



# GESTINGTHORPE PARISH COUNCIL

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

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup>. September 2020 at 7.30pm in the village hall.

Present: Cllrs J. Nott (Chairman), T. Flower, A. Cooper, D. Smith, C. Craig, S. Bolter and Kevin B. Money (Parish Clerk). Also present were 1 member of the public

**029/2020 Chairman Welcome.** The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting

**030/2020 Apologies for Absence** were received from ECC Cllr D. Finch

**031/2020 To receive the resignation letter as Chairman from Cllr James Nott**  
Councillors accepted, reluctantly, the resignation email from Cllr J. Nott as Chairman

**032/2020 To Elect a New Chairman for the remainder of the 2020/21 year**

The Chairman then asked for nominations for Chairman

Cllr J. Nott proposed Cllr D. Smith to act as Chairman for the remainder of the Council year

Cllr A. Cooper seconded this proposal. **All Agreed**

There were no other nominations so Cllr D. Smith was duly elected as Chairman of Gestingthorpe Parish Council.

**033/2020 The New Chairman to sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office**

Cllr D. Smith then signed the Declaration of Acceptance of office

Cllr J. Nott thanked Councillors for all the help they had given him throughout his tenure as Chairman.

Cllr A. Cooper, on behalf of the other Parish Councillors, thanked Cllr J. Nott for his service as

Chairman together with the well-running of the Council. Cllr D. Smith then took the position of Chairman and conducted the meeting.

**034/2020 To Elect a New Vice-Chairman (if required) for the remainder of the 2020/21 year**

Cllr T. Flower agreed to stay on as Vice-Chairman so there was no need for election of Vice-Chairman

**035/2020 The New Vice-Chairman (if required) to sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.** This was not required

**036/2020 Declaration of Interest**

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

Cllr A. Cooper declared a NPI in the Cricket Club

**037/2020 To approve the Minutes of the last meeting of Gestingthorpe Parish Council**

To receive and agree the minutes of the GPC meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup>. July 2020. **All Agreed**

**038/2020 Public Participation Session**

The Chairman will invite questions and observations from members of the public present.

There were no questions from the public but Cllr D. Smith asked for the email from Tim Lucas to be published. It read

## Background

Originally, 4 homes were intended for social rent and 2 for shared ownership. The shared ownership homes were intended to be offered so that people could purchase a share of the property (normally geared to the applicants earnings but likely to be between 30-50%) and pay rent for the equity they do not purchase. The maximum share that can be owned is 80% to preserve the benefit for local people in the future. The 4 social rented homes are not available for shared ownership and never have been. No 'right-to-buy' exists for these homes.

As the construction progressed, it became clear that the only households who were applying for the shared ownership homes had insufficient incomes to secure the necessary mortgage. This was compounded by the collapse in the housing market, as mortgages became harder to secure. The decision was therefore taken to rent the 2 properties using a relatively new tenure of 'Intermediate Rent'.



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The tenure was established for two main purposes:

1. As a tenure that would meet the needs of 'key workers' (quite a few units were built for NHS staff near to hospitals); or
2. As a stepping-stone to shared ownership, so that people in employment but unable to secure a mortgage, could rent until their circumstances allowed them to progress to take a stake in the property.

## Types of Rented Homes

All social housing let in the Braintree District is either:

- Social Rent: set using a national formula with adjustments to reflect local house prices and local earnings. The social rents in this area are well below market rents, although in some areas (where market rents are low) the two are much closer together.
- Intermediate Rents: rents are set at 80% of the assessed market value and are normally advertised to people able to pay the rent without needing to claim Benefits. Most intermediate rented homes can be converted to shared ownership. There are relatively few intermediate rented homes in the District.
- Affordable Rent: rents are set at 80% of market value but are normally limited by the maximum benefit rates (the Local Housing Allowance). Affordable rent was first introduced as a tenure by the Coalition Government in 2011. Because the rents are significantly higher than social rents, housing associations were able to continue to develop with lower rates of grant and in many cases, grant-free. Most newly built homes in the social sector are let at Affordable Rents.

The property currently being let (23 Oates Cottages) was therefore intended to be shared ownership, was first let at an Intermediate Rent. When it became vacant it was also offered for shared ownership sale and when no buyers were found was offered as social housing but at an Affordable Rent!

