estate off the High Street will have LED lights.

Cllr Harvey said the persimmon estate will be self-governing and the residents will pay for its maintenance.

Cllr Harris said the lights on the A2 belong to Kent County Council and the lights in Playstool Road belong to Swale Borough Council, both roads have been upgraded to LEDs

Cllr Mould thanked Cllr Harris for his report.

Newington Cemetery

Cllr Harris reported the Parish Council has carried out a considerable amount of work over the past few years. There are two halves to the cemetery, the first part was used over the last fifty years and the second half was sublet for allotments. The Parish Council has carried out extensive work to make the second area ready for interments. The old area is full and the new area is ready for use. The cemetery is being well maintained, rabbits come into the cemetery and it is difficult to prevent this as they come from the embankment. There is a slight mole problem and this is being addressed.

Cllr Mould thanked Cllr Harris for his report.

Planning Committee

Cllr Harvey report 2018-19 had been a very busy year, every planning application in the village is on the planning reports on the Parish Council website. The Parish Council always looks at every planning application and makes comments as a statutory consultee. The planning applications have been mainly domestic with a few traveller applications and the development at Blaxland Grange is now fully occupied. The Planning Inspectorate has approved housing on the land off The Tracies. The decision of the Appeal for Charlotte Court concerning

installing opening windows facing the A2 instead of air extraction is yet to be made. The Parish Council made representations to KCC regarding the extraction of brick earth at Paradise Farm by Wienerberger, particularly concerning the number of lorry movements through the village.

The scale of development in Rainham, Bobbing and Borden will affect the air quality in Newington. There are many challenges ahead.

The Government has required Swale Borough Council to increase its allocation for housing and this will start with an Appeal by Gladman on Pond Farm.

Cllr Mould thanked Cllr Harvey for his report.

Cllr Mould thanked all the Parish Councillors for generously giving a considerable amount of time to make sure the Parish runs smoothly and also the Clerk her support. There were fewer candidates for the Council this year so there will be no election and the money saved will go back into the budget. There are now three vacancies on the Council and the Parish Council will be able to co-opt to fill the places, anyone interested should talk to any Councillor or the Clerk.

Finally, it is with great personal and professional sadness that we say goodbye to Mel Harris who has dedicated twelve years of unfaltering service to Newington Parish Council. The Parish is also losing Borough Councillor Gerry Lewin who is retiring this year.

SBCllr Lewin said he has served as a Borough Councillor for twenty-eight years and it has given him pleasure to serve Newington.

5. Financial report of the Parish Council

Cllr Godmon reported that the income for the Parish Council was just over £90,000 and was higher than expected. The precept was £46,675. Grants were received from Kent County Council's Member's Fund of £663 towards the five-aside goals and also £2,000 towards the street lighting project. Burial Ground receipts were higher than expected. There was £11,595 S106 money from Jones Homes.

Expenditure was £69,000 for the year and slightly higher over budget but less than the previous year during which the Pavilion was refurbished. Bus shelter maintenance was £2,500 and cabinets were purchased for the defibrillators.

The precept for 2019/20 has been set at £47,842. a 2.5% increase on the precept income from last year. Due to the way that this is calculated this will actually result in a slight decrease in the amount paid by a band D property of 0.77% from £53.10 to £52.69.

The application for the lighting loan is well under way and the Council will receive £30,555 and will take £12,000 from reserves to pay for the lighting.

Cllr Mould thanked Cllr Godmon for his report.

6. The Wickham Trust

Mr Cliff Curtis said The Newington Parish (Wickham) Charity dates back to the 1900s when Mrs Elizabeth Wickham, a well-respected member of the village, paid to have a Parish Hall which was at 128-134 High Street, opposite the Women's Institute Hall which is no longer in existence. The Parish Hall opened on Shrove Tuesday 1905 and coincided with Mrs Wickham's 90th birthday. Due to high maintenance costs and lack of parking, it was decided to close and sell the hall and to set up a new trust in 1987 with the proceeds of £32,350. This was done with the involvement of the Parish Council. The income generated has been used for the benefit of village organisations, the largest amount given was for the current Village Hall which received a grant in excess of £76,000. The Trustees meet three times a year and ten groups have been helped in the past year, between £2-3,000 is given every year.

Cllr Mould thanked Mr Curtis for his report.

7. Reports from Village Organisations

Newington History Group

The group formed seven years ago and there are approximately fifty members. The aim of the group is to investigate, record and research its environs.

