

NEWINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Assembly of the Parish held on 27 May 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 Elaine Jackson, Cllr Eric Layer and Cllr Barbara Weight; and Mrs Wendy Licence Clerk.

Also present were one member of the public and Cllr Gareth Randall, Chairman Bobbing Parish Council.

Cllr Mould welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Cllr Chirs Palmer and Cllr Richard Palmer.

2. Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 17 May 2024

Cllr Harvey **PROPOSED** to accept the minutes of 17 May 2024 as a true record of the meeting; **SECONDED** by Cllr Layer: **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY**. Cllr Mould duly signed the minutes as a true record.

3. Matters Arising from the minutes

None

4. Report of the Chairman of Newington Parish Council Parish Council

Newington Parish Council can have 11 Members; we currently have 9 Councillors who act for the benefit of the village.

There are two vacancies and if you, or anyone you know, might be interested in becoming a Councillor please talk to Councillors or the Clerk to learn a bit more about what is involved.

The Council has signed up to the Civility & Respect Pledge which is an initiative by NALC to enable Councils to demonstrate their commitment to addressing poor behaviour and fostering positive changes that support civil and respectful conduct.

Councillors

In August 2024, we welcomed Mrs Barbara Weight who was co-opted to the Council.

Ray Cuffley resigned from the Council in August 2024 and I would like to thank him for his contribution to the Council.

County Councillor Mike Baldock and Swale Ward Members Richard and Christine Palmer have worked hard on behalf of residents.

Christine is now County Councillor for Swale North Division and is Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services. Richard is now County Councillor for the Swale West Division and KCC Chairman.

Recreation Ground

This will be covered by the Amenities Committee report.

I would like to thank Bob Jackson, our caretaker, who looks after the facilities at the Pavilion 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.

Newington Summer Fete 2024

This was another very successful event thanks to the Fete Working Group (Tony, Elaine, Eric and Stephen) who worked extremely hard to make the day another memorable occasion for the village. This year's Summer Fete will be on 12 July, please put the date in your diary and come along and enjoy the afternoon. If you are able to help in any way, please let us know. There is still time to book a stall.

Village Litter Pickers

The Council organises the litter picks and is grateful to everyone who comes along to help. Thanks also go to the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church for providing the volunteers with a hot breakfast as well as helping with the litter pick.

Acquisition of Land

The Council is currently in the process of acquiring the land at the top of Orchard Drive at the entrance to the playing field.

Village Voice

Continues online with a printed version delivered quarterly. Ruth Brown and Michael Barlow will be taking over the production of the Village Voice.

I would like to thank all those who contribute and help deliver it.

Planning

Planning is making a significant impact on the village.

The Council continues to discuss and respond to planning applications. Often residents attend meetings to give their views on an application and this is helpful. It is really important that residents lodge their comments on the Swale Planning portal.

Stephen will give a fuller report on this.

Highways

A Working Group continues to meet with KCC Highways to discuss issues within the parish and has achieved improvements including installation of repeater signs and refreshing of road markings.

Police

Our thanks go to PC Jez Chittim who has been very supportive and engages with the Council on a regular basis submitting reports to the Council which are available on the website.

Speed Watch

Newington Speed Watch team holds regular sessions which reminds drivers of inappropriate speed. The team is keen to have more members as this will allow the scheme to be effective in the village. If you would like to volunteer and help make Newington a safer place, please contact Richard Palmer.

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 together for the benefit of the community and give freely of their time and energy to maintain our amenities and help make Newington a better place to live.

I would like to extend special thanks to:

Stephen Harvey for his support as Vice Chairman and Chairman of the Planning Committee, for his hard work throughout the year, keeping a watchful eye on planning applications in the parish and attending Swale Planning Committee meetings to put forward the parish's concerns.

Elaine Jackson Chair of Amenities for her hard work; the Amenities Committee is the back bone of the Parish Council and does a lot of work on projects before they are presented to Full Council.

Eric Layer Chairman of the Churchyard and Cemetery Working Party; Eric is a key Member of the Working Party and helps ensure the Churchyard and Cemetery are kept in good order. Eric also carries out a regular sight checks of the play equipment at the Recreation Ground, including re-tensioning the zip-wire

Wendy Licence Clerk to the council for her help, support and guidance over the past year.

5. Financial report of the Parish Council

2023-2024

The Independent Internal Auditor completed the audit of year-end accounts to 31 March 2024 on 30 May 2024 and the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) and supporting documents were submitted to Forvis Mazars immediately after the June Full Council meeting. Details of the annual return and finance documents can be viewed on the Parish Council website

2024-2025

Income

The Precept for 2024-25 was £59,053, ensuring that there was no increase in the additional council tax for band D properties in the parish. The forecast budget requirement for the year was £79,018 (ex VAT).

Total receipts were £90,806 which included a VAT reclaim of £3,752 and £2,185 lighting grant- this was the last year for the lighting grant.

