

Minutes of the Meeting of Emergency Planning held in Rickards Hall on 22 April 2024 at 7:30 pm

Present: Cllrs. Sarah Compton, Michael Gemmell Smith, Margot McArthur (*Chair*)
In attendance: Councillors Careyann Jacques, Alan Layland and Mike Stockdale; Richard Rooth, Robert McKillop; Community Warden and minutes clerk.

There were no members of the public, and no press.

1 ELECTION OF COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN – for the ensuing year and the duration of current Council term (2023-2027)

The meeting opened with Cllr McArthur as existing committee Chairman.

It was noted the committee chairman was usually appointed for a Council year (May to April). As the Emergency Planning Committee meets only once or twice yearly, it was proposed to appoint a Chairman for the Council term (4-years) for continuity. Assuming Committee agreed, this would need to be approved by Council at its May meeting.

Cllr McArthur called for nominations for Committee Chairman, and was herself proposed by Richard Rooth. There were no other nominations, and members unanimously

Resolved: Cllr Margot McArthur be duly elected as Committee Chairman for the Council term (2023-2027), and to recommend full Council in May to confirm the appointment and updates the committee Terms of Reference.

2 ELECTION OF COMMITTEE VICE-CHAIRMAN

In line with the preceding decision on election of committee chairman, it was proposed the Vice-Chairman should be appointed for the term of the Council (2023-2027).

The Committee Chairman proposed Cllr Jon Aldridge as Vice-Chairman. There being no other nominations, members unanimously

Resolved: Cllr Aldridge be duly elected as Committee Vice-Chairman, and to make recommendation to full Council to confirm the appointment for the Council term, and for the committee Terms of Reference to be updated.

3 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received, noted, and accepted, from Cllrs Aldridge, Baker, Parker, and Streets, and received from co-opted members Paul Byrne, John Martin, and Colin Thurstan.

4 Declarations of Interest, or Predeterminations (Councillors only)

None.

5 To receive and sign minutes of Emergency Planning Committee on 06 February 2023 p9861-9863

Members had received the minutes of the Emergency Planning committee held 06 February 2023, and

Resolved: that the minutes of 06 February 2023 meeting should be signed by the Committee Chairman as a true and accurate record.

6 Committee Membership and confirmation of co-opted members

Members were reminded that Councillors are appointed to committees by Council at its annual meeting in May. Co-opted members were volunteers from the community and local groups.

6.1 Resignation of co-opted members

It was noted the Community Warden had recently contacted all co-optees of the EPC. Sadly, many had stepped down. Of the original list, only six confirmed, of which three were flood warden trained. Of the Councillors, three are trained.

6.2 To confirm co-opted members

Co-option provides non-councillor committee members with the opportunity to speak at meetings (though not to vote on decisions) and also insurance cover during activities.

Resolved: the current six co-optees Paul Byrne (FW); John Martin (FW); Robert McKillop, Robert Peters; Richard Rooth; Colin Thurston (FW) should continue, and Kathy Staff be added to the list.

7 Financial Matters

7.1 Budget and expenditure 2023-24

It was noted committee budget for 2023-24 was £345, to include the radio licences, equipment and training. Total expenditure was £143 (licence £112.50). There was no unexpected expenditure.

7.2 Committee Budget 2024-25 confirmed

Members noted Finance Committee and Council had confirmed the same budget allowance for 2024-25, total £345.

8 Review of activity since last meeting

Members were advised that Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) Head of Direct Services, within whose remit Emergency Planning falls, had commissioned a report from Raynet to look at communications between Edenbridge and Dunbrik Depot. There are no licensed radio amateurs at SDC so the review was focussed on the possibility of an alternative patch-through system. A verbal update was given at the meeting.

8.1 Review of communications resilience

EPC communications link Robert McKillop advised that the underlying problem for radio links was geographical, in that Ide Hill stood in the way of communication with Dunbrik, and to surmount this obstacle would take an exceptionally tall mast and a great deal of power - neither of which resources currently existed, nor the funding. It could be worth investigating the Starlink system utilising satellite link, which would near clear view of the sky, equipment, and costs which included on-going monthly subscription. Members discussed the possibilities for communication during a wide-spread and prolonged power outage (national?), also Starlink's potential usefulness to the Town Council for access to the Cloud-based computer system. As changes to Edenbridge EPC's communications system could result in higher costs than previously budgeted, it was

Resolved: that the Committee Chairman Cllr McArthur would approach Trevor Kennet at SDC regarding funding, and his thoughts on the wider issues of District communication resilience.

8.2 Outstanding actions

Members received an update from the chairman regarding two outstanding actions:

- Multi agency meeting - had not been held and not scheduled. No progress in this area currently required.
- Pumping station function - this had been clarified and was not related to the river or flooding. It was

Resolved: to remove these two outstanding actions from future agendas.

9 Forthcoming Activities

9.1 Resident information

Members noted the first step would be to include tailored information for residents on the ETC website, and then to consider leaflet drops in the Autumn. The Council's website has some information which would could be added to and updated.

9.2 Recruitment of co-optees

Members agreed there was a need to recruit more volunteers, with tailored publicity highlighting that flooding was not the only civil emergency the community might face, and a wide range of skills could be required. Besides the website, the town's noticeboards and a leaflet campaign were other options.

Resolved: that the Committee Chairman and Vice-Chairman would meet to consider the nature and content of wider communication.

9.3 Emergency Planning exercise

Cllr McArthur updated the committee on her conversation with SDC to arrange a desk top exercise. This was likely to centre on communication options and responses in the event of a wide-spread power outage. Committee would be advised in due course.

9.4 Annual check on Emergency Planning equipment

Members were advised the Community Warden would be carrying out the annual check on Emergency Planning equipment, and Cllrs Gemmell Smith and Jacques volunteered to assist and familiarise themselves with the equipment.

9.5 Annual Community Emergency Plan check

The current Emergency Plan required updating, and Cllrs McArthur and Jacques volunteered to review the Plan along with the Community Warden.

10 Information Exchange

10.1 Kent Police

Not present (an officer had attended the PACT meeting earlier in the day).

10.2 Kent Fire & Rescue Service

Not present.

10.3 Sevenoaks District Council Emergency Planning Officer

Sevenoaks EPO had tendered apologies for the meeting.

10.4 Edenbridge First Responders

First Responders had tendered apologies for the meeting.

11 News Release

The volunteers recruitment drive would be the subject for publicity when ready for launch.

12 Date of Next Meeting - 23 September 2024

Noted.

The meeting closed at 8.09pm