The most recent project is about the centenary of World War 1, all of the fallen and survivors were researched. Newington History Group has a Book of Remembrance in a cabinet, made by Mr Fagg, and this can be found in in the church. A members' weekend was organised in 2014 and this attracted over three hundred people to the church. There were thirty-one fallen from the village and twelve more were found to have been born in the village but not included in the memorial. Newington was the frontline of defence during World War 1 with the front of the escarpment of the A249 being highly fortified and a lot of soldiers were billeted to the village. Newington History Group has worked with the school over the last five years and there has been a special memorial service at the school on the centenary of the death of one of the fallen. Following on from this, Newington History Group is liaising with the school to have an after-school History Club.

There is a Memorial Garden, maintained by the Allotment Association, by the village sign. Newington History Group has cleaned the cross in the churchyard and also puts poppies on the lamp post for Armistice each year. A beacon was erected in 2018 on Wormdale Farm and was lit on 11 November to coincide with the national Beacons of Light initiative, there was also a memorial service in the church commemorating the end of the First World War.

Newington History Group is involved with the Roman sites in the village at Boyces Hill and also at the Roman Industrial site at Watling Place where there are thirty archaeologists working. The group is currently liaising with the church to celebrate National Peace Day on 15 July 2019.

There are monthly meetings with speakers on a variety of subjects and outings are also arranged. As well as a website, Newington History Group has published two books.

Newington Concert Party

Newington Concert Party was formed in Newington fifty-eight years ago and has an annual show in the village. It started in the Women's Institute Hall but when this was closed it transferred to the Village Hall. Newington Concert Party offers comedy and songs in a true concert party format. Currently, membership is down to its lowest point and the pianist left eighteen months ago. There have only been two pianists during the groups existence and it is hoped to find another one soon.

Swans Fitness Group

The Swans Fitness Group meets at the Pavilion and took over from Newington Sports Club. Up to sixteen members meet once a week. The group has all new equipment thanks to grants from Kent County Council and Swale Borough Council. Members exercise and chat over coffee and cake.

Allotment Association

The Allotment Association was formed in 2004, prior to that the allotments were run by Swale Borough Council. The change has worked well and plot holders are preparing for the new growing season. There are five people on the waiting list and the article in the Village Voice worked well. The Parish Council owns the land and fencing, the Association is responsible for the upkeep of the fencing. Last August, fencing was obtained from the Village Hall Committee and four panels were erected on the north side of the allotments by the children's play area. Grants from Kent County Council, Swale Borough Council and The Wickham Trust have enabled the Association to purchase more panels and volunteers have erected another section. Five panels have been obtained from the Isle of Sheppey and these will go on the south side where the manure is delivered for free.

All work at the allotment gardens is carried out by members and it is an active site. Allotments are a commitment especially at this time of year.

Newington Village Hall

The Village Hall was built twenty-eight years ago, the committee's function is to ensure the hall is maintained for the village. The hall is constantly being upgraded, there is a new PA system for use by regular hirers; a new CCTV system has been installed and LED lights have

been put in the corridor. There are about twenty regular groups using the hall and often all three rooms are in use.

Newington WI

Newington WI is one of the oldest groups in Kent and will be one hundred years old next year. It is part of an eight group WI called the Newington group which is part of the East Kent Federation which comprises of one hundred and four WIs with over four thousand women.

Newington WI has about thirty-five members and meets monthly with a variety of speakers, games evenings and outings. The group has also raised funds for Demelza. The WI has national campaigns such as *Don't Fear the Smear*.

The group is looking to find past members of the Newington WI to invite them to its centenary party on 7 February 2020.

St Mary's Church

St Mary's Church is a glorious place and it is a privilege to have a wonderful place of worship in the village for hundreds of years. It is a beautiful historic building and also a living place of worship with a warm welcome to everyone. Cornerstone Café is held monthly offering hospitality and a listening ear. The Community Warden and PCSO also attend. The church is also used by the Art Group. The church was full for Armistice Sunday.

The church would like to be open but leaders are aware that this would be vulnerable so it needs volunteers to help.

There are strong links with the school and clergy lead weekly assemblies. The school also comes into the church and currently there is an exhibition of the children's work in the church. The Friends of Newington Church raises funds to help keep the building in good order for the community and help is needed to run this group. It is a huge responsibility to keep the building for the community.

Everyone is welcome, the building is there for everyone. A new curate will be ordained in Canterbury Cathedral at the end of June.

St Mary's is part of a group of six village churches working together, with diverse congregations offering a mix of traditional and contemporary worship styles. It is a place of welcome and a place for everyone.

