



GESTINGTHORPE PARISH COUNCIL

Parish Clerk / RFO: Kevin B. Money
7 Roach Vale, Colchester, Essex. CO4 3YN
Tel: 07810781509 – Email: gestingthorpepc@gmail.com

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Thursday 11th. March 2021 at 7.30pm via Zoom

This meeting was held 'remotely' in accordance with the local authorities and police and crime panels (coronavirus) (flexibility of local authority and police and crime panel meetings) (England and Wales) regulations 2020.

Present: Cllrs D. Smith (Chairman), T. Flower (Vice-Chairman), A. Cooper, C. Craig, P. Collett, Leslie Crumpton-Taylor (Internal Auditor) and Kevin B. Money (Parish Clerk).
There were no members of the public present.

014/2021 Chairman Welcome. The Chairman welcomed everyone to meeting and said that on 25th February last, the working party set up to look into the possibility of reforming Braintree Association of Local Councils (BALC) held a further Zoom meeting. There appears to be interest from a large number of Parish Councils to reform an active association in order that we can engage with ECC & BDC with a collective voice. I am generally in favour of the proposal and feel that we should get involved, although I am mindful that there will be an annual charge to cover administration costs and a figure of £40 has been muted

015/2021 Apologies for Absence were received from ECC Cllr D. Finch, BDC Cllr W. Scattergood, Cllr J. Nott and Cllr S. Bolter.

016/2021 Declaration of Interest

To declare any Disclosable Pecuniary, Pecuniary or non-Pecuniary Interest relating to items on the Agenda

Cllr A. Cooper declared an Interest in any discussions regarding the Cricket Club

017/2021 To approve the Minutes of the last meeting of Gestingthorpe Parish Council

To receive and agree the minutes of the GPC meeting held on 14th. January 2021.

Cllr T. Flower proposed Cllr C. Craig seconded. **All Agreed**

018/2021 Public Participation Session

The Chairman will invite questions and observations from members of the public present.
No questions were asked

019/2021 Essex County Councillors report – Cllr David Finch

In the absence of ECC Cllr D. Finch the Clerk read out his report which was previously submitted

Essex in top 10

Essex County Council continues to be ranked in the Top 10 most effective top tier authorities in the country, as independently ranked by iMPOWER. Since 2018 we have been in the top ten in terms of productivity, demonstrating how we achieve better outcomes for residents from a less-than-average spend per head.

Over the last decade we have invested heavily in transformation for long-term sustainability and as a result we have been able to improve the quality of the services we provide, putting the resident, not institutions, at the heart of our services.

- 89% of our children now attend a school that is rated as Good or Outstanding
- We have improved our Adult Community Learning offer to nearly 11,000 students.
- We have an award-winning broadband team, enabling over 150,000 Essex homes and businesses to access superfast broadband.
- We engage 32,000 young people through our nationally recognised youth service.
- The condition of our roads is now among the best in the country.
- We have invested billions in improving and maintaining our infrastructure.

Council Tax

This year, for the sixth time in the last ten years, we announced no increase in council tax, and only a 1.5% increase in our social care precept this year. Very few authorities across the country are in a position to act with this level of confidence. Most are increasing their rates by two or three times this amount.

In fact, since 2010, while inflation has increased by around 35%, the cumulative impact on council tax



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has been much less, at around 22%.

Outstanding Children's Services

We have one of the best children and families services in the country, with some of the lowest spend, rated by Ofsted as outstanding. We did this by investing heavily in the right leadership, early intervention, and innovation in practice.

COVID-19

Rates of infection are gradually reducing, and the number across the county is well below 100 per 100,000. Our children are returning to school as part of the government's roadmap to reopening and our focus is shifting to the recovery for Essex.

