

# NEWINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

## Minutes of the Annual Assembly of the Parish held on 31 March 2023 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.

Cllr Palmer welcomed everyone to the meeting.

### **1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies had been received from Cllr Ruth Brown, Cllr Elaine Jackson and Ward Member Alan Horton.

### **2. Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 17 May 2022**

Cllr Layer **PROPOSED** to accept the minutes as a true record of the meeting: **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 reports that Claire Harvey and Mike Barlow were co-opted to the Council in August, unfortunately Claire had to step down from the Council in December due to health reasons.

The whole Council is up for election in May, anyone interested in becoming a Councillor needs to submit their nomination form by 4 April to Swale. Details can be obtained from the Clerk or Swale Democratic Services. Please talk to Councillors or the Clerk to learn a bit more about what the Council does.

Coming out of COVID, as a community we have recovered well.

### **Recreation Ground**

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.

As a parish we have managed to see improvements to the Recreation Ground, Play Area, Pavilion and Community Woodland have all helped to encourage greater use of the amenities within the village. The rest of the fencing around the Pavilion has been replaced. We have obtained grants for additional adult exercise equipment. The Pavilion is available for hire and is popular with groups and for small birthday parties.

The Council organised a hugely successful Village Picnic and Fete to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Children attending Newington School and Cherries Pre-school were given commemorative mugs.

The King's Coronation is on 6 May and it was decided this would be a hectic weekend with people preferring to watch the event. The Coronation is a year of celebration and the Council is planning a Coronation Fete on 15 July. Tony, Elaine, Eric and Stephen are working extremely hard to make the day another memorable occasion for the village. The Clerk has obtained a grant towards the event.

## **Village Voice**

This continues mainly online with a printed version delivered quarterly thanks to the commitment and sterling work of Tony. We would like to thank all those who help deliver it.

## **Highways**

Following consultation with residents the Council drafted a Parish Highways Improvement Plan to help make the roads in the village safer. This culminated in the centre of the village being designated a 20mph zone, including the High Street, unfortunately there are still issues as some people do not follow this. We are looking into setting up Speed Watch in the village and this will help evidence problems.

Bull Lane has been made one-way; this was a KCC Highways accident reduction measure and KCC Highways made the choice of the direction.

Posts have been 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 is a major concern in the village. We have continued to work with Swale Borough Council regarding Air Quality issues within the village, we are facing increasing 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. Children walking along the High Street are at the height to breathe in exhaust fumes.

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 first report by Prof Stephen Peckham was published the application for further development at Eden Meadow was withdrawn.

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.

I would like to extend special thanks to:

Tony Mould as Vice Chairman for helping to support me and also for his sterling work on the Village Voice. Also, for Charing the Coronation Fete Working Group.

Stephen Harvey the Chairman of the Parish Council Planning Committee, a role he fulfils to a high standard. Our objections, which take into account the comments of residents, are such a high quality that they have led planning officers to go out and look at things closer.

Elaine Jackson, Chair of the Amenities Committee for her hard work; the Amenities Committee does a lot of hard work on matters.

Steve Godmon the Chairman of the Finance Working Party for overseeing the Council's finances.

Eric Layer the Chairman of the Churchyard and Cemetery Working Party, he has put a lot of work into the group. The Cemetery is well maintained. Cllr Layer has completed training on the playground and regularly checks the equipment.

## **Community Warden**

Cllr Palmer said Georgina Springall has been the Community Warden for eighteen years and has been especially dedicated to helping the vulnerable in the village. Her work during COVID

was exemplary. The Council would like to thank her for all the support she has given and wishes her well in her retirement.

The Chairman presented Ms Springall with a card and gifts.

## **5. Financial report of the Parish Council**

Cllr Godmon said the Parish Council's share of the council tax that residents pay is known as the Precept and this is the main source of finance for Newington Parish Council. The funds are used to improve facilities and services for local people in the village. This includes the play area, the Pavilion, cemetery, some of the street lighting, bus shelters and litter picking.

Parish councils are responsible for managing their own budgets and each year the finance committee forecasts expenditure for the forthcoming year and last year this was calculated at £66,793.

In this financial year the Precept was £58,472 (which equates to an additional £4.53 a month in council tax for band D properties in the parish).

Total receipts, to end Feb 2023 were £94,772. The additional funds are made up of grants, hire of the pavilion and cemetery fees.

The grants received included over £9500 towards new adult gym equipment from Swale Western Area Committee and grants from SBC of over £1k towards Jubilee celebrations.

The Pavilion rooms continue to be a well-used and valuable asset to the community, offering affordable space for clubs and small parties. Receipts from hire have totalled £650 to the end of February.

On now to expenditure and total payments were £76,224 (ex VAT) to end February. This includes:

£7,021 for fencing at the Recreation Ground;

£2,058 for repairs to the play equipment;

£1,530 for tree works at the woodland;

£4,335 for reports from experts to evidence the council's objections to certain planning applications.