## Summary of current position

When it was agreed that the property was to be advertised in July, the Housing Team contacted both applicants with a connection to Gestingthorpe who had expressed an interest during the last year. The applicants chose not to 'bid' for the property while it was being advertised.

Normally, when an advertisement is placed on the Council's lettings system, only people who need the property size can place a 'bid'. Because we wanted to make sure that we enabled the widest possible group of applicants to be considered, the advertisement was set up so that people could apply and 'under-occupy' the property. The housing association would have the discretion to bypass an applicant if they could not afford the rent as a result of under-occupying.

The property was advertised so that connections to all of the neighbouring parishes included in the s106 agreement were taken into account. These are listed in the email below.

No-one applied with a connection to Gestingthorpe but a few people with connections to neighbouring villages applied. The Council sorted the order in which the shortlisted applicants should be contacted by the housing association. The top 2 applicants (who both live in or near Pebmarsh) decided against the property and the next applicant (a single person) is currently being considered for the house. He currently lives in one of the neighbouring villages listed in the s106. At the time of writing, this process is still not complete.

Please note that Colne Housing merged with Greenfields Community Housing in July, to form Eastlight Community Homes. Currently, the lettings teams for the 2 organisations remain separate. Braintree Council sorts through the shortlist and passes the names and details of potential tenants to the lettings team that were employed by Colne Housing. Over time, this process will change – Greenfields undertook all of their own shortlisting by logging into the Council's lettings system and we expect the merged organisation to function in that way.

We understand from one of the neighbours that the other 'Intermediate Rent' property is becoming vacant. My understanding is that it will first be offered with the same tenure. We wait to hear from the team at Eastlight how they would like to proceed. I was contacted by someone locally who is interested



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in exploring that with them whether they would consider offering the property on a shared ownership basis. I directed him to contact the relevant officer at Eastlight.

We have no objection to a change of tenure (either to affordable rent or to shared ownership) and I will keep you informed if there are discussions about a change; please feel free to contact me if you would like to discuss this further.

Cllr D. Smith asked Councillors if Lindsay Smith could speak to Tim Lucas direct. This was agreed.

## 039/2020 Essex County Councillors report – Cllr David Finch

In the absence of Cllr D. Finch the Clerk circulated his report

### Covid-19

- Coronavirus never went away but numbers are rising steadily across the country. While cases are increasing in Essex, it is not to the extent it is elsewhere. It is mainly prevalent among younger people and driven by relaxing lockdown in the hospitality industry with some contribution from returning holiday makers.
- The start of the school term increases the risk of transmission and makes social distancing in other situations more important than ever. It remains the case that if you keep 2m from anyone you are very unlikely to infect others or to pick up the infection from them – and will never be asked to self-isolate. Essex contact tracing service has so far been successful at tracking contacts of those who have contracted the virus, but the situation is very precarious. It is hugely important that anyone with symptoms to self-isolate straight away and then get a test.
- While Essex is seeing more cases and the situation changes quickly, there is nowhere in Essex currently that looks likely to need local lockdown.

### Local Government Reform

The PwC report on LGR for the CCN contains few surprises

The County Council Network's report on LGR was launched just before the August bank holiday weekend.

Commissioned from PwC, the report focussed on the financial impact of LGR within County areas in England and explored the financial impact of 1, 2, 3, and 4 Unitary configurations.

Unsurprisingly the report concludes that at an average level, a single Unitary model delivers the maximum financial benefits – particularly for statutory services.

However, because the report is based on the average size of county areas, it does not take into account the specific circumstances of counties the size and complexity of Essex.

In Essex, alongside other countries with populations large than 1 million, there are additional parameters that are being used by Government to guide their thinking, for example delivering better outcomes for the public and better connections with "place". The understanding is the Minister is not minded to consider a single Unitary proposition for Essex – we are seen as too big.

In Essex...

The Essex Finance Officers Association (EFOA) met again this week to progress the financial modelling and options appraisal work. All members are now engaged in providing the necessary data and reviewing the base model and underpinning assumptions, and this work will now continue over the coming weeks.

### Highways - cycle ways

we have invested to grow cycling schemes in Braintree at London Road and Notley Road and proposals have been submitted to DfT as part of the Emergency Active Travel Fund to improve Cycling in Braintree this includes :A proposed scheme based on two routes that head towards the town centre, one running from East to West and the other from South to North, and building upon the improvements established as part of the initial emergency measures:

- The East-West cycling and walking route starts at the double mini-roundabout junction of Courtauld Road with Coggeshall Road and ends at the roundabout junction of Panfield Lane with Porters Field.

