

EASTINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting held on 12 February 2013 in Eastington Methodist Church.

1. **Attendance and apologies for absence:** In attendance were Cllrs Niblett (Chair), Bullock, Cozens (arrived at 7.30pm), Edis-Bates, Edwards, Evans, Greenaway and Simmons; Anita Sach (Acting Clerk), Robert Power (RFO). There were 5 members of the public present. Apologies for absence were accepted from Cllr Allen.
Apologies were sent by County Councillor Blackburn, District Councillor Stephens and PCSO Liz Ward.
2. **Chairman's announcements:** Chair highlighted the closed session at the end of the meeting which would be closed to the public.
3. **Declarations of interest in items on the agenda:** None
4. **Approval of the Minutes of the previous meetings** Cllr Bullock proposed approval of the Minutes of the meeting of 8 January 2013. Seconded by Cllr Edwards with 4 in favour and 2 abstentions.
Cllr Bullock proposed approval of the Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of 15 January 2013. Cllr Evans requested that it be minuted that his comments concerning the Code of Conduct were not included in the Minutes. The Clerk advised that the vote can only be on the accuracy of the Minutes with no debate about its content. Cllr Greenaway seconded approval with 4 in favour and 2 abstentions from Cllr Evans, for the above reasons, and Cllr Edis-Bates.
5. **Review of outstanding actions from previous meeting** The play space survey has been completed and returned.
6. **To consider changes to the order of business:** None

The meeting was adjourned at this point for members of the Public to speak and reports to be read.

The PCSO sent a report to advise that a satnav had been stolen from April Cottage the previous night and that a child was using a motorised scooter and the individual concerned had been contacted by the PCSO.

A member of the public, who had extensive experience with planning, raised the question of the additional houses needed in the parish. Cllr Edis-Bates clarified the ongoing situation.

Mark Cousins from OHMGC gave a presentation on the proposal to build additional changing room shower and toilet facilities in conjunction with Stroud Football Club. The SFC youth team had been using the facilities for the last 2 years, but with 2 teams they need 4 sets of changing rooms. Currently 2 rooms are used upstairs in addition to the existing changing rooms, but there are no showers and there is a problem with the mud being walked in, especially when the rooms are also needed for other use. SFC is proposing to build another changing block behind the community centre and this would include a toilet for the use of the allotment tenants who would have their own key. He outlined the plan and advised that no funding would be required from the Parish Council. Cllr Evans advised him that he had been in touch with the school and they were interested in supporting the project. Cllr Bullock pointed out that Council is keen that the proposal should benefit the youth of Eastington as well as it is a parish resource.

The Clerk read a report from County Councillor Tony Blackburn

- The County Council has now fixed the council tax for 2013/14, subject to public consultation, and there has been no increase. The Council has received £4.5M less grant from the government and although it has had to sort out the financial implications of the new schools grant system allowing for Academies, it has been able to hold the council tax.
- The council is also on track to save £114M but has still been able to increase spending on the old and vulnerable and children's services. They have also saved enough to give extra for flood prevention, £7.5M to better broadband for rural areas and £1m for apprentices.
- It is also restarting the 'First time buyers' scheme which housed 32 couples last year.

The Clerk read a report from District Councillor Ken Stephens which focused on the Local Plan

- The consultant's report on suggestions for an Employment Strategy was discussed at the recent
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- Planning Advisory Panel for a second time. Cllr Stephens is not sure he agrees with all the findings, but the proposals for extending some employment areas and protecting them will be of interest to EPC. However, these could be in conflict with a certain SHLAA site proposed in the east of the parish. The final document with all the lines on maps etc, which will make some of the statements easier to understand, has yet to be published.
- A draft local plan structure was discussed at the same meeting, but as a revised document had been issued at the meeting and there were time restraints, it was agreed to have another meeting shortly. The document will then go to public consultation, which is not a mandatory part of the process, but thought to be good practice.
- It is hoped that EPC will study and comment on both the above documents, in consultation with the EPC planning consultant. Cllr Stephens would like to be invited to any discussions on them. He has spoken briefly with the EPC planning consultant concerning this and will continue to have dialogue on this and other matters of interest.
- Cllr Stephens attended a presentation on possible scenarios for enhancing the viability of the canal project within Stroud Town where a planning consultant was extolling the benefits a neighbourhood plan would have on the project. Perhaps EPC should consider a neighbourhood plan in the light of recent appeal decisions.

