

**Newington and Peene Parish Council Meeting
Held at Newington Village Hall
10th March 2025**

Attended by: Councillor John Neale MBE (Chair)
Councillor Sarah Wright (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Jill Sage
FHDC James Butcher
KCC Susan Carey

Clerk: Jean Gilham

| Item | | |
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| 1. | Apologies Received: Councillor David Godfrey FHDC Stephen Scoffham | |
| 2. | Declaration of Interests: None noted | |
| 3. | Minutes of previous meeting: Held on 13 th January 2025. Agreed and signed by Councillor John Neale MBE (Chair) | |
| 4. | <p>Matters Arising from previous meeting:</p> <p>4.1 Repairs to be carried out to Play Equipment at King George V Field and to the surface of the play area - An estimate of £613.00 + VAT has been received from Envisage Ground Maintenance, discussed and agreed. Proposed by Cllr. John Neale, Seconded by Jill Sage, all in favour.</p> <p>Ground maintenance on the field – to dig out 3 trenches and form French Drains towards stream, back fill and relay grass. Infill sunken trench across field and seed. Soil and seed area within the goal mouth, removal of old goal posts. An estimate of £2323.95 has been received from Envisage Ground Maintenance, discussed and agreed. Proposed by Cllr. John Neale, seconded by Jill Sage, all in favour.</p> <p>New Goal Posts for the Playing Field, to be purchased once work has been completed.</p> <p>4.2 Hugo Fox Website – was taken down on 25.01.25 the Parish Council Website has now been fully moved to Parish Online.</p> <p>4.3 Crime Statistics – The clerk has requested a breakdown of stats at village level for Newington Parish, unfortunately information has not been received, the stats available to the public are for the area which includes – Caple-le-Fern, Hawkinge, Densole and parts of Elham and Lyminge. The lack of response was discussed and KCC Susan Carey took notes and will make enquiries on behalf of the Parish Council</p> <p>4.4 Parish Council Vacancy – Notices have been placed in both notice boards for a new Parish Councillor. One application has been received, forms to be sent out to applicant for consideration at next meeting.</p> | <p>JG/ Envisage</p> <p>JG/ Envisage</p> <p>JN</p> <p>SC</p> <p>JG</p> |
| 5. | Open Session/Public Participation – None, no members of the public attended. | |
| 6. | Reports received – KCC Susan Carey – see appendix A FHDC Stephen Scoffham see appendix B | |
| 7. | Planning – No objections or comments have been received or made on either of these applications - PROW/FH/C457 Right of Way 25/0159/FH 25/0163/FH Discussed -FHDC Planning review is still identifying sites of interest. | |

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| 8. | <p>Finance – 8.1 January 2025 finance documents were circulated prior to meeting. Bank reconciliation report agreed and signed by Cllr. John Neale and Jean Gilham. 8.2 February 2025 finance documents were circulated prior to meeting. Bank reconciliation report agreed and signed by Cllr. John Neale and Jean Gilham. 8.3 Ward Grant the Parish Council has been awarded a £500 grant towards purchase of the new goal posts. Thanks to FHDC Stephen Scoffham. 8.4 Bank Signatories – are now up to date.</p> | |
| 9. | <p>Policies and Procedures – 9.1 Asset Register 9.2 Statement of Internal Control 9.3 Code of Conduct 9.4 Finance Reserve Policy 9.5 Standing Orders All policies have been read and reviewed prior being approved at the meeting.</p> | |
| 10. | <p>AOB – 10.1 Parking around Underhill Cottages - via email, discussed, this land is Shepway Housing Land and as such all applications for changes to use must be made to FHDC. The clerk to respond the email. 10.2 Parish Council Meetings – A return to The Barn at the site of the Elham Valley Trust was discussed and proposed by Cllr. John Neale Seconded by Cllr. Jill Sage and agreed, effective as of the May 2025 meeting. A donation will be made to the Village Hall for the previous 3 meetings held there. 10.3 Meeting May 12th 2025 – this will be a combined Parish Council AGM and Annual Parish Meeting – reports will be sought from the various groups active within the Villages. Please note that this meeting will start at 6.30pm 10.4 Notice Boards – Both locks on the Newington Notice Board are no longer working. Two new locks will be fitted by Cllr. John Neale as soon as possible.</p> | <p>JG JG JG JN</p> |

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.45pm

**Date of next meeting – May 12th 2025
Start time – 6.30pm
Venue – The Barn, Newington Road.**

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Appendix A:

Newington newsletter March 2025

The Government has decided that Kent County Council and Medway Council will not be part of its Devolution Priority Programme but KCC and District Councils must still produce plans for unitary councils (putting the district councils together with KCC). There won't be elections for a mayor in 2026 or the extra funding and powers that were promised to go with this. Elections will go ahead as planned for KCC in May.

KCC set its budget for 2025/26 at an all-day meeting on Thursday 13 February. Your council tax will rise by 4.99% but the only area where spending will increase is social care with all other areas bearing the brunt of the necessary savings to meet the increased costs and demand for social care. This rise is in line with other councils in England although a few have been allowed by the Government to increase council tax by up to 10%.

Sadly the 4.99% increase in council tax is necessary and there were no proposals from any councillors of any party to reduce the increase (the voting by each councillor on the budget and amendments is recorded in the minutes and the debate is available to view on the website www.kent.gov.uk). We desperately need proper funding of social care before it subsumes all other council services.

The Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Kent & Medway is still available for public consultation at [Let's talk Kent](#) and everyone is invited to give their views on what's now proposed following much work including workshops across Kent and the opportunity for both individuals and organisations to contribute. Called 'Making Space for Nature' this policy will be crucial for identifying the land that's available or needed for nature and how we will measure success. Please give your views.

KCC has now sent out offers for Secondary School places for pupils starting this September. 21,767 applications were made and more than 96% have been offered one of their four preferred schools with 81% offered their first choice (up from 79% last year). KCC is now helping find places for those who did not receive a place (usually because not all four preferences were used) in a second round of offers on 24 April.

One of the many duties KCC undertakes is the Government's Homes for Ukraine scheme which started in March 2022. Kent saw one of the largest numbers of householders offering accommodation to Ukrainians who had fled the invasion of their country by Russia. That scheme was closed in February 2025 but many Ukrainians are still based in Kent and KCC itself has a Memorandum of Understanding to develop and deepen co-operation with Chernihiv, one of the regions in Ukraine. There are plans this year for community and educational links as well as joint work on veterans' policy and links between respective chambers of commerce and industry. Support for Ukraine remains strong in the County.

KCC has won the Local Authority Energy Efficiency Award for the Southeast with its solar farm at Kings Hill singled out for praise. This site was a redundant pig farm and now generates three million kWh of electricity a year reducing KCC's energy costs and carbon emissions. As someone deeply involved in winning the grant funding for this project and the work involved to deliver it, I am delighted it has now been cited as an example for other councils to follow.

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Susan Carey
Member for Elham Valley, Kent County Council

Appendix B:

Newington and Peene PC

District Council Report

Budget

The annual budget was recently approved by Folkestone-Hythe council. Once again this balances the books without drawing on general reserves. The prudent financial management strategy adopted last year means that the Council is in sound position despite multiple pressures on its resources. The council tax will be increased by 2.99% in line with government guidance and slightly below the current rate of inflation.

Devolution

Discussions around devolution are continuing to occupy a huge amount of time and effort. We now know that Kent and Medway **will not be** fast tracked as a mayoral authority which means that the KCC elections will proceed as planned on 1st May. At a district level we have been asked to submit initial ideas for the new unitary authorities. The main question is whether we would like to see three or four new authorities. We have no fixed view at the moment. A public consultation will be held at the Civic Centre, Folkestone on **Tuesday 18th March**. Please do come and participate if you are interested. This is a decision which affects us all.

Cabinet or Committee system?

Devolution means that the District Council will cease to exist beyond 2027 (or perhaps 2028). There is no point in undertaking a major internal reorganisation with all the disruption that is involved in the full knowledge that the district is about to be combined with others. You will recall that I reported last month that we have written to the Secretary of State to ask for permission to retain the current Cabinet system but we still have not had a reply. The deadline is the end of this month.

Geopark

It's a year since I first started talking with the Kent Downs National Landscape (formerly AONB) unit about putting up interpretation panels at some of the Geosites in the district. Geosites are sites of geological interest across the aspiring UNESCO Cross-Channel Global Geopark, where people can visit and interact with our geological heritage. I am delighted to report that the first of these will shortly be erected at Farthing Common on the North Downs and the East Cliff, Folkestone. The East Cliff panel will be of particular interest to local residents as it focuses on the mega-flood that cut Britain off from mainland Europe many thousands of years ago. This is a fascinating piece of geological history that has only recently been discovered.

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Heritage ponds

The Kent Downs National Landscape team is also working with the DIO/MOD on a project to restore heritage ponds (dew and sole ponds) in the National Landscape area. The ponds are important for wildlife and have considerable landscape value but have fallen into disrepair. I am liaising with the team to see how we can best work together to restore the ponds in our district.

Green Grants

The FHDC Green Grants scheme has just been launched. This is a great opportunity for local groups and organisations to secure small-scale funding for work they would like to undertake. On **Tuesday 11 March at 7pm** there will be an online session to help potential applicants who have questions about the scheme. This can be joined via [Zoom](#). There is no need to book a place and, if required, the meeting ID is 876 6273 4963 and passcode 360625. **On Tuesday 1 April from 6pm** there will be an [in-person forum at The Workshop](#) in Tontine Street, Folkestone. Information about the application process will be available and there will be the opportunity to talk to those who have received funding in a previous business focussed scheme.

Ward grants

I am pleased to say that I recently approved a grant of £500 from my annual £3000 ward grant towards the costs of replacing the goal posts on the playing field. Its good to be supporting a community facility.

Cllr Stephen Scoffham 7th March 2025