

NEWENDEN PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING held on TUESDAY 3 September 2024 in St Peter's church.

PRESENT: Councillors Mr D Wheeler (DW) Chairman, Mrs V Robertson (VR) Vice-Chairman, Mr John Turnbull (JT) and Mr Alex Garman (AG).

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs L Dobson, Clerk and 13 members of the public.

1. **Apologies for absence.** Received from Kent County Councillor Mr M Hill, ABC Cllr Walder, Parish Councillor Gillian Dalton, residents Mr and Mrs H Edmonds.
2. **Declarations of interest.** None.
3. **To consider and approve** the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 2nd July 2024. The minutes were approved and signed.
4. **Matters arising from the minutes / action points from 2nd July 2024** (*not covered elsewhere on the agenda*).
 - i. **Council to consider whether yellow lines or similar could be placed at the A28 end of Lossenham Lane.** Cllrs agreed the junction to the telephone pole is very dangerous and voted 4:0 in favour of exploring further. **Action:** Cllr Robertson / Clerk to approach KCC to see what might be possible.
5. **Verbal reports / progress updates** from Council members and Clerk.
 - i. **Highways – Cllr Robertson**
 - a. **Potholes and damage to road** – white paint has been put around holes but nothing else has happened. Contact at ESCC and KCC isn't responding – funding has been agreed for gates but unclear why a delay. **Action:** VR to follow up.
 - b. **latest position on plans for bridge closure.** Following postponement decision contact from KCC has stopped. DW had a call with KCC's Head Project Manager asking that a formal letter be sent to the PC explaining the delay until next Spring. A FOI request has been put in (14 days ago) for surveys and load test results. Understood by local historians that timbers were removed, and concrete put in in the 1970s. Concern from residents about emergency services using the diversion and for pedestrians having to walk many miles when the work does start. Cllr Hill has confirmed he is aware of the difficulty for pedestrians and is in discussion with KCC highways about the situation. Widespread concern that traffic issues are getting worse both on the bridge and in the wider village. A recent incident saw a tractor hit the bridge and a traffic calming volunteer being hit by a car as he tried to keep things moving. There was no response from Kent police, only East Sussex. Another incident of a car in the wood on the hill recently. Mud on the bridge is also a problem as neither county council clears it off. Overtaking has become another issue making traffic calming essential. **Action:** Unanimous agreement from Cllrs that the Clerk write a letter to KCC highways and project team, copied to Cllr Hill, to ask for all correspondence about the bridge or other highways issues to come via email to the Clerk and raising awareness of need for more traffic calming measures. Cllrs all agreed.
 - c. **Update on plans to manage surplus water run off onto the Rye Road.** An email to landowner of battery bank asking for an update has not yet had a reply. If no reply

within a month PC will refer to ABC / KCC. Most of drains are already blocked with gravel following work to install fibre broadband.

- d. **Footway to Sandhurst** - Cllrs Dalton and Robertson walked to Sandhurst sign as complaint from resident about the path being overgrown. Newenden side now ok but Sandhurst end is overgrown so it will be reported to KCC.
 - e. Complaint from someone about car parking in Lossenham Lane, no space being left and there are more horse boxes than before. A fence was recently knocked over and horse boxes need to be better managed. **Action:** Clerk to write a letter to Romney Marsh pony club asking for them to manage traffic in and out during events.
- ii. **Playground** – Cllr Turnbull
- a. **ROSPA playground inspection report** was carried out in July and similar to previous years findings. Things are continuing to get in a bad state.
 - b. **Update on new equipment project.** Dennis Rose has been working hard on it on behalf of the council for which thanks were given. A project team of 4 has been assembled – JT, Mr Rose, Ian Robertson and Dave. Advice has been received to use RPI rather than ROSPA for equipment checks going forwards. Project now has all the information needed to plan new equipment according to budget (£40k). No adult equipment will be added. It was agreed that upgrading the play area was also a good opportunity to review traffic calming and the speed limit outside the play area. **Action:** VR to take forward. Judy Vinson representing the Selmes Trust asked if the plans would include a second entrance with a buggy path, as previously discussed, to allow better access for families with buggies but was reassured the new gate will be big enough for buggies and wheelchairs. Once the new equipment is installed, consideration will be given to locking the park at dusk. This follows a couple of recent incidents where the car park hasn't been locked and vans have been driving around the field at night with glass found broken in the park the following morning.
- iii. **Cricket club application for nets** – latest position. VR took the item. Nothing further to report, the application that had been made was withdrawn following advice.
- iv. **Reinstatement of jetty** – response from the Selmes Trust. The Environment Agency has agreed the new location for the jetty (OS reference TQ 8383627297). This is the only location along the Trust's section of bank that the authority (the EA) finds suitable. The old location has seen a large build up of silt which increasingly renders it unusable. Ashford Borough Council has confirmed that planning permission will not be needed as the jetty will be smaller than the minimum size for planning approval and all on one level. Access will be via the bridleway. Councillors again expressed frustration that the jetty had been removed from its original site. There was concern that the new position would not be used and the public will continue to soil the bank.
- v. **Village sign-** update. Cllr Wheeler confirmed the new post was now in place and expressed thanks to Lewis Wheeler for carrying out the work and Jillian Eldridge for painting the sign ready for to be put back in position.
- vi. **Kent County Council budget consultation** – the Clerk confirmed that Councillors had met and agreed a response from Newenden PC. This had been submitted using the online form during the consultation period and reflected the views expressed when Cllr Dalton visited residents. The PC has also sent a separate letter to ABC expanding on the concerns residents raised during the consultation exercise and explaining where current services fall short of expectations.

