



GESTINGTHORPE PARISH COUNCIL

Parish Clerk / RFO: Kevin B. Money
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GESTINGTHORPE ANNUAL VILLAGE MEETING 2021

Minutes of the Annual Village Meeting held on Thursday 22nd. April 2021 at 7.30pm via Zoom
This meeting was held ‘remotely’ in accordance with the local authorities and police and crime panels (coronavirus) (flexibility of local authority and police and crime panel meetings) (England and Wales) regulations 2020.

Present: Cllrs D. Smith (Chairman), T. Flower (Vice-Chairman), A. Cooper, C. Craig, P. Collett, S. Bolter, Leslie Crumpton-Taylor (Internal Auditor) and Kevin B. Money (Parish Clerk).

Also present was ECC Cllr. D. Finch, Helen Padgett – School Governor and 0 members of the public

- 1. Apologies for absence** were received from BDC Cllr W. Scattergood, Cllr. J. Nott, John Butcher – Cricket Club and Helen Skerratt – Neighbourhood Watch
- 2. Presentation of un-audited accounts for 2020/21.** The RFO had previously circulated the full set of 2019/20 accounts and the completed but un-signed AGAR return forms. No questions were raised
- 3. Minutes of last Annual Village Meeting** – 11th. April 2019. Cllr T. Flower proposed and Cllr A. Cooper seconded. **All Agreed**

4. Report from ECC Councillor D. Finch

Formal report will be circulated

- ECC Finances and standing. Annual reported by IPower. To be published shortly
ECC in top 10 of Councils
Schools are mostly above average
- Council tax increased only 4 times in last 10 years
- Social Care precept was increased by 1.5%
- Children’s Service is still outstanding. An additional £1m placed into the Recovery Fund
- Over 5,000 laptops have been distributed to School children
- LHP funding increased by £200,000 for this current and next financial year
- COVID-19. ECC has seen a steady decline in case numbers. A spike in September is expected.
- Government funding of £360m has been approved for further infrastructure. A further £100m road link from Wivenhoe to train station and A12 by-passes. £42m project is going on in Harlow
- 2 Freeports have been set up
Cllr D. Finch then took questions from the residents.

Cllr D. Finch was congratulated on the way ECC moved at the outset regarding COVID restrictions.

Cllr D. Finch left the meeting

5. Report from BDC Councillor W. Scattergood

No report was given

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

2020/21 has been an unprecedented year for all of us.

When we went into the first lockdown Parish Council meetings were suspended. Whilst the work of the Parish Council continued, we were not able to hold a meeting until September and our meetings since have been by Zoom- a new experience for most of us!

James Nott stood down as our Chair at our September meeting and I was elected Chair. I don't know what misguided faith my fellow Councillors had in me!

James has been a Parish Councillor for a number of years, probably more that he cares to remember, and following his move to Ovington he decided to stand down as Chair. On behalf of the Parish, I would like to thank James for all his hard work and contribution to the Parish over the years.

Whilst it has been an unusual year, the work of the Parish Council has continued.

1. We have 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.

2. We have pursued what appears to be unauthorised development and residential occupation of part of the wood at Pot Kiln Chase with Braintree District Council. This matter is ongoing and the continuing delays in getting BDC to pursue Enforcement action is extremely frustrating.

3. Fibre Broadband has arrived. Installation works last summer caused some disruption. Hopefully, it's now fully functional.

4. Long awaited road improvement works to Sudbury Road are underway which should prevent flooding issues. Works started last January and have been subject to weather related delays, I understand that the road should reopen on 1st May, with all works being completed by mid May. As part of the works, the carriageway is being widened and the bend eased. Could I thank our County Councillor, David Finch for his help and support in getting this scheme underway.

5. We have continued to report "Pot Holes" to Highways. Some have been repaired and others are still to be completed.

6. Discussions with Highways in connection with a speed indicator sign at Audley End have continued and we are hoping that a sign will be installed later this year.

7. Last December there were two flooding incidents at Audley End. We have supported the affected residents and together with the Flood Prevention Team at Essex County Council we are working to remedy the problem.