ECC Budget

At Full Council on 23 February we approved our budget for the next year. We also announced some additional initiatives

- An additional £2million investment in economic development to ensure a successful reopening of the Essex economy.
- £1.5million to support the Educational Recovery Task Force which will lead and oversee the educational recovery of all Essex children.
- A further £1million investment in mental health support for children and our health and care workforce.
- A further £1million community action fund for environmental initiatives to help communities create less waste, travel sustainably, use renewable energy and produce less carbon.
- A further £500,000 to break the cycle of violence and protect young people from gangs.
- A further £7.2million of capital funding for Local Highways Panels (LHP) - £200K more for each panel, each year, for the next three years.
- An additional £180,000 added to LHP revenue budgets for smaller highways projects.

Major Capital programmes

In March we agree the unlocking of grant funding worth over £200 million for Chelmsford North East By-pass and a new rail station at Beaulieu Park.

In total 14,109 new homes will be built through these two projects. By securing the funding, ECC has delivered an Infrastructure First approach whereby the infrastructure schemes will be brought forward earlier than would otherwise have been the case and existing residents will see the benefit as early as possible.

This funding is in addition to the £99m secured by ECC to support a new Link Road and Rapid Transport System to the east of Colchester. The Chelmsford and Colchester funds combine to over £300m, which will help drive economic recovery from Covid-19 by supporting thousands of construction jobs in Essex and adding 10bn to the economy.

Freeports

Felixstowe/Harwich and the Thames Freeport proposals have been chosen by the Chancellor as two of the 8 new Freeports in the UK. This will be a huge boost to the wider North and South Essex economies, and the county and country as a whole. Again, Essex County Council's work supporting and influencing these outcomes has paid off.

Essex and the East of England will play a leading role in powering local and national economic growth. We can drive the regional recovery from the challenges of Covid-19 – while helping lead the rest of the nation down the path of increased prosperity.

Climate Commission

The Climate Commission, set up in early 2020, has met regularly over the last year and we have continued to invest in and commit to environmental action and innovation.

The commission has produced its interim report, and we have published our response to this. This response outlines our commitment to short term actions that will begin to draw the roadmap to net zero carbon emissions by 2030. The final report of the Commission will follow soon after, helping to clarify our roadmap further, and we will be responding to that in the summer.

In the interim we are taking action, and you will have seen that I announced an additional £1m for climate change action at our Budget meeting last month. This included £500k for a competition to help four communities in Essex go further and become national pioneers in becoming net zero carbon



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communities – this is something you may wish to consider whether you'd be interested in pursuing. We are already building net zero school buildings, already converting our streetlights to LED and we are already using innovative low carbon techniques, such as Leaky Dams and Natural Flood Management. The Essex Forest Initiative – 375,000 new trees for our county – is ahead of schedule, we have planted tens of thousands of new trees this winter.

We also announced how we will spend the first £2.5m of the £5m Climate Reserve. We are using that money delivering green growth, net zero buildings, renewable energy and electric transport solutions, while making our county more resilient to the impacts of climate change, supporting our natural environment and bringing in millions of pounds of national funding

Education Recovery and Young People

We worked hard to support children during the last year. We supported them with meals and spent £900,000 on 5,000 laptops to those who needed them for remote learning. An unprecedented amount of education time has been disrupted or lost by every single child. This will leave a lasting legacy. This will not just be lost learning – though this will clearly be an important part. It will also be missed opportunities to develop sporting, social, interpersonal and cultural skills; with potentially long term mental and physical health challenges.

The sooner we begin to address this issue, the easier it will be to solve. We will establish an Education Recovery Task Force to lead and oversee the recovery of our children. The Task Force will work alongside the county's committed education leaders to re-establish young people's hope and aspiration for a successful future. It will have an independent chair who can work with the newly appointed National Education Commissioner Sir Kevan Collins.

In the short term the focus will be on supporting our children and young people in their exam years, supporting our most vulnerable and disadvantaged learners, and supporting the emotional wellbeing and mental health of all of our young people. We have set aside £1.5m in a reserve to support this. We will begin by supporting our children through the summer, setting them up for the school year ahead. We are already offering our most comprehensive summer activity programme ever, to a wider group than just those in receipt of free school meals.