6. Finance

- i. **Authorisation of accounts** – the following receipts and payments from 8th July to 3rd September were approved.

Payments made	VAT £	Total £
Clerk salary – July and August		646.68
Grass cutting – July and August		744.00
Day of action equipment – Cllr Wheeler		31.54
Defibrillator aftercare	41.58	249.48
Fundraiser – reimburse Cllr Wheeler		195.62
Email hosting – Vision ICT	24.00	144.00
Playsafety Ltd – ROSPA inspection	15.60	93.60
KALC – Councillor training x2	20.00	120.00
Rother Valley Timber – oak for sign	39.22	235.33
The Selmes Trust – playground ground rent 24-25		50.00
Internal audit – invoice – NB: Cheque not yet cashed.		100.00
Receipts		
Compensation from Natwest for poor customer service		400.00

- ii. **Update on banking.** The Clerk explained that the new signatories for the two Natwest accounts were finally approved and the PC could now make payments again. Cllr Robertson had spent a lot of time chasing the bank and pushing for resolution. A compliant had been raised and £400 compensation payment made to the PC. It was agreed this would be put towards the play equipment fundraising. The opening of a new reserve account with Unity Trust Bank, which specialises in accounts for public bodies and local authorities, is in progress. Once opened all the park funds will be moved to this separate account and the council will consider moving to the new bank for everything is the service and set up is as efficient as promised.
- iii. **To approve revised budget following feedback from external auditor.** The Clerk explained that as part of the external audit process the auditors had been in touch to discuss the sum in general reserves as at year end a PC can only have a maximum variance of 15% on the annual precept amount (£11,500) in general funds. Cllrs unanimously agreed that the surplus amount over this allowed variance, £5400 at year end 23-24, would be moved to special project funding as follows: £500 towards grass cutting this year to cover the gap between the cost and the reimbursement from ABC, £2500 towards traffic calming and £2500 towards the park. The budget will be revised to reflect this position at the end of Q2.

7. Planning – to consider any planning applications received from Ashford Borough Council and any other planning matters.

i. **Planning Application - NOT/2024/1326**

Church Cottages, Rye Road, Newenden, TN18 5PN. Twin oak tree - Reduction of all overhanging branches to the property. Clerk explained for information only as the PC is not a consultee. A Tree Protection Order has been placed on the tree.

- ii. **PA/2022/2709 - Rother Valley Farm**, Lossenham Lane, Newenden, Ashford, Kent TN18 5QQ – Retrospective change of use of land for the stationing of a caravan to provide temporary on-site accommodation. For information only, this application has been approved.
- iii. **ABC local plan** – JT reminded Cllrs that there is one site in Newenden under consideration as part of the Local Plan and should it be agreed the council will need to engage in the planning process at the right time.
- iv. **Planning Application - NOT/2024/1411** Lossenham Farm, Lossenham Lane, Newenden, TN18 5QQ – Prior approval for the change of use of agricultural store to flexible use within Class E. For information only, this application has been approved.

8. To consider and approve:

- i. **Insurance cover for the year ahead** – the Clerk explained the PC's current insurance ends 18th September. Councillors can agree to renew for another year at a cost of £593.53 or shop around. Councillors resolved to get further quotes before deciding on provider. **Action:** Clerk to get 2 other quotes and share with Councillors before renewal date.
- ii. **Risk management protocol** – this item was deferred to the November meeting.

9. Matters for consideration as an agenda item for the next meeting on 5th November 2024.

Councillors would like the following included: Playground update, potential relocation of noticeboard and post box **Action:** DW to explore options before meeting. Also for discussion in November – 25/26 precept and draft budget and outcome of external audit.

10. 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.

Q1. The layby by the post box is very bumpy and needs to be smoothed over – the Selmes Trust has already discussed with Mr Bourne who has agreed to supply the road plainings if a working party can be assembled to put down. ST will organise the working party as on ST land but PC will help on the day.

Q2. Has the owner of the canoe been found yet – no, canoe still at the boat station. All agreed the response when thought to be a missing person was very good from emergency services.

Q3. Water quality – does it continue to be checked? Lime Wharf Café / boat station checked about 5wks ago and still good, better than before. PC not planning to test the other end again. Fishing club also check it occasionally.

Q4. Bus times – today buses were running 120mins late. Young people trying to get to work can't get to Tenterden before 11am under the new times which is far below the service needed. **Action:** Clerk to obtain new timetable from ABC or KCC.

11. Date of next meeting: 5th November at 7.30pm