

**MINUTES OF EASTRY ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON
WEDNESDAY 5th MAY 2021 AT 8.30 pm VIRTUAL MEETING DUE TO CORONAVIRUS
RESTRICTIONS via MS Teams.**

Present: Councillors M Jones (Chair) N Kenton M Smith C Boughton D Russell
 M Hay M Kemp
 Joanna Jones Clerk to the Parish Council District Cllr S Manion (part)

Cllr Jones opened the meeting and thanked everyone for attending

1. APOLOGIES

County Cllr S Chandler, Cllrs A Barwick, L Taylor, N Ellis

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

The minutes of the last Annual meeting, held on Tuesday 19th March 2019 had been on the Parish Council website for the past two years.

3. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising from the last Annual Parish Meeting.

4. PARISH COUNCIL REPORTS

a) Chairman's Report - Cllr Mark Jones

The last year has presented the Parish Council with new challenges and we have had to adapt and change due to the unforeseen circumstances we found ourselves in, namely COVID-19.

Usually our meetings would be held in the parish room, however following government guidelines we had to close the parish room as well as the public toilets which meant our monthly meetings were initially cancelled, including last year's Annual Parish Meeting. Working under a different set of rules and guidelines and by using technology we held subsequent Parish Council meetings virtually using MS Teams. Since April 2020 all our meetings, Ordinary, Planning, Finance and an extra planning one have been held online using MS teams. This was a new challenge for a number of us not least the connectivity and reliability of broadband within the village! After this last online meeting we will be reverting to face-to-face meetings since the government has declined to allow online meetings to continue.

Due to the pandemic a number of planned events were cancelled – The Great British Spring Clean, Eastry Parish Council 'Meet & Greet' Open Day, VE Day Celebrations, Carols outside the Five Bells Public House, to name a few.

In the last year Planning has been front and central of the Parish Council and we have commented on 31 planning applications and objected to 5 of those.

The Old Hospital site is still waiting for development to start and now all the buildings have gone, save the old chapel, we should see some progress soon. Councillor Colin Boughton has had contact with the developers and we will of course pass on any relevant information to parishioners as soon as we have it.

The Gore Lane development by Etopia has almost started (Heras fencing up and hedge-row removed) and the council hosted a presentation by the developers on the site. There are some issues that have been raised namely:- the rear footpath, pedestrian crossings, transport management plan and Section 106 monies, all of which we will continue to work on to strive to get the best outcome for the village, even if some aspects are beyond Parish Council influence.

The big issue this year was the Local Development Plan issued by DDC following governmental directives to increase housing across the country. 3 sites were identified, Lower Gore Lane, Lower Street and Eastry Court Farm and through some excellent design work by Councillors Nick Ellis, Martyn Hay and Deborah Russell and a subsequent leaflet drop, all parishioners had the opportunity to comment to the Parish Council and to submit their own views direct to DDC Planning and Eastry Parish Council. My thanks to Nick, Martyn, Deborah and Jo Jones (Clerk) for their hard work in achieving this important communication link. Tree works have been carried out at the Gun Park, Eastry Church and around some street signs along the roads. A new bench has finally been installed by the horse trough on the High Street and the picnic bench at the pond was repaired. The Clerk also ensured that the grounds maintenance contractors worked to the letter

of their contract and the cemetery looks a lot better for it!

Our Environmental Engineer, Richard Ginn, has done some sterling work in keeping our streets and village clean and reporting back to the clerk on village issues. He has been out in all weather and even with Covid restrictions has gone about his job with passion and friendliness which, on behalf of the Parish Council, I thank him for. Please take the time to chat to Richard on his rounds.

Councillor Andrew Barwick continues to monitor the Public Access Defibrillator (PAD) at the Village Hall and as well as the one at the Fire Station we are well served and grateful to Andrew for all his work.

The Parish Council members have changed a lot over the last two years - we have seen a change in the clerk from Sarah Wells to Jo Jones, some councillors retire and others join. We said goodbye to Sarah Wells who has been the stalwart of the parish council for a number of years and her tireless effort and enthusiasm for all things Eastry will be hard to match. I know Jo is indebted to her for the assistance and guidance in the transfer of the roles in these Covid times which has not been ideal. I know Parish Councils rely on the efforts and dedication of the clerk and in Sarah we had a true champion of the role. I'm sure Jo will continue the high standards going forward. It is hoped that we can celebrate Sarah's commitment and service to the Parish Council properly in due course, but for the moment we all wish her well in her retirement and future plans.

