



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 Annual Village Meeting held on Thursday 27th. April 2023 at 7pm in the Village Hall

Present: Cllrs D. Smith (Chairman), C. Craig (Vice-Chairman), P. Bagby, S. Bolter, A. Cooper, G. Carey, P. Collett, ECC Cllr P. Schwier, Leslie Crumpton-Taylor (Internal Auditor) and Kevin B. Money (Parish Clerk). There were also 12 members of the public present.

1. Apologies for absence were received from Helen Skerratt and John Butcher
2. Minutes of last Annual Village Meeting held on Thursday 28th. April 2022. **All Agreed**

3. Report from ECC Councillor Peter Schwier

Cllr P. Schwier supplied a report prior to the meeting. It read

It is now almost two years since I was elected to Essex County Council; serving the residents of all the villages – and 33 parish councils - that make up the Heddingham division has been a real privilege. The year that has passed since your last annual meeting has gone very quickly but has proved extremely busy and filled with activity and achievement.

The passing of those two years also means we are half-way through the current four-year term, and we are starting to see many positive outcomes from the ambitious work the county council set in train back in May 2021.

The following is a small sample of the key numbers, landmarks and achievements from a busy year – many are necessarily Essex-wide but, where possible, I have tried to focus purely on issues relevant to our local communities.

Budget / Council Tax 23/24

In the toughest and most uncertain and inflationary financial climate the county has known for many years, ECC agreed a budget which prioritised support for adults' and children's social care, road maintenance, improving infrastructure and helping people with the cost of living.

Over the course of the next year, the county council will spend a total of £2,281m (gross) and £1,164m (net) through its revenue budget – 7% higher than had been planned last year, as a result of inflationary pressures

There will also be £275m of capital spending in 23/24.

Budget points of note include:

- £58m increase in the adult social care budget
- £7.5m extra to deliver 340 additional school places
- 9% increase in fees for foster carers
- Community supermarkets to be rolled-out – providing essential household goods at lower cost for hard-pressed families
- £200m spending on climate change remains in place, with new and existing cycle routes and active travel schemes are also being built and maintained to enable people to walk and cycle.

Highways

The council will be spending nearly £145m on highways maintenance and sustainable transport over the coming year and, as ever, will prioritise the areas by severity of need.

By way of context, the county looks after:

- 5,100 miles of carriageway;
- 4,000 miles of footways / cyclepaths;
- 130 miles of safety barriers;
- 131,000 street lights;
- 14,000 illuminated highway signs;
- 80,000 non-illuminated signs;
- 36,000 items of Public Rights of Way infrastructure.
- 7,002 – the number of potholes repaired in Essex over the course of 22/23 so far.

Over the last year, in terms of calls to our contact centre around highways issues, we received the following numbers:



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- 1,899 – average daily number of calls to the Contact Centre in January 2023;
- 432,711 - total calls to Contact Centre;
- 47,904 - total calls to Highways (new faults and general) service.

Meanwhile, the average answer waiting time for highways calls was 03:10.

Levelling Up

In late 2021, ECC launched its own Levelling Up White Paper, aimed at raising living standards for people in particular cohorts and locations. One year on, a great deal has already been achieved. This includes:

- 12,000 more homes and businesses connect to Superfast Broadband
- Over 6,600 devices donated to schools across Essex, to support students with getting online and enhancing their learning.
- 250 new entry level jobs created through our social value scheme.
- The Essex Opportunities website launched to provide access to more flexible job roles. In its first year the website has had more than 90,000 visits and 6,500 clicks to apply for jobs
- The Essex Apprenticeship Levy Transfer Service supported creating 240 new apprenticeships across Essex Businesses. Expanded our completely free holiday activity and food programme, ActivAte, which over the last two years has provided over 500,000 free meals and supported over 30,000 young people
- An almost £2million boost provided to social care in Essex under our Nightingale Care Bursary, which will support people from the most deprived communities in Essex to achieve social care qualifications or support existing care workers to achieve further qualifications.
- Our working families programme has been in contact with 960 families to provide support to those seeking information on upskilling or retraining for a new career
- Parkplay has now been launched in 16 areas across Essex and had over 2,000 unique people attend, with 16,000 attendances in total so far! Parkplay will be launched in more areas throughout 2023.
- The physical and mental wellbeing of 130,000 school children and young people supported at Essex Outdoors sites, where they learn a range of skills through outdoor pursuits.
- 60,000 new library members have signed up since Jan 2022
- 150,000 new recyclable library cards distributed to every primary school child in the county as part of the 'Essex Year of Reading' celebration. 74 new literacy areas have been created across Essex (one in every library).
- Almost 24,000 children took part in this year's Summer Reading Challenge. This is an increase of 36.4% on 2021.
- 'Multiply' launched - a new initiative that will offer over 14,000 Essex residents free access to maths and finance training

