



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 28th. April 2022 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall

Present: Cllrs D. Smith (Chairman), C. Craig (Vice-Chairman), P. Bagby, S. Bolter, A. Cooper, ECC Cllr P. Schwier, BDC Cllr W. Scattergood, Leslie Crumpton-Taylor (Internal Auditor) and Kevin B. Money (Parish Clerk). There were also 6 members of the public present.

1. **Apologies for absence** were received from Cllr G. Carey, P. Collett, John Butcher and Helen Skerratt
2. **Minutes of last Annual Village Meeting** held on Thursday 22nd. April 2021. **All Agreed**
3. **Presentation of audited accounts for 2021/22.** The RFO had circulated the full set of 2021/22 accounts and the completed but un-signed AGAR return forms prior to the meeting. Councillors and residents noted the audit accounts for 2021/22. The Chairman thanked Leslie Crumpton-Taylor for undertaking the 2021-22 Internal Audit.

4. Report from ECC Councillor Peter Schwier

ECC Cllr Peter Schwier submitted his report prior to the meeting and was circulated to all present at the meeting.

The report read:

The last 12 months have been exceptionally busy and demanding. They have also been productive, and the new administration at Essex County Council has lost no time in setting out its clear aims and priorities for the four-year term.

While too many to list in full, below is a small sample of the landmarks and achievements of the last 12 months at the county council.

Launch of Everyone's Essex Strategy – the council's ambitious plan for the four years ahead. It set out our levelling up plan for the county, and 20 commitments under the key areas of "economy", "environment", "health" and "family". The strategy set out how renewal, equality and ambition run through everything we do. Crucially, from my perspective, it established our aim to reach net-zero in Essex.

A budget for Essex - In February this year, the council set its budget for the 2022/23 financial year. To help achieve ECC's vision of a county where everyone can thrive, it was announced that several areas would receive significant additional investment, including:

a £1.3 billion capital programme across the next four years

£200million over the next four years to support our climate action and net zero ambitions

an additional £10million in skills and economic growth

a further £2million for infrastructure and a new pothole fund

a £1.5million fund for the heritage and culture sector

an additional £1million for Levelling Up across Essex

continuation of the £750,000 localities fund to support district-based Levelling Up priorities

a continuation of the £500,000 investment in the work being done to protect Essex children from being targeted by gangs

A £20million investment has already been made available to help families. This includes directly supporting financial wellbeing and helping them with summer childcare. ECC will also commit an extra £700,000 to the Essential Living Fund to help families and individuals with food, fuel, clothing and furniture bills.

Council Tax – At the same meeting, ECC took the difficult decision to increase its share of council tax by 4.49%.

As an administration, we are very clear that the only money the council has to spend is the money of our residents. It is therefore right that we raise taxes reluctantly and only once every alternative has been explored. In this instance, the main part of the increase was a 2.5% increase in the social care precept – money that goes towards supporting vulnerable residents, including frail, elderly, adults with disabilities, and vulnerable children in need. While we always seek to avoid council tax increases, the



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pressures on the social care market are such that an increase this year was deemed the only way to stave off serious problems in provision of social care, with providers struggling to stay in business.

Highways - The council will be spending £135m on highways maintenance over the coming year and, as ever, will prioritise the areas by severity of need.

In the Braintree District Council area, over the last six months, this spending has led to repairs to 184 county-grade roads, 160 local roads, 187 pavements, 3,711 drains cleared and 2,240 streetlights were fixed.

Climate Action - In November, ECC's cabinet approved a Climate Action Plan which agreed a £200m commitment to help address all areas of climate-related activity in Essex. The county council's ambition is to ensure we are building a coalition of support across the county for the move to net-zero carbon emissions in our county by 2050. Detailing how we will implement the recommendations of the Essex Climate Action Commission's report [Net Zero: Making Essex Carbon Neutral](#), it included plans across areas such as housing, infrastructure, transport, waste and the natural environment.

