

# GESTINGTHORPE PARISH COUNCIL

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## Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup>. May 2025 at 6.30pm in the Village Hall

Present: Cllrs D. Smith (Chair), P. Collett (Vice-Chair), P. Bagby, A. Cooper, D. Green, K. Brazier, G. Carey, BDC Cllr D. Holland and Kevin B. Money (Parish Clerk). There were also 6 members of the public present.

1. **Apologies for absence** were received from ECC Cllr P. Schwier
2. **Minutes of last Annual Village Meeting** held on 9<sup>th</sup>. May 2024 **All Agreed**
3. **Report from ECC Councillor Peter Schwier**

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

Cllr D. Holland informed the meeting about

- Waste Strategy where a consultation has taken place. Summer 2026 will change to 2 new bins, 1 for paper and card waste and the other for plastic waste. The total volume of waste in the bins will not increase. Over £1m has been wasted on food waste. Glass waste into a separate bin. Absorbent disposable waste requires more frequent collection – an on-demand service for the user. Black bin should therefore have less waste material in it. Another 140,000 more bins will be required to set this scheme up. With the new unitary authorities coming about do the joining authorities have this same system?
- Local Government Reform – See devolution by 2028. Election of a mayor for Greater Essex in May 2026. District, Borough and County Council will cease. Planning will be merged into the new authority. Social care will be kept separate. Braintree will merge with Thurrock, Colchester City Council, Uttlesford District Council and Tendring District Council. Council debt will be shared among all other Councils. The leaders are looking at 5 unitary authorities.
- Enforcement case was raised over 5 years ago. The Enforcement officers inform Cllr D. Holland that all actions have been put into place and no further action will be undertaken. In the past years there was only 1 enforcement officer covering the whole of BDC area. BDC enforcement officers have not engaged with Parish Council over this matter.

Cllr D. Holland then took questions from residents and Councillors

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

As part of the Planning process, we are notified 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 Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> June last, to celebrate the Summer Solstice, followed by a picnic on the Playing Field on Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup>.

The lighting in the Pavilion has been upgraded and further improvements will be carried out as funds allow. During the summer months cricket continued on the Playing Field with Sunday football during the winter months. I understand that the Cricket Club would welcome new players. Thanks to Peter Nice for marking out the football pitch.

The Cricket Club (Chris Moulton) has continued to mow the Playing Field and Micheal Green has cut around the edges. I do hope that everyone will agree that the field continues to look splendid and our thanks to Chris and Micheal.

Sadly, Leslie Crumpton Taylor, who was a Parish Councillor for many years and more recently our Auditor, passed away last November.

The Parish Council has welcomed Karen Brazier to the Council. Karen is a manager in the NHS and will bring her management skills to the Council.

Faced with rising costs, we had to increase the Village Precept for 2025/26 by 2.9%. Our main expenditure is on the Playing Field – i.e. grass cutting, maintenance of the children's play equipment, the Pavillion and insurance.

We celebrated the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of VE Day on 8<sup>th</sup> May last, in 1940's style. A fish and chip supper in the Village Hall to the accompaniment of war time songs, the VE Day Proclamation and Address, followed by lighting the Beacon. Sadly, I was unable to attend due to an existing commitment, although from the comments I have received it clearly was an enjoyable and memorable evening. A lot of hard work in organising and well done to all involved.

Sadly, Peter Collett is stepping down as a Parish Councillor. Peter has been an active Councillor for some 6

years. In particular he has dealt with Highway matters and it is thanks to his hard work that we have a speed indicator sign at Audley End. For the past two years, Peter has been a supportive Vice Chairman, for which I am very grateful.

I joined the Parish Council in 2018 with the intention of serving for 5 years. Some 7 years later the time has now come for me to follow Peter's lead and I am also stepping down as a Parish Councillor after our Annual Village Meeting this evening. This has been prompted by my impending retirement and a wish to now have more time to enjoy my hobbies and travel.

I have enjoyed my time as a Parish Councillor and have always tried my utmost to serve and represent the needs of the Parish and all our Parishioners. However, with the impending move to Unitary Authorities and the inevitable uncertainty and change this will cause for smaller Parish Councils such as ours, I feel the Parish needs a Chair with fresh ideas and the time and energy to tackle the challenges ahead. I look forward to seeing the Parish Council flourish.

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

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

#### 6. **Playing Field** - Cllr Ashley Cooper

I visited the playing field on 20<sup>th</sup>. May and as previously mentioned it looked spectacularly beautiful. Overhanging branches make it difficult to mow the grass under the trees along the eastern boundary, so Michael Green is now only cutting what he can safely do.

#### 7. **Highways** - Cllr Peter Collett

**Highways SID Sudbury Road** - To date the Parish Council have been unsuccessful in obtaining funding for a replacement SID. Despite some research the PC have been unable to locate a more reasonably priced device. The quotes received so far range from £3100 to £3600 +VAT. **Potholes etc.** - The Parish Council continue to report potholes, damaged road signs and missing finger signs on the ECC Highways website. Unfortunately, the majority of potholes and other issues have yet to be addressed by ECC. **Drainage Works** - The drain adjacent to the Hall pond in Church Street remains blocked, leaving the road liable to flood. **Speeding** - Speeding persists within the village at dangerous levels. PC Thorne has indicated that he could help with some speed checks and has visited the village. The Parish Council have also emailed PC James Draper to ask if he can assist by providing some speed checks. In addition, the Parish Council have suggested that PCSO's could visit regularly during coffee mornings or at the time of the "breakfast grills" to discuss speeding and other matters of concern. **Play Equipment** The annual ROSPA inspection is due shortly. The main issues highlighted in last year's report have been addressed.

