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MINUTES

Minutes of the Great Easton and Tilty Parish Council meeting held at 7.00pm on Thursday 23 January 2025 in Great Easton Village Hall, Great Easton.

Present:

Councillors

Cllr T Martens (Chairman), Cllr J Stevens (Vice-chair), Cllr M Benterman and Cllr P Neale.

Clerk: Kate Rixson

Eight members of the public attended including District Councillor Haynes

	The Chairman opened the meeting at 7.10 pm
01.25.01	<p>Apologies for absence Cllr Hurst and Cllr Heath were unwell. Cllr England and Cllr Hahn were unable to attend due to work commitments. The reasons for absence were accepted by resolution.</p>
01.25.02	<p>Declarations of interest Cllr Neale declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 10.</p>
01.25.03	<p>Minutes of the last Parish Council meeting It was resolved unanimously to amend the draft minutes of the parish council meeting on 28 November 2024 at item 11.24.17 "Community Activities and events", to record that the GECA Christmas event for children took place at Maysland. With that amendment the minutes were approved as an accurate record and signed by the chairman.</p>
01.25.04	<p>Public participation session The Great Easton Playground Committee addressed the proposal at Item 10 for the council to purchase play equipment for installation at Great Easton playground. The Chair exercised his discretion to extend the 15-minute period for this session to allow a discussion and for information to be exchanged on several matters including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The current ownership of the land and the council's security of tenure, and whether the council could improve its security with the freeholders' agreement. 2. Whether the council had, or could obtain, permission to install new equipment and whether the landowners would recognise the council's ownership and the right to remove existing and future equipment. 3. Evidence of ownership of the land and the extent of any rights of use by the council which had been granted either by owners or leaseholders. 4. The roles of the council and the Great Easton Community Association in placing an order for play equipment, becoming the owner of newly installed equipment and managing its removal and possible re-installation elsewhere, if this proved necessary. The costs and feasibility of removal, storage and/or re-installation. 5. Whether the existing equipment was still useable and should remain, with or without repairs and renovation. 6. The need for decisions to be taken quickly to ensure that the conditions attached to a grant of £10,000 could be met. <p>The chairman confirmed that the report of the forthcoming safety assessment of the equipment would be shared with the Community Association as soon as it was available. This was expected to be within the next ten working days.</p>

	<p>A member of the public put forward several suggestions for the use of the Burns Playing Field in the future, including working with the primary school to plant bulbs, creating a footpath along the river to Great Easton, adding a boardwalk for easier access for buggies and wheelchairs to the whole field, creating a barbecue area and running sports events in the summer. She asked about progress towards community use of the former changing rooms (Rivershed). The chairman outlined progress to date on renovating the building and proposals to use it as a repair shed and to pass on carpentry and other skills. Work was continuing with the neighbouring landowner on plans for a footpath. The ideas put forward were being collected and would be reviewed with the community. Residents were encouraged to bring their ideas to the council.</p>
01.25.05	<p>District and County Councillors' reports</p> <p>Comments and reports had been received from the councillors and circulated. Cllr Haynes kindly offered the Ward Member's grant of about £1,200 towards the purchase of an item of play equipment for Great Easton and this was gratefully accepted.</p>
01.25.06	<p>Chair's report and receiving reports on progress for items not listed separately on the agenda</p> <p>6.1 Village Green. The report was unchanged from the last meeting and the issue was deferred.</p> <p>6.2 Parking next to Tilty church –the chair reported that he had still had no response following his meeting with the Archdeacon. Action: Chair</p>
01.25.07	<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. It was noted that the council was requesting a 20mph speed limit in Duton Hill and Great Easton – the clerk was asked to include Mill End Green in the area for this speed limit. Action: Clerk</p>
01.25.08	<p>Neighbourhood Plan</p> <p>The chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NPSG) was invited to report.</p> <p>There had been two meetings since his last report and support was increasing from residents. The meeting on 15 January had been attended by 15 local people. The aim now was to form subgroups with each taking on a different task such as publicity. The group was working hard on engaging the local community through several routes and would be holding an open day/exhibition in the village hall in the Spring. A local WhatsApp group was being set up, open to all, to make it easier to communicate with interested local people.</p> <p>The NP adviser from the Rural Community Council of Essex (who is engaged by UDC to support NPSGs) had put the NPSG in touch with people in Lindsell, Little Hallingbury and Debden who were also aiming to prepare NPs.</p> <p>The group was applying urgently to Groundwork (the manager of funding support from the government) for a grant of up to £1,500 to cover initial marketing and communication. A larger grant would be applied for later in the year to carry out a survey of residents. It was confirmed that both Great Easton and Tilty parish areas would be surveyed.</p> <p>The parish council would be asked to provide some funding and a process for claiming minor expenses and approving payments would need to be agreed between the council and the Steering Group. The clerk would supply the datasets of local addresses (without any personal data) which had been provided by Uttlesford.</p> <p>Action: Clerk</p> <p>The council confirmed that banners promoting the NP could be placed on council land and that the clerk would contact the PC website manager to request an NPSG page on the council website. Action: Clerk</p>
01.25.09	<p>Parish Council Financial Reports and Decisions</p> <p>A summary and note of the bank balance at 3 January 2025 had been circulated to councillors and was tabled. Bank statements for 31 December 2024 had been made available to councillors and had been reconciled with the cashbooks.</p> <p>9.1 Income and payments for the year to date (1 April 2024 to 3 January 2025) and comparison with budget</p> <p>Total income to 3 January 2025: £63,045.70 (precept, VAT refund, contribution to printer toner, rent for Laundry Lane, grant). It was noted that the grant was an earmarked reserve which must be used for its intended purpose by 31 March 2025 or returned.</p> <p>Total outgoings to 3 January 2025: £38,251.95 including VAT</p> <p>A list of payments and amounts received between 1 November and 3 January had been circulated and was tabled. These amounts were included in the total income and spending figures above.</p> <p>A comparison of income and outgoings to 3 January with the budgeted figures had been circulated and was tabled. In summary this showed that the council had spent £33,279 compared with a budget of £36,750, up to the end of December (9 months of the financial year), so that reserves were slightly higher</p>

