

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
ELMSTED PARISH COUNCIL ON 14th MARCH 2024 HELD IN EVINGTON HALL**

Present:

Cllr Burge (Chair)	Cllr J Argar
Cllr P Argar	Cllr Castle
Cllr Francesconi	Cllr Stanley
Cllr Wright	

In attendance: District Cllr Martin and The Clerk

		To be actioned by
1.	To receive and approve apologies for absence.	
	There were no apologies to be received.	
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 received.	
3.	To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 14th December 2023	
	The minutes of the previous meeting were signed as a true record.	
4.	To discuss matters arising from the above minutes not covered by the agenda.	
	The defibrillator in Bodsham has been fitted and is now operational, fitting costs to be invoiced. The defibrillator for near the Church has been delivered and will be fitted and added to "The Circuit" defibrillator location website. "The Yard" website is up and running and the Parish Council remains hopeful that this will result in the public house reopening.	
5.	To receive a Report from District/County Councillors	
	Cllr Hollingsbee had sent a report, this was taken as read. (see Appendix A) Landslips are an issue in Folkestone and Memorial Hill will be closed for some time. Cllr Carey had sent a report, this was taken as read. (see Appendix B) Cllr Argar asked what the chance is for the Eurostar returning to Ashford, it is unknown but worth filling in the petition. The state of the roads was discussed again; all potholes etc must be reported. One of the metrics for funding is based on the number of reports, so please report as often as you can. Cllr Martin had sent a report, this was taken as read. (see Appendix C)	
6.	Public session: To receive questions and comments from the public on any agenda item.	
	There were no public in attendance.	
7.	Financial matters:	
	a) To note/authorise the following: i. To note the Parish Council's financial position, Chair to initial bank statement. ii. To authorise any payments	
	a) To note/authorise the following: i. To note the Parish Council's financial position, Chair to initial bank statement. The financial position as at 29th February was noted. ii. To authorise any payments A cheque was signed for the Village Hall use.	
8.	To consider any changes to the Risk Assessment.	
	The Parish Council considered any changes to the Risk Assessment. The Clerk is to chase the arborial report on the tree in the church car park.	
9.	Planning matters: to approve the responses to any recent planning applications.	

	Planning Applications received were: 23/2079 – Listed building application 23/2013 – Garage and external store 23/1995 – Lawful Development Certificate for campsite	
10.	Any Other Business (for information purposes only):	
	The Parish Councillors are to consider the £14,100 CIL money and how it might be used to benefit the community. Suggestions have been: Village Hall, Church car park and Recreation ground.	
11.	Determining the time and place of ordinary meetings of the Council up to and including the next annual meeting of the Council.	
	Thursday 9 May 2024	

The meeting closed at 8.15pm.

Signed:

Date:

District Councillor Report for Elmsted Parish Council – 14 March 2024

Otterpool Park – There is a lot of work being undertaken on this project but there is no confirmation yet of a strategic partner.

Budget Meeting - held on Wednesday 28 February had to be adjourned for over an hour while protesters were removed from the Gallery. The protest was about the situation in Gaza and one gentleman in particular, refused to sit down or stop shouting and eventually had to be evicted by the police. There was then a debate on the Housing Revenue Account and the Revenue Budget and associated documents. As is required by law, the budget is a balanced budget which has been achieved through a better than expected Government settlement of just under £1m additional funding and £3.6m of savings, (£2m on staff and £1.6m on services), Lower inflation and interest rates also contributed. Cuts include reduction in bins across the District, reduced street cleansing in some areas, area officer team reduced, rural verge cutting reduced to once per year, no Air Show for 2024, Tall Ships project (joint with Boulogne) axed and all fees and charges increased. Garden Waste charges will rise from £48 to £60 and collection of bulk items will rise from £35 for one item to £53 for three items. As from 1 April, car parking charges at the Sandgate Road and Coastal Park car parks will be to 9 pm instead of 6 pm. This all results in a Council Tax increase of 2.94% (£280.08 at Band D – an increase of £8.01 on the current charge). Voting on the budget was – in favour - 13 Green/Lib Dem, abstentions 10 Labour/1 independent and against 5 Conservatives/1 independent. On the housing front, social rents will increase by 7.7% which equates to an increase of £7.37 per week or £390.61 per annum. The budget debate can be accessed via this link Council - Wednesday 28 February 2024, 7:00pm - Folkestone & Hythe webcasting (public-i.tv)

Landslips – there have been a number of landslips in Folkestone. The Road of Remembrance has suffered quite badly with initially trees blocking the road followed by two further slips. The road will not be reopened until the area has been assessed as safe to work in, and due to the most recent slips and continued rainfall this could be some time. The District Council is working closely with KCC who are the Highways Authority. Further details on all landslides can be found on the website.