8. The children's play equipment on the Playing field has been overhauled. We are looking at further general improvements to the Field and making it secure. Thanks to the Cricket Club for cleaning down the wooden seats, carrying out repairs to the Pavilion and clearing the area to the rear of the Pavilion.

As many will be aware, our County Councillor, David Finch, is not standing for re-election this year. I would like to thank David for his help and support he has given to our Parish over the years - Thank you David and may I wish you a long, happy and well-earned retirement.

Finally, 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 C. Craig

I would like to offer the Parish Council's thanks to Chris Harman and the committee for the work to keep the village hall open where possible in the last year, and for continuing the maintenance and upgrades of the facilities.

The committee engaged a professional to establish what type and where sound reduction panels should be installed, and they were then engaged to install them. Two donations were received from villagers that were specifically allocated to the sound reduction panels. Although we have been unable to test the new acoustics fully, we hope the acoustics within the hall will have improved greatly.

The committee also engaged a professional painter to paint the inside of the large and small halls, and members of the committee undertook some repairs and repainting in the kitchen. More recently, some members have stripped, sanded, stained and varnished the wooden floors in the large and small halls.

The Village Hall Committee hope to be able to reopen the village hall later this spring for social gatherings. Opening will be inline with national Government guidance at the time. Coffee mornings are pencilled in to restart on 25th June.

The Parish Council will be working with the Village Hall Committee to organise a post-lockdown village event (covid-secure of course!). It is likely to be along the lines of a village family picnic on the playing field. This is likely to be after lockdown is currently due to end on 21st June. More details to be announced at a later date.

The committee is looking to send a short survey out to residents to gather thoughts on events at the village hall, and the facilities. We are looking to send this out in online and paper form.

The next Village Hall AGM (followed by a committee meeting) is scheduled for 1st July at 7:30pm and will be held in line with Covid restrictions in place at the time.

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

St Andrew's C of E Primary School, Bulmer

The Federation of St Giles' and St Andrew's C of E Primary Schools

The Federation between St Giles', Great Maplestead and St Andrew's, Bulmer continues to thrive. It provides opportunities for the children to work together on shared experiences. There are also considerable opportunities to save money through joint purchasing schemes. While budgets are tight and costs increasing, the federation with St Giles' has helped considerably with savings in costs 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. We welcomed Pebbles pre-school onto the school site, using a redundant demountable classroom. Strong links have already been established with the school.

Covid safety measures were put in place with classes forming 'bubbles' during the autumn term. This worked so well that the school did not need to close. There was an emphasis on the children's wellbeing and outdoor learning.

During the recent lockdown teaching has taken place on google classroom. This included a mixture of direct teaching and set activities. All aspects of the curriculum were covered including music, PE and assemblies. The school was open for children of critical workers from both St Andrew's and St Giles'. The spacious accommodation and excellent outdoor facilities, including Baker's Field, made the school an ideal learning environment.

All children returned to school before the Easter holiday with Covid safety measures once again in place. The emphasis, as always, is on delivering a broad and balanced curriculum experience.

The number on roll has gradually increased over the school year. We anticipate that the roll will exceed 70 in September 2021.

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

9. Education Charity – Cllr A. Cooper

The work of the Trust has continued satisfactorily despite the problems caused by the pandemic.

In late March 2020 we held our six-monthly meeting by email; by October 2020 and March 2021 we were able to use zoom.

During the year from January 1st- December 31st, grants totalling £1306 were made.

Because of Covid 19, schools closed. The trustees took this into account in welcoming grants which supported the cost of education at home, in their meetings of October 2020 and March 2021. At the latter, grants of £715.00 were made to five applicants.

As part of their response to the Lockdown, the Trustees launched a Book Voucher Scheme last autumn. Families with children were able to apply for a £30.00 voucher to be redeemed at a

local bookshop. At the time of writing eight vouchers have been redeemed, with four more anticipated.

The Trust's investments are reviewed at each meeting. In March 2021, the Trustees decided to move all our remaining equity investments with Blackrock, which were not already in their ESG (or more ethical fund), into their ESG fund. It was noted that performance of the latter was similar to their more general fund. As a Charity it was felt that this was the correct thing for us to do.