The Budget for the financial year 2023/24 has been set at £63,157 and the Precept requirement for the year is £57,926. Given the current reserves and the cost of living demands from elsewhere the Parish Council decided not to increase the amount that you will pay this year.

The year-end accounts will be independently audited on 11 May and the Council will sign off the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in June for submission by 1 July. This will then be made available on the Parish Council website, along with previous years.

Parish Councillors represent all residents within the parish and continue to work to improve the amenities within the village for the benefit of all.

## **6. Reports from Committee Chairmen**

### **Planning**

Cllr Harvey reported that there had been lots of small planning applications in the village; some sensitive applications in the Conservation Area; and some larger applications which have been a concern. The Gladman proposal for Pond Farm was turned down at Public Enquiry in 2015. Another application for one hundred and twenty-five houses was also rejected. An application for twenty-five homes on the land next to the school, predicated with a drop-off area for the school, was turned down last October. The developer threatened to appeal. A second application, lodged before Christmas, went to Swale Planning Committee on 9 March; there will be a site visit in June and a decision made ten days later by the Committee, the appeal hearing is scheduled just after the Committee meeting.

Other significant applications: 77 High Street for ten homes in a village centre site. 111 High Street approval for ten houses and the existing bungalow being left, the Parish Council was to be invited to attend Section 106 discussions. Eden Meadow has been withdrawn by the developer; in 2019 the developer announced they wanted to build a further four hundred houses on the land. Approval, in principle, has been given for twenty-four houses behind The Tracies and 168 High Street, part of a semi, will be demolished for access.

There will be a new Borough Council in May with possibly a new Planning Committee. There is concern that some of these applications will come back and the best hope is that there will be a change in Government policy or that Swale has its 5-year housing land supply. Currently the Planning Inspector says 4.8 years is close enough, a decision on a development at Otterham Quay Lane is yet to be made by the Planning Inspector. There is an application for 2,500 homes at Bobbing.

The Parish Council is on the case, please look at the Planning Reports on the Parish Council website and please put comments in to Swale Borough Council.

#### Amenities Committee

Cllr Layer reported that the extension to the play park has been completed and work is being scheduled for the Community Woodland as part of the management plan. The Council has obtained a 20mph zone in the village. The play equipment is regularly inspected. Bredhurst Junior Football Club continue to play at the Recreation Ground and they will soon start their Soccer School. A Youth Club meets in the Pavilion during term-time and the Parish Council supports this. The Council also maintains the Cemetery and the church yard. The Annual litter pick will take place on 29 April.

#### **7. To receive questions and comments from parishioners.**

*A resident said that the 20mph zone starts at Playstool Road, we get overtaken going outside the village, would it be better for that to be 30mph?*

Cllr Palmer said he had discussed the issues with the Police and they need evidence. The Police would then put pressure on KCC Highways to help resolve the problems and the Police would come out and issue fines.

Cllr Harvey reported that the Parish Council had managed to persuade KCC Highways to adopt and fund the zone, for legal reasons it had to be left of Callaways Lane.

*A resident asked why doesn't the 20mph zone go to the end of the Conservation Area?*

Cllr Harvey said the Council had tried but the law stipulated that it had to be this. There was a full consultation and a Parish Highways Improvement Plan drawn up. The Council was amazed that KCC Highways embraced and funded the scheme.

#### **8. The Wickham Trust**

The old village hall was sold in 1987 funding part of the new hall and some was put a Trust. There are seven elected members of the Trust. Most groups in the village have benefitted although in Covid the grant applications went down. The Trust meets in February, May and October. We lost our Chairman last year and he is greatly missed by us all.

#### **9. Reports from parish organisations**

##### Newington History Group

The Group celebrated its tenth anniversary last year and is now in its eleventh year. It is one of the largest groups in the village. There are regular meetings and the Group does a lot in the village. Our aims are to protect and promote the history and heritage of the village and neighbouring areas. The Group was invited to the site in Rook Lane regarding the World War II trenches, the news of this went national; we go out and give talks; a school group was given a tour of the temple site; a beacon was lit to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee; help was given at the service and prayers for the Queen following her death last September; poppies are put on lampposts every November, one being for every man in Newington who lost his life

in the First and Second World Wars. Newington History Group has taken part in the Heritage Open days since 2015.

We are working with the Borough Council to make footpaths more interesting with interpretation boards.

#### Lunch Club

The Lunch Club meets on the last Tuesday of the month, currently there are about twenty members. All are welcome and it costs £3.50.

#### Bingo

This is held on the first Thursday 2.00-4.00 pm each month (except January) in the Newington Room, Village Hall. Members who want to enter the raffle need to bring with them each month a raffle prize. More members are needed for this group.