7 Resolutions

7.1 Appointment of new Clerk

- 7.1.1 The Chair proposed the appointment of the Temporary / Acting Clerk to Eastington Parish Council and the vote was carried..
- 7.1.2 The Chair proposed an advisory committee including himself, Cllrs Bullock and Edwards to make recommendations for the appointment of a permanent clerk. Councillors were asked for ideas to publicise the vacancy and suggestions were to put notices in the noticeboards in the parish, church, OHMGC and village hall, on the website and on SPAN.
- 7.1.3 As above.

7.2 Finance

- 7.2.1 RFO gave an update of the 2012-13 accounts, referring to the report circulated prior to the meeting (copy attached to the signed copy of these Minutes). After the cheques listed there will be £43,350 in the accounts. The spend to date is £24,800 with £13,800 remaining to spend before the end of March. There are 6 cheques including one for Ian Stuart, salary for the Clerk, salary for the RFO, payment for the Acting Clerk, hire of the Methodist Hall and SDC election expenses.
- 7.2.2 Cllr Simmonds proposed approval of the accounts for payment. Seconded by Cllr Evans and carried. The schedule is attached to the signed copy of these Minutes.
- 7.2.3 The RFO reported on the effect of the changes to council tax collection. Following the ongoing changes which have been proposed during the past 9-10 months, parish councils were given a choice by SDC of requesting a smaller precept which would then be topped up by a grant from central government. At a meeting at SDC he was given a table showing the impact this would have on council tax. EPC had requested the precept plus the grant as without the grant the precept increase would have been 9.9%. However, the grant amount will decrease every year. Chair proposed acceptance of the decision and it was carried with one abstention. The RFO then left the meeting at 7.55pm..

7.3 Planning

- 7.3.1 Cllr Evans proposed, seconded by Cllr Cozens to engage Ian Stuart to help compile a case against the extension of Swallowcroft. It was noted that council needs to be constructive in its objections and to consider proposing alternatives.
- 7.3.2 Chair proposed to ratify the agreed spending limit for this engagement and it was carried. [Resolution in Minute 4.1.2 of 6th November 2012 refers: "Mindful of the threat of significant planning developments pending, Chair proposed a further sum of £2000, pointing out that the

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majority of public objections has demonstrated the importance of this issue”.]

- 7.3.3 The following planning committee’s recommendations were considered for the following applications:
S.13/0093/HHOLD and S.13/0094/LBC. Manor Cottage Churchend. Erection of single storey extension. Resubmission following refusal of S.12/0380/ HHOLD and S.12/0381/LBC. The planning committee recommended support for this application.
S.12/2314/FUL. Apple Tree Park, Claypits. To change one touring caravan plot to a residential pitch for a mobile home. For use by the site owner or manager to live on site. The planning committee recommended support for this application.
S.13/0165/HHOLD. 67 Broadfield Road. Removal of existing conservatory and erection of single storey extension. The planning committee recommended support for this application.
Cllr Greenaway proposed that the parish council supports these recommendations. Seconded by Cllr Cozens and carried unanimously.
- 7.3.4 The application for the grant of a Street Trading Consent to trade in Blunder Lock, Eastington from a mobile catering unit for hot and cold food and drink, between the times of 7am – 5pm (Monday to Saturday) was considered and the planning committee recommended support for this application. Cllr Greenaway proposed that the parish council support this recommendation. Seconded by Cllr Cozens and carried unanimously.
- 7.3.5 Cllr Evans proposed and Cllr Greenaway seconded the ratification of this council’s response to Stroud District Council: Request for Screening Opinion, Land Opposite Avenue Terrace, Bristol Road, Stonehouse. The Chair thanked Cllrs Evans and Greenaway for doing this on behalf of the council.
- 7.3.6 The Chair proposed to delegate authority to respond to the planning streamlining consultation to a sub-committee of Cllrs Evans, Bullock and Cozens.
- 7.3.7 The granting of the following planning permissions was noted.
S.12/2383/FUL. Orchard Leigh, Bath Road. Demolition of existing prefabricated building and erection of new Recreation and Education Centre
S.12/1199/VAR. Land To Rear Of Kings Head Inn. Removal of condition 17 (recycling facilities) from permission S.10/2070/FUL
S.12/2481/FUL. Orchard On Opposite Broomhall Butchers, Alkerton. Two Pony Stables to adjoin existing sheep holding.
- 7.3.8 The withdrawal of the following planning permission was noted:
S.12/2318/HHOLD. 2 Hillview Cottages, Middle Street. Erection of first floor rear extension.
- Business closed at 8.15pm.

