

KESGRAVE TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 25 November 2024

Councillors present:

A Athwall
A Cook
A Comber
R Gibson (Vice Chair)
G Lynch
J Ogden
A Skinner
G Ward

Officers present:

A Dougall – RFO

- 1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence** – Cllr Gibson, acting Chair, welcomed all those present, apologies received from Cllr Beecroft-Smith, reason – personal, Town Clerk, reason – personal, following the vote these were accepted. Apologies also received from District and County Cllr McCallum and County Cllr Lawson. No apologies were received from Cllr Mears.
- 2. Declarations of Interest** – Cllr Comber and Cllr Ogden, Item 8. – Scout Leader, non-pecuniary.
- 3. Minutes of the Town Council meeting** held on 28 October 2024, following the vote these were agreed and signed by the Vice Chair.
- 4. Chairman's Communication** – Cllr Beecroft-Smith provided the following report: -
 - Congratulations to KWMCC and the team behind winning their recent award.
 - Good luck for Tuesday with the planning application for the pump track, especially Cllr Gibson who will be speaking on our behalf.
 - Thank you to Michael Rayment for all his work for many years as our Footpath Warden, and welcome Peter Elmer as the new warden.
 - Wishing everyone a very Happy Christmas and New Year.
- 5. Clerks/Officer Report/Update** – J Abbott provided the following report.
 - The 11.11 Remembrance Service was well attended by all local schools, army, sea and air cadets along with many residents, thanks to KTC Officers for a well-organised event and special thanks to RBL Chair Mr Whinney.
 - KTC feedback to the A12 MRN Project has been acknowledged.
 - Attended SALC Forum where SCC gave a presentation on their winter maintenance program, very informative. Will enable the office to better inform / update residents. (The slides from the forum have also been shared with all Cllrs via email).
 - Attended along with the Events & Estate Manager and Cllr Comber the ESC Town Council Conference pilot held in Darsham on 6 Nov.

- Held a road safety meeting with Heath Primary School to discuss SCC Feasibility Report. Attended by Cllr McCallum, ESC Community Officer, Cllr Comber, Heath School representatives and SCC Highways Officer, productive meeting with a plan formed with key points to investigate further.
- Had a monthly catch-up meeting with District & County Cllr McCallum.

6. Members of the Public – none.

7. County and District Councillor Reports – No written reports received.

District Cllr Lynch provided the following verbal report.

- ESC budget will be updated with the recent government budget, i.e., change in Employers NI.
- ES Services will be reviewed at the end of their first trading year. It has been a difficult year during the transfer from Norse, particularly, with staffing salaries (80% of costs) and property transfers. Extra costs have occurred due to the de-carbonising of the green dustcarts, including the move from diesel to biofuel. The expected trading loss still remains lower than previous contracts, and it is hoped not to increase Council tax to fund the improvements needed.
- Maersk leaving Felixstowe for London Gateway will have a major impact for the area.
- The recent White Paper with proposed changes to District Councils will have a significant impact on Town Councils.
- Bin Collections – the first weekly food waste bins likely to start in 2025/26.
- Sizewell C – ESC grants for accommodation in large houses to be discussed at P&D meetings.

8. Finance & Governance –

- Finance & Governance Committee meeting minutes; 11 November 2024 – these were noted. Cllr Ogden opened discussion about the grant policy. It is currently under review by Cllr Skinner/Cllr Gibson. It was agreed that the policy should differentiate between small charities and contracted services and specify the conditions for approving funding. S137 one-off grants should be promoted more in the community. Contracted services should be funded in the budget with all bids received by September for the following budget period. The grant request from Footsteps was considered. Cllr Ogden proposed, seconded by Cllr Comber, to refer discussion to the next F&G meeting as the amounts requested are too large to be funded from the S137 budget.
 - Item 6. Flagstone Deposit Account – to be discussed under (f)
- Schedule of Accounts –
 - List of Payments for the period 01/10/2024 to 31/10/2024 - all accepted and agreed following the vote.
 - List of Receipts for the period 01/10/2024 to 31/10/2024 - all accepted and agreed following the vote.
- Transfer from Savings Account/KTC Card Payments Account to the Current Account for October 2024 – the transfers were agreed following the vote.
- Draft Reserve Position for 2024/25 – All accepted the amendments agreed at F&G, following the vote.
- Version 2 Draft Budget 2025/26 – All agreed, following the vote, to accept the current draft budget. Contracted services will be reviewed at the next F&G meeting.
- Flagstone Deposit Account – A Dougall raised 2 issues: -

