

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of Newenden Parish Council on 13 May in the village hall at 7.30 pm

Present

Councillors:

Mr M Berry (chairman)
Mrs R Edmonds
Mrs J Eldridge
Mr C Turnbull
Mr A Nilson

Clerk

Mr J Leeves

Apologies for absence

08.33 None.

Declarations of interest

08.34 None.

Election of chairman

08.35 Councillor Edmonds proposed and Councillor Eldridge seconded, that Councillor Berry be re-elected as chairman. There was a unanimous vote to re-elect Councillor Berry. Councillor Berry signed his declaration of office.

Election of vice-chairman

08.36 Councillor Berry proposed and Councillor Nilsen seconded, that Councillor Edmonds be re-elected as vice-chairman.

Allocation of business responsibilities between Councillors

08.37 Councillor Turnbull proposed that Councillors retain the business responsibilities that they were allocated last year. This was seconded by Councillor Edmonds. For the purpose of record the allocation is as follows

Councillor Edmonds Highways matters
Councillor Eldridge Planning matters
Councillor Nilsen Archives
Councillor Turnbull

Minutes of the meeting on 12 February

08.38 It was resolved that the minutes of the meeting on 12 February, having been circulated be approved and signed as a correct record. Councillor Edmonds proposed and Councillor Turnbull seconded.

08.39 As a matter of information, the clerk explained that in the absence of a Planning Committee, he would always record planning applications that had been considered by Councillors and the comments that had been sent back to Ashford Borough Council in Parish Council minutes so that there was a formal record of them.

Matters arising from the minutes of the meeting on 12 February

Repairs to Playground

08.40 Councillor Edmonds asked whether a “no dogs” sign had yet been put up at the entrance to the playground and whether the gates and style had yet been repaired. The chairman said he had spoken to Mr Golding about the repairs, but he had not yet done them. He would remind him again. As for the “no dogs” sign the chairman said he would purchase one and put it up himself.

Edge of Carriageway erosion: Lossenham Lane

08.41 Councillor Edmonds said that she had reported the damage at the edge of Lossenham Lane to the Highways Department, but was not hopeful that they would undertake any repairs as their priority was to deal with potholes in the road itself. The clerk had been sending her reports from Kent Highways on the campaign to repair potholes in the road and she had reported some. She hoped that Sandhurst Parish Council would also have reported various potholes.

Correspondence

08.42 The clerk reported that there were only a few items of correspondence of a non-routine nature. There were several more routine items which he had put into the diplomatic bag for circulation to Councillors.

Kent County Council

Potholes

08.43 The clerk mentioned that he had received several e-mails from the Highways Department about the campaign to repair potholes in roads in the County. He had been sending these to Councillor Edmonds.

Subsidised Rural Bus Services

08.44 Ashford Borough Council had recently tendered for the renewal of their financial support to rural bus services. Information on the services to be subsidised was available from the County Council.

Ashford Borough Council

Homelessness survey report

08.45 The clerk reported that Ashford Borough Council was conducting a survey on homelessness in the Borough. Councillors felt that this was not a problem in Newenden and more relevant to Ashford itself.

Macmillan Cancer Support

08.46 The Tenterden branch of Macmillan Cancer Support had written requesting a donation. The chairman commented that the policy of the Council was not to make such donations because it did not have the funds to do so. Councillor Edmonds added that in the case of Macmillan Cancer Support she was aware that residents were prepared to make donations themselves.

Action with Rural Communities in Kent

08.47 The Council had been invited to join this organisation for which the annual subscription was £35.00. The chairman commented that Action with Rural Communities in Kent had given helpful advice on the proposed new village hall and it was perhaps more appropriate for the village hall management committee to belong to it. The chairman took the letter so that he could discuss it with the village hall management committee.

Finance

Financial Statement to 13 May

08.48 The clerk had circulated the financial statement to 13 May and commented that the first half of the precept and concurrent functions grant had been received. There was always heavy expenditure in the first half of the year because of the Parish Council and village hall insurance policies. Consequently, a transfer of funds to the Reserve Account was not possible. The monthly financial statement was approved and a copy is attached to these minutes.

