

**MINUTES OF EASTRY ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 23rd MAY
2023 AT 7.30pm AT EASTRY VILLAGE ROOM**

Present: Councillors: M Jones (Chair) A Barwick M Gourlay N Kenton J McDonnell
M Smith D Russell L Wood Joanna Jones - Clerk
Cty Cllr Sue Chandler Dist Cllr Steve Manion (Part) 44 Members of the Public

Cllr Jones opened the meeting and thanked everyone for attending. A member of the public wished to record the meeting as a video made by a member of the public from the public gallery, this was explained to all, speakers had the opportunity to say if they did not wish to be recorded. The video was to be sent to the Clerk and the Parish Councillors, who would be able to decide how it could be accessed.

1. APOLOGIES

Cllr Hay

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

The minutes of the last Annual meeting were available in the Annual Meeting report pack, copies were available for all present and had been on the Parish Council web site for the pasted 12 months.

3. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising from last year's meeting.

4. EASTRY HOSPITAL SITE – Report from Stratton Land Developers

National Development Manager John Leigh gave a very informative report on the progress of the development so far and what was due to happen next. He then took numerous questions, responses included that the houses were planned for shared ownership for local people, local contractors were being used on site, there was no plans for access through Whitewood Road and the Chapel was currently planned to be a commercial building.

The Chair thanked Mr Leigh for his report.

5. PARISH COUNCIL REPORT

a) Chairman Report

Over the last year Planning has again been a constant for the PC, numerous applications have been submitted to the Parish Council from Dover District Council for consultation, for most there are no objections, but some have been objected to but are still passed by DDC.

The Gore Lane Development by Eutopia started (fences erected) but has stalled for 'geotechnical' reasons, we hope it moves on.

The Hospital site is underway and our guest speaker tonight from Stratton Land is John Leigh, National Development Manager, who has given us a lot of information on the development.

The DDC Housing Plan is in its final stages after various stages of consultation which the Parish Council has been actively involved with.

The Parish Council are still considering a Cemetery extension with the Church Commissioners, but as new plots can now be consecrated at the moment of need, the urgency for more space has been reduced.

The Butts Pond Licence has not been renewed yet with the Church Commissioners (who actually own the pond - the Parish Council doesn't own it but manages it) as they are still considering its long-term future, although we believe that the lease will be renewed.

The Parish Council continue to be concerned about speeding in the village and parking on double yellow lines, Dover District Council has recently committed to more frequent visits from traffic wardens at different times during the day.

Speedwatch has now ceased due to a lack of volunteers and we would welcome anybody who has the time and the inclination to step up and restart the programme. There is training provided and there is a commitment to the project, but more information can be sought from the clerk.

The Mobile Speed Indicator Device (SID) continues to be moved around the village by the Chair, to discourage speeding and to also record data of traffic speeds, times and numbers.

The Parish Council submitted their annual Highway Improvement Plan to KCC Highways this year and our

priorities are

- 20mph zone throughout the centre of Eastry (High St., Mill Lane, Lower street (part of), Sandwich Rd and Woodnesborough Rd) but feasibility survey needs to be completed
- Church Street parking
- Felderland Lane

Marion Gourlay and vice chairman Deborah Russell have a presentation on the HIP so they can explain more later.

The Parish Council have also tried to engage with Stagecoach to re-instate the buses on Gore Lane, the Dover Manager attended a Parish Council Meeting and a Coffee morning to hear resident's concerns, but unfortunately no news on the bus routes being re-introduced yet.

Litter picks were carried out, they were very successful and enjoyable with a good number of residents turning out from youngsters to our older residents with refreshments paid for by the Parish Council and provided by Mary at The Five Bells.

The dog poo dispenser in the Gun Park, provides bags from DDC for emergency use. The Clerk undertakes regular patrols with the DDC Dog Warden and reported areas are cleansed by the dog patrol team, but the amount of dog poo around the village continues to be a disappointment with the usual doggy suspects continually fouling the grass and paths. Please can I urge you all to challenge owners to act responsibly and pick it up.

Of particular concern is the fact that some dog owners are allowing dogs into the play areas, which is unacceptable. There are signs and gates to prevent dogs getting in and it is obviously not good for the play areas users. Please can I urge you all to challenge owners to act responsibly and pick it up.