We will allocate another half a million to support children's emotional wellbeing and mental health. We will ask the Education Recovery Task Force to assess the impact of the pandemic on children's emotional wellbeing and mental health and from that assessment determine where best to allocate this funding.

020/2021 District Councillors report – Cllr W. Scattergood

In the absence of BDC Cllr W. Scattergood the Clerk read out her report which was previously submitted

The main points that I was going to report on are

- 1) first the BDC Council Tax will not be increased,
- 2) second the Councillors Community Grant has been extended for another year
- 3) third the Council will continue to support the Dedham Vale and Stour Valley Project with no reduction in the funding,
- 4) fourth the Council has called an additional Council Meeting next Monday to discuss the Climate Change Strategy if it is approved it will go out for consultation on the 10th May for six weeks.
- 5) Finally, on February 22nd the Council adopted the Shared Strategic Section 1 of the Local Plan

On adoption the policies in the Shared Strategic Section 1 Local Plan superseded Policies CS1 CS4 CS9 and CS11 of the core Strategy 2011.

The Council Development Plan therefore consists of the Braintree District Plan Review 2005 the policies of the Core Strategy 2011 which are not superseded the shared Strategic Section 1 Local Plan 2021 and any Neighbourhood Plan.

We are now moving forward with the examination of Section 2 of the Draft Local Plan. We now can give some weight to the policies of this emerging Draft Section 2 Local Plan



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021/2021 Representative reports

- Highways maintenance – Cllr D. Smith & Cllr P. Collett

Cllr P. Collett informed the meeting on the proposed SID for Audley End - The Parish Council and Highways have come to an agreement regarding the height and the type of SID to be installed. There also appears to be funding for the SID in the budget for 2021 to 2022. However, the location of the SID is proving to be problematic. Highways have rejected the PC's preferred position (i.e. positioned to replace the existing 30mph repeater sign) suggesting that it should be located directly opposite the entrance to Rectory Farm. We have pointed out to Highways that this location has been previously rejected as it is unacceptable to both the PC and the owner of Rectory Farm. Highways have now suggested that the sign might possibly be sited on the wide verge on the Rectory Farm side of the road, south of the farm entrances. Highways have asked for the PC's views on this location but have stressed that it is only a potential location and is subject to engineering and services checks.

Cllr P. Collett to arrange a "site visit" from Highways

SID Sudbury Road - Nothing to report.

Community Speed Watch - Gestingthorpe has been put on the list of speed watch groups that will be formed in the future, unfortunately due to the pandemic no groups are being formed at the moment. We have however been promised online training and we have now 10 volunteers who would be interested in taking part.

Considerably damage has been caused on the verges in the village being done by farm machinery driving along the road.

Cllr D. Smith reported that the long-awaited improvements to Sudbury Rd started on Monday 18th January last, with a 10-week work programme. Despite adverse weather conditions works seem to be progressing, although from a recent conversation with a site foreman, I think a realistic completion date is likely to be mid/late April.

The flooding problem at Audley End continues to be investigated by the Local Flood Authority (ECC).

Cllr D. Smith is still trying to arrange a site meeting with the Officer responsible for ditches with a view to looking at other ditch related flooding issues within the Parish.

Cllr D. Smith thanked Cllr A. Cooper for removing the salt

- Playing Field/Recreation Ground – Cllr A. Cooper

Cllr A. Cooper informed the meeting that he had walked around the Playing Field this morning. My sincerest thanks to Peter Collett for undertaking all the research regarding the Play equipment and Terry Flower for liaising with Graham Nicholls about the trees.

I replaced the hazard tape around the unstable children's 'duck' in the play area.