Accounts for Payment

08.49 The following accounts were approved for payment:

Kent Association of Local Councils Annual subscription		£111.77
Mr J A Leeves	Petty cash	£100.00
Mr J A Leeves	Allowance and postage	£16.76
Kent Air Ambulance	Donation	£50.00
Mr G Parish	Internal audit fee	£50.00

Internal Audit Report 2007-08

08.50 The clerk had circulated the report of the Internal Auditor for 2007-08. This did not have any queries about the financial side of the Council's business, but made a number of recommendations. The Council discussed each of the recommendations.

Annual Inspection of Playground Equipment

08.51 Councillors recognised that the playground equipment should be inspected once a year by a competent organisation. This might cost £50.00 to £100 per year but was apparently required by law. Councillors asked the clerk to contact a company who undertook the inspection work and arrange for it to be done. Councillor Edmonds said that she thought an inspection had in the past been done by a company called LAPSETT. The Internal Auditor had also suggested a company who undertook inspections of playgrounds and had also pointed out that the Council's insurers Zurich also did this work. However, it was likely that they would be very costly.

08.52 The chairman indicated that he was aware that some equipment in the playground would require repair for example the climbing frame. He anticipated that the cost could be quite substantial perhaps as much as £700.00.

Litter Collector

08.53 A new litter collector, George Goad had recently been employed as Alec Garman had resigned. The Internal Auditor felt that the litter collector should have a contract of employment and the clerk said that he would prepare this for signature at the next Parish Council meeting. The letter would need to have a list of duties/tasks attached.

08.54 The Internal Auditor had pointed to some legal requirements for the employment of young persons under school leaving age and these included whether there were any byelaws relating to such employment. In order to establish the position he would have to approach Ashford Borough Council. There might also be a need to insure the litter collector against accident. The clerk would need to check the position with Zurich. Finally, the Council needed to prepare a risk assessment. The Internal Auditor had sent an example but this was not really very relevant and the clerk would have to prepare one for the specific job.

Annual Return to 31 March 2008

08.55 The clerk reported that the Annual return was complete and ready for signature. It had to be submitted to the Audit Commission by 31 May. The figures in it had been checked by the Internal Auditor and were correct. The chairman signed the financial return and the statement of assurance which the clerk had previously circulated to Councillors. The clerk also circulated an explanation of significant variances from the previous year. These had arisen because the Parish Council had not purchased fireworks on behalf of the village hall committee and the treatment of some costs had not been quite correct in the previous year although they had been disclosed. These had now been correctly categorised, but in consequence had given rise to significant variances that required explanation. There had also been a failure to disclose the playground equipment and the village sign as assets owned by the Council in the previous year and this had now been done.

Report of Annual Parish Meeting on 25 March

08.56 Councillor Edmonds commented that the meeting had been successful, but there were no matters arising that had not already been discussed.

Any other business

Planning Information Day

08.57 Councillor Eldridge reported that she had attended the Planning Information day run by Kent Association of Local Councils. It had been a very helpful and useful day. She had been assured that the Borough Council took into account the views of Parish Councils on planning applications.

Overgrown hedge

08.58 Councillor Turnbull mentioned that a roadside hedge at the top of Newenden hill was becoming very overgrown. The landowners were thought to be a Mr and Mrs Murdoch-Smith. The address was understood to be: Maron, Rye Road, Newenden Cranbrook, Kent TN18 5PL.

08.59 The clerk was asked to write to them to ask for the hedge to be cut and to remind them that if they did not do so voluntarily then the County Council had the power to cut the hedge and charge them the cost of doing so.

Riding of motorcycles on land owned by the Selmes Trust

08.60 The chairman reported that he had been contacted by the police about the noise of motorcycles being ridden allegedly by under age riders on land owned by the Selmes Trust. This land was in fact also used as the village cricket pitch. It was very central to the village and the noise from the motorcycles was causing a public nuisance. There had been similar problems in the past and it seemed that the Selmes Trust had given permission for certain people to ride motorised vehicles on their land. Councillor Edmonds confirmed that noise from the motorcycles was causing a problem to Newenden residents.

08.61 Councillors discussed what might be done about the situation. In the past an approach to the Selmes Trust had not been successful and there was no reason to believe that the position had changed. The clerk was asked to check with Ashford Borough Council to see what might be done and to see whether there was anything in the Selmes trust documents that might prohibit them from allowing the land to be used in this way. In the meantime the chairman and the clerk would liaise on drafting a letter of complaint to the Selmes trust.

Date of next meeting

08.62 It was agreed that the date of the next meeting should be slightly later on 12 June.

Chairman.....

Date.....