#### Swans Fitness Group

The Swans have a little gym meet every Tuesday morning at the pavilion. There are currently fourteen members.

#### Allotments Association

The Allotments were formed in 2005 on ground owned by the Parish Council. There are forty full-sized plots and five half-size plots. The amenity is for Newington residents only and costs £12 for a full plot and £6 for half-plot plus £3 subs to the National Association for each member. The Association has funded two lots of Palisade fencing and more will be put up at Easter, all the damaged areas have been replaced. Members are urged to collect and save water. There are only two people on the waiting list.

A barbecue for members and their families is held every summer and in lockdown there was a Best Kept Plot Competition. The stall at the 2022 village fete was very successful.

The group is involved in village life and looks after the garden around the village sign; it helped to plant trees at the Recreation ground in 2022 and two members gave a talk to Newington Court Nursing Home and this was well-received.

We would like to thank The Wickham Trust for their support which has made a big difference.

#### Short Mat Bowls Club

Short Mat Bowls is a modern variation of lawn bowls and is played on mats called rinks. The English Short Mat Bowls Association was founded in 1984; Newington English Short Mat Bowls was founded in 1991 and there are two sessions on Monday afternoon and Wednesday evening. Membership costs £10 per annum and there is a cost of £2 per session which includes tea. There are thirty-six members, we are permitted to have up to fifty. It is suitable for all ages and abilities, coaching is available. There are two teams in the Swale Winter league and we also have friendly matches with other local teams. Members do not have to compete.

We are grateful to The Wickham Trust for their support.

#### Village Hall

The hall is over thirty years old and it is a real asset to the village. The main hall is tremendous and has hosted some really good productions. Thanks go to everyone who helps maintain the hall to such a high standard.

Mr Cliff Curtis had also been involved for over thirty years and was also on the funding committee to create funds before it was started.

There are over twenty regular groups, ten of which are weekly. The pandemic was a problem but there was a grant from the Government which allowed all regular users six hires free of charge to help the groups.

The hall is continually being improved.

### Newington WI

The WI does things to make a difference and recent campaigns have included micro plastics; ending modern day slavery and making water cleaner. The group often meets with neighbouring groups. The WI meets on the third Thursday of the month, we have a speaker, a raffle and business. We also have outings.

We celebrated one hundred and three years in February. The group is all about friendship, enjoyment and fun.

### Cornerstone and St Mary's Church

Cornerstone is all about coffee and cakes and is on third Thursday of the month 9am- 12 noon. We have linked with Child Vision. Also, we have linked with Year 6 children. Lis Willmetts was commissioned as Anna Chaplain last September; Anna Chaplaincy supports older people emotionally and spiritually. There is a coffee morning at the Methodist Church on the third Saturday of the month.

The church is connecting with the community, there will be a Flower Festival in church for the Coronation weekend. The links with the school are important and we hold weekly assemblies and also help with RE lessons. We have gained a Bronze Eco Church Award and we are becoming environmentally aware; the churchyard is a wonderful resource. There has been a soil survey, especially in respect of carbon capture, and help is being sought from children at the school. We are grateful to the Parish Council for their stewardship of the churchyard.

Worship is a key thing and we have weekly services. The church is open every day. We are there for people when they want us.

### Newington Concert Party

This group has been going for sixty years and used to meet in the old WI hall. When this hall was closed, the group was invited to use the Village Hall on Tuesdays. A performance of One More Time will be held on 29 April for the benefit of the Village Hall. New members are always welcome.

### Newington Art Group

The Art Group meets in the Newington Room on the first and third Fridays of the month, 10am-12noon. The club has a relaxed atmosphere with no formal tuition and no set subject; members are encouraged to use their preferred medium. It is a friendly group and we have refreshments during the morning.

### Newington Floral Art Group

The Newington Floral Art Group was formed in 1973 for local ladies wanting to learn how to make displays from flowers in the garden. It first met in the WI Hall, then the Working Men's Club, then the Methodist Hall and is now in the Village Hall. Each month there is a different theme and there are various methods. The group meets on the first Thursday of the month at 7.15pm, subs are £20 per annum.

### Newington Youth Club

The Youth Club is run by Vibe charity for 8–12-year-olds and meets on Tuesdays 4- 5.30pm during term time. There are a variety of activities each week and we also play games on the field. Two of our young people have signed up to be young leaders. Vibe has strengthened its links with the school over the past year. We will also be doing outreach on Wednesday evenings with the Vibe van.

### Table Tennis

Ted Tydeman is the president of the Kent County Table Tennis Association, there are thirteen leagues in the county. The Sturdy Club was formed in 1945 and subsequently moved to Newington. The club has three tables and meets on Mondays for forty-five weeks of the year. There are five teams and some people are social players.

**10. Any Other Business**

No other business was raised.

Cllr Palmer thanked everyone for attending and for their reports.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.40pm

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