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MINUTES

Minutes of the Great Easton and Tilty Parish Council extra-ordinary meeting held at 7.00pm on Thursday 20 February 2025 in Great Easton Village Hall, Great Easton.

Present:

Councillors

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

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Approximately 22 members of the public attended.

	The Chairman opened the meeting at 7.00 pm and welcomed those attending.
02.25.01	Apologies for absence Cllr Heath and Cllr Hahn were unable to attend. The reasons for absence were accepted by resolution.
02.25.02	Declarations of interest Cllr Neale declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 5 on the agenda.
02.25.03	Public participation session The Great Easton Playground Committee addressed the proposals at Items 4 and 5 (as in the published agenda), that is, for the council to retain some or all of the existing playground equipment, and to purchase play equipment for installation at Great Easton playground to the value of £15,000 including installation. The Chair exercised his discretion to allow two speakers to use the whole of the 15-minute period allocated for this session and to extend the period allowed. Issues raised included: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The content of the Play Safety Ltd report carried out on 28 January 2025 and the condition of the existing equipment at the Great Easton playground.2. Concerns that the recommendations in the Play Safety Ltd report dated December 2023 had not been followed with regard to work on the equipment.3. That the GECA had decided to buy the new equipment (as per a revised quotation from HAGS, rev 3) itself including installation costs and VAT. It would order the equipment and become the owner.4. That the GECA recognised the council's concerns and its position as a public body in purchasing the equipment itself and installing it on land which had limited security of tenure.5. That the Great Easton Community Association (GECA) had decided it would not bear the whole cost of removal and storage of the new equipment if the legal occupier (leaseholder/tenant or freeholder) withdrew permission for the use of the site by the local community or parish council, so that the equipment therefore had to be removed or would be inaccessible or confiscated.6. The GECA was very grateful to the council for deciding to contribute £5,000 to play equipment. It asked that the council insure and maintain the new equipment and carry out safety and other checks on it for the lifetime of the equipment.

02.25.05	<p>To consider the report of Play Safety Ltd (RoSPA) on the equipment at Great Easton playground and decide whether:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To retain all the play equipment; 2. To retain the play equipment except for the wooden playframe/multi-activity equipment and the slide. <p>Cllr Neale took no part in the discussion and did not vote.</p> <p>It was noted that the report indicated no dangerous items and the assessment was largely unchanged from December 2023. The Play Safety Ltd inspector had advised that the slide would be difficult and expensive to bring up to current standards and the wooden playframe was within 2-4 years of the end of its life.</p> <p>After discussion the council voted unanimously to defeat proposal 1. to retain all the equipment and voted unanimously to pass proposal 2. To retain all except the wooden playframe and the slide.</p> <p>Action: Chair and Clerk to establish with GECA how the existing equipment would be dealt with before installation of the new pieces and consider obtaining quotes for work on and around the existing equipment.</p>
02.25.06	<p>Decision to amend item 5 on the agenda</p> <p>A motion was proposed to amend item 5 on the agenda (which read “To take steps to ensure that the £10,000 grant from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund awarded by Uttlesford District Council is not forfeited, including by committing to a contract with HAGS to purchase play equipment up to the value of £15,000 including installation costs”) by replacing it with the following:</p> <p>“5. To approve the purchase of play equipment from HAGS and cover the cost of installation at Great Easton playing field at a cost of £44,250 plus VAT, on two provisos</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the Great Easton Community Association confirm in writing that it will be responsible for removing and storing the equipment and any associated costs if the parish council is asked to vacate the playground site • That the Great Easton Community Association grant £39,250 to the parish council, these funds to be transferred within 60 days of the date of the council’s purchase order. The amount of the grant will be reduced, pound for pound, by any funds received by the parish council for play equipment through the District Council Ward Member’s Grant scheme .” <p>Note: the proposed amendment had been notified to councillors the day before the meeting (19 Feb 2025) and a copy was tabled in the meeting.</p> <p>The motion was proposed and seconded. Following discussion the proposal to amend was passed unanimously and the amended motion was put to the council.</p>
02.25.07	<p>Decision to approve the purchase of play equipment from HAGS and meet the cost of installation at Great Easton playing field as set out in HAGS’ quotation dated 4 October 2024 (rev 2), at £44,250 plus VAT, on two provisos</p> <p>The proposed provisos were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the Great Easton Community Association confirm in writing that it would be responsible for removing and storing the equipment and any associated costs if the parish council were asked to vacate the playground site • That the Great Easton Community Association grant £39,250 to the parish council, these funds to be transferred within 60 days of the date of the council’s purchase order. The amount of the grant would be reduced, pound for pound, by any funds received by the parish council for play equipment through the District Council Ward Member’s Grant scheme <p>In answer to a question it was confirmed that the sum of £39,250 took account of the decision at an earlier meeting for the council to spend £5,000 on play equipment, and that if funds were received from Uttlesford District Council under the Ward Member’s grant scheme a further deduction would be made. The amount of that grant was not yet certain but likely to be approximately £1,200.</p> <p>Cllr Neale took no part in the discussion and did not vote.</p> <p>The proposal and two provisos were approved unanimously. The decision by GECA to purchase the equipment itself was noted.</p> <p>Action: Clerk to check if the council could obtain insurance on the equipment on the basis that it maintained it.</p>

02.25.08	<p>Matters to note</p> <p>Cllr Neale requested the Clerk record in the minutes that he remained unhappy with the council's failure to carry out the recommendations in the December 2023 report from Play Safety Ltd, and that if any accident or injury occurred he wished it recorded that he had had no part in the council's lack of action.</p> <p>The chair referred to the plan to set up a working group/steering group to assist the council in managing the Great Easton playground. This had been discussed in principle with the GECA. The council believed this would be a positive step which would enable local residents to influence how the council dealt with the existing equipment as well as the new, and the council would greatly welcome support and help from local residents as volunteers.</p>
	<p>There being no further business the chairman closed the meeting at 7.25 pm</p>