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



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- The South-North route is approximately starting at the railway station and ends at the junction of Manor Street in the town centre. This route connects to both the existing provisions and proposed improvements to the South, providing improved wider connectivity with the centre of the town.

These routes involve both permanent and temporary segregated cycle routes, pavement widening, junction improvements to benefit walking and cycling, crossing improvements, lower traffic volumes through residential areas and 20 mph speed limits to make streets safer for walking and cycling. The scheme also proposes a ‘School Streets approach’ so that only those walking and cycling are able to access the streets outside of schools at the start and finishing times of the school day. The double mini-roundabout at the junction of Courtauld Road and Coggeshall Road will be converted to a ‘Dutch-style’ roundabout. The improvements in Station Approach are tied to other improvements the Council is making for bus operation in the area around the train station.

## Planning White paper

- The premise of the PWP is the need for fundamental reform of the planning system to address what the Government sees as its underlying weaknesses and to create a system fit for the 21st Century. The Government thinks the planning system is old, complex, has lost public trust and lacks clear rules on what can and cannot be done. Neighbourhood Plans would be retained, but their content would become more focused to reflect proposals for Local Plans, as well as the opportunities which digital tools and data offer to support their development and improve accessibility for users.
- While advocating and seeking to promote community engagement in the plan making stage, the Government is moving to a top down approach on matters such as removing consultation at the planning application stage, and assigning new nationally set housing numbers which will prove challenging to allocate in a condensed local plan preparation period.
- Local authorities will be given greater powers to determine how funds collected through the Infrastructure Levy are used, including covering affordable housing provision. Money collected will not be ‘ring fenced’ and could be used to lower council tax. Local authorities will also have the flexibility to use this funding to support both existing communities as well as new communities. The levy will also apply to changes of use through permitted development rights (e.g. converting an office to residential) that are currently exempt.

## Essex Climate Action Commission Update

The Essex Climate Action Commission has now met three times and has begun making transformative and pragmatic recommendations about how we can improve the environment and the green economy of Essex. It is working hard to:

- identify ways where we can mitigate the effects of climate change, improve air quality, reduce waste across Essex and increase the amount of green infrastructure and biodiversity in the county
- explore how we attract investment in natural capital and low carbon growth

They are doing this by drawing on in-house expertise, commissioning research and forming new external partnerships.

The [Cabinet](#) will consider all recommendations put forward by the Commission with both the cost and benefits of implementing recommendations in mind. The interim report is due to be published and made publicly available this Autumn.

The commission has over 30 members, which include the Chair Lord Randall, local councillors, scientists, academics, representatives from the business community and members of the [Young Essex Assembly](#). Find out more about the [commissioners from their biographies](#).

**Green Homes Grant – Spread the word** Homeowners and landlords in England can apply for a voucher towards the cost of installing energy efficient and low-carbon heating improvements to homes, which could help save up to £600 a year on energy bills. Please spread the word among your local communities.



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The government will provide a voucher that covers up to two thirds of the cost of qualifying improvements to your home. The maximum value of the voucher is £5,000. You may be able to receive a higher level of subsidy if you are a homeowner and either you or a member of your household receives one of the qualifying means-tested benefits, covering 100% of the cost of the improvements. The maximum value of these voucher is £10,000. Landlords cannot apply for the low-income part of the scheme.

Local Authorities will also be making support available for low income households in their local area through the Green Homes Grant: Local Authority Delivery. More information on participating Local Authorities will be made available on GOV.UK in due course.

<https://www.simpleenergyadvice.org.uk/pages/green-homes-grant>

## Essex Forest Initiative

You may already be aware of the Essex Forest Initiative – Essex County Council's commitment to planting 375,000 trees over the next five years – and we are really keen to discuss how your parish could get involved. The EFI is our commitment to tackling climate change and reducing our carbon footprint.

We welcome interest and involvement from Essex parishes who could plant more trees on parish-owned land, who have the volunteers to help plant the saplings and who are willing to look after the trees in the future. Essex County Council can supply the trees, offer any advice you may require and can even support you in applying for grants for bigger sites over several acres.

If you are able to help us create the Essex Forest, we would ask that you initially fill out the following survey to let us know about the size and location of your planting: <https://consultations.essex.gov.uk/waste-environment/essex-forest-initiative-parish-survey/>. We will then make contact over the future months, however, please be aware that depending on government guidelines our planting plans may vary.

**040/2020 District Councillors report – Cllr W. Scattergood.** No report was given

## 041/2020 Representative reports

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

Cllr D. Smith informed the meeting that works to Sudbury Road - Shaun Morgan, the lead Highway Engineer on the project has confirmed that they are still working to a start date of 18<sup>th</sup> January 2021. However, there is a risk that this date could be subject to slippage due to Corona Virus and/or bad weather. Cllr D. Smith is not aware of any other Highway issues within the Parish.

VDS – Cllr P. Collett advised that he is still no further forward and will keep chasing Highways.

- Playing Field/Recreation Ground – Cllr A. Cooper

Following the ROSPA report a site visit of the recreation ground and play equipment was carried out. Protective tape has been placed around some of the play equipment that has been highlighted in the ROSPA report as possibly dangerous. Subsequently Cllr J. Nott has contacted Playscape who will be supplying a quotation to repair the play equipment.

It was also agreed by Councillors to look into purchasing and collection costs of new dog bins to be erected around the recreation ground

- ROSPA report 2020 (previously circulated to Councillors)

Cllr A. Cooper requested that an Annual visit, just after the ROSPA report, be conducted by Councillors each year. **This was Agreed**

- Broadband update– Cllr S. Bolter & Cllr P. Collett

Cllr S. Bolter read out the Broadband report to Councillors

In March there was a fault that caused many local users to have to re-log-in several times. Unfortunately, only a couple of people reported the fault. It was thought to be specific to their connections. Once it was realised it was a general fault a temporary solution was found and there was extra monitoring until the faulty part was replaced.

The system has performed well with speeds keeping up despite the increased usage since lockdown.

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The biggest failure was in a server centre in London used by County Broadband and other services. CBB had to have an agency to take enquiries as it took down CBB's own e-mail and telephone system. County Broadband offered free extra data to those who were using more than normal because of shielding.

## **“Underground Fibre to the Premises**

The campaign to get underground fibre to all premises in the main populated parts of the village, as promised at meetings and in the leaflet enclosed with the sign up forms. County Broadband refused to honour their promise or to agree compromise. The most they would do was to offer to install underground at full cost payable by those who wanted the undergrounding. No allowance was made for the lower maintenance cost of undergrounding. This was investigated for New Cottages, the Crescent, Pot Kiln Chase area.

Many of those who want the fibre were either unwilling or unable to pay extra for undergrounding, and the cost to those left would have been in excess of £8000 each.

The costs of various part-underground options were investigated. The cheapest one explored was using overheat single fibres to individual houses, but having the thick multifibre cable across the front of the first three listed buildings in Pot Kiln Chase (but not the one across Sudbury Road to the pole opposite Byroad Cottage) underground. Just to do this they quoted an extra £7000. We were not interested at that price.

## **Fibre to the Premises.**

The proposed timetable for installation was rejected by Essex CC to enable syncing with roadworks. The roadworks have now been put back to January, so the delay was for nothing. The programme of a series of closures for fibre installation, from 1 June to 2 October 2020, has been published. There will be another 2 days to fit in on Little Maplestead Road.

The work on Sudbury Road outlined for between 13<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> July. Despite a delay when a water pipe was fractured, the team expect to be finished by the end of Monday 27<sup>th</sup>.

As some of the overhead customer connections will be crossing highways, it was feared more road closures may be necessary, but CBB say they will not be necessary.

Gestingthorpe was one of the first villages to sign up for CBB Hyperfast Broadband, but progress on insulation seems to be lagging behind other villages.

A letter from CBB dated 17<sup>th</sup> of July suggests that the connection team will not start work until November, when the network installation has been tested and handed over. It suggests connection could take 12 weeks, taking us to February 2021. When residents signed up in March 2018, they were expecting the work to be completed by March 2019. Then they were told work would not Start until spring 2019. It started in Summer 2020.

There is no technical reason why some customer installation work could not be done before the network is live. As they are so far behind with installation, I consider it would not be unreasonable to suggest that they catch up a bit by starting the customer design interviews, if not installing the ducting, before the final completion of the network installation.

I think that the Parish Council should ask County Broadband to give a schedule for the customer connection process and more details of the connection process and how appointments will be made.