Peter Bailey also retired from the council giving up numerous roles – Planning Committee Chair, Finance Committee member, SID (Speed Indicator Device) operator and manager where he and his wife would move the speed camera round the village on 2 week cycles. He also carried out tireless work on the allotment committee, not only being the council liaison but latterly the chair and secretary! He has handed over to Jo and Lindsay Taylor has stepped into the large shoes vacated by Peter. I have fond memories of my times with Peter on the council and he was always the senior figure with a huge amount of experience and knowledge and I, on behalf of the other councillors, would like to thank him whole-heartedly for his commitment to Eastry and we wish him and Gill all the best in their retirement where he can no longer worry about unmuting himself and enjoy the first Monday of each month without needing to attend any more meetings.

New Councillors who have joined us are Nick Ellis who brings some much-needed IT expertise and insight and taken on the role of Planning Committee Chair. Martyn Hay has joined and has brought social media and communications to the fore in an effort to communicate and share information across the village. He and Nick have also been instrumental in working to develop the new website to make it more user-friendly, accessible and relative. Mike Smith has joined us as well and Lindsay Taylor was co-opted and brings some new ideas with her. Lindsay has taken on the role of Finance Committee chair as well. I welcome all new councillors to the Parish Council and as soon as we can return to face-to-face Parish Council meetings I will buy the first round in the Five Bells afterwards!

The usual issues continue to be on the agenda:- speeding, dog poo, road conditions (including potholes) and parking (spaces and double yellow lines). We have had the Zebra crossing and the Belisha beacons repainted, some potholes and roads filled and repaired. We have been working to develop a Highways Improvement Plan (HIP) to reduce speeding; to ensure parking is sensible and proportionate, but due to lack of funding we will need to prioritise where we spend the money. KCC will be conducting some speed and traffic surveys over the summer to help to inform our decision making.

The winter periods saw the village succumb to ice and snow; in fact some of roads were treacherous and downright dangerous. Early anticipation by the council saw the salt/grit bins full and re-filled when required, the Chair and Cllr Boughton spreading salt/grit on some of the more slippery inclines to ensure the roads and paths were passable and useable.

There are numerous projects that we are considering and they include:- the refurbishment of the Gun Park Play area (works due to start in June to repair some areas) with a longer term view of replacement/renewal, Cllr Deborah Russell and the Clerk are working on this; a new parish room to replace the old corrugated steel-clad building on the Recreation Ground, which as a community asset, is used by village groups and organisations such as the Girl Guides, Eastry Village News, Bowling Club and other end users, as well as hosting, in normal times, Parish Council meetings and storage of council archives. A replacement building has recently had its' planning application renewed, the COVID effect again has delayed any progress and this will be a subject to bring forward in due course.

Speedwatch has been set up under the management of Councillor Colin Boughton with a number of volunteers undergoing the required police-led training to operate mobile speed cameras, at pre-determined

sites, to reduce speeding through the village. My thanks to Colin for his continuing efforts in coordinating this activity and to those volunteers for stepping up to the plate – let's hope it has the desired effect. I would like to thank all Parish Councillors, current and recently left, for their continued support and work throughout this pandemic amid difficult times and for all the work they do to make Eastry one of the best villages to live and work in.

b) Finance Report

**Eastry Parish Council – Finance Report – Annual Parish Meeting
Unaudited Accounts 2020/21**

	Actual to 31-03-2020	Budget 2020/21	Actual to 31-03-2021	Notes
RECEIPTS				
Precept	55,070.60	56,190.00	56,190.00	
Allotments	824.10	850.00	974.12	
Burials	1,550.00	2,000.00	2,200.00	
Grants	10,000.00	-	-	
Interest Current Account	108.54	100.00	27.13	
Capital Interest	384.78	380.00	60.25	
VAT	2,853.67	3,236.10	5,738.42	
Other	65.06	65.00	66.16	
	70,856.75	62,821.10	65,256.08	
Current Account Funds B/F	107,259.57	106,187.11	106,187.11	
Capital Carry Forward	68,667.24	69,052.02	69,052.02	
	246,783.56	238,060.23	240,495.21	
PAYMENTS - CURRENT A/C	Actual to 31-03-2020	Budget 2020/21	Actual to 31-03-2021	
Salaries	12,867.93	13,404.00	12,537.27	Note 1
Administration Costs	6,120.86	13,869.00	9,388.55	Note 2
Parish Room & Pavilion	913.72	1,690.00	740.87	Note 3
Ground Works	11,308.85	12,089.00	8,921.51	Note 4

