

GESTINGTHORPE PARISH COUNCIL

Parish Clerk / RFO: Kevin B. Money
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Minutes of the Annual Village meeting held on Thursday 9th. May 2024 at 7pm in the Village Hall

Present: Cllrs D. Smith (Chair), P. Bagby, G. Carey, A. Cooper, P. Collett, Mr. Leslie Crumpton-Taylor (Internal Auditor) and Kevin B. Money (Parish Clerk). There were 7 members of the public present.

1. **Apologies for absence** were received from ECC Cllr P. Schwier, Cllr D. Green, Jordan Knott and Michael Sharp

2. **Minutes of last Annual Village Meeting** held on Thursday 27th. April 2023. **All Agreed**

3. Report from ECC Councillor Peter Schwier

ECC Hedingham Annual report from Cllr Peter Schweir was supplied prior to the meeting. This report can be found at <https://gestingthorpepc.co.uk/agendas-%26-minutes#dc26d110-b367-4f12-bdb9-38d5d75017d0>

4. **Report from BDC Councillor David Holland**

- Braintree District Council does deal with issues around planning and bin collections.
- **Planning Issues:** Statutory by BDC in legal terms. Enforcement planning department was lacking in the process bit due to recruiting it means that BDC enforcement team is playing catch-up. All enforcement issues are now allocated to a dedicated officer. Call for sites is for developing BDC local plan. Change in National Planning policy by changing decision making easier for planning authorities. The 5-year housing supply has increased to 5.8 year. Every 5 years a new Local plan will be undertaken. Gestingthorpe village is not a sustainable area.
- **Refuse Service:** Residents upset as it went to a paid service. BDC is a better run organisation. Bin service was draining the public purse. Take up is greater than expected. Benefit more resilient position where tax rises could be kept at a lower level. The revenue bin service will be seen in the longer term by having smaller rises in Council tax

Cllr D. Holland then took questions from Councillors and residents

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 by reference to BDC's Adopted Local Plan and our own Village Design Statement.

The beacon on Church Green was lit on the evening of Saturday 6th May 2023, to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles, followed by a family picnic on the Playing field on Sunday and "Village" clean up on the Bank Holiday Monday.

The exterior of the Pavilion has been redecorated by a volunteer work party, the rainwater guttering replaced and we await a dry spell to complete rainwater drainage soakaways.

We are looking to carry out improvements to the Pavilion as funds allow with a view to making it more suitable for Community uses.

During the summer months cricket continued on the Playing Field with Sunday football during the winter months. I believe both the Cricket and Football teams would welcome new players.

The Cricket Club (Chris Moulton) took over mowing the Playing Field and I do hope that everyone will agree with me that the field looked splendid all last summer. Many thanks to Chris.

We have recently planted two Oak trees and a Red Chestnut tree in the village. One of the trees is in memory of the late Queen and one to celebrate the coronation of King Charles.

The Parish Council welcomed Dawn Green to the Council. Dawn may be known to a number of you as one of the "Cake Queens" who bake for the Village Hall coffee mornings. Sadly, Claire Craig resigned from the Parish Council and we currently have a vacancy.

Faced with rising costs and a reduction in the monies we receive from BDC we have had to increase the Village Precept for 2024/25. Our biggest expenditure is maintenance of the Playing Field – i.e. grass cutting, maintenance of the children's play equipment, the Pavilion and insurance.

Looking ahead to the summer, together with the Village Hall, we are planning to celebrate the Summer Solstice on the weekend of 22nd. and 23rd. June 2024. The beacon will be lit on the Saturday evening, followed by a village picnic on the Playing Field on Sunday.

I would like to thank our County Councillor, Peter Schweir, and our District Councillor, David Holland, for their help and support throughout the year.

I would also like to thank Peter Nice who marks out the football pitch during the winter months.

May I also thank my fellow Parish Councillors for their continued support and guidance throughout the year. Lastly, could I thank our Parish Clerk, Kevin Money, for keeping us on the straight and narrow.

6. The Federation of St Giles' and St Andrew's Primary Schools - Helen Padgett School Governor
The federation between St Giles', Great Maplestead, Wethersfield C of E Primary School and St Andrew's, Bulmer continues to flourish.

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. The school continues to have four classes and had 87 children on roll at the time of the school census. Over the last year St Andrew's gained 41 new children with 26 coming from other schools and the reception class oversubscribed. The school has 6 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 joined together for a residential trip to the PGL centre, Claythorpe, Lincolnshire and recently attended a Young Shakespeare workshop on Macbeth at St Andrew's. Trips together have included visits to Boydells Farm, Layer Marney Towers and a whole school visit to the Theatre Royal, Bury St Edmunds for the panto trip to see 'Snow White'. Visitors to school have included the Warner Textile Archive and Cambridge Science Museum. The school continues to provide sports coaches and I-rock provides music lessons in drums, vocals, keyboard and electric guitar. The emphasis, as always, is on delivering a broad and balanced curriculum experience.

Pebbles pre-school continues to work well with the school and have school lunches provided by St Andrew's. Their recent OFSTED inspection resulted in an Outstanding grade.

Our dedicated outdoor learning, Forest School teacher takes all classes over to Baker's Wood. New equipment has been bought and an externally sourced woodland management plan has been written.

Please see the schools website for more information and regular news. sab.sgasa.uk

Cllr A. Cooper stated that the school children have nearly doubled in size.

7. Playing Field - Cllr Ashley Cooper

Mowing undertaken well. Marking out pitch. Chestnut tree replaced. Over-hanging branches still remain but will be addressed.

Cllr A. Cooper thanked Cllr D. Smith for undertaking the pavilion upgrade

8. Footpaths - Cllr Penny Bagby

Three defective bridges in the parish reported since last Village Meeting have been repaired by Essex Highways & the Volunteer Group Friends of the Fitch Way.

Currently all footpaths in the parish are generally clear of vegetation and passable.

9. Defibrillator - Steve Bagby

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.

Community Heartbeat hold £176.00p on account for the Gestingthorpe defibrillator and there is a further £775.22p in the bank account held at NatWest. This amount includes the £150.00p grant received from the Parish Council & £367.67p raised from the Jumble Sale held in March. Bank signatories at NatWest have been updated.

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

To date no further action has been taken on annual training and possibility of a second defibrillator at Audley End. It has been suggested that a management committee be set up to progress these action points.

10. Highways - Cllr Peter Collett

Dangerous speeding continues to be a problem within the village, The Parish Council have contacted the Rural Policing Unit together with the local PCSO's and a limited number of speed checks have taken place over the year. However, the police have very limited resources and are unable to carry out more regular checks, as a consequence there has been no effective deterrent to speeding. The Parish Council are continuing to contact the police to ask if more regular checks can be provided. The Parish Council are also pressing for the broken speed indicator device on Sudbury Road to be replaced. Potholes and broken and missing road signs are reported on a regular basis, however a number of potholes remain (particularly on Sudbury Road). There is also a road sign on Sudbury Road that needs to be re-erected. One of the residents living on Northend Road has made an application for the speed limit to be reduced to 40mph on a section of Northend Road. This has been supported by the Parish Council and is currently with ECC. The Parish Council lobbied to retain the F315 bus service in its current form, however this was unsuccessful and the service will be replaced with a "Digi Go" service in July.

At 7.15pm ECC Cllr P. Schwier arrived for the meeting having been to a previous meeting

11. Cricket Club – Cricket Club is endeavouring to keep going. Youth coaching is underway. More players are needed. A resident has passed his Coaching exams

12. Football Club – Jordan Knott

Unfortunately, our cup final that was due to be played on Sunday 28th April in Witham but was postponed due to a waterlogged pitch has been rescheduled for that night so I won't be able to attend unfortunately. Obviously, I should be able to attend the next one.

13. Village Hall – Cllr Penny Bagby

2023/24 has been a very busy and successful year for the Village Hall. Funds raised through Lettings, Fundraising & Donations substantially exceeded budget with the additional funds used to purchase new heaters, fridge, light shades and a BBQ.