The allotments are well used and look great across the Parish, there are still a few plots available, please contact the clerk if interested. We have had two water leaks over the last year, the oldest taps were replaced a while ago and now the supply has been upgraded.

Following the sad passing of our much-loved chemist Mr Hafeez, the Parish Council, in agreement with his family, are going to install a memorial bench at The Cross with a plaque, the old bench will be moved to the Gun Park once it has been refurbished, the new bench is on order, we will let you know when it is installed. The Parish Council Coffee mornings have been well attended and it's good to see them back. The Coffee morning frequency has increased to every other week and they are a focal point for the village with the Community Warden and PCSO attending when they can.

Thank you very much to our Coffee Morning volunteers who ensure that it takes place, very much appreciated but special thanks to - Tamara and Andrew Barwick, Sarah Wells, Sally Castle, Joe & Anne McDonnell and Tracey Davis plus others for their help. Eastry Parish Council in conjunction with Age Concern in Sandwich and funding from DDC held very successful Meet, Heat, Eat and Greet lunches from early Autumn through to the Spring, subsidised two course lunches were served along with free jumpers, blankets, scarves, gloves, hats etc on a monthly basis, thanks for the support from Hilli and Sanjay at Bickers selling the tickets, much appreciated.

The Parish Council continue to report to DDC, KCC and Public Rights of Way regarding overgrown vegetation, highways concerns, potholes and overgrown and damaged footpaths and would like to urge Parishioners to report any Highways issues using the KCC Highways Reporting Tool on the KCC website and Public Rights of Way issues using the Public Rights of Way Tool.

The Gun Park play area has had a massive overhaul costing £72,000 with contributions from the National Lottery and Section 106 money from the Shemara Farm development but the vast majority was paid for by the Parish Council, the Parish Councillors and children in the village are delighted with the result. The Skate Park has also had a refurbishment of the slopes and more work is due to be started shortly on re-surfacing the tarmac.

The Parish Council are still looking at replacing the Parish Room, we have investigated the cost of renovation and upgrading instead of rebuilding but this too came in at a lot of money and would require a renewed planning application. It is an item on the agenda and we are looking at all options. This is an important free at point of use village/community facility and needs attention. Essential repairs have already been carried out to the electrics, boiler and toilets and it is used by many village organizations – Bowls Club, Brownies and Guides, EVN, Neighbourhood Watch, local community wardens, the Parish Council etc. Thank you to Richard our Caretaker for the invaluable job that he does in keeping our village environment and public toilets clean and he is always about with a cheery smile on his rounds through the village.

Thank you to my fellow Parish Councillors for all that they do and the Clerk.

This year your Parish Council on May 4th was re-elected, unopposed in the local election, two people stood down from councilor roles -

Nick Ellis who continues to work with Eastry CAN, helping those in the village in need and a quiz master of some note!

We also said goodbye to Martin Kemp who has faithfully served Eastry Parish Council since May 2007. He has had a long association with Eastry, living and working in the village and has dedicated himself to the village for many years. We will miss him and wish him well in the future.

Your Parish Councillors are:-

Myself

Vice Chairman Deb Russell

Nick Kenton

Andrew Barwick

Martin Hay

Mike Smith

Joe McDonnell

Lindsay Wood

Marion Gourlay

Each Parish Councillor stood and introduced themselves.

We do have 2 vacancies on the Council so if anybody is interested in becoming a Parish Councillor then please contact the clerk for more information.

Eastry Events, run by a great team have the Eastry Fun Day on the 3rd June using the Gun Park and Recreation Ground and after the success of last year's Queen's Jubilee Fete, I am sure it will be a great event. The Church will be using the Recreation Ground for the renowned Church Fete on July 22nd and Jazz on the Green on 29th July.

Please contact the Clerk, Jo Jones, clerk@eastry-pc.gov.uk, 07903 739792 if you have any concerns or issues within the parish. The Parish Councillors, Jo and myself will try to continue to make Eastry the lovely village it is already.

