

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
ELMSTED PARISH COUNCIL ON 12th DECEMBER 2024 HELD IN EVINGTON HALL**

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

In attendance: 2 members of the public, Cllr Martin and the Clerk

Cllr Burge welcomed everyone to the meeting.

		To be actioned by
1.	To receive and approve apologies for absence.	
	Cllr Castle, County Cllr Carey and District Cllr J Hollingsbee had sent their apologies.	
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 12th September 2024	
	The minutes were signed as a true record.	
4.	To discuss matters arising from the above minutes not covered by the agenda.	
	There were no matters arising from the minutes that are not covered by the agenda.	
5.	To receive a Report from District/County Councillors	
	District Councillor Jenny Hollingsbee: Age UK Hythe Lyminge & Ashford – I was as surprised as most people to learn of the closure of the Lyminge Centre. I have been in contact with Cleo Smith, the Chief Executive who advises that the Centre has not been able to cover its costs for some time and that with the reduction in KCC funding, the minimum wage and the proposed increased National Insurance Costs that running Lyminge is no longer sustainable. I understand that negotiations have also taken place with the District Council who own the building and that while the rent increase could possibly be postponed, this would not materially change the situation. Cleo tells me that the Dementia unit will go to Hythe and that transport will be available to take those in most need to Hythe. Many residents have told me that they will very much miss the café and shop and I hope further consideration will be given to this situation. Princes Parade Hythe – a short initial survey has just been published seeking views on the future use of this site, the survey is open until 5 pm on 16 February. The land had been earmarked for a swimming pool, leisure facilities and 150 houses, but this was rejected after the May 2023 district council elections. However, as the Council now has to prepare a new Local Plan and with increased housing targets set by Government, all options have to be considered. Otterpool Park – discussions are on-going with Homes England and a six months collaboration arrangement, along with other papers, was considered by the Cabinet on 11 December 2024 (which was webcast). The Waste water treatment plant planning application is imminent and a public consultation was held at Sellindge recently. May I take this opportunity to wish you all a very Happy Christmas and Healthy New Year. Contact - jenny.hollingsbee@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk Mobile 07887918458 District Councillor Elaine Martin: Otterpool Park An important step has been made to start the building of the Otterpool Park garden town and will be discussed by the F&HDC Councillors at next week. The Council has worked with Homes England, the government housing and regeneration agency, to reach a Collaboration Agreement between them. The agreement, if accepted, would be for six months and will allow F&HDC to access the additional skills and	

expertise needed to attract investment and take the development forward. Prior to any building being started the waste water treatment plant has to be constructed. I attended the public consultation on the Waste-Water Treatment Plant planning application, held here last Tuesday. Lots of people, including Councillors, attended and there were Officers on hand to answers any questions. The consultation is ahead of the formal planning application which is likely to be submitted in January. Details can be found on www.otterpoolpark.org and comments can be submitted up to the 24 th December.

Lyminge Age UK

As you know, decision has been taken by the Trustees of Age UK Hythe, Lyminge and Ashford to close their Lyminge hub. This is a great loss to Lyminge and the surrounding villages. The Trustees say the decision was taken because the cost of running the facility was unsustainable and they had been making a loss on running the services there. Dementia support will still be available in Hythe.

Trees Initiative

The Chair of F&HDC, Cllr Anita Jones, has recently obtained tree whips from The Woodland Trust and around 600 trees were planted in Hythe recently. Other locations are set to benefit from new young trees soon. There are approximately 200 left and community groups and schools are being encouraged to get in touch with suggestions, contact chair@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk.

North Downs Forum

Our next meeting will be on the 9th January, 19.00, venue Elham Village Hall, and will focus on health and wellbeing in our rural communities. If you would like to see the new Elham Community Shed, come along at 18.30, and you will be shown around. If you know an individual, group, or organisation that might be interested in joining, let me know and I'll get them added to the mailing list.

F&HDC corporate plan

The consultation on the corporate plan has been completed, with 550 responses received, about a third of these were from younger members of the community. This is a really good response rate as these things go, so many thanks if you returned the online questionnaire.

Green Community Grants

In the New Year we are expecting to see the launch of a new programme of Green Community Grants, building on the success of the Rural England Prosperity Fund and the Green Business Grants. The grants will be available to community groups, town & parish councils, and local businesses, and intended to support a wide range of sustainability and carbon-reduction projects.

