

EASTON ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 13 MAY 2024 AT EASTON & LETHERINGHAM VILLAGE HALL at 7.30pm

MINUTES

1. PRESENT & APOLOGIES

Present: Parish Councillors: Piggott (Chair); Balcombe, Edwards, Ladbrook, Palfreyman; and Gibbon; District Councillors: Langdon-Morris and Grey; and four members of the public. **In attendance:** A Staples (Parish Council Clerk).

Apologies: were received from Cllr Siddall (Easton Parish Council); Sue Edwards (Easton Bowls Club); James Harper (Easton Cricket Club); and Jane Woodbury-Eggins (All Saints Church).

The Chair opened the meeting at 7.30pm and welcomed residents of the village, the Village Hall Committee and Councillors.

2. APPROVE MINUTES OF ANNUAL PARISH MEETING ON 22 MAY 2023

The minutes were approved as an accurate record and signed.

3. PARISH COUNCIL REPORT – Chair’s Report

Cllr Piggott delivered a report:

“The Parish Council continues with its responsibilities, managing the cemetery and burials, village car park, village play area, village grass cutting, responding to planning applications along with village projects.

Parish Council business includes finances and conduct is officially audited each year by a qualified independent Internal Auditor and Government External Auditor. The annual audit reports and documents are uploaded onto the PC website, along with the Minutes and Financial reports.

Neighbourhood Plan

The Easton Neighbourhood Plan has now reached its final stage, which is the Referendum, this gives the electorate of the Parish their opportunity to vote Yes or No to the plan. If the Plan is voted for it is then adopted by ESC who will then be required to adhere to the plan when determining planning applications within the parish.

This year the expected Government funding which is normally made available from the beginning of April, each year, was not made available until the end of July. It was applied for immediately but the funds were not received until August, all works then needed to be completed by March 31st the grant year end. As soon as work was able to commence the Reg. 14 consultation that

had taken place earlier in the year needed to have all comments from respondents considered and dealt with. A formatted table had to be completed giving the comments and any resulting amendments to the plans text. This was then submitted to ESC as the Submission version.

ESC then took control; they appointed an Independent Examiner and conducted their consultation which ended January 19th this year. The Examiner conducted her work and issued her report on March 22nd. The Examiner had outlined modifications to the NP which were necessary to ensure greater legal detail. The plan was then amended and published as the Referendum version. ESC then issued the Decision Notice which is necessary to allow the plan to go to Referendum.

The benefits in having our NP in place are:

- that the plan dictates where the mandated housing figures will go, and how they will look.
- that the housing will provide smaller dwellings for young families and downsizing.
- that the natural and historic environment is respected.
- we will receive an increased amount of NCIL monies against each new dwelling within the parish (from at present 15 percent to 25 percent)

The Referendum is organised by ESC Electoral Services and conducted in the same way as any other Election poll, it will take place in the village hall from 7am to 10pm, voting rules apply which now includes photo id, and only the electorate of Easton parish can vote, the date of the poll is Thursday June 13th this year. It is very much hoped that the residents of Easton will take the opportunity to vote and take the Neighbourhood Plan through its final stage.

Village Green Posts and Renovation of Village Sign

The Parish Council is most grateful to Peter Bennett-King for his voluntary work which has resulted in a suite of posts being instated along the boundary of the village green and most recently the cleaning and refreshing of the village sign, residents are very proud of the sign and the village green and keeping them in good condition is important.

Speed Indicator Signs

Funding is being sought for 2 solar Speed Indicator signs to be placed at the school end of the village to display speed for those entering and leaving the village, so far £2,000 has been given by our District Cllrs Owen Grey and Vince Langdon-Morris and, and £1,000 from County Cllr Elaine Bryce this leaves £1,500 funding to find.

Storm Babet

Our District Cllrs are supporting the village in holding the bodies that have responsibility for drainage and water quality to account. The storm was especially devastating to those residents whose homes were flooded internally and for whom the disruption and stress still continues. The lengthy process of insurance claims, and the wait for building works to repair and make good still in many cases is yet to be resolved.

It is especially difficult when there is no visible effort being made by SCC, the road drains still remain blocked and ineffective, no management of control for surface water draining from land onto the roads and beyond, and culverts remain blocked to name but a few. Those that reported into SCC to give details of their flooding experience have been told by way of a response that 'there is an investigation taking place, which is expected to take 2 years'. Again, this is difficult to hear when the leader of SCC had announced that 1 million pounds had been received from central government that would allow for additional manpower to conduct the investigations. The Parish Council will continue to raise issues to SCC, but are fully aware that this is usually met by silence, dismissal or a response that there are no resources to address the issues that have been reported.

Village Daffodils

ESC donated 500 daffodil bulbs to the Easton. Members of the council planted the bulbs around the village, the majority by Cllr Gareth Edwards, and they have made a lovely display this spring.

Christmas Tree

The Christmas tree for the Village Green always looks so good and our thanks go out to the team of volunteers that help to get the tree in place and decorated.

On behalf of the Parish Councillors, I would like to thank all the members of the community who consistently give their appreciation for the work that the Parish Council does. All Councillors give a lot of their time to meet their duty as a Parish Councillor and they do their very best to ensure the Parish Council meets its legal obligations and works within its powers for the village.”

4. DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

Cllr Langdon-Morris delivered a report covering: the sowing wildflowers around Framlingham; ensuring that when utility companies are digging up roads the councils are told in advance what is being done and why; last year's flooding and the dispersal of grants by East Suffolk Council; the Framlingham Flood Resilience and Recovery Group which is also engaging neighbouring parish councils. The group is discussing what needs to be done to protect our towns and villages; the flood emergency response plan which has been developed; a ring-fenced emergency fund is going to be available from ESC councillors for rapid allocation; the Barclay's pop-up bank that is regularly visiting

Framlingham; the Post Office in Framlingham will be re-opening; the Be Well Bus visiting Framlingham. Further details are available in Cllr Langdon-Morris' latest newsletter.