Within the first 100 days - the following was achieved

repairing over one million square metres of roads and 40,000 square metres of footpaths and cycleways

creating over 600 new roles for unemployed young people aged 18-24 as part of the Government's Kickstart scheme

delivering four BT broadband contracts under Superfast Essex programme for a further 12,000 premises

starting construction of the West Mersea temporary defence barrier scheme

- launching a new £500,000 fund to support community action on climate change

working with the Essex Climate Action Commission (ECAC) to develop and publish the 'Net Zero: Making Essex Carbon Neutral' report

launching the Active Essex 'Find your Active' campaign, supported by a £1.25 million fund

- launching Essex Pedal Power, a £2.7million community-based project being piloted in Clacton and Jaywick Sands

- launching the new Essex Care Technology Service to support people with care needs access and use the latest technology to help them to live as independently as possible announcing the Essex Education Task Force which will invest £1million in reading over the next 18 months, to support children and young people affected by the loss of learning during the Covid-19 pandemic

piloting construction methods designed to deliver net-zero, future proof, inclusive school buildings

It has been a pleasure to assist the following communities with My Locality Fund -

Sturmer, Ashen, Pebmarsh, Castle Hedingham, Lt Maplestead, Gestingthorpe and Belchamp St Paul.

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.

For my part, my appointment as Climate Czar was a great privilege. It is a role that speaks volumes for our commitment in this space, but the work has only just started and there is much still to do.

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 left the meeting

5. Report from BDC Councillor Wendy Scattergood

BDC Cllr W. Scattergood informed the meeting that

Planning – Local plan has been conducted by inspectors – gone out to public consultation and inspectors have still now made their decision.

Planning committee has been meeting weekly and during Covid a numerous amounts of applications were submitted to BDC.

BDC are proposing an inspector for each area and they are not consistent.

Enforcement department – A numerous number of recommendations were made and 5 new Enforcement Officers were approved.



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BDC was the first Council to bring back face-to-face Planning meetings. Hence all applications were handled on time.

BDC has support business throughout these difficult times.

New initiatives have been introduced to increase BDC funds.

Cllr D. Smith asked if BDC has its 5-year supply. Answer Yes

Are all BDC staff back at Causeway House as it is difficult to get in touch with appropriate officer. Most are back at work.

A proposal of a prison in Weathersfield. Can an update be given? – BDC has had no meetings with MOJ and have no plans or any planning application/s submitted.

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

You will recall that last year's Annual Village Meeting was held via zoom. As Covid restricted eased, we have returned to our usual meeting format. Over the last year, we have been involved with the following: -

- We've considered and submitted comments on Planning Applications within the Parish to Braintree District Council. I like to think that Braintree takes notice of our comments, although at times I do wonder.
- The road improvements to Sudbury Road were completed last summer. Hopefully, there will not be any further flooding problems to this area.
- A speed indicator sign at Audley End has been installed. Unfortunately, the speed indicator sign in Sudbury Road is not working and we are in discussion with Essex County Council regarding a replacement.
- Two new children rockers have been installed on the playing field.
- Following a problem with travellers on the playing field at Great Maplestead, we had concerns over the possibility of travellers getting onto our playing field. In order to make the field secure, a row of security bollards has been erected along Church Street. The cost of the bollards has been funded by Covid related grant monies. Unfortunately, with rising costs we have had to increase the precept for 2022/23. Our biggest expenditure is maintenance of the playing field – i.e. grass cutting, maintenance of play equipment and the pavilion and insurances. As part of the celebrations for the Queens Jubilee we are erecting a beacon on Church Green which will be lit at 9.45pm on Thursday 2nd June next. The cost of the beacon has been funded by public subscription. I would like to thank our Essex County Councillor, Peter Schwier, and our District Councillor, Wendy Scattergood, for their continued help & support throughout the year. Could I thank my fellow Parish Councillors for their continued help, support and guidance, together with our Parish Clerk, Kevin Money, for keeping us on the straight and narrow.