- At the F&G meeting, it was proposed to transfer £200,000 from the Barclays Account (1.5% interest) to the Flagstone Holding Account. This deposit will be moved to a higher interest instant access account. Cllr Lynch proposed, seconded by Cllr Comber, to this transfer with the F & G committee agreeing which deposit account to be used. All agreed following the vote.
- The 6-month fixed deposit account with Sainsburys Bank matured on 20/11/2024. The F&G committee agreed to reinvest into a 6-month fixed account offering the best interest rate. This was noted.

The committee agreed that if interest rates fall below 0.5% on any account, it should be reviewed by the F & G Committee and reported back to Full Council.

9. Planning & Development –

- a. Committee meeting minutes: 28 October 2024 and 11 November 2024 were noted (copies attached).
- b. Pump Track Application – Cllr Gibson confirmed that he will be presenting a report at the ESC Planning Committee on 26 November 2024 as the applicant.

10. East Suffolk Council's Independent Remuneration Panel – Cllr Gibson presented a report in response to the letter received from Chris Bing, ESC. Following discussion, it was agreed that the Council should not be out of pocket for undertaking their duties and to be paid expenses, but felt they did not feel comfortable to accept payments in a role they volunteered for. It was agreed that receiving an allowance would not help with councillor recruitment and if allowances were given, those accepting may be stigmatised if others decline. Following the vote, it was agreed that Cllr Gibson will respond to the consultation, concluding no support for receiving an allowance by the majority attending the meeting. It was felt that to encourage new councillors, it should be publicised that expenses may be possible in certain circumstances to support childcare, elderly care, provision of laptops, etc. to help become a councillor.

11. Government Consultation on; changes to Councillor Standards and options for Virtual/Hybrid Meetings - Cllr Gibson presented a report written by J Abbott for discussion. The consultation has 2 main elements:

- **Remote attendance** - Cllr Ogden proposed, seconded by Cllr Skinner (Cllr Lynch against) to have remote attendance as an option. There may be occasions that this would be beneficial, but consideration will be needed to ensure good IT & internet provision, security risks to be managed for remote attendance and confidentiality issues addressed (someone may be listening at home/away). This option may also encourage new councillors where physical attendance may not be possible. The majority felt that attending in person should be the priority, but this should be an option to maintain quorate on an occasionally basis only. It would be necessary in the event of local/national emergencies. All agreed, following the vote.
- **Proxy voting** – Cllr Comber proposed, seconded by Cllr Ogden (Cllr Lynch against, Cllr Skinner abstained) to have proxy voting as an option. There may be occasion due to holidays, medical conditions, caring responsibilities, parental leave, other commitments etc that may prevent attending a meeting, where an important decision is to be discussed. All agreed following the vote.

It was agreed that Cllr Gibson will respond to the consultation on the Council's behalf for both remote and proxy voting.

12. Other/Urgent Communications – none.

13. Date of Next Meeting – Monday 20 January 2025, 7.15pm, at the Town Council office – noted.

14. Agenda Items for Next Meeting – none.

15. Resolution to exclude the Public under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 – agreed, no members of the public present.

Agenda items 16a&b and 17a, b&c were then discussed in the CONFIDENTIAL part of this meeting.

this part of the meeting finished at 9.03pm.

Chair**Date.....**