Thank you very much for coming, please do stay for drinks and nibbles afterwards.

b) Finance Report

Eastry Parish Council – Finance Report – Annual Parish Meeting Unaudited Accounts – 2022/23

	Actual to 31-03-2022	Budget April - 2022/23	Actual to 31- 03-2023	
RECEIPTS				
Precept	56,592.79	58,991.79	58,991.79	
Allotments	1,352.62	1,300.00	1,391.65	
Burials	7,595.00	2,200.00	4,116.00	
Grants	-	-	10,000.00	Note 1
Section 106 Monies	-	-	4,612.00	Note 2
Bank Account Interest	42.51	15.00	1,028.30	Note 3
VAT	2,291.12	2,667.94	2,667.94	
Other	426.87	66.00	66.45	
	68,300.91	65,240.73	82,874.13	
Current Account Funds B/F	18,247.65	37,649.92	37,649.92	
Capital/Deposit Carry Forward	173,058.54	173,101.05	173,101.05	
	259,607.10	275,991.70	293,625.10	
PAYMENTS - CURRENT A/C	Actual to 31-03-2022	Budget April - 2022/23	Actual to 31- 03-2023	
Salaries	16,024.53	16,730.00	18,061.24	Note 4
Administration Costs	1,897.89	10,163.00	5,033.08	Note 5
Parish Room & Pavilion	1,134.53	2,385.00	1,586.94	Note 6
Ground Works	9,942.96	15,530.00	13,950.61	Note 7
Allotments	245.70	1,600.00	1,179.69	Note 8
Leisure Fields	4,982.49	4,120.00	6,145.69	Note 9
Community Services	9,247.44	9,775.00	10,105.38	Note 4
Grants & Coffee Break	1,325.51	3,000.00	2,374.96	Note 10
Church Yard Maintenance	-	3,000.00	110.00	
Membership and Publications	881.14	1,060.00	882.82	
Events & Communication	440.00	2,650.00	507.83	Note 11
Contingency	-	2,112.68	125.00	
Village Hall Hire	66.00	264.00	-	
Professional Fees - Parish Room	-	2,000.00		
Street Furniture	-	550.00	28.25	
New Parish Room Funds	-	131,052.02		Note 12
Play equipment Gun Park	-	60,000.00	60,041.37	
VAT	2,667.94	-	14,258.11	
Reserves	-	10,000.00		
Total	48,856.13	275,991.70	134,390.97	

Notes

Note 1 - Lottery Awards for All Grant towards Play Area

Note 2 - Shemara Farm S106 monies for Play Area

Note 3 - Interest rates increased

Note 4 - Backdated Government payrise higher than budgeted for

Note 5 - Timing differences with insurance payments

Note 6 - Boiler repairs and electrical report & works

Note 7 - Start of new Grounds Maintenance Contract in year

Note 8 - Taps and pipework replaced due to water leaks

Note 9 - Repairs & refurbishment of Skatepark & Teen Shelter

Note 10 - Grants - Eastry CAN, Eastry Shortmat Bowls Club, Eastry Events & Coffee Morning funding

Note 11 - Litterpick refreshments & Local Plan leaflet printing & distribution

Note 12 – Capital Reserves – New Parish Room

Eastry Parish Council Financial Year Ending 31st March 2023
Bank Reconciliation

Balances per Bank Statements as at 31st March 2023

	£	£
NW Current Account	100.00	
NW Debit Card A/c	509.17	
NW Reserve Account	123,612.16	
Unity Trust Bank	14,499.81	
Unity Trust Deposit Account	<u>20,517.19</u>	
		159,238.33
O/S debit card transaction		<u>4.20</u>
Net balances as at 31/03/23		<u>159,234.13</u>

The net balances reconcile to the receipts and payments book as at 31st March 2023

Opening balance	210,750.97
Add: Receipts in the year	82,874.13
Less: Payments in the year	<u>- 134,390.97</u>
Closing balance at 31st March 2022	<u>159,234.13</u>

The Clerk was thanked for all her hard work over the year and presented with flowers by the Vice Chair from all of the Parish Councillors and said thank you.

6. REPORTS

DDC Cllrs Nick Kenton and Steve Manion

District Cllr Kenton gave the report commenting on how great it was to see so many people at the Annual Parish Meeting and reported on the DDC's plans for affordable and social housing and capital investment projects completed and planned, he then took questions on the Sandwich Guildhall project and Richborough Household Waste site.

The Chair thanked Cllrs Manion & Kenton for their report.

KCC Cllr Sue Chandler

Cty Cllr Chandler started by addressing concerns about the consultation on the proposed closure of the

Household Waste site at Richborough, she stated that additional options for the consultation to not shut Richborough have been requested, the Consultation will open in mid-July and she urged all to submit their comments.