7. Village Hall – Cllr Claire Craig

I would like to offer the Parish Council's thanks to Chris and Rose Harman and the village hall committee for their work to keep the village hall open, safe, and well maintained during the last year. Following on from past improvements to the village hall, the committee have now appointed Border Roofing to replace the slate roof, which is starting to fail and cause damp problems in areas of the hall. Thanks to kind and generous donations from villagers, fundraising events, and subsidies and grants from outside sources, we are lucky enough to have adequate funds to do this before it becomes a bigger issue. Border Roofing will be reusing as many of the original slates as possible, placing these on the roof facing the road, and using new Spanish slates elsewhere. The work is due to start in May, with scaffolding going up very soon. Once the roofing works are complete, we are hoping to continue the improvements to the hall, with further replacement heaters, and the purchase of a gas camping stove (or similar). Following the recent storms where the village was without power for a couple of days, we would like to be able to offer the community somewhere to get a hot drink, food and companionship should we have an event like this again. Members of the committee will be having a garden weed and tidy session on the Friday after this meeting, as part of plans to make the outside space more attractive and part of the appeal of the hall. We thank Penny for the roses recently planted out the front of the hall, which should bring a splash of colour to the road front. We also plan to



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decorate the hall and outside space with bunting, flower displays, and new photos in time for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee this June. The committee are planning to release a calendar of events, with save the date notices going up in the hall, in the parish magazine and online. As a committee, we would like to see the village hall become more of a community hub than a 'space for hire'. The coffee mornings are being well supported, and it's great to see Nic Smith's exercise classes in the hall continue to be so popular. However, we need more events like this! With more children in the village, we would like to see a parent and toddler group, plus other informal community groups use the village hall. If you know of anyone looking for a space, would like to set something up, or can help get the word out, please let us know!

The Chairman then thanked Chris Harman and the village hall committee for all their hard work.

8. 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. While budgets are tight and costs increasing, the federation with St Giles' 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 and we welcomed two new teaching staff to the key stage 2 classes. The number on roll has gradually increased over the school year and there are now 71 children in school.

The federation continues to provide opportunities for the children to work together on shared experiences. This has included learning, sport and trips out. Both schools' year 5 and 6 pupils recently attended a very successful week's residential stay on the Isle of Wight. The school continues to provide sports coaches and a music specialist for music tuition. The emphasis, as always, is on delivering a broad and balanced curriculum experience.

Pebbles pre-school have settled in well onto the school site and strong links have been established with the school.

There has been the expected disruption due to Covid on staff and pupil attendance. Staff have covered for absent colleagues and it is a credit to the team at St Andrew's for pulling together and doing any and all jobs. No classes have had to be sent home nor has the school had to resort back to online learning.

The children have been delighted to be back in school after the lockdowns of last year and the school made sure that the usual activities resumed as normal. The Christmas activities of Nativity, trip to the pantomime, Christmas lunch and Christmas crib service all went ahead. It is also thanks to parents for their support in twice weekly lateral flow testing that enabled their children to attend these events.

The school has recently replaced the fencing all around the school site and the double gates to the staff car park. This has provided a much safer environment for the children especially during drop off and pick up times.

Please see the school's website for more information and regular news. www.sab.sgasa.uk

Cllr D. Smith asked how many local children attend the school. Helen will let the Chairman know.

9. Education Charity – Cllr Ashley Cooper

Ashley Cooper reported on behalf of the Trustees. The accounts and annual report were circulated and passed to the Clerk. Income during the year was £1774. Expenditure, including grants amounted to £1742, of which £1466 was grants. £240 was in respect of the 2020 book voucher scheme (The reminder was insurance on the Field). Andy Craig was thanked for auditing the accounts.

Ashley reported that the Trustees are trying to register Rents Field with the Land Registry. During the year Corinna Brown had stood down as a Trustee after many years' service. She was replaced by Helen Padgett.

Ashley thanked Jane Crumpton-Taylor for her invaluable work as secretary. During the year she had undertaken a review of the terms of the Foundation, and also the precise location of the boundaries of the ancient parish. At the request of the Trustees, she had also obtained permission for the Foundation



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to appoint three additional Trustees. Trustees had taken this course of action as there is concern that there might not be enough ex officio Trustees willing to serve in the future, and also to enable new ideas to be expressed.

In an effort to raise the profile of the Trust, a £25 Book Voucher scheme to commemorate the Queens Platinum Jubilee, is going to be launched in the Parish, for the first 20 families with children who apply.

10. Neighbourhood Watch - Helen Skerratt

I took over NHW Coordinator from Chris Harman back in 2016.

I was previously the NHW coordinator when I lived in Hertfordshire.

During the early days Chris and I drove round the village and posted a newsletter, stickers for windows and larger stickers for bins for outbuildings/gates etc.

I mainly receive information from Clive Stewart, who is the Braintree District Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator as well as phone calls or emails from local residents.

Additional, I have set up a dedicated email address for the sole use for NHW matters.

When I receive information, I blind copy(bcc) to every resident that has signed up to receive information via that method.

I also report issues/information via the village Facebook page. On a few occasions I have put up posters outside the village hall & bus shelter.

Should anyone like to receive NHW emails, the address is;

Gestingthorpe194@gmail.com

Helen Skerratt

01787 237297 or 07793 402297

11. Cricket Club - John Butcher

In John Butcher's absence he had supplied, prior to the meeting, his report read:

The 2021 season was fair. We played most of our matches and won a few but shortage of players was a problem.

A number of our junior players have grown up and gone away to university/college. They are not available till later in the season.

We have decided to reduce the number of matches we are playing and hope this will ease the problem. It's not just a problem for us: a number of village teams have packed up and covid did not help.

We had a much delayed AGM, presentation and annual dinner two weeks ago in Ashley Cooper's 'ancient' barn. It was all very well supported and there was a lot of enthusiasm and a fair amount of Nethergate's Stour Valley Gold consumed. The club is optimistic that we should be able to field a reasonably good team this season.

Instead of paying for autumn pitch maintenance we have bought a scarifier and will do it ourselves.

Chris Moulton seems to know what he's doing. (I don't!).

We have also bought some Astro Turf to lay a new run-up in the nets. We hope to do this soon. Laying it is a bit tricky.

The cost of these items come to about £800 which we will pay for out of our reserves. We are letting Sudbury Cricket Club use our wicket again this year and this will bring in about £400.

We will also have the odd fund raising activity during the season. One big one is our memorial game/barbecue bash on the 3rd July. On this day we remember club stalwarts who are no longer with us. We have photos of many of them in the pavilion.

Any other business:

Ashley Cooper has kindly agreed to be our new President. Bravo.

We've teak oiled the 5 benches at our end of the field. I have been asked if the PC could install benches in the playground area. You could use the spare one next to the pavilion and reposition the one in the middle of the field. The cricket club would then replace it with a new one in memory of Arthur Nears. We talked about doing this during covid.



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Finally, the cricket club would like to thank the PC for its help and encouragement and we all hope cricket will have a thriving future in Gestingthorpe.

If any of the PC members would like to play for us, please let the captain know!

Fixtures.

Sudbury will be using the wicket on the following Saturday afternoons.

14th. May, 28th. May, 11th. June, 25th. June.

Our fixture list can be found at <https://gestingthorpe.play-cricket.com/home> if we get enough players.

12. Public Forum

Cllr W. Scattergood mentioned that A BBC Look East reporter stated that NG now propose to underground only just the section of new 400 of kV line that passes through the AONB. I believe this was just misreporting.

A discussion took place regarding National Grid and UK Power Networks - Bramford to Twinstead reinforcement

More transmission capacity is needed to take the extra electricity from new windfarms and possibly a new nuclear power station, from the East coast to the area of demand around London. In 2014 and 2015, a consultation group, comprising mostly local councillors, eventually convinced National Grid that it should underground the section of the proposed new 400 000V (400 kV) line where it crosses the Stour Valley. We had had convinced them that the Special Landscape of the Stour was as important as the Dedham Vale Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The project was put on hold and revived last year. A preliminary consultation contained question fishing for approval of abandoning the Stour Valley undergrounding as it is not in an AONB.

Respondents made it clear that protecting areas of special landscape value in relaxing areas is as important as a few tourist honeypot AONBs.

I am pleased to report that the revised scheme subsequently offered was an improvement on the previous one, with more undergrounding and a less conspicuous termination of our end of the underground.

While this is less ideal, for example, using undersea cables round to the Thames, I think this is the best we can hope to achieve. Further enquiries and delay could result in the cancellation of the undergrounding but still using the Bramford to Twinstead route.

