

East Knoyle Parish Council – Annual Parish Meeting Minutes 2nd April 2025

Chaired by Cllr Sue Entwistle

Minutes taken by PC Clerk (retiring) - Martin Brown.

Members of the Public attending – C Cox, E Brunner, T. Seger, J Knight, A Knight, M James, B Bates, S Lucas, S Southerden, Mrs G Staunton, B Wayman

EKPC officials attending - S Entwistle, N Southerden, I Tait, R McCarthy, G Staunton, A Ambrose, P Dean, M Brown

Cllr Entwistle opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and explaining that comments and questions were very welcome from everyone attending.

Summary Of Parish Council activities

Chair's Report – Cllr Sue Entwistle.

Cllr Entwistle explained that her role this evening is to provide you with an overview of the Council's activities during the past year 2024...My account will be somewhat brief as my fellow Councillors will each report on their particular areas of expertise .

May I introduce my colleagues...

Ann White, who deals with Finances and Planning.

Deb Batem, involved with all things invasive...Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam etc.

Ann Ambrose - Common Lands and Chair of the CLAROW Group, plus our Village Hall representative.

Hugo Middleton - Planning plus the complexities of IT and Computer programmes.

Rob McCarthy - Our Highways and potholes expert.

Ian Tait...Finance and Wren's Shop representative, and also all round expert in form filling.

Garry Staunton...KHG and instrumental in forming and coordinating a group of volunteers to ensure Knoyle House Grounds meets the requirements of a ROSPA inspection.

Neil Southerden - our Vice Chair, who provides the Council with his extensive knowledge of all things past in the workings of East Knoyle...he also brings to any debate a measured approach to tricky decisions before the Council.

During the past year there has been a varied mix of issues before the Council, which have included -

The KHG appeal for funds ..which was extremely successful....and I thank the residents of East Knoyle for their generosity.

The Council has also been active in promoting issues regarding noise and speeding on the A30.

We have investigated alongside representatives of St Mary's Church the protocol for Royal events.

An excellent first aid course was arranged by our clerk...the feedback from this event was extremely positive.

Councillors also volunteered at the Age Wiltshire event at the Nadder Centre.

An afternoon was spent addressing a huge amount of paper work accumulated over a number of years re Parish Council matters ...and I thank both Ann White and Ian Tait for their good humour in completing this task.

On a somewhat sadder note, 2 Parish Councillors resigned last year...David Pickering and Brian Williamson...I thank them for their contribution whilst members of the Council....David continues to provide valuable advice on trees and common lands. On a more upbeat note, a new councillor was welcomed - Garry Staunton.

I would also like to thank on behalf of the whole Council our newly retired clerk, Martin Brown. He has been a member of the Council both formally and informally for a number of years, latterly as our Clerk. He brought to the role a degree of tenacity, good humour, and much information re Health and Safety matters! He will be missed.

I will now pass over to my colleagues who will outline in more detail their roles within the Council.

Planning – Cllr Middleton

- EKPC received 15 planning applications in the last period April 24 to March 25.
- 5 were for tree works, 2 for new outbuildings, 2 were amendments to existing applications, 2 were for extensions to existing properties and 3 were for new builds.
- The new builds were for the new Salt store alongside the A350 – a Wiltshire Council application; Of the other two, one was approved, but then withdrawn and one is still awaiting a decision.
- EKPC continues to diligently work with residents and Wiltshire Planning Department regarding planning applications and ensure local opinions are recorded.

