

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
ELMSTED PARISH COUNCIL ON 28th SEPTEMBER 2023 HELD IN EVINGTON HALL**

Present: Cllr Burge (Chair) Cllr J Argar
Cllr Castle Cllr Francesconi
Cllr Stanley Cllr Wright

In attendance: 12 members of the public, County Cllr Carey, District Cllr Martin and The Clerk

| | | To be actioned by |
|-----------|---|-------------------|
| 1. | To receive and approve apologies for absence. | |
| | Apologies were received from Cllr P Argar and District Cllr Hollingsbee | |
| 2. | To receive declarations of interest (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Other Significant Interests). The nature as well as the existence of any such interest must be declared. | |
| | There were no declarations of interest. | |
| 3. | To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 11th May 2023 | |
| | The minutes were signed as a true record. | |
| 4. | To receive a presentation from Kent School of Food | |
| | <p>Rebecca Smith from the Kent School of Food introduced herself.</p> <p>Rebecca explained the history of the public house in Bodsham and the link to the school. The name “The Timber Batts” has been retained by Mr and Mrs Berry, so the pub at Bodsham may be renamed ‘The Yard at Bodsham’, although nothing has yet been finalised.</p> <p>The Kent School of Food is looking at UNESCO and sees their vision to be alongside this.</p> <p>The Kent School of Food is considering extending the site to a market garden and wildflower meadow at the Yard.</p> <p>The building will require renovation and possibly a planning application to undertake this.</p> <p>The Kent School of Food is looking for funding.</p> <p>There were a few positive comments as well as concerns expressed about: noise from music, large scale of events, who is being catered for, what measures are in place for parking, timetable of work, Are the vegetable beds to be raised, what is the vehicular impact of the groups, impact on the environment, opening times.</p> <p>The Kent School of Food are hoping to listen to the community and are looking at a family friendly venture. Rebecca reported that they had been in conversation with Ed Kyrke-Smith and that he had mentioned that Brook School would be keen to be involved with this venture. The cookery lessons will involve the children during some timetabled sessions but the building will remain as a fully functional pub. Parking will not be reduced and the raised beds would be available at different heights and environmentally friendly options for raised beds are being considered.</p> <p>The maximum number of any group involved would be 15 so vehicular use would be limited, the use of the minibus was mentioned.</p> <p>The opening times have yet to be agreed.</p> <p>The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and for answering questions. The Parish Council is not able to provide formal support but is very grateful for the attendance.</p> | |
| 5. | To discuss matters arising from the above minutes not covered by the agenda. | |
| | There were no matters arising from the minutes. | |
| 6. | To receive a Report from District/County Councillors | |
| | <p>Cllr Hollingsbee had sent a report, Cllr Carey read this. (see Appendix A)</p> <p>Cllr Carey gave her report (see Appendix B)</p> <p>Cllr Martin gave her report (see Appendix C)</p> | |
| 7. | Public session: To receive questions and comments from the public on any agenda item. | |
| | Please report potholes as you find them. | |

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| 8. | To discuss and agree the opportunity for a defibrillator in Bodsham | |
| | The Parish Council discussed the quotations received and agreed to go ahead with purchasing the defibrillator and having it installed by Garry Watts. | |
| 9. | Financial matters: | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) To note/authorise the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. To note the Parish Council's financial position, Chair to initial bank statement. ii. To authorise any payments | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) To note/authorise the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. To note the Parish Council's financial position, Chair to initial bank statement. The financial position as at 31st August 2023 was noted and the bank statement initialled. ii. To authorise any payments There were no payments due. | |
| 10. | To consider any changes to the Risk Assessment. | |
| | The Parish Council considered any changes to the Risk Assessment. No amendments were necessary. | |
| 11. | Planning matters: to approve the responses to any recent planning applications. | |
| | There had been one application received and there were no objections to this. | |
| 12. | Any Other Business (for information purposes only): | |
| | There was no other business for information. | |
| 13. | Determining the time and place of ordinary meetings of the Council up to and including the next annual meeting of the Council. | |
| | Thursday 14 December 2023 Thursday 14 March 2024 Thursday 9 May 2024 | |

The meeting closed at 8.45pm.

Signed:

Date:

Appendix A.

District Councillor Report – Elmsted 28 September 2023

Contact jenny.hollingsbee@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk Mobile 07887918458

Planning – I have received a number of enquiries on planning issues throughout the Ward recently and have visited a number of sites. If you have an issue with a planning application please do contact me. I understand that the Pentland Planning Application will be heard by the Planning & Licensing Committee on 3 October and it has been recommended for approval by Officers.

Waste service - A report by East Kent Audit Partnership has identified that some aspects of the District's street cleansing service need to improve, particularly in relation to town centres and busier areas of the district. This has resulted in a number of improvements being recommended in a report being considered by the Audit & Governance Committee.

Budget – because of some extraordinary circumstances, the budget for 2023/24 is projected to be £4.5 million in deficit. This is because of interest rate rises, inflation and other unforeseen expenses arising from other projects not progressing. However, there were approximately £1m savings accumulated by the previous Administration from 2022/2023 and also a refund of £500,000 VAT which currently have been allocated to reserves and can be used to reduce the projected deficit for 2023/24.

Otterpool Park – On 8 September, I joined the Design Team for Phase 1b (Barrow Hill Sellindge) on a tour of the area surrounding the site and pointed out some of the characteristics and issues for the Villages. I joined the morning session of the Planning Day on 9 September.

Network Rail Ticket Office Closures – I have received a number of emails and letters from residents about the proposed ticket office closures. In my response to the consultation I included all the points raised with me by individuals and encouraged them also to respond to the consultation.