One of the wooden seats near the Pavilion has a slat missing at the rear— and might benefit from further attention. The goal posts remain behind the pavilion. They are not in the way there, but we need to ensure that they don't become submerged in brambles. They could possibly be kept at Hill Farm if it was deemed better,

- 1) Playing Field / Equipment repair quotations – Cllr P. Collett

Cllr P. Collett had previously circulated the 5 quotations he had received to Councillors.

Cllr D. Smith proposed accepting quote "A". Cllr T. Flower seconded. **All Agreed**

An additional seat and surrounding fence for the play area needs addressing.

Andy Craig to renew

- Broadband update— Cllr S. Bolter & Cllr P. Collett
P. Collett - I have nothing to report re Broadband matters

- Footpath – Leslie Crumpton-Taylor.

The bridge across the ditch at Audley End where Footpath 7 leaves the main road (as reported last Meeting) has now been replaced by a broader bridge with a handrail. This is a great improvement on what had been there before it collapsed. This job was probably part of the rectification of the drainage/flood trouble in that location as none of the other nearby matters have been touched but, whatever, it looks good.



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Footpath 8 (Pot Kiln Wood section) continues to be affected/damaged by the excess use generated by the unauthorised development/residential use.

On 13th February 2021 a complaint was received from residents in that outpost of Gestingthorpe near Bulmer Brickworks concerning Gestingthorpe Byway 38. This short Byway joins Bulmer Byways 17 & 15 with the whole running from the main road, through Bulmer Brickworks and on towards Hilltop Farm & Upper Houses. Damage had arisen caused by Off-road organised groups of four-wheel drive vehicles with extra tow-truck. As most of the damage was to the longest bit (Bulmer Byway 15) the matter has been passed to Bulmer Parish Council to co-ordinate.

We should watch out for such mis-use of our Byway 13 (Delvyns Lane) as that used to be the Off-road target in past years

- Tree Warden – Cllr T. Flower

Cllr T. Flower and Graham Nichol started their inspection over by the boundary with Roger Goldsmith's property. From Church St we followed the line of the estate fence down to the corner where it meets the arable field boundary. The trees along *Roger's Boundary* are predominately a mix of Scots pine and Corsican pine. All mature trees having a great deal of character and no major damage. Evidence of small dead branches here and there but these were considered natural wastage and did not considered to be any H&S threat. All these trees, interestingly, were growing Roger's side of the estate fence and one could therefore pedantically argue not the responsibility of the PC? Just past the cricket pavilion are two stands of coppiced field maple. Both stands of field maple are stable and no threat to H&S. However, before they get too high it could be sensible to coppice again, only next time keep them trimmed down with regular volunteer action.

Continuing our survey, we arrived at the lower boundary where it meets the arable field. In this corner is a fine mature poplar (probably hybridised Black/White?) and dead field roller. This tree is showing signs of goat moth larvae attack at ground level but nothing as yet to destabilise the tree but worth keeping an eye upon. We continue along the field boundary in the direction of Sudbury Rd. The trees this side are well spaced and predominately mature sycamore. There is the odd dead branch high up in these mature trees but according to Graham nothing of real concern. Until that is, we reach the end of this boundary at Sudbury Rd. Just before the row of sycamore ends there is one tree with a large dead limb high up. Graham reports this should be dealt with ASAP. Proceeding to the corner with Sudbury Rd. we have a small group of trees: two beech and several more sycamore. Some of this stand has storm damage higher up but the trees remain stable and so not sufficient to trigger remedial work on H&S grounds, although we could consider the work on aesthetic grounds?? There is one bole within the stand that is well rotted and shows signs of woodpecker activity. It is a vertical bole with no extending branches and not deemed a major H&S threat? Therefore, possibly best left for our local woodpecker residents to dine on and let nature take its course.

