

# Minutes of the Meeting of Eynsford Parish Council held on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2025, at the Parish Office, Priory Lane, Eynsford, at 7.30pm.

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## 9291 PRESENT

### Members Present

Mr A Cooke  
Mrs J Laird  
Mr D Naylor  
Mrs H Sim  
Mr O Young

### Others Present

Mr J Gee, Tree Warden, two members of the public.

### Clerk in Attendance

Mrs H Ivaldi

## 9292 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Mr M Barker, Mr J Griffiths, Mr V Robson.

The meeting was chaired by Mr Cooke.

## 9293 CHAIR'S REMARKS

None

## 9294 CLERK'S COMMENTS

The Clerk noted that a councillor had requested that the May meeting be moved from 15<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup>. Those present indicated that the new date was acceptable. The Clerk agreed to move the date and publicise as required.

## 9295 GOVERNANCE

### a) Declarations of Interest

None.

### b) Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the last full council meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2025 were presented for approval.

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes are accepted as a true and complete record and that the recommendations are approved.

### c) Finance Notes

The clerk submitted a list of accounts, and a budget report, for March 2025 along with the most recent schedule of payments.

**RESOLVED:** That the accounts are approved and the payment schedule is signed.

At this point, the Chair skipped to the Highways & Transportation section of the agenda to accommodate visiting members of the public.

## 9296 HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORTATION

### a) Proposed Closure of the Hulberry Rail Crossing

Councillors were asked to agree a response to Network Rail's proposal to close the foot crossing at Hulberry for safety reasons. The proposed diversion was along Lullingstone Lane and then diagonally up the field between the railway line and Eagle Heights.

Two members of the public gave their views about the proposal.

Mrs Pittman, representing Eynsford & Crockenhill Rights of Way Group, noted that the crossing was part of the Darent Valley footpath and that no risk was identified when a similar proposal was put forwards in 2015. She queried how Network Rail would manage the steep drop between the field and the road on their proposed diversion which would require extensive engineering work. Mrs Pittman noted that Lullingstone Lane is narrow with no pavements and that closure of the crossing would result in the loss of a great high-level view.

Mr Akthar spoke in support of the closure. A friend had experienced a near miss between their small child and a train at the crossing and he was very concerned about the safety issues. Mr Akthar also spoke about the noise from the train horns until 11pm and from 6am in the morning.

**RESOLVED:** That the council objects to the proposal put forward by Network Rail due to safety issues along Lullingstone Lane. However, the council appreciates that there are safety concerns associated with the pedestrian crossing and would support an alternative off-road route.

At this point, 8.07pm Mrs Pittman and Mr Akthar left.

### b) Streetlight Repairs and Replacements

A list of repairs required as found by our contractor had been circulated to councillors. This included four streetlight columns that were suffering from erosion and needed to be replaced. Councillors queried the costs.

**RESOLVED:** Cllrs agreed in principle that these works need to be carried out but due to the high value of the quote it was agreed other estimates are sought to be brought back to another meeting, June at the latest.

At this point, the Governance agenda was resumed.

## GOVERNANCE (Cont.)

### d) Outstanding Actions

Councillors provided updates on the outstanding actions spreadsheet and noted the following should be added:

That work has continued on the Resilience Plan with a focus on the flooding risk.

**RESOLVED:** The information is noted, that the spreadsheet is updated.

### e) Neighbourhood Plan Update

Mrs Sim gave an update on progress with the plan. Mrs Sim noted that she and Mr Robson had been progressing things and a few volunteer residents have started to get involved. An open meeting is planned for 22<sup>nd</sup> May where residents can put themselves forward for the committee or working groups. Suggested working group could be: protected landscapes; planning; amenities; transport and business. Mrs Sim mentioned that they were looking into how best to collect and manage data from surveys etc. Mrs Sim and Mr Robson had spoken to some community groups about the plan and how people can get involved. A meeting with Farningham Parish Councillors is

planned for 25<sup>th</sup> April at 10am. The terms of reference for the new steering group would come to the council for approval.

It was also noted that an email had been received from a resident asking for the council's rationale behind creating a Neighbourhood Plan.

**RESOLVED:** Mr Robson and Mrs Sim, as previously discussed, continue to progress the Neighbourhood Plan by working to set up the steering group and carrying out relevant research and preparatory documents.

That the council produce a written response to an email from a resident about the Neighbourhood Plan which will be initially drafted by Mrs Sim and Mr Robson.