- Footpath – Leslie Crumpton-Taylor. Issues previously circulated to Councillors

Leslie Crumpton-Taylor informed the meeting of issues on Footpaths 20 and 8. Also a fingerpost has been damaged and broken. All these issues have been reported to ECC

- Tree Warden – Cllr T. Flower

There is Fungus growing at the bottom of a Horse Chestnut tree on the recreation ground. Cllr T. Flower has been in contact with BDC and was told to keep an eye on any developments but BDC thinks it is still a sound tree.

The RFO asked Councillor if they would consider placing about £1500 in the Budget for 2021/22 for any tree works that need urgent attention. This was agreed to be looked again at the Budget/Precept meeting in November 2020.



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- Village Hall – Cllr T. Flower

Report from the Village Hall Committee

The Village Hall Committee has continued to work for our village hall and I am pleased to report that since the Parish Council meeting in July the painting of the inside of the two halls has been completed as has the painting of the outside of the windows. Some work by a carpenter is due to take place on the window above the flat roof. Carpentry work had taken place on the windows in the two main halls but funds at the time didn't allow for work on the other windows.

Some guttering is to be replaced above the flat roof, materials have been bought and the fitting will be done soon.

I know you will have noticed, during your meeting tonight, the considerable improvement in the acoustics of the hall. This is down to the sound reduction panels that have recently been installed onto the ceilings of the two halls. You are the first group of people in the hall to have benefitted from this improvement that had been planned since about four years ago.

We want to open the village hall for groups, meeting and functions as soon as we can but before then we need to draw up and for the committee to approve a COVID-19 Risk Assessment plus some COVID-19 rules for the conduct of people in the village hall and in the grounds, additional rules for hirers and users etc. etc. in order to ensure the village hall is as COVID-19 secure as possible. We have to be reliant on the compliance of all users of the village hall to help us with this.

A Village Hall Committee meeting is to be held on 17<sup>th</sup> September to discuss and progress the important and necessary steps we have to take because of COVID-19 and also to ensure the security of our lovely village hall for current and future generations.

At this point the Clerk asked Councillors to agree to hold all future meetings, in the light of Government new COVID-19 guidelines, remotely via Zoom. **This was agreed by all Councillors**

The Clerk was then asked to purchase a Zoom PRO licence which enables the meeting to be held in an unlimited time frame and up to 100 participants. **This was also Agreed by Councillors.**

**042/2020 Planning Applications.** All planning applications responses have been submitted to BDC. Cllr D. Smith informed the meeting of all the planning applications that had come in from BDC affecting Gestingthorpe and have been responded to BDC. He gave a comprehensive account of all reasons behind the applications

**20/00864/FUL** – Extension to Joinery Workshop at Nether Hall Farm

Parish Council comment "no objection in principle, although the Application was lacking detail". Subsequently Refused.

**20/10254/AGR** - Prior Notification Application for Grain Store at Delvyns Farm

Allowed before expiry date and before Parish Council could submit comments. Have asked Chief Planning Officer for an explanation.

**20/01102/FUL** - Grain Store at Tudor Lodge

Proposal already has prior notification approval, Parish Council requested that any approval should be subject to a tree planting/landscaping scheme, permitted development rights regarding grain drying/handling equipment and external lighting should be withdrawn. As yet to be determined.

**043/2020 Decision/s made by BDC on planning applications**

**20/01254/AGR** - Delvyns Farm Church Street Gestingthorpe Essex CO9 3AX

Application for prior notification of agricultural or forestry development - Erection of agricultural portal framed building for the storage of grain. **Prior approval Required and Given (19.08.20)**

**044/2020 Finance**

- 1) Bank balances as at 31<sup>st</sup>. August 2020 and 2020/21 budget account (previously circulated to Councillors). Councillors noted the Bank Balances and Budget account for 2020/21
- 2) Councillors to agree payment of August & September 2020 finances (previously circulated to Councillors). **All Agreed**



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- 3) To receive an update on Internet Banking application

The RFO informed the meeting that he had submitted the Internet Banking application form to Unity Trust Bank which has been accepted. After the meeting he asked the appropriate forms to be signed by signatory Councillors. **All Agreed**

## Items for Next Agenda

**Date of next meetings:** 12.11.20 Budget / Precept meeting

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 9.30pm and thanked everyone for attending

Signed

David Smith

12<sup>th</sup>. November 2020

DRAFT