Turning at right angles here we follow the boundary as it follows the Sudbury Rd. Most trees along here are stable but for two notable exceptions. There is a mature horse chestnut along this line of trees showing considerable signs of Ganoderma fungal attack and a smaller tree of the same species that is suffering from bleeding bacterial canker. Graham suggested the cankerous tree should, along with the previously mentioned dead bough limb, be felled and lopped respectively ASAP. (cost £200.00) More of the Ganoderma attack later in this report.

Continuing along to pass the play equipment we come to the bus shelter corner. Here a stand of Scots and Corsican pine. Mature trees with no noticeable damage apart from the odd small dead branch due to natural wastage, as with their cousins along the boundary with Roger.

Walking the boundary with Church St. now, most trees are in good health with the exception of a further mature horse chestnut tree showing signs of Ganoderma fungal attack. Graham suggests visiting both this tree and the other with similar attack in May so as to ascertain by a visual inspection of the leaf cover the extent of the damage to the tree. At that time if necessary, Graham could fell both trees. (Rough estimate £500-600 per tree if he can leave timber on site cut as logs for local free firewood?) Finally approaching Roger's boundary and the circuit now complete it was noted that our millennium oak has damage at ground level to its trunk. Probably strimmer or grass cutter damage. This damage is callousing over well and not thought life threatening to the tree.



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In conclusion I would suggest we ask Graham to immediately undertake the bough removal and cankerous infected small tree removal for which he estimated a cost of £200.00 for both. I will meet with Graham in May to inspect the two horse chestnut trees suffering from Ganoderma. At that time, we can take advice regarding H&S of these trees and arrange for felling if necessary. Failing the imminent arrival of the coming storm which could deliver more damage and H&S issues for us.

- Village Hall – Cllr C. Craig

Cllr C. Craig informed the meeting that there is nothing to report for the Village Hall, apart from that the reopening in the near future will continue to be reviewed in line with government guidelines.

A future village event for when the lockdown has been ceased.

022/2021 Planning Applications

Cllr D. Smith said that Pot Kiln Lodge - unfortunately, the saga continues. I am still awaiting a response from Mr C Paggi, the Development Manager at BDC to my email of 1st. February last, and also from Mr G Butland, the Leader of the Council, to my email of the 2nd. March last. Based on the lack of progress to date, and the inability of the Planning Officer and the leader of the Council to respond, I have lost all confidence in the ability of BDC to deal with this blatant breach of Planning.

21/00540/HH - Maple Tree Lodge Little Maplestead Road Gestingthorpe Essex CO9 3AS

Alterations to the cartlodge by way of addition of wall, door and windows to enclose and use as storage

GPC Decision: **NO OBJECTION TO THIS PLANNING APPLICATION**

023/2021 Decision/s made by BDC on planning applications

No decisions made by BDC affecting Gestingthorpe

024/2021 Finance

- 1) Bank balances as at 28th. February 2021 and 2020/21 budget account

Councillors noted the Bank balances as at 28th. February 2021 and 2020/21 budget account

- 2) Councillors to agree payment of February & March 2021

Cllr D. Smith proposed and Cllr C. Smith seconded to authorise the February and March payments.

All Agreed

- a) Grounds Maintenance Service Level Agreement 2021/22

Cllr D. Smith proposed to renew the BDC contract at £1314.54p. Cllr T. Flower seconded. **All Agreed**

- b) Street Cleaning Agreement 2021/22

Cllr D. Smith proposed the BDC Street Cleaning Agreement of £618.04p. Cllr A. Cooper seconded.

All Agreed

Date of next meetings all to be held remotely via ZOOM: 20.05.21 PC AGM: 08.07.21: 09.09.21: 11.11.21

025/2021 Items for Next Agenda

Play equipment / renewals

Chestnut Trees

Minutes to be reduce in content

Future opening after lockdown

026/2021 Closure of the Meeting

To close the Meeting having considered and determined all items of business.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 9.05pm

Signed

20th. May 2021

D. Smith

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Thursday 11th. March 2021

NEW PC WEBSITE: <https://www.gestingthorpepc.co.uk>