8 Closed Session

Matters relating to employment and the Code of Conduct were reviewed

The Chair reported on the exit interview with the Clerk and reported on the possible implications for the Council because of the reasons for her resignation. Council has a duty to take advice, assess risk and consider future actions so he has taken professional advice from GAPTC, the SDC Monitoring Officer and a specialist solicitor in employment law is lined up. He has invited the Monitoring Officer to consider whether the Clerk would have a case for constructive dismissal; in employment law a claim can be put in within 6 months so may need to prepare a case to defend the Council. Chair also reported that the Monitoring Officer was also studying the possible breach of the Code of Conduct and will propose any recommended action against the perpetrators.

The Chair proposed that several of the Council’s working documents should be reviewed to ensure they met the needs of Council, including the Standing Orders and Code of Conduct and the Member/Officer Protocol, Grievance Procedure and Employment model documents which should be adapted and adopted. Chair also proposed that all new councillors should be trained within 6 months of joining and they would have to agree to this before joining the Council.

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It was agreed that the Chair and Cllr Evans would work on the Standing Orders; Cllrs Bullock and Simmonds on the Code of Conduct; Cllr Cozens on the Grievance Procedure and Cllr Greenaway on the Member/Officer Protocol.

Discussion then ensued about the Code of Conduct and DPIs. The Clerk advised that undeclared DPIs or participating in the discussion or voting in a meeting on a matter in which the Councillor has a DPI is actually a criminal offence and could mean a fine of £5000 for the Councillor (not the Council). Their involvement in such matters could also be open to challenge from a member of the public and, in particular with EPC, from developers who have access to an array of legal advice. This would invalidate any work undertaken by the Parish Council. In the light of this advice it was proposed that the Strategic Planning Group was reconstituted as a precautionary measure until advice was received from the Monitoring Officer about DPIs. Cllr Evans requested that he be asked to make a decision within 7 days. The proposal was put to the vote and there were 4 in favour with 3 abstentions. (Cllr Evans objected that this was against the Standing Orders as no advance notice had been given of the need to vote, but the Clerk advised that it was a precautionary measure to protect Cllr Evans against possible criminal charges and the Council from being challenged.)

The Chair reported that he had been contacted by the headmaster of the local school as he felt he had been harassed and misled by Cllr Evans with regard to the proposed changing facilities at OHMGC. He stated that he had been phoned 15 times, with 7 voicemail messages from Cllr Evans canvassing for financial support. Cllr Evans advised that he had only phoned the headmaster once. The headmaster had contacted the Chair for clarification and stated that he wanted it on record that the school did not want any involvement with the changing facilities. This was contrary to the statement Cllr Evans had made earlier in the meeting when he advised Mark Cousins that the changing facilities would have the support of the school. Cllr Evans was very surprised about this and he apologised unreservedly if his actions had been misconstrued. The Chair advised that as a member of the public had complained, this made it a Code of Conduct issue and it would have to be reported to the Monitoring Officer and Cllr Evans would have his opportunity to put his side and hopefully an apology would solve the problem.

Any Other Business

Plans for a Neighbourhood Plan were underway and the Chair would be having meetings with Ian Crawley and Ian Stuart and would report back at the next meeting.

The meeting closed at 2120 hrs.

Notice: The next meeting of Eastington Parish Council will be on Tuesday 12th March 2013. Anybody with an item they wish to bring to the attention of the Council, should forward details, in writing, to the Clerk to the Parish Council, no later than Monday 4th March 2013.

Signed.....
Chairman/Responsible Officer

Date.....