Kent County Council Member's Report to Eastry Annual Parish Meeting – May 2023

The past year for the Council has been dominated, unsurprisingly, by the financial issues we face and your Parish Councillors will have heard that message in my reports throughout the year. Financial monitoring at the nine month (end of December) stage of this financial year, reported to the March Cabinet shows a projected 2022-23 overspend of £53.7m. This is gradually coming down, and part of it will be met by the £25m the Council set aside as a risk reserve at the start of the financial year. Nonetheless, it seems almost inevitable that we will, for the first time in more than twenty years, see a significant overspend at the close of the financial year, which will have to be met from our reserves.

The biggest factors in the overspend were: cost pressures in adult social care, notably older people's residential services; growth and increasing costs in school transport, in particular for SEND students; and sharply higher placement costs, reflecting the challenges in foster care recruitment and higher costs for more specialist placements, in children's services. On the capital side, we are seeing the impact of severe inflationary pressures. Shortly before the Autumn Statement, the Leaders of KCC and of Hampshire wrote a well-publicised letter to senior ministers setting out their concerns about the unsustainable financial position confronting the majority of councils.

The budget for 23/24, which was agreed in February, included proposals for necessary savings, whilst the decisions to include those savings were difficult the challenge of delivering the budget in the current economic climate will be greater.

We are very aware of the **continuing financial pressures that residents are also facing** and continue to offer support, we have a strong record in supporting our residents through the crises and pressures of recent years, which began with a commitment, ahead of much of the sector, to delivery of Free School Meals in the half term in October 2020. Since that time, government has brought forward a series of programmes, running from September 2021 as the Household Support Fund. In the first two rounds of funding, over 450,000 awards have been issued to Kent residents. This has covered areas such as food vouchers for Free School Meal eligible families, energy vouchers, support with water bills, funding passed to District and Borough Councils and more. The third round of the Fund is currently being delivered, while a £22 million fourth round (announced recently) runs for a full year to March 2024.

Alongside this, the Council has run its own Financial Hardship Programme, which includes and has built on the Helping Hands Scheme, launched in February 2021 with £10 million from the Covid Emergency Grant. The innovative schemes have included the Money Advice Hub and strengthening of Referrals and Data Sharing between councils. Much of the focus is on ensuring that services and support are available to the residents already entitled to them, and that we help residents build their financial resilience.

Roads, traffic, speeding and travel issues are an important issue for many residents in our villages and whilst Parish Highways Improvement Plans have provided a good platform for road improvements in Parishes to be prioritised I am very much aware that the lack of funding from KCC for implementation is a frustration particularly for small parishes.

Winter weather has taken its heavy toll on our roads. In the December/ January period, highway reports were five times the level of the same period a year ago. While constrained by tight funding and inflationary pressures, we have since January been stepping up the pace of repairs; 14,000 potholes have now been repaired and 68,414 square metres of road has been patched across the County, I continue to encourage residents to report potholes online, the reporting tool is effective and dangerous potholes (there are criteria about depth and severity) will be prioritised. The national budget announcement of £200 million for roads funding, meaning some £6 million for Kent, is a welcome addition.

The issue of road closures for utility companies has been a particular issue for some parishes and I have been working with the Highways officers to look at mitigation and sensible scheduling, but unfortunately legislation requires us to allow utility companies to install and repair their infrastructure under our roads.

Unsurprisingly residents tell me that they are very concerned about **health care, care of the elderly** which is a significant part of our Adult Social Services being a particular worry. 42 **Integrated Care Systems (ICS)**, aimed at joining up health and care, came into being on 1 July last year. Kent and Medway is an ICS. The Leader of KCC chairs the Integrated Care Partnership (ICP), I am one of the three KCC Member representatives, which is centred on the NHS, Medway Council and Kent County Council but which brings together a broader group of partners concerned with the health, wellbeing and care of the population. The ICP was required to develop an Integrated Care Strategy to a deadline of the end of last year; this was successfully delivered, but of necessity is being developed further and is a starting point for more detailed and specific plans.