At this point, 9.05pm, the meeting paused for questions from the public.

The meeting resumed at 9.06pm.

#### f) Domain Providers

Councillors were asked to agree which company to use for providing a .gov.uk domain for the parish council and email hosting. Two companies had been shortlisted by the Clerk from a recommended list from government.

**RESOLVED:** That the council works with Cloudnext to set up a new domain and email hosting. The domain will cost £50 per year and email hosting £49.99 per year.

#### g) Budget Review

Councillors were provided with the end of year figures and asked to make adjustments to the budget to accommodate the new brought forward figure of £187,378.98.

**RESOLVED:** That the following budget lines are adjusted as follows:

Bank Interest £400

Harrow Meadow Income £3500

Year End Residue £187378.98

Allotments Expenses £1750

Annual Parish Meeting £300

Common Meadow Fencing Rolling Fund £10,000

FELHS Building Maintenance Rolling Fund £4500

General Reserves £9837.80

Grounds Maintenance General £1200

Harrow Meadow Grounds Maintenance £2750

Litter Warden £1568

Memberships £1200

Parish Office Running Costs £4400

Playground Replacement Rolling Fun £25000

Street Lighting Replacement Rolling Fund £21000

Tree Maintenance £2900

Village Hall Project Support £57861.77

#### h) Microsoft Package

Councillors were asked to consider upgrading the council's Microsoft account from a personal account to Microsoft 365 Business Standard which would cost £9.60 per user per month or

£115.20 per year (for one user). This would include additional programmes such as Microsoft Planner, Teams and much more. The current package costs £59.99 per year.

**RESOLVED:** That the council upgrades their Microsoft account to Microsoft 365 Business Standard at £115.20 per year.

i) Membership of KALC

Councillors were asked to agree whether to renew their membership of KALC costing £833.92 + VAT for this financial year.

**RESOLVED:** That membership of KALC is renewed.

j) Village Hall Update

Mr Cooke provided an update on the village hall project. He said that the committee were working with two potential contractors for the new hall on stage 1 tenders and both would be interviewed. The build cost would be in the region of £1.8m. Another potential contractor had just come forward and a meeting would be held with him too. Mr Cooke said that the existing site is now being marketed for £800,000. There was still a shortfall in funds of £3-400,000 but the results of various grant applications were awaited. The committee may ask the council to consider a public works loan to cover any shortfall once the results are known.

**RESOLVED:** That the information is noted.

**9297** PLANNING

a) Notifications of Planning Consents/Refusals

The following information had been received since the last meeting:

24/03233/OUT – 1 Fairview Villas, High Street, Eynsford – GRANTED

24/02529/HOUSE – Hollyhurst Cottage, Station Road, Eynsford – GRANTED

**RESOLVED:** That the information is noted.

b) Planning and Infrastructure Bill

Councillors were told that the government are introducing a new bill that will change how the planning system works including reducing the involvement of local government and communities in planning decisions. Councillors were asked to agree which points to raise in a letter to Laura Trott MP so that she can raise these in parliament.

**RESOLVED:** That Mr Young carries out some research into this and brings back some suitable wording to the committee meeting.

**9298** COMMUNITY

a) Police/Crime Report

The Clerk provided crime information from February 2025. Two crimes had been reported as follows:

Lullingstone Country Park (car park) 1 x Burglary

Lullingstone Castle (car park) 1 x Criminal damage/arson.

The Clerk noted that she had met the Acting Chief Inspector at a recent meeting and had suggested a meeting to discuss Anti-Social Behaviour at Riverside and would pursue this.

**RESOLVED:** That the information is noted.

b) Poppy Wreaths

Councillors were asked to take on the responsibility of looking after the wreaths left at the war memorial around Remembrance Day each year.

**RESOLVED:** That the council ensures the remembrance wreaths are secure and tidy around the war memorial and dispose of them on or after Shrove Tuesday each year.

c) VE Day

Mrs Laird updated councillors on plans for VE Day. There would be a flag raising at 8.45am in the churchyard with a few readings. From 5-7pm there would be an exhibition from Farningham and Eynsford Local History Society in the church, tea and cake, some music and then a peal of bells at 6.30pm.

**RESOLVED:** That councillors attend the events if possible and contribute cakes for the refreshment stall. That the clerk makes a poster and advertises the events.

d) Mental Health Talk/Training

Mrs Sim told councillors that she had arranged a free training session about mental health that would be delivered by Mid Kent MIND. It would be held at 10am on 7<sup>th</sup> July at St Martin's Church. This was linked to the grant from Kent County Council for warm spaces that had been passed onto The Space.