Do sign up to 'My Community Voice' - a messaging service that helps Kent and Medway residents, businesses, and community groups to keep in touch with their local policing teams. The service sends updates about your local area directly from the police officers themselves: it allows you to reply to the alerts sent to you, share information and tell Officers about the issues affecting you.

Appendix B

Report for Elmsted Parish Council meeting 28/09/23

There's been much recent media attention about councils facing bankruptcy. Birmingham Council faces large liabilities because of not paying equal pay over a number of years and other councils are in trouble because of failed property deals.

This is not the case with KCC which dealt with equal pay many years ago and which has not bought property for investment.

However, all councils that have responsibility for social care have seen rising demand and rising costs. Here in Kent, we face a potential overspend this financial year in social care and in transport costs for children with Special Educational Needs.

Work is already under way to bring the budget back into balance and there's a special meeting on 05 October to review progress and set out in more detail what needs to be done to make the necessary savings. Difficult as this will be, we are confident it can be done.

A unique challenge faced by KCC is the situation with Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) arriving in small boats from France. (UASC are under 18-year-olds travelling on their own). It's been ruled by the courts that KCC must accept responsibility for all UASC arriving in Kent and that these young people must receive the same care that a young person already in Kent would receive. The numbers involved are far beyond the resources of any single council and the National Transfer Scheme, which shares UASC to other councils, remains voluntary and slow. KCC's Children's Services were judged as 'Outstanding' by Ofsted but they can't cope with the scale of the problem we face. We expect the Government to meet the extra costs involved but KCC alone cannot deal with what is both a national and international problem.

KCC is also involved with schemes for refugees who arrive legally in this country. Homes for Ukraine has been one of the most successful of these and it's been good to see so many people in Kent open their homes this way. There are also schemes for Syrians, Afghans, and those fleeing Hong Kong.

These schemes all receive Government funding, but they add to our costs for services such as school places, school transport and social care.

Despite all the above, there continues to be good work being done across KCC in social care, preparation for keeping roads open over winter, our award-winning country parks, a growing network of EV charging points and more. KCC has

also won funding from Government for more tree planting and if you know of suitable sites in the parish, do let me know. There's also a new round of Solar Together just started. Solar Together is a group buying scheme for solar panels and battery storage.

Nearly 1,400 homeowners have accepted their offer from the most recent auction (lowest price wins) with installations now under way. Solar Together is open to Kent residents, small businesses, and community organisations. See www.kent.gov.uk and search for 'Solar Together'.

Susan Carey, Member for Elham Valley

Appendix C

Stagecoach - Stagecoach, a private company, has implemented a set of wide ranging and savage cuts to local bus services across the district. A combination of service reduction and service removal. Stagecoach was hoping to get additional subsidies from KCC but KCC themselves have a huge deficit to make up, so it was hardly surprising that very few additional subsidies were granted to Stagecoach. The implementation of these cuts in services has been poorly managed causing a great deal of stress and disruption for people in the district. Please check the Stagecoach website (<https://www.stagecoachbus.com/timetables>) for up-to-date timetables.

Green Business Grant Scheme - F&HDC have recently launched a Green Business Grant Scheme to help smaller businesses become more energy efficient. Grants of up to £10,000 are available. More details of the scheme and how to apply are on the Folkestone Works website (<https://folkestone.works/green-business-grant-scheme/>).

Rural England Prosperity Fund grants - Hopefully, in the next few days there will be an opportunity to apply for a grant from the Rural England Prosperity Fund. F&HDC were awarded £570k grant to be used between 2023 and 2025. Briefly, the grants are a minimum of £3,000 and a maximum of £30,000. The grant will need to be match funded, for community groups this will be a minimum of 10%. When the details are confirmed, on what the grant can be used for and how to apply, they will be placed on the Folkestone Works website (<https://folkestone.works/>).

Rural initiatives meeting - Folkestone and Hythe District Councillors who represent the North Downs rural wards recently held a meeting on with representatives from the Parishes to discuss the issues facing the rural communities and how the District Council can best support them. Topics discussed included how best community groups with shared interests could connect and share ideas, routes for getting people involved in their communities and having a voice in the district council for rural areas. We are hoping to arrange a forum to explore these important issues further.

Joint Parish Council meetings - For information, there are quarterly Joint Parish Council meetings held with the District Council. These take place online and the next meeting is on 16th November. The meeting can be viewed via the live stream on YouTube: bit.ly/YouTubeMeetings

Otterpool Park - There was a recent well-attended public consultation workshop held for Phase 1b in Sellindge Village Hall. The feedback I received on the day was, although all communications are welcomed, the format of the presentation was frustrating for residents who wanted answers. The review of the Otterpool Park project is continuing. The Governance report has been received and the recommendations are being implemented. The Financial report has been received and the recommendations are being discussed. The third element, Management Review, is ongoing. It has been agreed the Council should look to find a Joint Venture partner to help the project to progress.

Financial position of F&HDC – F&HDC are predicting a £4.5million deficit for next year, inherited from the previous administration, and there is likely to be a reduction in services to save money. Consultations are ongoing, all front line services and statutory services, however, will be fully protected. I'll provide further updates when available.

Asian Hornets - There have been several Asian Hornet nests found in the District. Asian Hornets are a highly aggressive non-native predator of native insects. They pose a threat to honeybees and other pollinators. The number of sightings of the Asian Hornet is increasing so please report anything you feel is suspect.

Ward Grants - Just a reminder, all District Councillors have a £3,000 Ward grant available to help fund local community projects. Please contact me if you have any projects you would like help funding.

Contact: Elaine.Martin@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk