



**Minutes of the Annual Parish Community Meeting held at Elvington Community Centre
on 26 April 2023 at 6.30 pm.**

PA1/23. WELCOME

The Chairman Cllr M Ledger welcomed everyone to the Annual Parish Assembly meeting and thanked them for coming. Cllr M Ledger explained that there were two representatives at the meeting from Stagecoach who would take questions from the public.

PA2/23. TO AGREE THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 18 MAY 2022.

Cllr Wright proposed them as a true record of last year's meeting and Cllr Morgan-Lovett seconded all Cllrs present unanimously agreed to carry them.

PA3/23. ANY MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES.

There were no matters arising.

PA4/23. REPRESENTATIVES FROM STAGECOACH SOUTHEAST DOVER DEPOT.

Cllr M Ledger welcomed the two gentlemen from Stagecoach, Mathew the Southeast Commercial Director, thanked the meeting for the opportunity to attend this evening and gave a brief overview in respect of the rural community issues in general. He explained that some people have forgotten that we had a pandemic, in 2019 Stagecoach were operating at 80% capacity, with 65% of people being older people. There have been significant cost increases since then which have gone up by 20% and we have lost 20% of passengers, but we are still receiving Government funding to break even.

In conjunction with DDC and Aylsham Parish Council we have been able to create a demand responsive bus service through the Stagecoach Connect pilot project Mathew explained that this was not necessarily the final solution, but the Government do not know how the future will pan out. He explained that the current Government grant was due to expire in June 2023, which may sound depressing, but we must wait to see what happens. There are other rural villages such as Worth and Northbourne who are in the same situation as Eythorne, so we are keen to get your feedback to see if we can enhance the model for the future.

Mark from Stagecoach introduced himself as the Assistant Operations Manager, his role is to get drivers onto buses and buses on the roads. He explained that this is the first demand response transport service, hence we are looking for feedback from the public.

A member of the public explained that they were sorry that passenger numbers were reduced, but losing the regular bus service has changed everything in business. Parents will be unable to get their children to school if they go to different schools. Mathew explained that Stagecoach was hoping that talks with Government have been strong. A member of the public again stated that older people needed to get to medical appointments which was proving difficult, she asked if Stagecoach could advertise the service more widely, noting that not all residents were online and able to use the app. Another member of the public also agreed that it needed to be publicised in diverse ways, on local radio.

Mathew explained that the issue with schools is the travel saver card that the children use which parents can purchase for £450 a year for reduced bus costs, this scheme is the most generous in the Country. He explained that parents are making different choices about where their children go to school, and Stagecoach cannot meet everyone's need. A member of the public enquired if some of the services could be re-routed?

Cllr M Ledger asked if there were any proposals for the autumn school term? Mathew replied that they have not been given the proposed numbers of school children by KCC so far, so Eythorne could have one hundred passes, but we do not know which schools they will be attending, so we must alter the service as the term progresses, but so far there are no changes planned. A member of the public explained that this is not what the schools are saying, Dover Grammar and Sandwich Tech are saying that the school bus services are ceasing in June 2023. Mathew explained that this issue related to eight or nine buses school buses that come out of Dover, KCC will top these up, but this has yet to be received in writing. Mathew reiterated that there were no plans to alter the services now. He explained that pre COVID Stagecoach were running at 70% capacity but now we are at 80%, and costs are outstripping supply. A member of the public explained that last year we had the same issue, and a petition was made to keep services running. Mathew explained that KCC manage the school buses with Government funding.

A member of the public explained that this issue was not just relevant to school children, some people cannot get to work or medical appointments and although the new Hopper service is good and a great start, it is expensive at £3.50 for a one-way trip, is there anything in the pipeline to reduce the costs? Mathew is working with the tech solution re: pickups so that the public can buy a ticket from Whitfield to Dover at a reduced cost.

A member of the public thanked the two Stagecoach employees for attending this evening and noted that he felt that they were being genuine in wanting to help with the bus services. However, he can see that come June it will be on a cliff edge, so can Stagecoach see that the Government would not allow the withdrawal of funding happen? A member of the public explained that rail services had billions of Government money, yet only a third of people use rail services, so using buses means good value for money. Another member of the public asked what Stagecoach were doing about climate change and green issues? Mathew explained that by 2035 Stagecoach were planning to be emission neutral, however electric buses cost £2 million, which is more expensive than diesel buses. He also explained that currently there is not the charging infrastructure available and electric buses do not have enough battery life, so their range is limited, hydrogen fuel cells are the way forward, and the first order for electric buses had been placed. A member of the public asked if Stagecoach would stay in touch with the community.

A member of the public asked if more could be done that did not rely on social media to book the service. Mathew noted that Stagecoach is aware of this issue, hence people being able to pick up the phone and book a service by speaking to another person on the phone.