Fundraising events included the Village Craft Fayre, monthly 'Gestingthorpe Grills', plant sale & sausage sizzle, the Bluff my Cheese quiz and the publication of the Cake Queens Recipe Book. In addition, Christmas parties were held for both village children and adults.

We have a very busy programme of fundraising events lined up with the next event being the Summer Solstice party & Beacon Lighting to be run in conjunction with the Parish Council Annual Picnic on 22/23 June.

All funds raised go towards the running costs of the hall, repairs & maintenance as well as further improvements which are currently being determined by the Management Committee.

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.

Also, thanks to all the volunteers who have helped run events, baked cakes etc and to everyone who has attended our events and helped make them such a success.

Finally thank you to Chris Harman who stood down as Chairman at the AGM in June. During his 10 years at the helm, he oversaw significant improvements to the hall including the Toilet upgrade and the new roof. Chris was replaced as Chairman by Roger Goldsmith. This year's Village Hall AGM is on Thursday 6th June.

14. Education Charity – Cllr Ashley Cooper

During the year, Steve Bolter, stood down as Parish Council representative and was replaced by Claire Craig. Andy Craig who had previously audited our accounts, has now stood down to avoid a conflict of interest and has been replaced by Stephanie Prior.

In 2023 the GEF made grants of £1757, in support of various educational claims such as extra curricular tuition, sports coaching, swimming lessons, school trips etc.

Included in this was a book voucher scheme to commemorate the Coronation of King Charles III which enabled 20 families with children to receive an e-book voucher worth £30.

The Trustees visited the field in July 2023, more recently they visited in April 2024 and from July 2023 there has been significant boundary issues relating to the drainage of water through the garden of Kirstum Cottage and the adjoining newly built house.

In February 2024 Blackrock Investments informed the Trustees that it was winding up the ethical fund in which the Trusts money was invested. Following an additional meeting of the Trustees, the funds were re-allocated into similar investments run by Blackrock, IFSL and Epworth. In all of the administration the foundation is grateful for the immense amount of voluntary work undertaken by our Clerk, Jane Crumpton-Taylor who I cannot sufficiently thank.

15. Neighbourhood Watch - Helen Skerratt

I have been contacted twice by two residents in our village. One was in January and the other in April. On each occasion, I gave them NHW posters/signs.

If any residents would like any deterrent items, please let me know and I can deliver to them or they can contact me directly.

I am aware that that many more people have moved into our village or moved away. So, if any new residents need any NHW items, please feel free to contact me.

My details are: The Lantern, North End Road. Or email me: gestingthorpe194@gmail.com

My phone numbers are: 01787 237297/07793 402397

Chris Harman added that:

That a letter has been sent to Barclays Bank plc requesting that the Neighbourhood Watch funds of £136.41p to be paid, electronically, to the bank account held by Gestingthorpe Parish Council as Restricted Funds for use only in connection with Neighbourhood Watch costs and expenses.

The E-mail address that Helen wishes to be used for Neighbourhood Watch differs from the one published in the Parish News. I have asked Penny to amend the E-mail address in the Parish News.

Helen is to set up / has set up a Gestingthorpe Neighbourhood Watch Facebook account to receive and distribute Neighbourhood Watch information. For those who don't use Facebook they will, if they authorise Helen to do so, receive 'blind-copied' E-mails and for those who don't use either medium, posters will be displayed (as discussed with you this morning) in the PC Notice Board. I have asked Roger if the Village Hall

Committee will agree to Neighbourhood Watch posters on the outside and inside noticeboards.

An article is being written to be put into the Parish News. I will send that article to you, Kevin and Penny, prior to the Parish Council AGM, once Helen has read it through and suggested amendments and changes etc.

16. Public Forum No questions from the public

The Chairman then closed the meeting at 7.50pm and thanked everyone for attending

Signed

D. Smith

5th. September 2024

**Chairman
D. Smith**