Winter Fuel Payment

As I am sure you will have heard, the Government is stopping the Winter Fuel Payment for any pensioner who is not in receipt of Pension Credit. If you are of pensionable age, or know someone who is, please check to see if you can apply for Pension Credit. If you are in receipt of a benefit, you will be automatically eligible for the Winter Fuel Payment and may also be able to get help with your council tax. The application form is available on the Council's website and can either be filled in online or downloaded and returned by post. Friends and families can help by checking with relatives and helping with filling in the application form. There is still time to apply, the deadline for applications for Pension Credit and to be able to receive the Winter Fuel Payment is 21 December 2024.

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

County Councillor Susan Carey:

The new Government's budget announced extra funding for Social Care. As Social Care is the largest expenditure made by KCC and demand for Social Care continues to grow this was welcome. However, the increase will not be sufficient to meet the increased costs caused by other measures in the budget. The charities and organisations who we engage to look after the elderly and disabled face a sharp hike in costs from the proposed increase to the National Living Wage and employers' National Insurance Contributions (NIC) and the lowering of the level at which NIC are paid. Local care providers and charities have already made contact with KCC to say they will not be able to continue their work without support to meet these costs. (These three measures are also of course impacting the wider economy by raising costs and discouraging companies from taking on staff.)

	The final settlement for Local Government will be confirmed in late December but we already know we will need to make substantial savings to balance the KCC budget for 2025/26. One of these savings is from ceasing the Wellbeing Service for Adults to save £3.45m annually. The Wellbeing Service includes an innovation fund to trial new approaches to care and Care Navigators who advise those over 55 on services. You can take part in this consultation and others at https://letstalk.kent.gov.uk/ KCC also intends to reduce staff numbers to save money starting at a senior level but the proposed consultation on this is on hold as the Government is expected shortly to announce radical changes to local government and any changes we make must take this in to consideration. The team at Kent Highways that work with schools and young people to promote safer behaviour on our roads has just won the Prince Michael International Road Safety award for outstanding achievement and innovation. The course which the team developed can be taught by schools and colleges as part of the post-16 PSHE curriculum. Kent Highways also work with businesses, motorcyclists and older drivers to help raise driving standards. It's work that makes a difference but mostly unseen. This award should help raise awareness of their efforts. Another piece of good news is that KCC has just launched a scheme (funded through Government grant) to help pensioners who are just missing out on eligibility for the Winter Fuel Allowance. The scheme provides a £200 voucher that can be used for energy or food or both. It's open to people to apply themselves or refer others. Details of this and other schemes are on www.kent.gov.uk or you can ring 03000 41 92 92. Susan Carey, Member for Elham Valley, Kent County Council Cllr Francesconi asked whether there is any money available to develop Otterpool. Cllr Martin said that she hoped so.	
6.	Public session: To receive questions and comments from the public on any agenda item.	
	The tree on a telephone wire along the bottom road has been reported but is still there. The SLOW signs in Bodsham need refreshing.	
7.	To receive an update on the old Timber Batts building	
	It is thought that someone is living in the building. It is thought that there is a potential purchaser interested in purchasing the pub.	
8.	Financial matters:	
	To note/authorise the following: i. To note the Parish Council's financial position, Chair to initial bank statement. The financial position as at 30th November 2024 was noted and the bank statement initialled. ii. To authorise any payments The were no payments due. iii. To agree the proposed budget for 2025/26 The budget was agreed. iv. To agree the precept for 2025/26 The precept was agreed for £2250 for 2025/26.	
9.	To consider any changes to the Risk Assessment.	
	The Parish Council considered any changes to the Risk Assessment. No amendments were necessary.	
10.	Planning matters: to approve the responses to any recent planning applications.	
	The application 24/1405/FH was discussed. This was approved with conditions but there is no approval report available to view. It was agreed that Cllr Martin would follow this up with the Officer.	

11.	To agree the steps forward to adopting a gov.uk email address and website address in line with the good practice to comply with the AGAR 2024/25.	
	The Parish Council agreed to adopt a gov.uk website and email address. The Clerk will take this forward.	
12.	Any Other Business (for information purposes only):	
	There was no other business to be discussed.	
13.	Determining the time and place of ordinary meetings of the Council up to and including the next annual meeting of the Council.	
	Thursday 13 March 2025 Thursday 8 May 2025	

Signed:

Date: