

Minutes of a Meeting of Newenden Parish Council held on 19 February at 7.30 pm in the village hall

Present:

Councillors

Mr A Nilson (chairman)

Mrs R Edmonds

Mrs J Eldridge

Mr D Richardson

Clerk

Mr J Leeves

Members of the public

Mr E Goad a member of the public was present.

#### **Apologies for absence**

1. Apologies were received from Councillor Livesey.

#### **Declarations of interest**

2. None except in relations to the planning application.

#### **Minutes of the meetings of 27 November and 19 December 2012**

3. The minutes of the meetings on 27 November and 19 December 2012 having been circulated were confirmed as a correct record.

#### **Matters arising from the Minutes of the Meetings of 27 November and 19 December 2012**

4. The clerk reported that he had not received any response to his letter to the Department for Communities and Local Government enclosing the resealed byelaws. He had therefore telephoned the Department and been told that they would reply shortly.

5. The chairman reported that the Landlord of the White Hart inn had withdrawn his planning application to build a new dwelling following receipt of a letter from Ashford Borough Council indicating that they were unlikely to approve the building of any new houses in Newenden because they considered that the village was unsustainable because of lack of community facilities. The chairman said that he would like to discuss the issue in greater detail later in the meeting.

6. The chairman explained that the formular used by Ashford Borough Council to help Parish Councils calculate their precepts had not been very well explained to them. Consequently, the precept had nearly inadvertently been raised when the Council had wished to maintain the status quo for another year. Several parishes had in fact made this mistake although some had intentionally raised their precepts. Fortunately the Government had not capped parish councils' precept increases this year but might do so in future. The clerk explained that the Council support grant should have been subtracted from the amount of the precept. The problem had now been

resolved and Ashford had confirmed the correct figure for the precept for 2013-14 to maintain it at the same level as 2012-13. The chairman commented that the Concurrent Functions grant would remain payable at a reduced rate for the next two years.

### **Financial Statement**

7. The clerk commented that the Council would incur little expenditure between now and the end of the financial year. The Council had in fact spent less than in the previous year. Councillors approved the financial statement.

### **Consideration of Public Liability Risks**

8. The clerk explained that he had received a circular from the Council's insurance broker, Came and Co, about the increase in claims for public liability and suggesting that parish council's review risks to the public. The clerk read out a list of areas for which parish councils commonly had responsibility and the public liability risks that might be involved. Councillors thought that the only areas where there were public liability risks related to the children's playground and the cricket field. The children's playground was subject to an annual safety inspection and Mr Goad whose house overlooked the playground, confirmed that none of the play equipment was currently in a dangerous condition. The chairman said that he would ask Mr Seal to undertake a periodic inspection of the playground to ensure that the equipment was in good condition and that no other risks had arisen.

9. Councillor Eldridge mentioned that there was a small hole in the ground at the rear of the cricket pitch that could be a hazard. It was agreed that this should be covered.

### **Management of the Selmes Trust lands**

10. The chairman reported that the farmer who was to have grazed his sheep on the Selmes Trust land in the Spring would now not be doing so and he had asked others in the village with farming contacts to see if any other farmers might be interested in using the land for grazing.

11. Councillor Edmonds commented that the gate at the sewerage farm end of the land needed to be repaired again.

12. The chairman said that Mr Seal had offered to make a pedestrian path along the road boundary of the cricket pitch from the gate onto the road behind the cricket pavilion in the corner of the field to the exit on the corner of Lossenham Lane. This would enable pedestrians to walk on the path instead of on the road where there was no pavement and they were in danger of being run over by passing traffic.

13. Councillors discussed possible surfacing materials for the path. Mr Seal was proposing to use wood bark but road planings were also considered. Councillors thought that bark would be preferable and Councillor Eldridge said she would speak to her son who might be able to supply it. It was thought that the Selmes Trust and the cricket club should be consulted about the construction of a path and an enquiry should be made as to whether planning consent was required.

### **Highways**

14. Councillor Edmonds reported that Kent Highway Services had successfully completed gully cleaning and agreed to respond to the recent note from Highways asking for potholes to be reported

as part of their “find and fix” programme. There were several potholes along Lossenham Lane and one outside the White Hart that needed fixing.

15. The police had rejected the Council’s request for double white lines on the narrow stretch of the Rye road on the Newenden side of the bridge. It was unclear why the police objected to the proposal. However, the single white line in the middle of the road needed repainting and Highways had agreed to do this.

## **Planning**

### Sustainability

16. The chairman said that because Ashford Borough Council considered that Newenden lacked facilities such as a shop and Post Office they had classified it as unsustainable. In consequence additional new housing would not be permitted and new planning applications for residential development would be refused. The result of this policy was that with the decreasing size of households the village community would decline. Although there was no land available in the village for any large scale development Councillors thought that there might be a few small sites where one or two dwellings could be built. Under the current policy however, this would not be possible.

17. The chairman had spoken to Ashford Borough Councillor Mike Bennett a member of the Borough Council’s planning committee. Councillor Bennett was sympathetic and would be prepared to support any request for Newenden needed to be put on the list of sustainable villages. In order to understand the policy of the Borough Council it was thought that Councillor Bennett should first be invited to a meeting to explain their approach. The parish council would then consult the village at a township meeting to see if there was support for getting Newenden onto the list of sustainable villages.

### Planning application 13/00066/AS

18. The chairman explained that the owner of the Oast was Mr Seal who was the Council’s river warden. In consequence it could be considered that all members of the Council had an interest in the planning application. The chairman thought that he had the greatest interest in the application as he knew Mr Seal best and he left the room whilst the application was considered. The clerk gave the remaining three Councillors a dispensation to discuss the application.

19. Councillor Edmonds chaired the meeting for consideration of the application. Councillors noted that only part of the existing house was listed and that the proposal involved an infilling extension. Councillors did not have any concerns about the proposal and supported it. The clerk was asked to advise Ashford Borough Council that the application was supported.

## **Council records**

20. The clerk explained that he was approaching state retirement age and had decided to move within the next few months to a smaller house in Tunbridge Wells. He would continue as clerk to the Council, but as he would be downsizing his new house would have less space and consequently he would be unable to store the Council’s records currently in a four draw filing cabinet. Most of the records were rarely accessed in paper form and Councillors agreed that apart from the essentials such as insurance policies, bank statements and the last six years previous accounts there was no point in retaining paper copies. The chairman said he would store the Council’s records when the clerk moved. The clerk would empty the filing cabinet and only retain essential paper documents.

**Any other business**

21. Councillor Richardson reported that he had now produced a draft of the parish plan and would be holding a meeting of the committee that had drawn it up in the next few weeks to get it into publishable form. Councillors provided details of the number of residences and population of the village for inclusion in the plan.

**Dates of the next meetings**

22. The Annual General meeting of the Parish Council would be on 7 May. The Annual Parish meeting would be on 26 March.

Chairman.....

Date.....