The biggest issue for Gestingthorpe is the necessary changes to the 132 000 volt (132 kV) local grid owned by "UK Power Networks". For years they have been needing to reinforce the supply to Sudbury, which goes via Castle Hedingham and Belchamp. National Grid is removing part of 132 kV cable and erecting part of its new 400 kV line in its place. It thus has to resupply the 132 kV cable by putting a Grid Supply point, with a pair of giant 400 kV to 132 kV transformers. The site they have chosen is between Butlers Wood and Waldegrave Woods, beside the road from Hedingham to Bulmer-Tye.

This is the subject of a separate planning application. Although the Far-Eastern owners are said to be pressing the Government to expedite approvals, the design of the transformer station is far from complete.

Only the tops of the pylon towers are likely to be visible from anywhere in the Parish. They will be lower than the pylons on the nearby 400 kV line.

We have almost zero chance of having the station. Its position was chosen, from three possible sites, a decade ago.

On behalf of the P C we have made several representations, including to call for far the fast establishment of screening to the west of the gap between the woods, abatement of ground-born and air-born noise, no lighting except during maintenance, and for diesel generator to be used for emergency use only.

The whole Bramford to Twinstead reinforcement scheme is now open to public comment. The MP for the Suffolk side of the valley is encouraging everyone to object, but there is little hope of radical positive change and the chance that delays will end in occur in funding and an even more intrusive scheme.



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County Broadband Limited - Fibre to the home.

As far as I know all in the Gestingthorpe CBL area, who registered in advanced, are now receiving the service. I am not sure about those in the parts of the Parish who will be served via Little Yeldham. If you are having problems, you are invited to contact me on sbolter@outlook.com.

Public Transport - Stansted Airspace

Last year I attended a preliminary meeting aimed to ascertain what local people wanted, with discussion followed by questionnaires. Results indicated that number of people overflown was an important parameter, making it preferable to concentrate large numbers of flights over narrow corridors over the countryside, rather than spreading them over larger areas. even though my written response tried to counter this by re-emphasizing that overflying is more intrusive over otherwise quiet rural areas than over busy urban areas,

It seemed pretty hopeless, but I had missed one factor, which came to our rescue. In our areas planes are relatively low a long way from the airport.

The proposed new routes through the airspace will avoid Gestingthorpe. We must hope that the latest proposals are accepted when the overall airspace for the main "London" airports is finalised.

Public Transport F 315 bus

The bus service was severely disrupted by broadband works, the remedial works to stop Sudbury Road falling into the Wickham Brook, and Covid19.

We are returning to normal in other ways, the service is still very underused.

USE IT OR LOOSE IT. If you do not support it when you can now, it may not be there if you need it in the future. Having a coffee while you wait for the next bus home is cheaper than using petrol or diesel to go by car.

The last bus into Sudbury is 6:49pm, returning at 7:15pm. The last bus each way has to be booked. All others are hail and ride. The timetable on the Gestingthorpe PC Website gives earliest departure times, that is the time you should be at the stop not to miss the next bus. Buses towards Sudbury can be 15 minutes later than that if they have had to call at both Pebmarsh and Great Maplestead on their way from Halstead.

Do not use the ECC website or phone apps that take their information from it. You are likely to miss the bus if you do not look at all, the small print. ECC ignore information sent to them by me and the operator. It is as if ECC want the route to fail.

The Parish News information has been trimmed down so much it is not clear either.

Report from Peter Collett

SID Audley End - The unit still needs some adjustment as it only operates if a vehicle is travelling above 40 mph. The PC will continue to attempt to make contact with ECC Highways to resolve this matter. SID Sudbury Road - The PC has made an application to ECC for a new sign. The PC will contact Cllr Schwier in an effort to secure funding for the new installation. Community Speed Watch -

We are awaiting to be informed of the dates for further training and a "live" speedwatch. Play Equipment - A ROSPA inspection will take place next month. Bramford to Twinstead Reinforcement -

The PC has submitted its response to National Grid's consultation. In summary, the the PC's response reluctantly accepts the need for a substation but stresses the need for adequate and effective screening of the completed installation and draws attention for the need for consideration of residents during the construction phase.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.30pm and thanked everyone for attending

Signed

D Smith

12th. May 2022

D. Smith – Chairman GPC

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