Over a hard winter, the Council worked closely with the NHS to seek to manage the pressures on both of our services, using technology to reduce the risk of crisis, increasing care and support at home and developing Integrated Hubs to manage transfers of care. Much of this is, however, work in progress and the severe pressures have meant that we still see far greater reliance on short-term beds than we would wish (and which contribute to our budget pressures). Nonetheless, the Council continues to develop local work on integration, and at a national level we await the publication of Dame Patricia Hewitt's review of integrated care systems, which we have reason to hope can strengthen the truly local nature of health and care systems.

July saw our **Children's Services rated Outstanding** by Ofsted. Ofsted stated that "Children are at the centre of Kent County Council's culture and practice. ... Outstanding practice is evident for children in care and care experienced young people as they clearly benefit from the support they receive and make good progress." As the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services this was a very positive highlight in the year and is testament to the hard work of all those involved in care for our children, particularly our social workers working 'on the front line'.

In February KCC was designated one of 14 'trailblazer' councils for developing in the government's **Family Hubs programme**, which is designed to provide integrated support for families and children. This gives access to £183,000 initial funding and to more than £10 million transformation funding for implementation of the model over the next 2 years.

This is linked to the Community services consultation which ran from January to the end of March focusing on how we deliver services to communities. A decision on next steps is due to be taken by Cabinet in July.

In contrast the Ofsted/CQC revisit of **Special Educational Needs and Disability** services in September produced a deeply disappointing outcome, with inspectors concluding that the Kent area had made insufficient progress in all 9 of the areas of weakness identified in the 2019 Written Statement of Action. There is a comprehensive plan of improvement to address the long-running challenges in this service.

2022 saw a large number of small boat crossings and as part of this the number of **Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)** referred to KCC was a record 1,390. (There had been 276 at the end of March this year). However, because of the agreements that we reached with government in 2020-21 I can report the following:

- Better financial arrangements mean that the Kent council tax payer is not exposed to these costs.
- The National Transfer Scheme was made mandatory, and some 1,640 UASC young people have been transferred under this scheme since June 2020 to other councils.
- We have around 500 UASC in our care, just above the 0.1% level set by the 2016 Immigration Act, and also provide a Reception and Safe Care service for 120 UASC before they go to other councils.

The Leader and I met recently with the Immigration Minister Robert Jenrick and we will await the outcomes of the recent announcements and the Immigration Bill in the coming months.

The environment and climate change are issues that I know local residents care deeply about, as a Council we continue to focus on our own contribution to that agenda. On 23 March DEFRA issued the long-awaited regulations and guidance implementing provisions of the Environment Act 2021, covering a range of issues from consistency in waste collection to responsibility for Local Nature Recovery Strategy and Biodiversity. Most districts in Kent already have a separate food waste collection, including Dover District which has a particularly good record for collection and recycling rates, but the Environment Act requires that all councils must do this. KCC will be the lead authority for the Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy and we are expecting extra funding for this and for our new Biodiversity duties.

Kent's Plan Bee continues to contribute with information and advice, regular newsletters and influence, residents can subscribe to the newsletter. The green roof on the bus shelter in Wingham is an example of real practical contributions.

I continue to support your Parish Council and local residents with issues, to follow up enquiries and provide information wherever I can, you will find my contact details at the end of this report.

Finally I want to thank all the volunteers in our Community who contribute so much, this includes your Parish Councillors who work so hard on your behalf.

KCC Member for Sandwich and the Villages, Email: Sue.Chandler@kent.gov.uk 07989134576

Cty Cllr Chandler then answered questions on Sandwich Technology timetable changes and bus route concerns.

Eastry CAN

Nick Lawrance-Ellis, the Chair of Eastry CAN gave a report about Eastry CAN, it was formed as a result of the cost of living crisis to support villagers in Eastry who were struggling, £5 vouchers were available to redeem in Eastry shops and food outlets, he urged those that had outstanding vouchers to spend them and anyone who wants to apply for vouchers to go to Eastrycan.org.uk. The next Eastry CAN quiz is on 10th June in the pub.

Highway Improvement Plan

Cllrs Russell and Gourlay gave a report on Eastry's Highway Improvement Plan, explaining the system and including the proposed 20mph zone in the middle of the village, the parking issues on Church Street due to inconsiderate parking and the joint efforts with Worth Parish Council to tackle speeding on Felderland Lane.

The Chairman thanked everyone for coming and invited them to stay for refreshments and help themselves to the 30mph toolkit resources.

The meeting closed at 9.25pm