

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF HASTINGLEIGH PARISH COUNCIL
ON 16th MAY 2023 HELD IN EVINGTON VILLAGE HALL**

Present: Cllr Day (Chair) Cllr Helmer
Cllr Hill Cllr Jakeman

Three members of the public, Cllr Betty and the Clerk.

		To be actioned by
1.	Election of the Chairman and any Vice-Chairman for the Council year 2023-24	
	Cllr Helmer proposed that Cllr Day be elected as Chair. Cllr Hill seconded this. Cllr Hill proposed that Cllr Helmer be Vice-Chair. Cllr Day seconded this.	
2.	Completion of the Declaration of Pecuniary Interests and Declaration of Acceptance of Office Forms	
	The Declaration of Pecuniary Interests and Declaration of Acceptance of Office Forms were completed by the Councillors.	
3.	To receive and approve apologies for absence.	
	Cllr Dryland had sent her apologies for absence. These apologies were accepted.	
4.	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 made.	
5.	To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 14^h March 2023	
	The minutes were signed as a true record.	
6.	To discuss matters arising from the above minutes not covered by the agenda.	
	There were no matters arising from the above minutes.	
7.	To receive reports from the Borough Councillor	
	Cllr Betty reported that he will attend meetings unless he sends his apologies. The Ashford Borough Council main groups have now overall majority with results meaning that there are 19 Conservative seats, 11 Labour seats, 5 Ashford Independents and 8 Green seats. There are lots of discussions occurring around allies. The first full meeting will take place on 30 th May.	
8.	Public Session: To receive questions and comments from the public on any agenda item	
	A member of the public introduced himself, he would like to know whether the Parish Council, in its creation of an Open Space Management Plan, will consult the public regarding how the Open Spaces are managed or whether the PC will make the decision themselves. <i>The Chair responded that the Council will be passing this over to the Joint Asset Management Group which will be members of both Hastingleigh and Elmsted involved in creating the group and managing the assets going forward. The Joint Asset Management Group has not yet met so the procedures have not been considered. The Parish Council is acutely aware of the risks that surround the assets The Joint Asset Management Group will take things forward within the next 12 months.</i> Another member of the public stated that the recreation ground needs to be cut shorter.	

	<p><i>The Chair explained that we have had some work undertaken on the trees and going forward the grass cutting will be undertaken. The mower had been unable to access the field whilst the trees are being cutting down. The member of public said that they are a professional sports coach and that people cannot use the field whilst the grass is so long. The Chair responded that the Joint Asset Management Group will maintain the assets and work together. The Parish Council needs to be considerate towards the family who the field is rented from. The Chairman assured the meeting that things will progress.</i></p> <p>A member of the public explained that they are the Chairman of Brabourne Parish Council and had written a letter circulated by the Clerk, the idea is to create a group discussion and exchange ideas. This could revolve around planning issues or other issues relevant to Parish Council working. <i>It was suggested that this could be undertaken purely by an email group or a Yahoo group or similar. Hastingleigh PC concluded that it was happy to see where this goes but are keen to keep this to a virtual group.</i></p>
9.	To confirm eligibility to use the General Power of Competence
	<p>The meeting was informed that with the Clerk holding a recognised professional qualification (Certificate in Local Council Administration) and the Council now meeting the electoral mandate of having at least two-thirds of the council elected, the Parish Council is now eligible to use the General Power of Competence. Resolved – that having met the conditions of eligibility as defined in the Localism Act 2011 and SI 965. The Parish Councils (General Power of Competence) (Prescribed Conditions) Order 2012, the council adopts the General Power of Competence from 16th May 2023 until the next relevant Annual Meeting of the Council.</p> <p>The resolution was correctly proposed and seconded (unanimous).</p>
10.	To agree representatives on other Committees for 2023/24
	<p>Village Hall Representative – Cllr Day KALC Representative - Cllr Hill Joint Asset Management Committee - Cllrs Day and Helmer</p>
11.	Appointment and Scope of the Internal Auditor
	<p>The meeting was circulated with the Clerk’s recommendations regarding the Internal Auditor for 2023-24. The Parish Council approved that Mrs Lister should be appointed as the Internal Auditor for 2023-24.</p>
12.	To agree application to the Helping Hands Grant Scheme to assist with Hall Hire for the Warm Space (Coffee Mornings and Afternoon Chats)
	<p>The Parish Council agree to apply for a Helping Hands Grant to assist with Hall Hire for the Warm Space.</p>
13.	To receive an update on the Football Field/Pond
	<p>All of the tree work is now complete. All of the shrubbing is being burned, the cuttings will be scraped away and the field will be rolled. It was noted that the Village Caretaker could access the field earlier than the current company and cut it closer. To review again in November.</p> <p>The War Memorial had been maintained by Cllr Day ahead of the Coronation and the area was looking lovely. The meadow area had signs to stop people from cutting. Brambles have been removed and the bin is being emptied.</p> <p>A member of the public asked about clearing the pond as they stated they had entered the pond to clear the duck weed. The member of public had been made aware of Greater Crested Newts but had felt that the pond should still be cleared.</p>

