

Newchurch Parish Council

Minutes of Meeting 2025-5 held on **Monday 5<sup>th</sup> May 2025** in-person and in-public at The Community Room, Newchurch Village Hall, Romney Marsh, TN29 0DP. At 7.30 pm the Chairman Colin Woollard welcomed all present and opened the Annual Parish Council Meeting.

Unique Minute Number	Agenda Heading	Record (to include spending power as appropriate)	Action by whom and within what timescale
2025-5-1	Persons Present	<u>Councillors</u> Colin Woollard, Tony Goode, Scott Fielding; Michelle Barden, Invited speaker Cllr Tony Hills (KCC retiring and FHDC) 3 members of the public, <u>Officer</u> , Mr Michael Sharpe (Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer/RFO to Newchurch Parish Council/ NPC) The meeting was quorate, with 4 Parish Councillors.	
2025-5-2	Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman 2025/26	As current Chairman, Colin Woollard conducted the election. One nomination, for Colin Woollard, was received, proposer Tony Goode, seconded Michelle Barden, elected unanimously. Scott Fielding was proposed as Vice Chairman by M Barden, seconded C Woollard, elected unanimously. The Chairman 25-26 signed his Declaration of Acceptance of Office form, in the presence of the Clerk.	<u>ACTION Clerk</u> to notify relevant bodies as convenient, and keep Declaration on file.
2025-5-3	Apologies	No apologies received.	
2025-5-4	Declarations of Interest	The Chairman reminded all Parish Councillors to declare any conflicts of interest in the business before them. He declared an Other Significant Interest (OSI) in Item 8 (Solar Farm Planning application) as he has taken a prominent role in the 'Hand Off Our Marsh' campaign. No other declarations were made.	
2025-5-5	Approval of minutes of the previous Parish Council meeting	The minutes of the Parish Council meeting of 8th April 2024 were examined, discussed and unanimously APPROVED. Proposed S Fielding, seconded T Goode. The Clerk placed the signed copy in the Minutes Book straightway.	<u>ACTION Clerk</u> to update website by 28 <sup>th</sup> May.
2025-5-6	Matters Arising	Under <u>Minute 2025-4-5</u> Mr Sharpe handed the purchased flags to C Woollard for him to install on the Village Sign. Under <u>Minute 2025-4-8</u> C Woollard reported he had had a site meeting and agreed the correct procedure for installing the memorial bench. He passed on the thanks of the Forbes family to Councillors.	
2025-5-7	Invited speaker and public participation	Tony Hills informed the meeting that his successor as Kent County Councillor (KCC) for the Romney Marsh Division from Wednesday 7 <sup>th</sup> May will be David Wimble. Tony Hills will still be Romney Marsh Ward District Councillor at Folkestone & Hythe DC, along with Cllr Tony Cooper. Cllr Hills went on to inform the meeting that the Romney Marsh Visitor Centre is expected to re-open under FHDC stewardship quite soon; and that the KCC-supported Romney Marsh Hub 'Dial-a-Ride' bus was available especially for residents travelling to hospital in Ashford - please make use of it. Members of the public present did not ask any questions during this item.	
2025-5-8	PLANNING - proposed Solar Farm opposite Marten Farm	Having declared an OSI (above), C Woollard vacated the chair for this item and Vice-Chair S Fielding assumed the role of Chairman. Councillors reviewed the application as published on the FHDC Planning Portal under reference 25/0542/FH. S Fielding invited members of the public to make their contribution to the discussion. Newchurch Parish Council RESOLVED after due debate neither to support nor to object to the application, but requested the Clerk to forward the comments of the meeting on relevant 'planning	<u>ACTION Clerk</u> to correspond with Alex Stafford at FHDC to ensure comments are submitted, by 8 <sup>th</sup> May.

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2025-5-8 (contd)		considerations' to FHDC within the agreed consultation deadline. All present noted that the decision is due to be made at Committee level by FHDC, rather than under Officer delegation.	
2025-5-9	Review of Council Policies	As required in NPC Standing Orders, the Parish Council reviewed the operation of NPC policies and found them to be satisfactory. They noted the need to develop a fresh Social Media Policy. No NPC Committees were created. Councillors RESOLVED to attend the Romney Marsh Forum (RMF) depending on personal availability.	ACTION <b>Clerk</b> to inform RMF when convenient.
2025-5-10	FINANCIAL REPORT	A. Mr Sharpe as RFO informed Councillors that the monies at bank on 5th May 2025 totalled £9,160.72, according to the online statements. The Bank reconciliation against the NPC accounting records was duly signed. He also reported a slight underspend in the 24/25 planned budget heads, leading to increased contingency reserves going into FY25/26. B. Cheque to be signed: Newton Newton Flag & Banners Makers Ltd, Skegness <i>2 replacement Union Flags for Village Sign £36.50 +VAT £7.30 = £43.80</i> (section 137 LGA 1972)	ACTION <b>Clerk</b> to post cheque and update Receipts & Payments spreadsheet by 16 <sup>th</sup> May.
2025-5-11	AGAR : Report of Internal Auditor (IA) Michelle Webber of Mulberry LAS	As Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), Mr Sharpe reported that the Internal Auditor had completed her remote and telephone audit last week. Councillors had received the completed and printed Annual Internal Audit Report 2024/25 (single-page for AGAR and 12-page for consideration) from Mulberry forwarded by email. All in order.	ACTION <b>Clerk</b> to process Mulberry Local Authority Services Ltd invoice within 30 days.
2025-5-12	AGAR : Declaration of Exemption from External Audit for FY 24/25	Since the IA reports confirmed that Newchurch Parish Council's receipts and payments for FY24/25 both fell below the £25K threshold, and no audit queries had been made at the previous stage for the FY23/24 AGAR and Accounting Statements, Councillors RESOLVED to claim exempt status. The RFO and Chairman duly signed the exemption certificate.	ACTION <b>Clerk</b> to scan / email Exemption Certificate to external auditors Mazars by 7 <sup>th</sup> May.
2025-5-13	Casual Vacancy for Councillor, and Clerk's retirement	The Chairman reported no applicants have come forward for the current vacancy, and asked if residents present would be prepared to serve. Answer came there none. Cllr Woollard did say a replacement for the Clerk/RFO had been arranged. Mr Sharpe intends to retire (at age 66) within the calendar year, giving a longish handover to the new post-holder.	ACTION <b>Clerk</b> to prepare handover as convenient.
2025-5-14	NPC delegates to KALC events	After due debate, Councilors RESOLVED that C Woollard should attend the KALC Extraordinary General Meeting on 19 <sup>th</sup> June 2pm at Aylesford on NPC's behalf.	ACTION <b>Clerk</b> to arrange to book place and forward voting papers, by 10 <sup>th</sup> June.
2025-5-15	NPC participants in FHDC meeting	Councillors appreciated the invitation to a planning policy online meeting, but found that the timing 3pm to 5pm was not suitable for any of them.	
2025-5-16	Dates, time and place of future NPC Meetings	The Council RESOLVED to hold the next Ordinary meeting on Monday 2nd June 2025 at The Old Wool Store, and then at the same venue 7.30pm start, on 7 <sup>th</sup> July, 1 <sup>st</sup> September, 6 <sup>th</sup> October, 3 <sup>rd</sup> November, 1 <sup>st</sup> December 2025.	ACTION <b>Clerk</b> to prepare agenda; and post dates on website by Tuesday 27 <sup>th</sup> May.

The Chairman Colin Woollard thanked all those present for their contributions, and declared the Parish Council meeting to be closed at 8.18 pm. END.