Allotments	667.16	1,400.00	1,185.25	
Leisure Fields	893.50	5,300.00	772.95	Note 5
Community Services	8,381.78	9,415.00	8,985.51	
Grants & Coffee Break	3,667.63	3,700.00	545.00	Note 6
Church Yard Maintenance	95.80	3,000.00	-	Note 7
Membership and Publications	784.96	1,142.76	880.76	Note 8
Events & Communication	406.02	450.00	462.77	
Contingency Other Projects	1,532.50	3,548.45	-	
Damage fallen tree Gun Park	-	-	1,377.20	
Professional Fees - Parish Room	-	500.00	581.00	
Street Furniture	1,395.00	1,000.00	522.00	
New Parish Room Funds	250.00	131,052.02	-	Note 9
Play Area - Allotments	16,522.30	-	-	
Play equipment Gun Park	-	13,500.00	-	Note 10
New toilets	-	4,000.00	-	Note 11
VAT	5,736.14	-	2,288.38	
Reserves	-	19,000.00	-	
Total	71,544.15	238,060.23	49,189.02	

Notes

Note 1 - New Clerk - on a lower pay scale

Note 2 - Budget includes pension deficit fund contingency

Note 3 - Maintenance less than budgeted

Note 4 - Less additional work than budgeted

Note 5 - Less vandalism repairs & maintenance than budgeted for

Note 6 - No coffee break due to Coronavirus and less grants allocated than budgeted for

Note 7 - No Church Yard maintenance or repairs required

Note 8 - New publications not required

Note 9 - Saving towards New Parish Room

Note 10 - Saving towards Gun Park Play Area refurbishment & refresh

Note 11 - Saving for when toilets
need refurbishing

**Eastry Parish Council
Financial Year Ending
31st March 2021
Bank Reconciliation**

Balances per Bank Statements as at
31st March 2021

	£	£
NW Current Account	100.00	
NW Debit Card A/c	315.15	
NW Reserve Account	123,058.54	
Unity Trust Bank Unity Trust Deposit Account	17,832.50	
		50,000.00
		191,306.19
Ousting Cheques		-
Net balances as at 31st March 2021		<u>191,306.19</u>

The net balances reconcile to the receipts and payments book as at 31st March 2021

Opening balance		175,239.13
Add: Receipts in the year		65,256.08
Less: Payments in the year		<u>- 49,189.02</u>
Closing balance at 31st March 2021		<u>191,306.19</u>

5. REPORTS

DDC Cllr Nick Kenton

Cllr Kenton explained the importance of using DDC's online reporting tool to report any waste problems and gave the Clerk the name of the new Waste Manager. A discussion was held on possible courses of action to be followed for the construction of the new Parish Room, to be financed with the ring-fenced capital funds held in reserves and a possible Public Works Board Loan.

DDC Cllr Steve Manion

The last 12 months have been an exceptional year for the county council, in addition to the usual duties of

the authority, we have had to contend with a Pandemic and also the Brexit transition. Either one or on their own would have made for challenging circumstances but with both together it really has been an exceptional year and I am pleased to say the county council has been up to the challenge.

The pandemic has seen a real change to the way we conduct our business with virtual meetings very much the norm. All aspects of county business have been able to migrate to these new ways of working. One area in which I get much experience is home to schools transport appeals and we have been doing these either as virtual hearings or with the appropriate PPE using a covid secure venue in Maidstone.

The officers have been kept busy with delivering our key services and again PPE has been very much in demand.

The council has been in regular contact with partners especially health partners to respond to the pandemic. The leader was sending out regularly updates and these were forwarded to the parish council to ensure that the local Community was kept informed. The county was very much at the forefront in delivering the symptomless testing programme and our director of Public health Mr Andrew Scott- Clark was a regular on local TV news casts.

As we move forward, I expect that KCC will again have a lead role in delivering services in our Community.

I also want to thank the parish council who have also been key stakeholders in the response to the pandemic.

KCC – Cllr Sue Chandler Sandwich Division

Reducing the activity of KCC over the past year into a shortish report is quite clearly somewhat of a challenge and we need absolutely no reminder that it has been totally overshadowed by the Covid 19 pandemic.

However I think it is very much worth saying that the year and the unprecedented situation has also shown very clearly the effectiveness and ability of local government to rise to the challenge and deliver on the Governments instructions for a huge range of support to residents, business and the care sector. That, of course, is not just the County Council but Dover District and Sandwich Town Council as well, the partnership between all levels has been vital to achieve delivery, solve problems and above all keep residents as safe as possible. The Kent Together helpline, which is still operating, provided a service that helped those who were in need of help and support during the pandemic, this was linked to Dover District Council's support services and community organisations.

Our community and voluntary organisations, local businesses and a huge number of individuals were absolutely amazing throughout and I would just like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who played their part in providing care and support to those who needed it during the pandemic.