	<p>The Clerk explained:</p> <p>As we know there are Greater Crested Newts in the pond in Hastingleigh. The pond was tested some years ago and during these tests, the DNA of Greater Crested Newts was discovered in the pond.</p> <p>As we know from advice taken from the Kent Amphibian and Reptile Group and the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust, Great Crested Newt numbers have declined substantially and they are now strictly protected by law which makes it an offence to kill, injure or disturb them; damage or destroy their habitat. This law refers to all life stages, including eggs.</p> <p>Due to the protected nature of these newts, any work in ponds should only be undertaken in the autumn/winter when newts tend to live outside of the pond and even then, the workers need to have a licence. Licences are obtained at a cost from the government website.</p> <p>Working in the pond without a licence is a wildlife crime because it will damage the habitat of a protected species.</p> <p>For the above reasons, nobody should enter the pond.</p> <p>In addition to this, the Parish Council insurance would be voided if it allowed persons to enter the pond without a full Risk Assessment being completed and without ensuring the safety of these people.</p> <p>Whilst any volunteering is much appreciated, the land that the Parish Council owns is our responsibility so we would need to undertake due diligence and ensure that the proper practices are in place, ie Risk Assessment, adequate insurance, appropriate safety precautions and any protective clothing is worn etc.</p>	
14.	<p>Planning matters: to authorise a response to any application(s) and to note any recent planning decisions by Ashford Borough Council or any correspondence on planning matters</p>	
	<p>There were no new applications to discuss.</p> <p>A response had been submitted for the application: PA/2023/0565</p>	
15.	<p>To review the effectiveness of the System of Internal Controls: Councillors are asked to consider the Statement of Internal Control in support of the Annual Governance Statement.</p>	
	<p>The Parish Council reviewed and agreed the System of Internal Controls.</p>	
16.	<p>To approve the Standing Orders, Asset Register and Risk Assessment and confirm arrangements for insurance cover in respect of all insured risks.</p>	
	<p>The Parish Council approved the Standing Orders, Asset Register and Risk Assessment and confirmed arrangements for insurance cover in respect of all insured risks.</p>	
17.	<p>Review of the Council's subscriptions to other bodies ie KALC</p>	
	<p>The Parish Council reviewed the Council subscription to KALC.</p>	
18.	<p>Financial matters:</p>	
	<p>To approve the following financial documents:</p> <p>To receive the end of year accounts</p> <p>The Parish Council received and approved the end of year accounts.</p> <p>To confirm that the Council can verify itself as exempt from the "limited assurance review" and complete the Certificate of Exemption.</p> <p>The Parish Council confirmed that it can verify itself as exempt from the limited assurance review and completed the Certificate of Exemption.</p> <p>To receive the report from the Internal Auditor</p>	

	<p>The Parish Council received the report from the Internal Auditor.</p> <p>To approve the Governance Statement 2022/23, section 1 of the AGAR for the year ending 31 March 2023</p> <p>The Parish Council approved the Governance Statement 2022/23, section 1 of the AGAR for the year ending 31 March 2023</p> <p>To consider and approve the Accounting Statements 2022/23, section 2 of the AGAR for the year ending 31 March 2023 and the supporting Bank Reconciliation as at 31st March 2023, the explanation of significant variance. To ensure that the Accounting Statements 2022/23 are signed and dated by the person presiding at the meeting.</p> <p>The Parish Council considered and approved the Accounting Statements 2022/23, section 2 of the AGAR for the year ending 31 March 2023 and the supporting Bank Reconciliation as at 31st March 2023, the explanation of significant variance. The Accounting Statements 2022/23 were signed and dated by the person presiding at the meeting.</p> <p>To note the Parish Council's financial position for the beginning of the new Financial Year.</p> <p>The Parish Council noted it had £2142.45 in the bank account.</p> <p>To authorise any payments</p> <p>The payments were authorised: S Lister - £60.00 Chairmans Allowance - £50.00 HMRC - £46.80 Clerk's salary - £186.85</p>
19.	To consider any changes to the Risk Assessment.
	The Parish Council considered the Risk Assessment and there were no changes to be made.
20.	Any Other Business (for information purposes only):
	Thanks were received from Cllr Day for flowers, Cllr Helmer for her long service award and the winner of the Les Johnson Community Award.
21.	Determining the time and place of ordinary meetings of the Council up to and including the next annual meeting of the Council.
	Tuesday 11 th July 2023 Tuesday 12 th September 2023 Tuesday 14 th November 2023 Tuesday 9 th January 2024 Tuesday 12 th March 2024 Tuesday 14 th May 2024

Signed:

Date: