

Minutes

of the Annual Meeting held at 7.15pm on Tuesday 3 May 2022 in the Community Room, Newchurch Village Hall, Kent TN29 0DP

1. Note of those present

Local electors Colin Woollard (Chairman), Deborah Woollard, Alison Youd, Richard Garske, Jacqueline Garske, Gillian Apps, Brian Bishop, Kerry Pearce;

Invited speakers Cllr Tony Hills (Kent County Council) Cllr Ian Meyers (Folkestone & Hythe District Council);

Members of the public Tony Goode, Michael Sharpe (minutes taker).

(12 attendees for all of the meeting).

2. Apologies for absence

Folkestone & Hythe District Councillor Terry Mullard.

3. Approval of Minutes of last Annual Parish Meeting 24 May 2021

These were read out and approved by the Meeting, proposed A Youd, seconded D Woollard, all in favour.

4. Matters Arising from those Minutes

None

5. Reports from County and District Councillors

At the invitation of the Chairman, Ian Meyers (FHDC) gave an oral report which covered the following topics:

- outline of the FHDC structure;
- awareness of Planning issues at the Westgate Industrial Site;
- his membership of FHDC Planning Committee;
- the FHDC 'Blue & Green Infrastructure Strategy' draft document;
- the FHDC Annual Meeting on Wednesday 4th May, which would review the balanced budget for Financial Year 22/23; and
- support for Community Hubs, of which the New Romney Hub is an example.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Tony Hills (KCC) gave a spoken report (text placed on the www.newchurchvillage.org website) covering the following headings:

- Pandemic;
- Ukraine;
- Highways;
- Dungeness A Station site re-use;
- Climate Change;
- Bus Transport;
- Medical Matters;
- Cllr Hills' Kent CC responsibilities. He concluded by stating that in his KCC Councillor he has two main functions: to represent residents of Romney Marsh at County level and do his level best to help with local concerns.

The Meeting noted Cllr's Mullard's short written report, tendered in his absence, and available on the website alongside Cllr Hills'.

The Chairman then invited residents to contribute to the meeting, and the major issue raised was that of recent sewerage charge bills sent to certain houses in Newchurch by FHDC, which have risen 105% since last year.

Much unease is felt at this colossal rise (typically from £341.07 to £697.86 per household) in the light of the cost of living pressures, and residents expressed their shock at not having had some warning in advance of this year's much larger bill from FHDC.

Both Councillors were able to participate in these discussions and offered to help. Cllr Meyers stated he had recollection of an arrangement dating from 1997 when the non-adoption of the sewerage pumping and treatment works by Southern Water from FHDC had led to the present anomalous arrangements.

Residents confirmed that there are three groups of properties within Newchurch, each with its own sewerage undertaking, and that the charges are levied under covenants established on the deeds of each property. Cllr Hills stated that such arrangements affected other properties in other Romney Marsh parishes.

Since Newchurch Parish Council has already been in contact with FHDC through Cllr Meyers and received a reply from the Leasehold Management Senior Specialist stating the bills had been correctly issued, Cllrs Hills and Meyers undertook to review the issue and maintain communication through the NPC Clerk Mr Sharpe during negotiations. The immediate objective is for residents to receive an amended and lower bill from FHDC. The long-term objective is to change the provision of sewerage infrastructure services to a system benefitting from the protections of the Water Act 1980 and OFWAT supervision.

6. Date and time of next Parish Meeting – 7.30 pm Monday 8th May 2023 (with seven clear days' notice)

The Chairman closed the Parish Meeting at 7.59 pm and thanked all those in attendance.

To be read and agreed at and for the purposes of the next Parish Meeting:

Signed

NAME and position in capital letters

Date

(END)