#### 8. **Footpaths** - Cllr Penny Bagby

Generally, footpaths in the parish have been well maintained over the year and are currently clear of vegetation and passable. New issue raised 15<sup>th</sup>. May 2025 - Reference Number 2975696 - Issue: defective bridge on prow. Location: footpath 23 Gestingthorpe - Footbridge collapsed on one side

#### 9. **Village Hall** - Cllr Penny Bagby

2024/25 has been another successful year for the Village Hall. Whilst running costs increased 42% on the previous year, it was covered by the income from hall hire and the fortnightly coffee mornings. Including fundraising monies, income over expenses in the year exceeded £3000.

Fundraising events included the monthly Gestingthorpe Grills, Late Summer BBQ, the annual quiz and history group talk and the summer solstice weekend. In addition, Christmas parties were held for both village children and adults and were very well attended.

The recent VE80 celebrations organised in conjunction with the Parish Council was a huge success with more than 70 people packed into the village hall enjoying drinks, fish & chips and a rousing singalong led by local resident, Suzanne David. The History Group also put up an interesting display on Gestingthorpe at war. Hall hire rates were reviewed and increased effective 1<sup>st</sup>. April 2025. The rates are inclusive of electricity & heating.

Improvements agreed so far include the redecoration of the small hall and a new shed. We are also accumulating funds to go towards repair, decoration and installation of a new kitchen which will also include much needed additional and secure storage.

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, thank you 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.

The Village Hall AGM is on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup>. June.

#### **Defibrillator** - Steve Bagby

The current service agreement in place with Community Heartbeat runs to 1<sup>st</sup> May 2026. The Service agreement covers all costs except the annual cost of the VETS scheme & 999 service which totals £160 pa.

CH hold £516 on account for the Gestingthorpe defibrillator and there is a further £275.22 in the bank account held at NatWest. 7 people currently on the Volunteer telephone system & defib checking rota. We are currently arranging an awareness training session in the village hall in September. The funding of a 2<sup>nd</sup> defibrillator at Audley End is still to be decided.

#### **10. Education Charity – Cllr Ashley Cooper**

Existing Trustees have continued to administer the Trust. A good deal of work has gone into establishing the boundary through the Land Registry and also continuing to resolve the ditch and drainage issues near Kirstun Cottage and its new adjoining house. The ditch alongside Cock road was dug out in July 2024. During the year the Trust had a income of £1839.19p. During the same period the Trust made grants of £1500.00p in response to 16 applications. The Trustees has a further meeting to make further grants in late March 2025. We have also initiated a book voucher scheme to commemorate the 80<sup>th</sup>. Anniversary of VE Day by offering a £20 voucher to the first 20 families with children who apply.

The Trustees visited the field on 27<sup>th</sup>. April 2024 and are going to do so again in June '25 for their annual pre-ambulation. We are immensely grateful to our secretary, Jane Crumpton-Taylor, without whose guidance and willing hard work we could not function so smoothly

#### **11. The Federation of St Giles' and St Andrew's Primary Schools - Helen Padgett School Governor**

St Andrew's received a two-day visit by OFSTED in October 2024 which resulted in 'Good' gradings in all areas. 'St Andrew's is a 'happy place to be' and children 'relish coming to school here'.' Please see the school's website for the full report.

While budgets are extremely tight and costs increasing, the federation has helped considerably with savings. The school continues to have four classes and has 61 children on roll with 12 starting in Reception in September 2025. The school has 2 children attending from Gestingthorpe.

The federation continues to provide opportunities for the children from the three schools to work together on shared experiences. This has included learning, sport and trips out for all three schools. The three schools had a panto visit to the Theatre Royal, Bury St Edmunds at Christmas. Other visits have included Boydells Farm, Cambridge Mosque and Botanical Gardens, Firstsite, Colchester, Colchester Castle, and Colchester Zoo. St Andrew's has hosted a visit from the Exotic Animal Workshop, Young Shakespeare, A Midsummer Night's Dream and The Planetarium. The school continues to provide sports coaches and St Andrew's was host to a Football Festival as well as attending the Cross Country at Hedingham School. There is a dedicated music specialist working across the three schools. The emphasis, as always, is on delivering a broad and balanced curriculum experience.

The school has now leased a minibus which has meant that there can be more visits between schools and has reduced the costs considerably for local visits.

Pebbles pre-school continues to work well with the school and has school lunches provided by St Andrew's. Forest School continues with all classes going over to Baker's Wood during the school year.

Please see the school's website for more information and regular news. [sab.sgasa.uk](http://sab.sgasa.uk)

#### **12. Neighbourhood Watch - Helen Skerratt**

A 6 monthly newsletter was circulated to all residents in Gestingthorpe. A police officer is required to inform Gestingthorpe village about crimes in the area.

#### **13. Cricket Club**

The cricket club season has begun, and the players are making use of the pavilion for home matches, T20 games and Sudbury matches on a Saturday. Sudbury have played 3 matches so far and have another 2 games to play.

Gestingthorpe have a total of 12 home games, these include 5 T20 evening games and a charity match for Ponty in July.

I have recently spoken to Charles cricket club treasurer about the changeover of the electricity. He has assured me that he will speak to EDF energy to discuss changing over the account from the cricket club to the Parish Council. I should hope to get this resolved in the next few weeks. Charles stated that EDF energy are not the easiest company to deal with, and he told me that he had the same issues when they took over the account from the Priors.

#### **14. Public Forum**

A resident who has taken over The Pheasant Public House informed the meeting how the public house is now being run and is looking for views from residents on what they require a public house to be in the village. The community in the past have not supported the public house. A loyalty card is being introduced. The menu has been changed with a new chef. There is no proposal to extend the public house. The opening hours are from 12noon to 11pm.

The Chair then closed the meeting at 7.45pm and thanked everyone for attending

Signed