**RESOLVED:** That the information is noted.

**9299** **OPEN SPACES**

a) Review of Actions from the Annual Walkabout

This item was deferred to the next committee meeting due to time pressure.

**RESOLVED:** That the information is noted.

b) Grounds Maintenance Common Meadow

Councillors were asked to discuss the quotes received to carry out the grounds maintenance of Common Meadow. Two quotes had been received.

**RESOLVED:** That contracts B1 & B2 are offered to Eynsford Cricket Club at a total cost of £1.

c) Trees at Harrow Meadow Playground

Previously councillors had agreed to get quotes to fell the large sycamore adjacent to the children's play area at Harrow Meadow for health and safety reasons due to shading and the increase of moss/algae and leaves on the surfacing and play equipment. Councillors had asked to revisit this decision due to differing views. Two quotes had been received to remove the tree. Mr Gee, Tree Warden expressed his opposition to the removal of the tree.

**RESOLVED:** That councillors uphold their decision to remove the large sycamore tree. That a quote of £640 + VAT is accepted to carry out the work. That the tree surgeon is asked to also remove the surrounding saplings.

At this point, Mr Gee announced his decision to step down as Tree Warden and left the meeting. Councillors present thanked him for his service.

d) Asbestos Testing

Councillors were asked to agree to asbestos testing of the changing rooms ceiling prior to the refurbishments works costing £120 + VAT.

**RESOLVED:** That asbestos testing is carried out at a cost of £120 + VAT.

e) Changing Room Refurbishment Project

Councillors were asked to approve the initial payment to the project manager for the first stage of the project which was to gather quotes for the various aspects of the project.

**RESOLVED:** That the payment of £2000 + VAT is approved.

f) Greenhouse at the Allotments

Councillors were told that a new allotment holder had erected a greenhouse on their allotment without permission. There was already a shed on the plot.

**RESOLVED:** That permission is granted to keep the greenhouse provided that the panes are polycarbonate and not glass and that the shed is removed.

g) New Water Trough Trench

Councillors were asked to approve expenditure of £480 + VAT to dig a trench to link an additional water trough at the allotment.

**RESOLVED:** That expenditure of £480 + VAT is agreed to dig a new trench.

h) Common Meadow Fencing

Councillors were asked to discuss how to approach replacing or improving the fencing alongside Common Meadow.

**RESOLVED:** That councillors and clerks research suitable types of fencing and obtain quotes for the fencing and installation. That agreed options are discussed with the cricket club and homeowners along Furlongs Lane to decide on a way forward.

**9300 FACILITIES & ENVIRONMENT**

a) Green Team Update

Mr Naylor gave a brief update on the latest plans and activities of the Green Team including their work at Chalk Hill and the idea of installing a gabion bench; plans for Big Green Week and Arbor Day; creating more links with other organisations such as Kent Wildlife Trust.

**RESOLVED:** That the information is noted.

b) LGA Consultation on Climate Change

Councillors were informed that the Local Government Association was consulting on whether local councils/government should have a statutory duty to act on climate change. Councillors were asked to agree how to respond to the survey.

**RESOLVED:** That this item is brought back to the meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> May and Mr Robson is asked to draft a response.

c) Trees in the Allotments

Councillors were told that a quote had been received to fell a number of dead and dying trees in the old allotment area as recommended by the Tree Warden.

**RESOLVED:** That the quote of £395 is accepted to fell the identified trees in the old allotment area.

d) New Permissive Path

Mrs Laird provided an update on progress with the permissive path at Castlefield, Chalk Hill and Harrow Meadow. A few residents of Priory Fields had written to express concerns about the path passing behind their gardens. An email had been received from Mr Munn at KCC outlining some issues with the proposed path over Chalk Hill.

**RESOLVED:** That Mrs Laird and Mrs Ivaldi continue negotiations with KCC and the Alexanders. That a response is sent to the residents who have been in touch.

The meeting ended at 10.55 pm

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Chairperson: 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2025

## **Appendix Q**

### **Public Questions from the Meeting of Eynsford Parish Council, held on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> March 2025**

The meeting opened to questions from the public at 9.05pm.

Mr Gee said that he would like to arrange to look at the football pitch with Mr Cooke. Arrangements were discussed.

The public questions closed at 9.06pm