The environment and climate action

As the county council's Climate Czar, I've been front and centre with much of the work around our support for the environment and the drive towards net zero. I am delighted that it remains a central ambition of the council's work, despite the financial pressure. Progress has been made, along with our partners, over the last year, and key achievements include:

- 138,349 trees planted across Essex on our way to target of 375,000 by 2025. This amounts to 52.73 hectares of trees, and 16,492m of hedgerows
- 36,681 LED streetlamps now installed across the county.
- 1,222 fuel-poor households receiving support, helping them claim an additional £2.4 million in benefits via our Warm Homes Essex project
- £100,000 awarded in the last 12 months to local cycling groups and charities
- SuDS advice provided on 850 major planning applications a year
- 62,500 new properties receiving flood reduction expertise



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- Green Flag award status retained across seven country parks welcoming one million visitors during the year
- £500,000 awarded from the Climate Action Challenge Fund to more than 30 local organisations and schools taking action on key climate change issues
- Several retrofit projects completed on the ECC estate
- £17.2m secured jointly with partners to provide fuel-poor households with grant funding of up to £10,000 to improve energy efficiency and heating systems in their homes
- A new North Essex Farming Cluster supported, which will help with information-sharing across the farming community, helping farmers move to more sustainable farming methods and protect sustainable agriculture
- Through Solar Together Essex, we have led a scheme enabling Essex residents to benefit from a significant discount on solar panels and battery storage from a reliable supplier. The scheme in Essex has now delivered over 1,300 installations and enabled over 1,100 tonnes of avoided carbon emissions annually. There have been 6,600 registrations over this year, more than any other year. The deadline to apply has been extended so people can register until 21/4/23.

Waste and recycling

We continue to work closely with district councils to promote recycling and efficient waste management that minimises the harm to the environment:



52% of household waste in Essex was recycled in 2020/21 – higher than the national average of 44%



The household **recycling rate varies from 40% - 58%** across the different district, borough and city areas



On average, each resident in Essex produces around 463kg of waste per year, that's **16% more waste than the national average.**



Approx 700,000 tonnes of household waste are generated in Essex per year – with a recycling rate of 52%, that means **circa 330,000 tonnes of general rubbish to landfill each year**



Over £100m is spent each year on the cost of collecting, treating and disposing of household waste in Essex



There are around **1.5 million visits to our 21 Recycling Centres each year**

Locality Fund

Once again, it has been a pleasure to support local communities through my Locality Fund. The details of schemes supported are as follows:

Organisation	Amount
The Birdbrook & District Community House	£310
Steeple Bumpstead Parish Council	£600
Mens Shed Great Yeldham	£1,000
Sturmer Parish Council	£700
Gestingthorpe Parish Council	£825
Birdbrook Bowls Club	£800
Helions Bumpstead Community Benefit Society	£803
Belchamp Otten & Belchamp St Paul Parish Council - Belchamp St Paul Community House	£300



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I hope the above gives you an idea of the work that has gone in over the last year to develop our plans and deliver on them for the people of Essex.

Meanwhile, my work as Climate Czar has been extremely rewarding: meeting people across Essex and beyond; championing the work and achievements of people throughout our county; lobbying government on environmental causes – including the East Anglian Green proposals which I and colleagues across the region are steadfastly opposing.

On top of the above, I have also continued my busy work as a Braintree District Councillor, including membership of various bodies, such as the Planning Committee.

Most of all, it has been my pleasure and privilege to serve the residents of all the villages, both large and small, within the Hedingham division. I look forward to continuing to do so in the next year and beyond.

Cllr P. Schwier took questions from residents and Councillors

Cllr P. Schwier then left the meeting

4. Report from BDC Councillor Wendy Scattergood

No report was given

5. Report of the Chairman of the Council - Cllr David Smith

As part of the Planning process, we are advised by Braintree District Council of all planning applications in the Parish and these are considered by the Parish Council in light of BDC's Local Plan and our Village Design Statement and our comments are submitted where appropriate. I like to think that Braintree takes notice of our comments, although some of the time I do wonder.

The beacon on Church Green, which was funded by Public Subscription, was the focal point for the Village celebrations for the Queens Platinum Jubilee early last June, which I thought were a great success and enjoyed by all.

During the summer months cricket continued on the Village Playing Field and over the winter we saw the return of Sunday football. Hopefully, this will continue, although I believe both the Cricket and Football teams would welcome new players.

Unfortunately, repairs and maintenance to the Pavilion have been under funded for a number of years and we are now playing catch up. A benefactor has very kindly funded the cost of redecorations to the kitchen and cloakrooms. We have secured Grant Funding towards the cost of repairs to the external timber cladding, guttering and materials for external decorations. We have purchased the paint and as soon as weather conditions permit, will be looking for a village work party to carry out redecorations. Over the next few years, we want to look to carrying out improvements to the Pavilion with a view to make it suitable for general Community uses.

Unfortunately, with rising costs and a reduction in the monies we receive from BDC we have had to increase the Village Precept for 2023/24. Our biggest expenditure is maintenance of the Playing Field - ie grass cutting, maintenance of the children's play equipment and Pavilion and insurance.

We have the Coronation to look forward to on the 6th May. As part of our Village celebrations, the beacon will be lit on the evening of Saturday 6th, there will be a picnic on the Playing Field on Sunday 7th and on Monday 8th a Village Tidy Up.

I would like to thank our County Councillor, Peter Schwier, and our District Councillor, Wendy Scattergood for their help and support throughout the year. Sadly, Wendy is stepping down and I would like to thank her for her help and support to our Parish over the years.

I would also like to thank Peter Nice for his help and support throughout the year. Peter is there to mark out the football pitch, mark out the track for children's races at the Jubilee/Coronation Celebrations and will be there to light the beacon on Saturday 6th May.

May I also thank my fellow Parish Councillors for their continued help, support and guidance. Sadly, Steve Bolter is standing down and I would like to thank him on behalf of the Parish for his commitment over the years.

Lastly, could I thank our Parish Clerk, Kevin Money, for keeping us on the straight and narrow.



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6. The Federation of St Giles' and St Andrew's Primary Schools - Helen Padgett School Governor
The federation between St Giles', Great Maplestead and St Andrew's, Bulmer continues to flourish. At the beginning of this year Wethersfield C of E Primary School joined the federation and the federation became The Chorus Schools Federation.

While budgets are tight and costs increasing, the federation has helped considerably with savings resulting in the quality of education being enhanced at St Andrew's. At the beginning of the academic year in September the school continued to have four classes. There are currently 77 children on the school roll with 20 children applying for 15 reception places in the autumn term. The school has 5 children attending from Gestingthorpe.

The federation continues to provide opportunities for the children to work together on shared experiences. This has included learning, sport and trips out for all three schools. The three schools recently attended a Young Shakespeare workshop on A Midsummer Night's Dream at St Andrew's. The school continues to provide sports coaches and a music specialist for music tuition. The school recently introduced i-rock band lessons in drums, keyboard and electric guitar. The emphasis, as always, is on delivering a broad and balanced curriculum experience.

The school has brought all of its library and class book stock up-to-date through the School Library Service.

Pebbles pre-school continues to work well with the school and now have school lunches provided by St Andrew's.