Common Lands and Rights of Way – Cllr Ann Ambrose

- The Common Lands and Rights of Way group (CLAROW) has 13 volunteers. It has achieved substantial success in its 1st full year of operating – clearing paths, repairing stiles, engaging with Wiltshire Council over various matters (including damage done by utility companies), liaising with landowners (with who we have a good relationship).
- Windmill – the recent project to encourage areas of different fauna and flora has achieved some welcome success, but has proven labour intensive and is being continually reviewed.
- Planting of 550 saplings – this project, funded by grants, has seen the scrub clearance and then planting of various suitable native trees and shrubs below the power lines running from the Fox and Hounds down to Underhill. The original clearance for the power lines meant that many invasive species took over this part of the wooded area. We hope that this project will see a ‘new’ wood flourish.
- Looking ahead – CLAROW/EKPC will continue to maintain areas as appropriate. It is hoped that the foot bridge over the River Loddon will be replaced this year by WC (has been agreed). We are investigating a possible grant from Wessex Water to develop new planting areas, as well as looking to see what might be done at Milton Triangles.

Highways – Cllr Rob McCarthy

Most of what goes on with Highways and the PC most people generally don’t see because it just kind of happens. I’ll burst one myth before going any further and that is that I/we don’t have a direct line to Wiltshire Council or any particular clout with them so we have to use the same procedures as everyone else. That said we do have several useful contacts within WCC built up over the years that are often able to give advice and point us in the right direction.

Despite all the challenges with budgets etc we have managed to get quite a bit done around EK in the past year so in no particular order here we go.

Potholes are everyone’s nemesis, and an awful lot have been filled and refilled over the past 12 months. The Parish Stewards visits once a month (unless called away) for other duties and does the best he can, he gets a list of jobs to look at from me each month and to be fair he does a pretty good job for us. Sadly, in the H&S world that we have to operate in he’s a lot more limited in that he can do but he still does a good job for us in filling the smaller potholes, rodding drains, cleaning signs, cutting back shrubbery etc. Anything bigger has to go on the Wilts App to get a crew to inspect and we go from there. In general, the state of our roads and lanes isn’t that bad, they’ll never be perfect. We do the best that we can with what’s available and despite much badgering from myself to Wiltshire Highways we still have four problem areas where the state of the lanes are very poor these being Underhill, The cutting between Sandpit Hill and Holloway, Touchorne Lane and also Friar Hays Lane. There are also issues with broken drains on the corner of Holloway and also Touchorne Lane. These will always be work in progress, but we keep pushing for them to be repaired.

That said we have had some successes this year, Part of Underhill has been repaired (albeit the wrong part) Sections of Wise Lane have also been resurfaced between Clouds and Upton and we have had Gulley Crews out clearing ditches in particular Holloway, Upton and Sutton Bottom. For the Winter period all our sale bins are inspected and if required topped up and we do generally get a gritter through doing the length of Wise Lane.

Touch wood we have not had that many issues of fly tipping in the past year, but it is an ongoing problem to watch out for and if within 2M of the lane WCC will clear if any further away unfortunately is down to the landowner.

The PC continues to do the best we can with limited resources on Highways and will keep that going.

Finances – Cllr Ian Tait

- Started the year with a current account balance of £1,757, and the reserved funds for the Windmill and Knoyle House Gardens of £9,272. We planned a precept income of £14,161 and income from the Shop rent of £2000.
- We spent most of our available cash on the routine expenditure in covering our insurances, paying for grass cutting, tree maintenance, ROSPA inspections, and supporting village activities as well as maintaining the common lands.
- The effects of Ash Dieback seem to have reduced but we are still vulnerable to pay for emergency tree work if any of the trees around our footpaths become dangerous.
- We put in place a formal budget for 2025/26 based on the figures for September 2024 and applied to increase our Precept by a modest 5% to £ 15248.87.
- We finished the year with a balance of £15,274 but that includes £11,142 of ring fenced funds for the Windmill and Knoyle House Gardens. So we're ending the year with a balance of £4,092 but no significant contingency for any unexpected expenditure.
- We are planning to gradually increase our contingency over the next 5 years.

Village Shop – Cllr Ian Tait

- Wren's shop was open throughout the year and only closed on Xmas day 2024.
- We have a willing set of volunteers who give up their time to operate in our shop, without whom we wouldn't be able to open.
- The Management Committee are also volunteers who provide the leadership to make sure that everything runs smoothly and the shelves stay filled.
- We completed the annual stocktake over the weekend 22/23 March and again we relied on our volunteers to perform this essential function in preparation for the end of the accounting year.
- The shop continued to support Village activities by donating raffle prizes, a grant to the Newsletter and assisting the Village Hall to maintain the building.
- We have strengthened the bank behind the shop to make sure our waste bins can be assessed more easily.
- Meadow Sweet Flowers now maintain a plant and flower stand by the new vegetable boxes and both have proved to be a great success.
- Finally we introduced a loyalty card scheme on 1 January to try to increase our turnover and so far we have seen an increase by over 6% against the same time last year.

Knoyle House Grounds and Playground – Cllr Staunton

My wife and I opened our garden in May 2024 too raise funds for the KHG playground. This was a one day event that raised £1400.00 through donations and the sale of tea, coffee and cakes.

- I undertook the project to improve, repair and treat the wood structures and equipment in the playground during the summer of 2024.
- During that summer, with the help of many volunteers (thank you all !), we cleaned and oiled all the wood structures and supports to the play equipment.
- We repaired and made safe exposed metalwork and woodwork including replacing a number of wooden posts on site. These materials were all delivered to my home address and stored by me until used.
- We replaced ageing and rusted chains to the swings and dismantled, repaired and treated the original wooden gates to the playground including repainting the metal parts. All the benches and the tables were also cleaned and treated with preservative.
- New play bark was ordered and delivered to replace and augment the existing bark and spread by hand over a number of days.
- New protective floor matting was ordered and placed around the base of all the swings and slides and especially over and around the play tunnel. This will be grass seeded in due course.
- 3 Contractors were contacted for quotes to clear overgrown area and hedges and to cut back ivy and brambles.
- A contractor was chosen and instructed, under supervision, to clear the areas that were now overgrown through neglect. This was completed (mostly) by February 2025 and the contractor who maintains the playground has been met on site to agree the new areas that need to be kept clear.

- I visit the playground at least weekly to collect litter and other debris/lost property that is left behind. I have also dug up and removed old cricket netting that was near the pedestrian entrance.
- I have also dealt with an attempted vandalism by some local lads when called upon at home by my neighbours' children
- I have liaised with the clerk on site re new signage which has been ordered.
- I recently re installed a sign removed by vandals and discarded in undergrowth. I have fixed this sign in concrete.
- I have re-attached the 'cycling route' signs to the outer fencing which had been broken off and discarded nearby.
- Under the supervision of Paul Naish I have assisted in the cleaning, repair and repainting of the phone box outside the village shop.
- I have also volunteered to assist the chair (Sue Entwistle) on the renewal of the shop lease
- I have also assisted the parish clerk, Martin, in trying to resolve the issue of the fallen boundary fence (owned by The Coach House) by the large slide in the playground.

Wiltshire Council Report - Bridget Wayman (WC Councillor)

Nadder Valley Division - Report for the year 2024-25

It has been an honour to have been the Chairman of Wiltshire Council for this year. Presiding over Council meetings has had its tricky moments, especially when the debate gets heated, but on the plus side I have represented the Council at civic events all over the County, including meeting Her Majesty The Queen at an egg factory.

Back in the real world, it has been a busy year representing the eleven parishes in my Division. Fortunately, not all the crises happen at the same time, although it sometimes gets close.

At a Council level, it is especially pleasing to report that the Council's finances are stable and we are always mindful that a very careful watch is needed to support the delivery and management of change programmes across a wide range of the services performed by the Council.

In Children's services, performance has been strong and the Ofsted inspection in September resulted in an Outstanding grade which reflects the significant investment in a preventative family support approach. Stronger powers are anticipated from the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill to make sure children are getting the right education, along with requirements for a register of children not in school, to avoid children vanishing from education and to strengthen safeguarding.

Wiltshire Council has not closed any libraries (unlike some other councils) and funding has been added to ensure book stocks remain up to date and relevant for library users. Likewise with the leisure centres to support the health and wellbeing of residents with a wide range of activities at affordable prices.

The highest percentage spend of the council's budget is in Adult Social Care. The 2% Adult Social Care Levy will raise £7m and will help to fund the £20m inflation and demand growth. The Council continues to take an innovative and preventative approach to service delivery and the recent Good rating from the CQC inspection acknowledged that staff go 'above and beyond' to support people in our community.

The Environment Act 2021 will require our Waste Services to make substantial changes over the next three years, including the separate weekly collection of food waste from August 2027. Councils must also reach a target of 60% recycling by 2030, so additional changes will need to be made to the kerbside collection of recyclable materials, also from 2027, but the design and procurement of the new service will commence very soon in order to have all the changes ready by 2027.

People are often unaware of the huge range of services provided by the Council, but everyone uses the roads in one form or another. The Council has added an additional £20m of funding over two years as we are determined to improve the quality of the road network. Additional funding of £1m for highways preventative flood maintenance was added in 24/25 and this now forms part of the base budget allowing this enhanced service level to continue.

Personally, I think it will take more than two years of additional funding to get our roads back up to a good standard and I will be pressuring the cabinet member to ensure we get a fair amount of all highway maintenance funding. There are some good roads; there are also some pretty shockingly bad ones in the Nadder Valley.

Flooding problems seem particularly bad along the Nadder Valley, particularly in Chilmark and Teffont.

Solutions are being developed by Wessex Rivers in conjunction with the Environment Agency and I am trying

to help make sure early interventions are introduced to reduce flood risks from sudden intense rainfall. Ground water flooding cannot be prevented if persistent rain raises the water table to ground level. Planning is a big concern as the Government has decreed Wiltshire should provide 23,385 more houses than originally planned for. That is an 81% increase, rising from having to provide 1,917 homes to 3,476 per annum. As a result, we do not have a Five Year Housing Land Supply which leaves the county vulnerable to speculative development in unplanned areas. Coupled with Ed Miliband's plans for solar farms and onshore wind, the attack on farming in so many different ways, I am extremely worried about the ruination of our countryside. The vast majority of this Division lies within the Cranborne Chase National Landscape and is better protected, but an application for large solar farm which could be deemed national infrastructure would be decided by Ed Miliband and I am unsure if he cares about our landscape in his Net Zero by 2050 zeal.

At a more local level, I am really pleased that the need to reduce light pollution to meet the Dark Night Skies objective seems to have made an impact with the planners and I now see more of a consideration for controlling external lighting and either reducing rooflights or insisting on light sensitive blinds in rooflights. I regularly make these comments on planning applications, although I wish architects would not draw them in the first place.

On a more personal note, East Knoyle parish council is always friendly and welcoming and I am always happy to help where I can.

We await the Speed Limit Assessment on the A350 – let's hope that it is positive, but the Police have been visible carrying out some speed checks. I have been chasing the additional replanting on the A350 bund which was promised this dormant season, but I gather that everyone is planting trees and stocks are hard to find!

Open Forum

- Mrs T Seger raised concerns regarding the condition of Touchorne Lane, Milton. This has been a problem for many years and is believed to be caused by a broken roadside drain. In winter the road freezes and is dangerous for all users. Cllr Wayman said that a ticket has been raised by WC Highways for this road, but it is dependent on available budgets and priorities.
- Mrs G Staunton wanted to record thanks to those who helped at the KHG fund raising event she held – Sue Entwistle, Flora Rosevear and Pam Bates. She also expressed thanks to the KHG volunteer team.
- Mr E Brunner raised a question to Cllr B Wayman regarding allowing underground cabling under roads not being allowed by WC. Cllr Wayman referred back to previous conversations with Mr Brunner.

The Chair welcomed the New Clerk – Mr Peter Dean.

The meeting closed at 7.03pm.

Signed as a true record...Sue Entwistle...Chair EKPC

Dated7th Mat 2025.....