A member of the public raised the issue of flooding and queried whether it was exacerbated by over development in the Framlingham area.

5. COUNTY COUNCILLORS'S REPORT

No report received.

6. REPORTS INVITED FROM VILLAGE ORGANISATIONS INCLUDING:

6.1. All Saints Church

Apologies were received from Jane Woodbury-Eggins, who provided the following update by email:

“There was nothing of special interest to report for Easton church except that our new priest, Revd Ann Kember, joined us last summer and we are very much enjoying her ministry and working with her. She has been reaching out to the school and hopes to be more involved with local children. There are initiatives being worked on. This all has to be done within her 4 days per week in the benefice of seven parishes.”

6.2. Easton Play School

No report received.

6.3. Easton Primary School

No report received.

6.4. Easton & Letheringham Village Hall

Cllr Palfreyman delivered a report as follows:

“The key project delivered this year has been the replacement windows which for many decades have prevented adequate airflow into the building as they were non-functioning, caused high heat loss, condensation & mould as well as being corroded and uneconomical to maintain.

The project has taken a lot of time and considerable effort working closely with East Suffolk Council to find the right product that met the trustees, and Conservation and Planning's specification. The desire of the trustees was to install sympathetic metal slim-line replacements that were a close match to the previous design, whilst addressing the problems they caused and the increasing financial burden of maintenance on the charity's finances. It proved a real challenge to find suitable products as so few suppliers could meet the specification for such a non-standard design. The need for replacements was reinforced by the Conservation Officer who supported our

planning application who stated the existing windows – which are not original or early and are themselves replacements – have now reached the end of their functional life; and they are not capable of repair or retrofitting. The total cost of the project was £25,046, funded entirely by grants from East Suffolk Council and National Lottery Community Fund Grant. The National Lottery grant of £10,000 was awarded specifically for the windows as they supported the project’s aims and goals for the benefit of the community. It’s been a committee’s policy not to use hirer income for major hall projects.

The committee wish to express our thanks and appreciation to members of the community and our hirers who have given such positive feedback on the replacement windows and the running of the village hall.

Regarding our operating account, we have a slight deficit this year as income was down and costs were significantly higher this year than last, this was partly due to planned re-decorating both inside and out, as part of our delayed rolling maintenance cycle.

As trustees everyone on the committee does their very best and give a lot of personal time to ensure the hall is compliant for use by the public. The committee have worked tirelessly over many years and bring a wealth of experience and knowledge to look after such an old building and its unique challenges. I wish to express my heartfelt thanks to all the committee for your dedication and support that continues to ensure the village has such wonderful and important asset for community to enjoy.”

6.5. Easton Cricket Club

No report was received.

6.6. Easton Bowls Club

The following written report was received from Mike Cattermole:

“Now that the winter should be over and the sun has started to shine, after a very wet winter, we opened the green on Sunday 14 April. We have another full season of league fixtures this year. We have started with the first Woodbridge league fixture on 23 April, and we are also running with two teams in the Fynn league. There are also some cup games in there as well as our usual club competitions.

In the 2023 season Easton finished runners up in the Woodbridge League, and also were winners of the Salter Cup and the Jubilee Shield competitions. We also finished as the Area B winners in the Junior Cup, which is a competition held across the whole of Suffolk. The Easton A team were the winners of their division in the Fynn league, and Easton B team came in third in their division.

If there is anybody in the village or you know of anyone wishing to join us, they would be more than welcome. Membership is only £40 per year with £2 match fees. For anybody wishing to join us we can arrange some practice or “taster” sessions. Contact Mike Cattermole for further details on 07970451251 or our chair Mandy Plank on 07949898784. It is the same story – we are always looking for people to help in other ways besides playing, such as green management or helping with refreshments etc.

Lastly I would like to thank the Parish Council for their help in sorting out our problems with the trees/hedge on the Cemetery boundary. This has definitely worked and made a great difference in letting light onto the green allowing it to dry.”

7. PUBLIC FORUM

It was queried whether the NP referendum would allow postal votes. Cllr Piggott explained that the referendum would operate like all other elections so postal votes would be acceptable.

A member of the public raised a query about how Suffolk Highways can be held to account. It was reported that issues noted on the SCC on-line portal often disappear without being actioned. Also, the website no longer gives details of when scheduled works take place, such as drain clearance. Cllr Piggott explained that the Parish Council endeavours to escalate issues via our County Councillor but is presently finding it difficult to contact Cllr Bryce (SCC). Cllr Langdon-Morris (ESC) offered to liaise with SCC on behalf of residents if they are having problems contacting their County Councillor.

A member of the public asked about maintenance of the pavement and flint wall by the village car park. There is ivy growing on the wall restricting passage on the pavement. It was noted that the decaying foliage on the pavement has been cleared by a village volunteer, following reports of residents slipping. Cllr Piggott explained that problems with the pavement should be reported to SCC Highways on the on-line portal. As regards the ivy on the car park wall, the Parish Council’s contractor could be asked to clear this. Cllr Edwards’ said the pavement on the opposite side of the road was also unsafe, and this has been reported on the SCC portal, but disappeared without a reference number being given.

A query was raised about landowners maintaining ditches running into the Deben. Again, reports were put on the SCC portal and no action taken. Cllr Langdon-Morris there was a group looking at the whole Deben catchment area. SCC have the power to serve notice on landowners to require them to clear ditches.

8. CLOSURE OF MEETING FOLLOWED BY REFRESHMENTS

The meeting closed at 8.12pm.