Chairman’s report to the Parish Annual General meeting on **23.4.20**

**The Council** has adhered to its established pattern of bi-monthly meetings in the year, with a very satisfactory attendance record for all 5 Councillors. The Council is non-political.

**Elections to the Council** took place in 2019. Full Elections will be held again in 2023, although there maybe vacancies on the Council before then, due to retirements. As a reminder, anyone is welcome to attend Council meetings, who would like to get more involved. There has been no change in the Easting Councillors this year.

**Covid-19.** Currently the whole country is in lockdown, as the world attempts to deal with this terrible pandemic. In Eastling, we are greatly helped by several voluntary groups looking after those who are most vulnerable and those in need. The Council is extremely grateful to all those villagers who are helping all their neighbours, at this very difficult and unnatural time.

**Parish Council Clerk**. We are fortunate to have Wendy Licence as our Clerk. Wendy is Clerk to a number of other councils and attends regular training and update seminars to keep abreast of all that is required by statute for the proper governance of Parish Councils. The Council is obliged to have its own Website <https://www.hugofox.com/community/eastling-parish-council-15993/home> On that is published all the agendas and minutes of Council meetings and all our regulatory and financial information etc. This Website is maintained by Wendy. The Council is a member of the Kent Association of Local Councils [KALC], a body that is particularly useful for training and keeping us all up to date. On the financial side all I need to say is that the cash management and budgeting are robust. There will be no change in the Precept this year. It will remain about £5,100, being £35 a year for a band D property in Eastling.

**Planning applications**. Eastling is in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and thus subject to severe restrictions on development. Eastling Parish Council have viewed and commentated on a number of applications favourably and a few unfavourably, but it is Swale Borough Council who makes the decisions and sadly occasionally the Council’s opinions get rejected by SBC.

Alan Willson continues to do an excellent job in looking after **Neighbourhood Watch**, liaising with the police where necessary and helping out villagers in many ways. Thanks to Alan for the excellent work he does in the village on many fronts and helping to keep us all safe.

**Speed Limits.** Residents have been concerned for a number of years about the highways speed limits in Newnham Lane, the 40mph sign is in the wrong place, and in any event, it should be a maximum of 30mph. To help resolve this, a petition was organised and received a massive 144 supporting signatures. This was submitted to the Chairman of the Joint Transport Board at KCC. The Council awaits an official response.

**Highways.**  Council continues to report issues to KCC, and batter them with follow up letters, calls etc. we have made numerous reports and letter concerning the Z Bend flooding. In February the drains around the Z bend were cleared, and I believe I can report that the flooding around this area has been reduced. However, because of the slope of the land, water and mud inevitably flow off the fields. Potholes have been terrible this winter, as they are all over the county. Anyone can report any Highway problem themselves online, through [www.kent.gov.uk](http://www.kent.gov.uk) I would urge you do this. KCC are pretty responsive, and you can track progress.

**The Village Website** The village website is [www.eastlingvillage.co.uk](http://www.eastlingvillage.co.uk). This is run by Paul Ainsworth. We are pleased with the Website for Eastling Village; feed in any comments, news, or events you may have to the administrator. He can only put up information he is told about, so do be in contact with him with information and photos. In addition, the Council has its own website, [see above] which has all the details concerning the work, constitution, and regulations etc of Eastling Parish Council. This is run by our Clerk, Wendy Licence. There are links between the 2 websites.

**Footpaths.** The Council strives to work with local famers, to keep paths in good condition. Ben Binder, manager of the Belmont Estate, works particularly hard to maintain the paths and bridleways. He provides regular reports to the council, for which we are very grateful. If you spot any problems, fallen trees etc then please let Ben know.The trenches around most of the fields dug by the Belmont Estate are to stop “Hare Coursing”. Unfortunately some is still occasionally taking place. If you see this happening, please report it to the police, rather than approach the offenders yourself.

**Swale Borough Council and Kent County Council.** I must pay tribute to KCC Cllr. Andrew Bowles who has attended, and significantly contributed to, all our Council meeting this year. Andrew is able to help the Council in giving sound advice on local and Kent matters. Andrew is longer on Swale Borough Council, but our new Ward member Cllr David Simmons is. David has been unable to join our Council meetings due to clashes with SBC meetings. I have also noted that our MP, Helen Whately is working hard on our behalf in this her Constituency.

Jimmy West, Chairman

23.4.20

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