

NEWENDEN PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING held in St Peter's church on TUESDAY 6TH FEBRUARY 2024

PRESENT: Councillors Mr D Wheeler (DW) Chairman, Mrs T Gethin (TG), Mr A Garman (AG), Mrs N Holland (NH) and Mrs V Robertson (VR).

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs L Dobson, Clerk and 12 members of the public.

1. **Apologies for absence.** Received from Kent County Councillor Mr M Hill and Mr Alan Seal.
2. **Declarations of interest.** None.
3. **To consider and approve** the minutes of the meeting on 5th December 2023. The minutes, having been previously circulated, were agreed as a true record of the meeting. With one editorial change (*amendment of amount paid in salary arrears to outgoing Clerk from £138.31 to £128.31*) the minutes were signed.
4. **Matters arising** from the minutes/ action points from 5th December 2022 (*not covered elsewhere on agenda*)
 - **Outstanding contribution from Ashford Borough Council for grass cutting.** The Clerk confirmed that ABC have agreed to pay the outstanding £2k before the end of the financial year and has submitted the requested summary report for the 23-24 grass cutting season. The agreement with Ashford Borough Council ends in March 2024 and will need to be renegotiated, along with the contract with Scott Pemberton. **Action:** Clerk
5. **Verbal reports / progress updates** from Council members.
 - i. **Christmas party** – Cllr Wheeler explained the event was a great success and came in well under budget at just over £500. The PC would like to express thanks to Thorson farms for the generous donation of fireworks and for providing the venue.
 - ii. **Highways:**
 - a. *Flooding and drains clearance.* Drains have been cleared. Thanks to Alan Seal and Ivan Goodger who cleared the drains of tree debris and mud. One resident reported a brick holding up the lid of a drain up by Cophall. **Action:** Cllr Robertson to assess and contact highways as necessary.
 - b. *Newenden Bridge* – Cllr Robertson outlined latest position On 24th January, KCC Highways confirmed that a survey has been completed and it is waiting for better weather to carry out the repair needed. AECOM has been commissioned to undertake the work and a stress test in early spring.
 - c. *Village hedges* – Cllr Robertson is still waiting for a reply from highways. A steward came and looked at the pinch points in Lossenham lane, but it was a quiet day with no parked vehicles. There remains an issue if there are vehicles parked and large agricultural vehicles need access. If hedges outside all houses were cut back this would greatly help the situation.
 - d. *New village speed signage* – Cllr Robertson has been given some 30 signs to put up but no progress yet made on other calming measures.
 - iii. **Playground:**
 - a. *Lease with the Selmes Trust* – Cllr Holland has renegotiated the lease with the Selmes Trust – it has been agreed to move the entrance away from road. Flooding means the alternative gate will need to move and works will need to include a hard path to allow access by buggies. A member of the public asked if the Selmes Trust could pay

for the new play equipment, but it is understood the Trust doesn't have the funds. The new lease includes maintenance of equipment which wasn't included previously. The council agreed to budget annually for playground upkeep.

b. *Funding applications* – two applications in so far to the National lottery Community fund and Ashford Borough Council Community Amenities grant. Should hear outcome ahead of next meeting. An application was also made to the Janus foundation but the foundation won't consider it currently as won't fund anything that involves Selmes Trust land.

6. **Village Cricket** – the Cricket club did not have a representative available so sent a statement that was read out by Cllr Gethin (statement is available from the parish clerk). Cllrs discussed and invited views from those present. All agreed health and safety is paramount and should override anything else, it should also be the responsibility of the land owner (in this case the Selmes Trust). A member of the public suggested there maybe a system that could be raised and lowered on match days. The PC and residents present keen to find a compromise position. Should nets be agreed, the PC would consider a donation of up to £500 towards the cost. Moving the jetty would likely need planning permission, along with agreement from the Selmes Trust. Byelaws were written previously to discourage people from using the river, but it caused a lot of negativity. The views of a resident unable to attend were read out (available from the parish clerk). PC agreed it was for the cricket club and the Selmes Trust to find a way forward but resolved to support as far as possible.

Action: PC / Clerk to write to the Selmes Trust expressing the views of those present at the meeting and potential ways forward, e.g. safety signage for cricket days or tape off the jetty for access only and have a spotter.

7. **Village hall donation** – *to consider a donation of £3000 towards the village hall project.* Cllr Wheeler set out the current position. The previous parish council agreed to give the completed village hall £5000 as a sinking fund towards running costs. £1000 of this was then used as a grant to the Selmes Trust towards the legal costs of agreeing a lease that is still not in place. £1000 also went towards extra hours spent on the village hall project by the clerk at the time. Any further spend needs to be discussed and agreed by the current council. Based on recent progress under the new project team, Cllr Wheeler proposed £3000 be given but councillors want to understand villager's views. Cllr Holland keen for an open and transparent decision-making process. Cllr Garman suggested the amount and when it should be given should wait until the building is almost complete. Cllr Robertson keen to honour commitment of previous council but agreed that nothing should be given until the hall is up and running. Following discussion, cllrs agreed 5:0 to donate £3000 but to defer the decision on when to give the grant to the next meeting. **Action:** Clerk to add £3000 grant to budget.

Cllr Gethin asked if there was appetite for events in the village to raise money for the village hall. After discussion, it was agreed the PC should focus its efforts on raising money for the new park and could ask the village for ideas and potential volunteers for events through a survey. **Action:** Council to survey the village to gather wider views on fundraising.

8. **D-DAY 80 – 6th June 2024** – *the council to consider if it would like to arrange a beacon or similar for the nationwide event happening 9.15pm on the 6th June.* After discussion and consideration of the cost of a beacon it was agreed the council will focus its energies on events to fundraise for the park. If there are strong views from residents that a D-Day beacon is a good idea the council will reconsider at the April meeting.