Friends of Newington Recreation Ground

The play area at Newington Recreation Ground is well-kept and well loved but not well-used. The Friends of Newington Recreation Ground was formed to raise funds and to make it accessible. A survey was carried out to find out what is expected of a play area and what is used. While people do use it, more often people are going out of Newington to other play areas and it was also highlighted that Newington play area is not wheel chair accessible. People said that if the play area was modernised they would use it and there was also a request for a zip wire.

The Friends of Newington Recreation Ground is currently applying for grants and will start CrowdFunding. It will also seek sponsorship from local businesses to buy a bench.

The existing equipment has had a face lift, it has been painted and new swings seats have been installed. The group has met with three contractors and hopes a zip wire will be installed but the summer holidays.

Bingo

Around twenty-five people attend on a regular basis and the Community Warden updates everyone regarding the latest scams. There is a raffle and coffee and a chat.

Art Group

The Art Group meets at the church on the first and third Friday of the month and also enjoys tea, coffee and a chat. There are beautiful places inside and outside the church. The group has been going for about a year and there are currently fourteen members.

Cherries Preschool

The Pre-School started fifty years ago in the Methodist Hall, moved to the old village hall and then the new village hall. The school had a nursery built but could not sustain it and approached Cherries in 2011 to move in to the unit. The Preschool is a charity and is run as a business.

The Preschool gets support from the Wickham Trust and also the Village Hall Committee which holds an annual Wine and Wisdom evening.

There are twenty-six children in the morning and twenty-six children in the afternoon from fifty families in the village. Hartlip Preschool closed last year so Cherries has had to take on extra staff to cope with the increase in children. Parking is an issue and it is hoped that when the school changes its times in September this will help alleviate the situation.

Cherries works with the Allotments Association and has trips for the children. There are good links within the village with Newington Court Care Home and kindness cards made by the children are left at the doctors and pharmacy. A group is knitting animals for the preschool. Cherries took part in the Newington Christmas Tree Festival. A new climbing frame was installed eighteen months ago.

Floral Art Group

The Floral Art Group started in 1973 in the WI Hall, it then moved to the Working Mens' Club although this was not very successful and then moved to the Methodist Hall in 1986. When the new hall was built the group moved to the Newington Room in 1991.

There are up to fifteen members and as well as learning techniques, the evenings are also very social. The group helps with the flowers at the church. When new people come along they can learn by watching others. Meetings are on the first Thursday of the month and are open to everyone, it costs £20 per annum, and includes a raffle and refreshments.

Newington Short Mat Bowls Club

Short mat bowls is a form of indoor bowls played on forty-five foot long mats, it has the same woods as used for lawn bowls but to keep the bias you have to bowl around a fifteen-inch block of wood. The Club meets twice a week and has four mats with two teams to each mat. Currently there are thirty-nine members and new members are always welcome. It costs £10 per year and there is a playing fee of £2.00 or £2.50 for guests with beginners have three free sessions. There is a set of bowls for new people to use.

The Club plays friendly matches against other clubs and two teams play in the First Division of the Swale League.

Church Flowers

There are eight ladies responsible for the flowers in church and more help is needed. There will be a celebration of Christmas at the church on 7 December and this could include decorated Christmas trees.

Newington Reading Group

The Newington Reading Group meets on the last Wednesday of the month at The Bull to discuss a book and have lunch. You do not have to read the book to come along.

8. To receive questions and comments from parishioners.

When will the new youth club start?

Cllr Mould said it starts on 1 April from 4-6pm at the Pavilion and is for junior school aged children.

Can the Parish Council approach Southeastern Trains for more trains from Newington?

Cllr Harris said that when the service was cut, the Parish Council lobbied the director of operations. Six trains pass through Newington each hour and to have one stop adds extra time to the timetable. Not many people travel outside the rush hour so it is difficult to argue for

more trains. The Thameslink Service also uses the link meaning there are eight trains on the line making it congested.

SBCllr Wright said Southeastern Trains, Kent County Council and Swale Borough Council recognise the service has been cut from Newington and looked at utilising platform two to go to Teynham and Sheerness, options are being put forward. The issue has been the lack of tickets sold compared to the number of people using the train and this is a problem for all unmanned stations.

Cllr Harris said the Parish Council lobbied for an extra service in the afternoon for school children and an extra train has been put on for two hours late afternoon.

Cllr Mould said the Parish Council will continue to lobby for a better service.

9. Any Other Business

A resident asked for an update on Pond Farm.

Cllr Harvey said there is an Appeal at the High Court and senior judges will consider whether the Planning Inspector was acting within his remit by turning down the development on the issue of air quality.

Cllr Mould thanked everyone for attending the meeting which has been very informative and has shown how important community is.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.36pm.

Signed as a true record of the meeting:

Chairman

Dated: 25 May 2021