Parliamentary Elections – new boundary lines to balance the number of people voting for members of Parliament has resulted in the change for residents in our ward North Downs West (which includes Elmsted). It is only the Parliamentary constituency boundary that is changing following the Boundary Commission's review. Folkestone & Hythe District Council will continue to collect council tax and provide local services. Elections for Folkestone & Hythe District Council and any parish or town council in the ward will also continue as before.

Appendix B

Report for Elmsted Parish Council 14 March 2024

The KCC budget was agreed at a full day meeting of the County Council on 19 February. The papers for the meeting and a webcast of the debate are on the KCC website www.kent.gov.uk. The Labour Group, Liberal Democrats, Greens and Independents all put forward amendments to make small changes to spending but their proposals also all involved a 5% increase. None of the amendments were accepted (one involved opening a bar in County Hall to make money!) The budget that was passed has increased spending on adult social care, children in care and home to school transport in line with demand.

KCC has stepped up its campaign for all those involved but particularly the Government to do more to help preparations for the proposed introduction of the new EU Entry Exit System (EES). From 06 October 2024 EES will replace stamping passports with an electronic system to register the dates of entry and exit by non-EU travellers and is similar to systems already in operation in the USA, Canada and Australia. EES requires biometric information such as facial recognition and fingerprints.

It is technically possible to do most of these checks before arriving at the ports, but current plans do not allow this. Roger Gough, KCC's leader, told Parliament's EU Scrutiny Committee on 31 January that traffic modelling showed a worst-case scenario of delays of up to 14 hours at the ports and Eurotunnel once EES is in place. Roger called for funding for measures to cope with the change. He pointed out that delays in Kent also impacted on the whole UK economy and urged the Government to look at technological and legal changes to enable remote registration. Roger has also visited Eurotunnel to see the preparations being made there to reduce the potential impact of the new checks. Eurotunnel has invested £80m to prepare their terminals for the change. Such work is reassuring but more facilities are needed particularly for freight traffic. A report on this issue went to the Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee on 07 March and you can read this and watch the debate on the KCC website www.kent.gov.uk

Another current campaign is the one to restore the Kent stops for Eurostar services. There is a petition on this which has nearly reached 50,000 signatures. If you'd like to support it you can sign the online petition. KCC has also surveyed Kent businesses and found strong support for the reintroduction of the Kent stops. I know Damian Green MP, Ashford Borough Council and KCC are all involved in the campaign to persuade Eurostar to restore the services.

KCC has launched a Biodiversity Net Gain Site Register for Kent. Since 12 February all developments with over ten houses are required to deliver a 10% increase in biodiversity. The aim is for this improvement to be delivered on the site itself but if this is impractical then the site register will provide a pipeline of suitable land to deliver this commitment. The Making Space for Nature Kent website has more details on this.

Do please keep reporting potholes preferably on the KCC website or to 03000 41 81 81. Nearly 60,000 potholes were repaired on Kent's roads between April and December 2023 and the work continues. The Government has allocated Kent £135m of additional funding over the next 11 years for road repairs. £8.6m of this will be spent between March and October this year. This is on top of the £50m in KCC's own road and footway maintenance budget.

Susan Carey
Member for Elham Valley, Kent County Council

Appendix C

At the meeting of the Full Council on Wednesday a fully costed and balanced budget for 2024/25 was approved. As expected, the Council Tax will increase, the F&HDC proportion of it is increasing by 2.99%. Other precepts will be determined by KCC, Kent Police and Crime Commissioner, Kent Fire and Rescue Service and Town/Parish Councils. The budget includes £18 million to be spent on front line services such as waste collection, quality social housing and other community based services. The Housing Revenue Account budget was also approved and unfortunately rents will be increasing by 7.7%. This is in line with the Government recommendations. The extra money will enable the council to continue with the maintenance of its properties and allow us to build more social housing in the District. I know that these increases come at a very bad time with the ongoing cost of living crisis. Please check the Council's website for details of help and support that can be provided if you are affected by this.

At the last Overview and Scrutiny Committee there was a presentation on the CIL regulations. The figures that were given were for the year 2022/23; almost a year out of date. I requested up to date information for all eight parishes in the North Downs West Ward. The information indicated that Elmsted has a total of £28,577.35 allocated, of which £14,100.00 was available for draw down from the year 2020 – 2021. CIL money needs to be spent within 5 years of being allocated. The £14,100.00, at least, will need to be spent within the next 18 months. CIL money should be used on infrastructure (provision, improvement or replacement of the infrastructure) that will benefit the community such as play areas, benches, sports facilities, public open spaces, community halls etc.

There have been several landslides along the Folkestone part of the coast and the Road of Remembrance remains shut. F&HDC have completed the works they are responsible for: all shrubs and sycamore trees were removed, and 12 evergreen oak trees were coppiced to form a low hedge. We are now awaiting a drone survey to be carried out along the escarpment and an assessment will be made to see if any other works need to be carried out. The road remains closed whilst KCC arranges clearance of the fallen trees.

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