We now have a dedicated outdoor learning leader who is just about to complete her Forest School Leader training. All classes are taken over to Baker's Field which is now known as Baker's Wood. New equipment has been bought and an externally sourced woodland management plan has been written.

The school received a 'Good' result in its recent SIAMS inspection. 'The vision is lived out in the school. It is exemplified in the high-level provision, organisation and creativity in place to respond to the needs of all'. Please see the schools website for more information and regular news.

sab.sgasa.uk

7. Playing Field - Cllr Ashley Cooper

- All points have been covered in previous reports.
- Michael Sharp has undertaken all tree works on the playing field.
- Good to see the playing field being used so much
- Both football and cricket clubs are working well together
- The mowing of the playing field, being undertaken by the cricket club, is working well
- Pavilion – 2 cold snaps with burst piping. Extra lagging installed. Showers replaced.
- The Annual ROSPA inspection will be carried out in May

8. Footpaths - Cllr Penny Bagby

Whilst there are a number of open issues outstanding with Essex Highways, many of these are old reports of missing waymarker posts and paths not reinstated after ploughing. There are three recent reports of footbridges broken or in poor repair. Essex Highways have advised that these are unlikely to be fixed in the short term due to the number of defects outstanding across the county.

The unstable bridge on Footpath 8 was replaced by Essex Highways in November. Currently footpaths in the parish are generally clear of vegetation and passable.

9. Defibrillator - Steve Bagby

Steven & Penny Bagby jointly took after administration of the defibrillator from Wendy Jones in July last year.

The service agreement in place with Community Heartbeat was renewed in May 2022 and runs for four years to 2026. The Service agreement covers all costs except the annual cost of the VETS scheme & 999 service being £160 in total.



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Community Heartbeat hold £306 on account for the Gestingthorpe defibrillator and there is a further £250 in the bank account held at NatWest. Bank signatories at NatWest need to be updated.

7 people currently on the Volunteer telephone system & defib checking rota.

Considering implementing annual training and possibility of a second defibrillator at Audley End. A second defibrillator will require additional volunteers. A special thanks to Wendy Jones for all her hard work.

10. Highways - Cllr Peter Collett

SID Sudbury Road - The unit has been removed from the post and I understand that it is currently undergoing repairs by ECC. I am pressing ECC for its return but despite requests for an update I am now not receiving responses.

Potholes - In the coming weeks I intend to map and report to ECC as many potholes within the village as I can.

11. Cricket Club - John Butcher

Last year brought mixed results of the Cricket Club, but we had an enjoyable season. Village teams are having a job finding new players and we are no exception.

We were joined by some players from other clubs who have packed up, but some of our young stars are going to university this year and won't be available for the whole season.

We have decided to play fewer matches on Sundays but will play more evening 20/20 matches.

I would like to place on record our team's thanks to our old Captain Neil Johns who has retired after many successful years in the post.

I would also like to thank Ashley Cooper who has supported the Cricket Club over the years. This year he has sponsored one of our players to acquire a youth coaching qualification. He will help under 10's at the ground enjoy a fun grounding in the game. We are looking to the future. Ashley also hosts our annual dinners and meetings at Hill Farm. Many thanks. I'm sure Gestingthorpe appreciates how lucky it is to have Ashley's contribution to life in the village.

Once again, the Cricket Club would like to thank the PC for all it's help to keep our club going.

12. Football Club – Jordan Knott

- 4 more games left.
- Good season finishing mid table
- Not the best weather conditions this season
- Thanked Peter Nice for marking out the pitch
- New team is now moulding together well
- Good response from residents in supporting the club
- A new football kit is being used for 2023/2024 season in support and raise awareness of the local charity

Jordan Knott left the meeting

13. Village Hall – Cllr Penny Bagby

The work to replace the roof was completed last summer. Unfortunately, there was a significant overrun on costs as additional defects were identified once the old roof was removed. The Village Hall was able to meet these costs from its reserves plus donations sourced from several generous villagers. Thanks are extended to all villagers who donated funds directly and/or those attending fundraising events.