Throughout the year the challenges for Kent County Council have included sourcing and distributing PPE (which we did so effectively in Kent that the military came to see how we had done it) both for our own staff, but also for GP's, Care Homes and many more. Extending our IT systems to ensure that every member of staff could be connected to work from home. Developing protocols to ensure that face to face meetings with vulnerable adults and children could and did continue as safely as possible. Providing advice and guidance for schools and Headteachers. Virtual School Kent and The Education People developed a huge range of online learning and guidance that was available to all schools. A website that was updated continually with Covid advice, advice on financial support, advice for parents.

KCC Public Health played a huge role in monitoring infection, advice to the public, setting up testing both symptomatic and symptom free testing and more recently the surge testing. Symptom free testing is continuing in Sandwich in the Guildhall through til June.

The total amount of Covid grant from Government to KCC has been £139.1 million, some of which has been distributed and delivered as support by the Districts.

In addition all the implications of Brexit have had to be planned for with transition due to commence on 1st

January this year. In fact, we dealt with a different completely unforeseen consequence of Covid when the French closed their borders for 48 hours and then required evidence of a negative Covid test before re-entry. The Kent Resilience forum planning for the new year was implemented but there were additional problems which have all been well documented. Manston has been in use since that time for Covid testing for HGV drivers but has now been decommissioned which was welcome news. From the outset I spoke out about the use of Manston and the impact on our local communities and continued to get action taken on carriageway repairs and roadside litter (together with District colleagues). Overall the commercial activity across the 'short straits' is now back to expected levels.

There has also been 'business as usual' activity to keep our roads repaired and drains cleared, despite reducing government funding, this is an ongoing challenge particularly given weather conditions earlier in the year, but the response has improved. The five year highway maintenance plan has been published, anyone who is interested can look on the website and see what is planned for their local area in terms of renewal and maintenance. The pothole blitz continues to operate, please do report potholes through the website.

The past year also included the somewhat larger project to completely refit and refurbish the Sandwich Toll Bridge, the £500,000 project was completed last autumn and I would like to thank all local people for their patience during that time. The historic bridge now has new mechanism and paintwork to see it through another 25 years at least, with regular maintenance!

I have worked with parishes to develop and progress their Highways Improvement Plans, which prioritise the improvements they would like to see in their parishes. I have also been part of the A257 Group, supporting their ambitions for improved safety along that road. There are, of course, some local highways issues that continue to concern residents and I will persevere with efforts to find workable solutions.

The recent consultation on the Vision Zero strategy which is the plan to reduce fatalities on Kent roads to zero by 2050 but importantly to achieve a year on year reduction in serious accidents and to make sure that local communities feel safer using their local roads is an important step to address the concerns that I know are shared by many in our villages.

Our social services teams, both for adults and children, have worked under difficult conditions to keep people safe and work with the increasing number of those in need of help, including seeing many residents face to face with the appropriate protection. Many people have spoken to me about their concern for children following the past year and I was able to announce in March our Reconnect programme for all children and young people in Kent for the next year and beyond. The idea behind Reconnect comes from young people who told us they would prefer a positive programme focusing on opportunities rather than emphasising the 'damage' that may have been done to them or their futures by the pandemic. The programme aims to help them reconnect to:

- Health and happiness
- Learning missed
- Family, friends and community
- Sport, activities and the outdoors
- Economic wellbeing

There has been some significant environmental work done during the past year with the Net Zero Action Plan which commits KCC to reducing greenhouse gas emissions from its estate and wholly owned traded services to net zero by 2030, its worth noting that KCC have reduced their greenhouse gas emissions by 54% since 2010. I was also a member of the working group that developed the Plan Bee pollinator action plan for Kent, which is designed to do what it says on the tin and take the lead and encourage local communities to improve habitats for pollinators. Through my members grant funding I have been able to support Gazen Salts Nature Reserve in Sandwich and it's good to see the recent work that has been done to restore the habitat there, a beehive in St Clement's churchyard, a small verge nature reserve in Ash, the cemetery in Stourmouth all of which contribute to our local environment. Whilst a slightly different environmental project, it was very exciting to see the sweeps turning on the Chillenden windmill last autumn after restoration, the first time since 1949 they had turned under wind power.

Finally our budget for 21/22 is focussed on maintaining frontline services despite the unprecedented financial

context, and has regrettably had to include a rise in Council Tax of just under 2% and an additional 3% which is ringfenced for social care, where we are experiencing substantial increases in both costs of care and demand and complexity of care. Social care accounts for 47% of the total budget and is a priority for the Council but was also identified as a priority by residents, both for adults and children, in the consultation that was carried out in the preparation of the budget.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending.

The meeting closed at 20.55