A member of the public asked if there was a plan to extend the service? Mathew replied that the larger the area to cover would mean a longer response time in pickups. A member of the public asked if there was a bus that goes to QEQM hospital because people cannot not get to appointments? Mathew replied that the current service did not provide it to the hospital but explained that they are working with East Kent Hospital Trust re: wider social isolation issues.

A member of the public asked what time the buses run to and from, Mathew replied between 7.00am and 7.00pm. The member of the public explained that children's activities went beyond 7.00pm, which made it difficult to get home. Mathew responded that DDC would have to agree

to any timetable changes, but we will mention this at the DDC review meeting. Another member of the public noted that the current proposals in the Local Plan to build hundreds of more houses, how will the buses cope with this? Mathew explained that Section 106 monies are critical in providing services, KCC contribute to the bus services and are in the loop before the planning stage. A member of the public asked if there was anything else that residents could do? Mathew responded that it was key to keep using the service. A member of the public asked if the price of a ticket reduced. Mathew replied that Stagecoach was looking into this now. A member of the public enquired if a voucher scheme could be applied to the service to get more people to use it? Mathew asked if the residents could bear with him for a couple of weeks. Mathew explained that he was happy to come back to a Parish Council meeting if this is required. Cllr D Ledger thanked the two Stagecoach employees for being honest with residents and for their time this evening.

PA5/23. COMMUNITY WARDEN JULIETTE WEST

The Community Warden explained that the issues causing the most concern over the previous year have been as follows:

Road works causing congestion and disrupted travel.

Construction causing obstructions to highways, mud on the highway, vehicles on the pavements, traffic congestion, and blocking of the highway.

Weather, heavy rain and flooding.

Drainage issues causing flooding and excess water on the carriageway.

Cost of living crisis.

Energy prices.

Cutbacks on services.

Bus cutbacks.

Scams, cybercrime, rogue traders.

Theft of tools.

Fuel thefts.

Catalytic converter thefts.

Nuisance noise.

Nuisance motorbikes.

Parcel thefts.

Straying animals and

Individual welfare issues.

Juliette offered to give a talk to a Parish meeting about scams. **Action: the clerk to arrange at a Parish Meeting.** The Chairman asked if there were any questions from the public? A member of the public asked what the future was for policing given that we have lost our PSCO? Juliette was not too sure but explained that there was a rural task force team in place, which consisted of 3 or 4 police constables / officers. **Action: Juliette will update the Parish Council.**

PA6/23 EYTHORNE PARISH COUNCIL ACHIEVEMENTS/FUTURE PROJECTS

This year has been an easier year than the last two years with little work being carried out during the pandemic. The Parish Council successfully lit the beacon to celebrate the Queens platinum Jubilee held in June 2022. The damaged bus shelter has been replaced. The Parish Council submitted their objections to Dover District Council Local Plan re: the proposed new houses for Terrace Road. Objected to the proposed closure of the Childrens Centres, commented on the proposed home to school transport consultation, and worked hard to try to reinstate the local bus services, this work is ongoing.

I (the Chairman) was invited to speak at a Dover Joint Transportation Board meeting to explain the problems residents are experiencing after the cuts in bus services and we have supported the new Hopper minibus service.

The Parish Council is considering updating the Speedwatch equipment if finances allow.

The repairs to the alleyway leading to Eythorne playing field have been completed. The Elvington Community Centre has now had its new Defibrillator installed by a local electrician free of charge.

The Parish Council continues to support Tilmanstone Welfare and a Cllr has been appointed as a Trustee, as stated in their Constitution, after a lapse of many years.

Our new clerk has been with us for nine months and all has been going well.

Work regularly undertaken by Eythorne Parish Council

- Cllrs are continuing to walk all Public Rights of Way to check for any damage and overgrowth of plants and bushes and to ensure are kept open. Any issues are reported to KCC.
- Continually keeping all three villages clean and tidy with the hard work from our Handyman Stuart.
- Continuing to help St Peter and St Paul's Church with repairs and maintenance to the Church Clock.
- Regularly reporting overflowing bins, potholes, damage to highways, missing signs, HGV issues, litter issues and speeding issues to name a few.
- Regular checks on the play areas to make sure they are kept safe.
- Speedwatch checks in the Village.
- Volunteers have been working hard on the Wildflower area along Green Lane

Projects Completed This Year.

- 20mph along Adelaide Road near the school.
- Double yellow lines along Pike Road to prevent lorries parking.
- Eythorne Roundabout Safety Improvements including nearby roads has now been completed with the help of KCC Highways.

Projects This Coming Year

- New village gates and village signage will be installed on the entrance to the villages of Barfrestone and Adelaide Road in Elvington
- The road surfacing of Wigmore Lane is underway.
- Possibly fencing in the playground at Eythorne - dependant on finances

Cllr M Ledger thanked everyone for their continued help and support with Eythorne Parish Council.

PA7/23. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no further questions from members of the public.

The meeting closed at 7.45pm.