Fundraising events kicked off with our Raise the Roof party to celebrate the new roof. Christmas parties were held for both village children and adults as well as a craft fayre, the Jubilee Team Party, several Tuesday Talks, and regular fortnightly coffee mornings which are proving very popular. The book club is also well established with a regular turnover of books going through the book exchange.

Future events planned include another craft fayre and a Summer party. The hall will also serve as a



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focal point during the Village celebrations for the Coronation of King Charles III being open all three days with an exhibition of village artefacts & photos put on by the History group with teas, coffee & cake on sale, and a Coronation drinks party on the Saturday prior to the beacon lighting on Church Green.

All funds raised by the Management Committee go towards the running costs of the hall, repairs & maintenance as well as ongoing improvements including the replacement of the old electric fan heaters and improvements to the garden courtyard so that it is a more useable space in the warmer weather.

I would like to offer the Parish Council's thanks to the Village Hall Management Committee for their hard work over the year maintaining the hall and managing the full programme of events which many villagers past & present have attended and enjoyed.

The Chairman thanked the Village Hall Management for all their hard work.

14. Education Charity – Cllr Ashley Cooper

Ashley Cooper reported the Receipts and Payments accounts for the year ending 31st. December 2022. He also gave an update on the Trustees Annual Report for the year ending 31st. December 2022

The Educational Foundation was established by a Scheme made by the Secretary of State for Education and Science in 1969 and revised in 1972.

The object of this charity is to promote the education (including social and physical training) of residents of the ancient (original) parish of Gestingthorpe by means of financial grants towards the cost of such items as tuition fees, study books, educational materials or any activity which the trustees consider to be educational. Preference is given to applicants under the age of twenty-five.

The trustees have taken advantage of the amendment of the Constitution which permits the appointment of up to 3 additional co-opted trustees for terms of a limited term of 12 months to appoint Corinna Brown.

Applications for grants are discussed and allocated twice a year at Trustees meetings in the Spring and Autumn.

The charity is funded partly from the rent of approximately 12.5 acres of arable land at Cock Road, Little Maplestead (known as Rents field) and partly by interest and dividends from investments in COIF Charities Deposit Fund and in Blackrock Charishare Common Investment and Restricted funds

A group of trustees inspected the charity land in February 2022 accompanied by the tenant. The date of the inspection varies each year so that the seasonal changes can be appreciated. It was noted that the new pond created by the tenant was now filled with water and the hedges cut back. The Trust arranges Public Liability insurance for the charity land. The charity's investments are reviewed at each meeting of the trustees. The advice of Black Rock Investment Managers Ltd. and SB Surveyors of Sudbury is sought periodically.

During 2022, 10 grants totalling £1,455 were made in support of various individual activities of which £1375 was cashed by recipients in 2022.

A Platinum Jubilee Book Voucher Scheme was launched and 18 vouchers each worth £25 were claimed at a cost of £450 in total. The scheme benefited 32 children including some pre-school children. Some children had visited book shops with their parents to choose their selection. The trustees will consider a further Book Voucher Scheme at their first meeting in 2023.

15. Neighbourhood Watch - Helen Skerratt

In the absence of Helen Skerratt, the Clerk read out the information she had supplied prior to the meeting. It read that if anyone would like any NHW signs, window stickers etc, to please contact her.

16. Speedwatch – Cllr Peter Collett

Terry Straight has attempted to take over the role of co-ordinator of the Gestingthorpe Community Speed Watch. However, Terry now informs me that he has been unable to recruit any volunteers and has now resigned from the role. This currently leaves the village without any speed watch activity. One piece of good news is that on the afternoon of 19th April there were two police officers monitoring



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traffic speeds in Audley End. I will contact the police on behalf of the Parish Council to request that this becomes a regular occurrence in Audley End and other sites in the village.

17. Public Forum

A resident spoke about the rejected planning application at the Pheasant PH.

A resident spoke about the County Broadband provider and asked if there is a contrail period. The Chairman stated that the contract was for 2 years before residents can opt out of the contract.

A resident asked about the latest in Pot Kiln

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.45pm and thanked everyone for attending

Signed

D. Smith

11th. May 2023

D. Smith
Chairman GPC