

Minutes of a Meeting of Newenden Parish Council held on 23 February in the village hall at 7.30 pm

Present:

Mr A Nilson (chairman)
Mrs R Edmonds
Mr D Richardson
Miss C Bond
Mrs E Hannavy-Cousen

Clerk

Mr J Leeves

Apologies for absence

1. None.

Declarations of interest

2. None.

Minutes of the meeting on 15 December 2015

3. Subject to a minor correction of the married name of Nicola Bourne to Nicola Holland, the minutes were agreed as a correct record.

Matters arising from the minutes of the meeting on 15 December 2015

Footpath to Rolvenden in Hexton channel area

4. The chairman reported that he had raised the issue with Rolvenden Parish Council but had not yet received a response. Councillor Edmonds said that she had asked the former footpaths officer Sue Siggers, about the footpath and had been told that there had never been a footpath in that location.

Financial Statement to 23 February

5. The financial statement to 23 February had been circulated. The clerk commented that there was now little expenditure anticipated until the end of the financial year and that overall the Council had spent little during the year. The financial statement was agreed.

Audit Arrangements for Smaller Authorities

6. The chairman explained that the Government had introduced new arrangements for the auditing of smaller authorities with annual turnover of less than £25,000 coming into effect from 1 April 2017. Following the abolition of the Audit Commission it had set up a new organisation the Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments (SAAA) Ltd and established auditing arrangements whereby smaller authorities could opt in or out of the requirements. If an authority opted out it would have to set up its own audit arrangements. Councillors decided to opt into the SAAA's arrangements.

Update on Affordable Housing situation

7. Councillors discussed the latest position on affordable housing following the recent meeting they had held with Tessa O'Sullivan of Action with Communities in Rural Kent and a representative of the English Rural Housing Association, and reviewed possible alternative sites in the parish for such housing. Councillors also discussed the forms of organisation that might be established to build affordable homes such as a community land trust.

8. The chairman said that he planned to make a report on affordable housing to the Annual Parish meeting on 5 April.

Update on village hall matters

Use of village hall by children's nursery

9. The chairman said that the nursery had been given notice to end their use of the village hall at the end of July 2016. The nursery's proprietor had agreed to bring rent payments up to date and provide timesheets for use of the village hall.

Registration of village hall with Land Registry

10. The chairman reported that the Land Registry had now registered the ownership of the village hall in the name of the village hall committee. The newly formed Newenden Trust will take over the management of the village hall charity and is likely to appoint a sub-committee for this purpose.

Future of village hall

11. Councillors discussed options for the future of the village hall.

Highways

12. Councillor Edmonds reported that Highways had finally come to clean the drains on Newenden hill. They would return to jet the drains outside of Mr Wright's property. There was a dangerous broken drain cover at the bottom of Newenden hill. It appeared that the support under the diagonal cover on one side of the drain had broken and needed replacing. This was an urgent repair and she was in touch with Highways to get it done.

13. Councillor Edmonds mentioned the need for a road name on the Old School House side of Beech road and for the road itself to be marked as a no through road. The clerk explained that road naming and road name signs were in fact the responsibility of Ashford Borough and not Kent County Council. There was a complication however because Beech road was unadopted and the Borough Council might claim that they had no responsibility for unadopted roads. The clerk gave Councillor Edmonds the name of the person in Ashford responsible for road naming.

Planning

14. Councillor Richardson reported that the Planning Inspectorate had dismissed the appeal for White Cottage. The applicant had now appointed a new architect who had produced a different design for the replacement cottage which was more in keeping with the surrounding properties in Lossenham Lane.

15. Mr Seal had submitted an application for various internal alterations to the Oast on which Councillors had commented. Councillor Richardson had returned a support comment to Ashford Borough Council. In the meantime, Mr Seal had amended this application by proposing some further minor additional internal changes. It was not clear whether this would trigger a new application or an amendment to the existing application.

Any other Business

Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC): Planning Conference

16. KALC would be holding a planning conference on 7 March. Unfortunately no Councillors were available to attend.

Day of Action

17. A day of action was planned for 16 April starting at 10am.

Queen's 90th Birthday Celebrations

18. The Queen's 90th birthday was on 21 April and celebrations were being planned throughout the country. The main form of celebration was the lighting of beacons which did not have to be located on high points. It was thought that the Parish could light a beacon on the site of the annual bonfire where some rubbish and dead undergrowth had been accumulated. The chairman said he would raise the issue at the Annual Parish meeting on 5 April.

Village Maintenance Contracts

19. The chairman said that he was seeking to establish what financial contributions the County and Ashford Borough Councils could be expected to make towards the cost of village maintenance if the Parish Council took over responsibility for undertaking the work that they currently did. It is understood that if those Councils agree to transfer the work to the Parish Council, the contributions could be around £2,000 from KCC and £500 from Ashford each per year. The total budget could be further increased by contributions from the PCC and the cricket club.

Broadband

20. Councillor Bond said that she had made further enquiries about the provision of broadband in the village. If the community were to finance fast broadband itself then the cost could be very substantial. Where it had been done elsewhere in the country for a small village it had cost £48,000. The County Council had a scheme for providing broadband to villages and she thought it would be worthwhile asking Mike Hill about it.

Annual Parish meeting

21. The Annual Parish meeting would be held on 5 April. The chairman said that he would invite Kent County Councillor Mike Hill and Ashford Borough Councillor Mike Bennett to speak at the meeting. Councillors discussed domestic arrangements for refreshments at the meeting. The local PCSO, sports clubs, the Rother Valley Fisheries Association and the Samuel Bishop Trust should also be invited.

Next Parish Council meeting

22. The next Parish Council meeting would be on 10 May. This would be the Annual General meeting.

Chairman.....

Date.....