9. **Meeting dates 2024** – the council agreed the following meeting dates for 2024:

- 9th April
- 7th May – Annual Council meeting 7pm, annual village meeting 8pm
- 2nd July
- 3rd September
- 5th November

10. Accounts

The Clerk outlined the financial statement to 5th January 2024. Receipts and payments up to 5th January were noted and approved.

Payment	VAT £	Total £
Ashford Borough Council – election cost		368.54
Clerk salary		314.60
Reimbursement of expenses for Christmas party – D. Wheeler		476.41
Received		
Reimbursement from PCC		310.00

11. Planning – there were no current planning applications for consideration. The following had been considered since the previous meeting:

Planning application: PA/2023/2344 Application to vary Condition of planning consent No: PA/2023/0543 – as the application was to correct a previous error the council gave a ‘no comment’ response.

Confirmation of orders: received for Bridleway AT32 and footpath AT72. The county map has now been amended to show the new route for these rights of way.

12. To consider and approve a revised safeguarding policy and new health and safety statement. The 2017 Safeguarding policy has been updated and a new health and safety policy statement written. After consideration, councillors unanimously agreed to adopt both policies. They will be added to the website and reviewed again in two years.

13. Matters for consideration as an agenda item for the next meeting (not already covered in matters arising). There was a request from a member of the public to have an agenda item on the state of the river and sewage waste. **Action:** PC/clerk to write to southern water and the environment agency to obtain recent survey results for discussion.

14. Public Questions – to allow members of the public to address or ask questions to the Parish Council in respect of any item on the agenda.

The following questions / comments were made.

1. Sports nets – where will nets be on the main roadside next to path? The questioner was referred to the cricket club for a response.
2. It would be more sensible and not contentious to give PC money to the playground.
3. Vote of thanks to Cllr Roberston for all her efforts with highways and the drains.
4. Vote of thanks to the PC for an enjoyable Christmas event.
5. Crossing the road is dangerous – what can be done? The PC is working on getting more speed awareness signs but unless there is a serious injury nothing further can be done.
6. Regarding fundraising, it is incumbent on the PC to bring the village together and run fundraising events with a sub-committee of villagers to help. **Action:** PC to come up with ideas for events and survey the village for more ideas and volunteers.
7. Was the jetty proven to be built in the right place in the first place? There was no planning needed so it could be put anywhere.
8. Did the PC pay for the jetty? No, the Selmes Trust paid for it.
9. Is the playpark closed for the foreseeable future? Yes. As the barriers are being knocked over the unsafe equipment needs to be removed. **Action:** Council to organise a working party.
10. At the moment, there is nothing available for children in Newenden and they should be prioritised.
11. Suggestion to approach Bruderhoff in Robertsbridge for play equipment.

15. Date of next meeting: 9th April at 7.30pm.

The meeting closed at 9pm.

Statement from Newenden Cricket Club 6th February 2024

“The club have records detailing games played on the ground for the last 100 years. In the last 10 years an outdoor cafe has been set up at one end of the ground and a jetty on the other end. Although according to cricket club records there has never been any injury to persons, this has raised fresh concerns about potential dangers to people and property from a handful of residents. Club representatives met with the PCC at the end of last year to listen to the concerns and work out the best plan of action.

As a result of this the club sought the advice of the Kent County Club to see if they could suggest any mitigating measures. Before they would visit the club, the KCC required a formal ball strike assessment to be carried out on the ground and surrounds. The formal assessment was paid for by the cricket club and carried out in November by a specialist company recommended by the ECB. The assessment recommended fencing of an average height of 12 metres all around the north and west boundaries of the ground. Given the scale of this, the club then approached planning officers for their opinion before submitting a formal planning application which would in the club's opinion be very unlikely to succeed. Planning officers took 2 months to come back with a suggestion that the club should submit an application for lawful development to test the water. The club will submit this application combined with suggestions for more modest fencing within the next few weeks.

It is important to note that netting of that magnitude would be cost prohibitive to a club of our size, and this along with the concerns of many residents around the visual impact of such a large structure, is why we are seeking a more tailored solution for the affected parties. The positioning of the new jetty is clearly a health and safety issue given its proximity to the playing surface so we would suggest that this is moved up the river in time for the coming season as a remedy in line with the concerns held by the parish council regarding members of the public and cricket ball strikes.

The club will keep the parish council informed on progress.”

Views of resident unable to attend 6th February 2024

Please accept my apologies but I will not be able to attend the parish council meeting as I have a previous engagement.

I note that the cricket club has brought up the issue of the new jetty. The cricket club's opinion is that the new jetty is attracting more members of the public to this part of the river bank which could be a danger due to flying balls. In my opinion it would not matter if there was a jetty or not, as this lower part of the bank has always attracted people, as it is much easier to access the river for swimming or boating.

The cricket club are suggesting that it should be moved further down the Selmes Trust land towards the east.

When the application to The Environment Agency was started, we considered what the purpose of the jetty was, it is a jetty for allowing boats to moor for a very short period of time, to allow easier access for passengers to board and disembark boats, especially anyone with a disability. The jetty was never intended as a picnic location or as a diving board.

The Environment Agency did state when we applied for permission for this jetty that we could not build one where the banks are higher, as it would mean larger and longer piers to be fixed into the banks which would cause damage to the banks and probably erosion during the times when the river is in flood.

There is a very simple solution to this problem, on match days the area between the flood defence and the riverbank should be roped off and someone should be on watch on the floodbank to ensure that nobody enters the area.