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MINUTES

Minutes of the Great Easton and Tilty Parish Council meeting held at 7.00pm on Thursday 28 November 2024 in Great Easton Village Hall, Great Easton.

Present:

Councillors

Cllr T Martens (Chairman), Cllr J Stevens (Vice-chair), Cllr J England, Cllr D Hahn, Cllr J Heath and Cllr P Neale. Cllr C Hurst arrived during the public participation session item 11.24.04.

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Two members of the public attended.

	The Chairman opened the meeting at 7 pm
11.24.01	Apologies for absence Cllr Benterman was unable to attend due to a prior commitment. Cllr Hurst had said she would be late. The reasons for absence were accepted by resolution.
11.24.02	Declarations of interest None.
11.24.03	Minutes of the last Parish Council meeting The minutes of the parish council meeting on 26 Sept 2024 were approved as an accurate record and signed by the chairman.
11.24.04	Public participation session The chair of the Great Easton Playground Committee addressed the council as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is now a fund for playground equipment of £32,000 from grants and fundraising by the Great Easton Community Association (GECA). The committee plans to have the equipment installed in Spring 2025 and hopes the parish council will fund a specific item costing £6,500 plus VAT. - The committee wishes to order by the end of 2024 to avoid a 7.5% price increase. - GECA has asked the current owners jointly for a long-term arrangement to use the land. A further approach is planned to one of the three owners. - The committee understand that the land is already subject to a lease which would limit the options of a purchaser and that it is unsuitable for development or agricultural use. It hopes it could therefore continue indefinitely as a playground but if necessary, in the future the play equipment could be moved off the site. <p>It was agreed that the details of ordering the equipment, invoicing and VAT charges needed further discussion between the parish council and the committee. Councillors raised queries concerning the legal ownership of equipment fixed to a third party's land and the feasibility of moving it to any other site.</p> <p>The damaged slide which has been dismantled for welding will be brought back to the parish for repair.</p> <p>Action: Cllr Neale, Chair</p>
11.24.05	District and County Councillors' reports Comments and reports had been received from the councillors. The availability of a district councillor's grant towards play equipment was noted and would be discussed at a later date.

11.24.06	<p>Chair's report and receiving reports on progress for items not listed separately on the agenda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Village Green. A quotation for installing a line of wooden posts next to the road had been requested but not yet received. Cllr Neale noted that Highways should be asked to repair the damaged kerb next to the drain at the edge of the green. Action: Clerk • Parking next to Tilty church –the chair reported that he had still had no response following his meeting with the Archdeacon. Action: Chair • Tree surgery – it was noted that dangerous branches had been removed from the oak tree at Laundry Lane and that work to reduce the sycamore outside Easton Hall would take place on 3 December. It was noted that further work was needed on an urgent basis – see item 11.24.13 below.
11.24.07	<p>Clerk's report on items not listed separately on the agenda, and correspondence</p> <p>A written report (annexed to the hard copy of these minutes) had been made available and was taken as read.</p>
11.24.08	<p>Report on progress of work on the War Memorial</p> <p>The clerk reported that two initial quotations to restore the lettering and repair the damaged steps and indicated a cost of up to £9,000. Both craftsmen were based in the south-west of England.</p> <p>It was noted that the WMT had strict requirements for the format and content of quotes and that a conservation approach, minimising alterations or damage, must be taken. The clerk would need to prepare formal paperwork to comply with this. A War Memorial Trust grant, if offered, would cover only up to 50% of the cost. The work itself could only be carried out in good weather, therefore after April/May 2025 at the earliest.</p> <p>Cllr Neale kindly agreed to ask his contact to quote on the terms set by the WMT. He confirmed that the Great Easton Community Association had proposed a parishes-wide fundraising campaign to mirror the subscriptions from local people which had funded the original construction of the memorial.Action: Clerk, Cllr Neale</p>
11.24.09	<p>Neighbourhood Plan</p> <p>The chair and vice-chair reported on the meeting on 17 October, at which Nicky Joshua of the RCCE had explained in detail the steps required to prepare a plan. The chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (an advisory committee of the parish council) had been elected and was now organising the group. Cllr Stevens would be a member of the group and liaise with the parish council. A meeting was taking place on 29 November. As yet, there was no proposal for the parish council to consider a change of the terms of reference but any such change would need to be put to the council. Cllr Stevens confirmed that consultation and approval of the plan in a referendum would involve all electors in both parishes (Great Easton and Tilty) even if the development set out in the Plan related only to parts of the area.</p>
11.24.10	<p>Parish Council Financial Reports and Decisions</p> <p>A summary and note of the bank balance at 18 November 2024 had been circulated to councillors and was tabled. Bank statements for 31 October and 30 November 2024 had been made available to councillors and had been reconciled with the cashbooks.</p> <p>16.1 Income and payments for the year to date (1 April 2024 to 19 November 2024)</p> <p>Total income to 19 November 2024: £53,025.70 (precept, VAT refund, contribution to printer toner, rent for Laundry Lane, grant). It was noted that the grant of £10,000 was an earmarked reserve which must be used for its intended purpose by 31 March 2025 or returned.</p> <p>Total outgoings to 19 November 2024: £33,522.17 including VAT</p> <p>16.2 Balances: The TSB current account held £56,606.75 at 19 November 2024.</p> <p>16.3 Payments and receipts to note and approve</p> <p>A payment of £100 for the removal of hardened road salt from the Highways' bins in Great Easton was approved. The payments due before the next meeting (already approved or required) were noted. A list of payments and receipts from 26 September to 18 November 2024 was tabled and noted.</p>
11.24.11	<p>To consider and decide the budget and precept for 2025-26</p> <p>Cllr Stevens presented the draft which was tabled and had been circulated to councillors and discussed by the finance working group. The precepts for nearby comparable parishes had been considered and it was noted that Great Easton and Tilty PC's precept for the current year (£49,000) was about 1.7% lower.</p> <p>In the current year the council was likely to underspend, leaving extra reserves. These would reduce the increase needed for the 2025-26 financial year as well as allowing for contingencies or any spending brought forward from its planned date. Cllr Stevens proposed an increase in the precept for 2025-26 of 4% to</p>