During the year Revd Gay Ellis stood down as a Trustee. She was replaced by Revd Beverley Vincent.

The Trustees had inspected the Rents field, together with the tenant in September 2020. The tenant proposed digging / reinstating a wildlife pond in a corner that is too wet to be farmed. The Trustees have given consent to this work.

In March 2021, an enquiry was made to the Trustees by a developer regarding drainage from a proposed new dwelling, adjoining the Trusts land, in the South eastern corner.

This was dealt with by our land agents SB Surveyors to ensure that everything was done in the most transparent and professional way.

10. Neighbourhood Watch - Helen Skerratt

I have been the NHW co-ordinator for Gestingthorpe since 2015.

I receive information via emails from Clive Stewart who is the Chairman & Secretary for Essex. I created a dedicated email account for NHW issues- gestingthorpe194@gmail.com.

All emails sent by me are BCC, (blind copy) so that no-one else can see each other's email addresses. I also post information on the Gestingthorpe Facebook page. This seems to be the most preferred method as it's an instant Communication tool.

As well as circulating information from Clive, I receive concerns/issues/warnings from residents and from NHW other coordinators from surrounding villages. Again, any information/concerns/crime received is shared as above.

When I first took over the role from Chris Harman. We did a door to door call around village handing out an information sheet, NHW stickers for windows and larger ones for bins and out buildings and shed etc. And contact details for me should they need to report anything.

Just recently, there have been many concerning scams around They range from phone calls from someone claiming to be from Amazon and saying that your account has been hacked, and they are requesting your bank details. to set up a new account.

Another popular scam is they claim to be from HMRC and you are owed a rebate, ALL they need is your bank details and NI number. There are several other scams as well.

As well as caller claiming to be your bank and money has been taken out, they only need you to confirm your details and they will sort it out! Another scam.

I have advised people never to give out any details at all and just to put the phone down and they can block that number by dialling 1572 from a BT phone, other providers' have their own numbers. These calls are not showing on your phone as an unknown number and can look genuine. Unfortunately, they change their numbers frequently, so we all need to be alert. If in doubt, just put the phone down.

11. Cricket Club - John Butcher

David Smith and Ashley Cooper met me at the ground last week and to discuss the pavilion and the area surrounding it and Gestingthorpe cricket in general.

With the aid of Ashley the fence at the back of the pavilion has been cleared of brambles and old goal posts and if the grass ever grows there it will be gang mower accessible.

It has been pointed out to me that clearing hedges is illegal in the spring or summer so if any more work like this goes on it may be better if it's carried out in the autumn.

There are still some bits of concrete and steel sheeting which the council might consider removing to finish it off.

The Cricket Club agreed to keep the whole area tidy.

We have machine sanded and teak oiled the five benches near the pavilion and they have come up surprisingly well. It was quite a job and I would be grateful if the council don't ask me to do anymore!

The pavilion guttering has been repaired and the woodwork will be painted this week as required.

I am ordering a repair patch for the net run up and will mend it as soon as possible.

I am pleased to see the faulty practice football goal has been removed. I'll monitor the safety of the remaining one. When I was working on the benches, I saw two groups of lads using it which is good to see. During the cricket season we would like the goal to be moved well away from the cricket playing area maybe down towards the corner of the field.

The council may also like to hear that we are maintaining the inside of the pavilion, including essential plumbing and electrical work, repairing door locks, decorating etc.

In return the cricket club are happy(!) to continue paying rent of £200 a year. We can just about afford it.

I am not sure how the season will pan out but I think we have enough players, young and old, to keep things going.

Although the village green is open to the public, we can only play cricket if we stick to the rules and regulation hand down to us by the England Cricket Board.

The covid restrictions are very strict especially near the pavilion. Two metre distancing and hygiene measures will be in force.

The Cricket Club would like to thank the PC for its help and encouragement especially in these difficult times.

12. Residents / Councillors to agree the next Annual Village meeting date on 21st. April 2022

13. Public Forum

No questions from the public

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending. The meeting closed at 8:15pm

Signed

28th. April 2022

David Smith - Chairman