	<p>than expected.</p> <p>9.2 Balances: The TSB current account held £51,896.97 at 3 January 2025, which included the balance of the grant/earmarked reserves for the Rivershed (Burns playing field building) amounting to £6,880. If not spent by 31 March 2025 on the Rivershed refurbishment the remaining funds would have to be returned.</p> <p>9.3 Payments and receipts to note and approve The clerk's office expenses (landline phone) of £38.64 for 2024, and a payment of £345 for work on the fence, trees and hedging on the riverbank in Great Easton were approved. The payments due before the next meeting (already approved or required) were noted.</p> <p>9.4 To open a savings/deposit instant access account. Councillors considered the interest rates offered by a bank and two building societies offering instant access accounts for parish council deposits. The highest interest rate was available from Unity Trust bank which had a reputation for high standards of service and ease of use in the local council sector. It was decided unanimously to apply for an account. A resolution was passed in the terms required by Unity Trust Bank and Cllr Martens and the clerk were nominated as signatories. Action: Clerk</p>
01.25.10	<p>To consider Great Easton playground equipment proposals as follows:</p> <p>10.1 Chair's Report: the Chair reported that information had been shared at an informal meeting between PC representatives and the Community Association playground project leader/committee on 16 January. It was noted that although most of the grants received by GECA for the playground project were not time-limited, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund grant of £10,000 was conditional on completion of the project by 31 March 2025. The clerk had advised that the council's use of the land could be ended by the freeholder on three months' notice, based on documents held by the council. However it appeared that the land might have been included in a longstanding farming lease to a local family. They had never farmed the playground area and did not object to the use of the site as a playground. The leaseholder, if the lease did include the playground site, was happy for the playground to remain while they remained leaseholder, and for new equipment to be installed. The legal ownership of the freehold was not clear but further information was being sought. Currently it was uncertain who would be able to make decisions on the council's security of tenure on the site. Cllr Neale reported that a welder had agreed to repair the slide but needed to examine it to estimate the cost. It was agreed to wait for the forthcoming Playsafety Ltd report on the condition of all the equipment before any steps were taken towards a repair. In the meantime, the metal slide bed was in the keeping of the local firm Southon Engineering.</p> <p>10.2 Motions to approve the council purchasing play equipment for Great Easton playground and to allocate Cllr Haynes' ward member's grant towards the "Mira" swing Cllr Neale, having declared a non-pecuniary interest, took no part in the discussion and did not vote. The quotation ref Q-32026-C6CO rev 2 from HAGS play equipment suppliers dated 4 October 2024 for Great Easton Community Association had been circulated and set out the list of equipment. The estimated cost was £44,250 plus VAT for supply and installation. Two other quotations, from other suppliers, had been received and were passed to the council. After discussion the chair proposed to defer the motion that the council should purchase the equipment to an extraordinary meeting. The purpose of deferral was to allow time to receive responses from the landowner and any leaseholder on the matters discussed in the public participation session (see above) and to consider the Playsafety Ltd report. The replies and the report would be relevant factors in the council's decisions. The motion to defer was passed unanimously. In relation to the Ward Member's grant, the community association advised that the playground committee had been offered a donation to buy the Mira swing. However they would be happy to add the Ward member's grant to funds needed for other items. The clerk would provide details to Cllr Haynes. Action: Clerk</p>
01.25.11	<p>To consider a grant to the Five Parishes Baby and Toddler group, to be used to meet hall hire charges It was observed that two previous grants had been made and that although the group was opening a new bank account (to gain access to its funds) the process was not yet complete. Attendance at the group was increasing, but income did not cover running costs including hall hire. The chair proposed a grant of £325 to cover about three months' running costs on condition that the current organisers should be signatories on the new bank account and that the new bank account details were supplied to the clerk. This was passed by a majority vote. Action: Clerk</p>
01.25.12	<p>To agree to plant cricket bat willows at the Burns Playing Field, Duton Hill Councillors considered information supplied in the meeting by interested residents. It was noted that the project would contribute to biodiversity and that planting, cultivation and felling could be managed by a specialist contractor. After about fifteen years the sale of the timber to make cricket bats would generate income for the council to use for community benefit. However, it was already too late to plant trees in 2025. It was agreed to investigate further. Action: Clerk</p>