Grants received:

- £5,000 from The Queenborough Fisheries Trust towards Youth provision
- £500 KCC Kent Active Grant which will go towards activities for the 2025 holiday club
- £500 from NISA towards repairing the village sign
- £1,000 Parish Council Support grant of which £200 was given to Newington Lunch Club, £300 to Newington Bingo Club and £600 given to St Mary's Church to support Cornerstone. Representatives from the scheme reported that they were very impressed at the support in the community.

The Pavilion rooms are a valuable asset to the community offering affordable space for small parties and groups; receipts from hire of the Pavilion were £585 a slight increase on the previous year. Cemetery receipts were £8,059, approx 25% less than 2023-24

The bank balance at 31 March 2025 was £125,448.

Expenditure

Total payments were £89,738 (ex VAT). This includes £1,500 grant to Newington School funded from the Parish Council Winter Support Grant received in the previous financial year.

Annual Governance and Accountability Return

The Independent Internal Auditor will conduct the audit of year-end accounts to 31 March 2025 on 2 June and the Council will sign off the AGAR at its meeting in June for submission by 30 June.

2025-2026

The budget for 2025-2026 has been set at £111,569 and includes a provision of £30,000 for a Neighbourhood Plan. The grounds maintenance and litter picking contracts are due for renewal in 2025.

The Precept requirement for the year is £61,671; which is a 3% increase and adds £1.68pa (3p per week) to a Band D property and will yield the Council an extra £2,618 in precept. If the planned expenditure goes ahead, the balance will be taken from reserves. The Council seeks grants, when possible, to relieve the financial burden from Council Tax payers.

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

6. Reports from Committee Chairmen

Amenities Committee

Cllr Jackson reported that the Committee oversees the amenities in the village well as some lamp posts, roads and footpaths. The Committee meets every month except for August and December.

The Summer Fete was a huge success; thanks go to Newington WI for providing a vintage tea tent which was greatly appreciated. This year's Fete will be on 12 July and will build on the continued success of the event.

The Recreation Ground and Community Woodland continue to be well-used by residents of all ages. Bredhurst Junior Football Club plays every Sunday at the Recreation Ground offering our children and young people the opportunity to play football.

Following an incident in the village, the track height barrier lock was cut off by the Police, who also cut the lock to the allotments. The Police have reimbursed both for new locks.

The Committee looked into installing a basketball hoop but the cost was prohibitive and there is the facility within the ball court, so the Committee decided not to proceed with the project.

The Pavilion is an excellent amenity for the parish and is available to hire for baby showers, children's parties and groups. The hand dryer in the toilet has been upgraded to a more efficient one and a baby change unit has been installed. A new CCTV camera has been installed. It was decided not to proceed with extending the Pavilion.

Youth Club- The Council supports the Youth Club which meets at the Pavilion during term time and funds the summer activity days. Last year the Council obtained significant grants towards this from The Queenborough Fisheries Trust, our thanks go to them. We are continuing to provide for the youth in the village.

Village Sign This has been repaired and is waiting to be installed, the chain posts around the garden will also be replaced. The Council is grateful to NISA for their contribution towards the repairs.

Defibrillators- the Council maintains three defibs in the village; one in the Pavilion, one on the compound fence and one in the High Street outside the doctor's surgery. The cabinet for the one at the doctor's has been replaced. Thanks go to Richard and Bob for regularly checking on the defibs.

Bus Shelters- A new Perspex section has been installed in the green bus shelter which has also been cleaned, and the brick bus shelters have been re-painted. The lettering on the memorial will be marked out.

Notice Board- the one in the High Street will be replaced, the Committee is currently investigating the location for this and is waiting to hear from Swale Borough Council whether planning permission is required.

Planters- Our thanks go to Joanna Millward who is maintaining the High Street planters and also to Cherrill Matthews and Kate Beeby for maintaining the planters near Playstool Road; this has been greatly appreciated by the Council and has received positive comments from residents.

Litter Pick-

The Council organises the bi-annual litter pick; we have just had one in April and would like to thank everyone who kindly came along.

Finally, a huge thank you to all the Members of the Committee for your support and sterling work over the past year.

Planning Committee

Cllr Harvey reported that the work on the land next to the school is under way; the work on land next to 128 High Street is also proceeding. The land off Denham Close, which already has planning permission, will be discussed next week. Wienerberger should have started brick earth extraction last year but it has been deferred to this year.

Cemetery and Churchyard

Cllr Layer reported the Cemetery is clean and tidy and looks good. There will be a plaque on the memorial bench. The ashes area has been refurbished and a sun dial installed.

Cllr Mould thanked the Committee Chairmen for their reports.

7. The Wickham Trust

A report had been received from The Wickham Trust which has supported many groups in the village including the Allotments Society; the Village Hall; the School PFA; the Table Tennis Club; the Church Fayre; the Lunch Club; The Church flowers and the History Group.

8. To receive questions and comments from parishioners.

Cllr Gareth Randall said Newington and Bobbing Parish Councils are jointly opposed to the Bobbing development. Bobbing Parish Council is interested in collaborating with Newington Parish Council regarding planning matters

9. Any Other Business

No other matter was raised

There being no further business, the meeting finished at 7.30pm