	<p>£51,000. This allowed for inflation on existing commitments but no increase otherwise.</p> <p>The council noted the importance of maintaining adequate reserves and complying with financial best practice for small councils and approved the proposed budget and a precept demand of £51,000 unanimously.</p>
11.24.12	<p>To resolve to allocate £5,000 to the purchase of play equipment</p> <p>Cllr Neale declared a non-pecuniary interest and took no part in the discussion or vote. It was proposed by Cllr Martens that £5,000 should be committed to the purchase of play equipment and this was agreed unanimously.</p>
11.24.13	<p>To select a tree surgeon to carry out urgent work on two willow trees on Burns Playing Field</p> <p>The trees identified as T9 and T10 in the arboriculturist's report needed coppicing to ground level. Four quotes were considered. The council decided unanimously to engage the firm quoting £1,800 for work on both trees on the basis that the firm was insured and qualified, which should be checked. Cuttings should be left as habitat piles for wildlife/flora in an agreed location. Action: Clerk</p>
11.24.14	<p>To consider future uses of the former changing rooms on Burns Playing Field</p> <p>It was resolved to use the grant of £10,000 received from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to fund:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Waterproofing, repairs and removal of changing room fittings. - The installation of electric sockets and functional LED lighting, insulation of the rear wall, security measures and creating a basic kitchen sink area, but excluding refitting the toilet. Two quotes had been requested for the installation of utilities and the second was awaited. <p>The grant fund was restricted to spending on this building and would have to be returned if not spent by 31 March 2025.</p> <p>It was noted that after the proposed work described above the building would still be a basic shell, measuring about 40 square metres, with rudimentary facilities. It would be suitable for a wide range of uses and it was agreed that the council should make residents aware of what it would offer when the grant-funded work was finished. Groups using the building might wish to do further work to fit out the shell for particular uses.</p>
11.24.15	<p>To consider the invitation to twin Great Easton and Tilty parishes with Cosuenda in the Cariñena wine region of northern Spain</p> <p>Councillors had seen details of the invitation and agreed unanimously to accept. Action: Clerk</p>
11.24.16	<p>Planning applications, decisions and progress on planning matters</p> <p>A note of the outcome of previous applications had been circulated and was tabled. There were no new planning applications.</p>
11.24.17	<p>To receive representatives' reports (for items not shown separately on the agenda or discussed above)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open spaces including playing fields/play areas and trees See above. • Footpaths, road safety and highways – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A number of footpaths in both Tilty and Great Easton parishes were overgrown. The chairman will raise this with the landowner. It was noted that the new footbridge on the path between Duton Hill and Great Easton over Snow Hill was again damaged. Action: Chair, Clerk ○ Affinity Water had visited and told residents that water was draining across the pavement because the drain on the Endway near Merrifield was blocked. It was the Highways Authority's responsibility to keep this drain in working order. A formal complaint had been made to Highways by a resident and the county councillor was being copied in. Highways' response indicated that they would clear the drain at an unknown date. It appeared that the drain may now have been cleared but the position would be checked. The council can make available "Footpath Closed" signs if needed. These are stored in the village hall. Action: Cllr Neale • River interests – nothing new to report. • Airport – nothing new to report. • Community activities and events — Great Easton Community Association: the Christmas tree would be positioned on the green on 30 November and lit up on Sunday 1st December. There would be a cheese and wine-tasting evening on 30 November and on Sunday 8th December a children's Christmas

	<p>event “Father Christmas Express” at a miniature railway in Monk Street.</p> <p>Duton Hill Community Association: The community would gather around the Christmas tree on 30 November, accompanied by a band and free snacks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dunmow United Football Club — the club was enlarging its car park and using up the parish council’s surplus road salt in doing so. An agreement had been drafted to record the council’s consent, as trustee, for the club to build a new club house on the site. The club would own this and would be responsible for all maintenance, costs and removal when it was no longer needed, so the council as trustee would not incur any costs. • IT, website, social media and communications – The clerk reported that the domain name greateastonparishcouncil.co.uk would be renewed automatically at the end of December. The website was hosted by Astley Digital which would be charging £200 per year from now on. This included backing up the site every night and forwarding completed contact forms.
11.24.18	<p>The date and time of the next meeting was confirmed as 7pm on Thursday 23 January 2025. The venue would be indicated on the Agenda and via the website before the agenda was published.</p>
	<p>There being no further business the meeting was closed at 9.15 pm.</p>

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