01.25.13	<p>To endorse a letter making a formal complaint against Uttlesford District Council from Broxton Parish Council and others</p> <p>The letter had been circulated to councillors. It was agreed unanimously to support the complaint and to refer to the failure to order the repair of Tilty Watermill and to prevent unauthorised commercial activity to the rear of Marshes in Cherry Green. Action: Clerk</p>
01.25.14	<p>To appoint a councillor representative to liaise over twinning arrangements with Cosuenda, Spain.</p> <p>It was agreed to defer a decision until a meeting where more councillors were able to attend.</p>
01.25.15	<p>Planning applications and decisions and report on 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>
01.25.16	<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. It was noted that the eastern boundary of the Burns playing field no longer matched the plan on the deeds and action should be considered. Action: Clerk • Footpaths, road safety and highways – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There was dense vegetation across public footpaths near the lakes at Tilty and although this had been reported no action had been taken yet. ○ The drain on the Endway near Merrifield was still not clear and although the problem was not as bad, water was still emerging onto the pavement. ○ A drain at Mill End near the junction with the B184 main road was blocked. Action: Clerk to report to Highways ○ The potholes near P and A Wood were scheduled for another repair. • River interests – Fencing at Brocks Mead had been repaired for safety reasons, and some cutting back of hedges had been carried out. • Airport – the express set-down area would be barrierless from 23 January and the discount for residents living within 5 or 10 miles of the airport should be shown when paying online. This depended on the car number plate of the resident being registered with the airport parking company and being recognized when entering/leaving the express set-down. The PC website would be altered to specify the new arrangements. Action: Clerk • Community activities and events – The 80th anniversary of VE day would arise on 8 May 2025. The Community Associations would be asked if they wished to light the beacons and this should be on the agenda for the march meeting. Action: Clerk • Dunmow United Football Club – the club was changing its name to "Easton AFC". A memorandum of understanding had been signed by the club and the PC regarding arrangements for the new clubhouse, which would belong to the club. Building and maintenance costs would be met by the club and it would remove the building if the club's lease came to an end and was not renewed. • IT, website, social media and communications – See above at item 01.25.08 regarding a new page for the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.
01.25.17	<p>Items for inclusion on the next meeting's agenda</p> <p>See items 01.25.6.1, 01.25.14 and 01.25.16 arrangements for VE Day anniversary.</p>
01.25.18	<p>The date and time of the next ordinary meeting was confirmed as 7pm on Thursday 27 March 2025. The venue would be indicated on the agenda and via the website before the agenda was published.</p> <p>An extraordinary meeting to consider decisions about new playground equipment should be fixed to take place after the Playsafety Ltd report was expected. Action: Clerk</p>
	<p>There being no further business the meeting closed at 10.05 pm.</p>