

# Asheldham & Dengie Parish Council

Parish Clerk / RFO: Kelly Andrews

Westwood, Grange Road, Tillingham, Essex CM0 7UR

Tel: 07903 312394 email: [theclerk.asheldhamanddengiepc@gmail.com](mailto:theclerk.asheldhamanddengiepc@gmail.com)

www. <https://e-voice.org.uk/asheldham-dengiepc/>

## **Minutes of the Asheldham & Dengie Annual Parish Assembly Meeting held on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup>. May 2025 at 6.30pm in Dengie village hall**

Present: Cllrs D. Henson (Chair), L. Brown, R. Griffiths, A. Snowdon and Kelly Andrews (Parish Clerk). There were also 5 members of the public present

**1. Apologies for Absence** were received from Maldon District Councillor M. Neall and Cllr S. Russell

**2. Minutes of the last APM meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup>. May 2024. All Agreed**

**3. Chairmans report for 2024/2025**

Chairperson, Cllr Dave Henson, reported that this last year has had its frustrations just like previous years. Unfortunately, trying to communicate with Maldon District Council and Essex Highways is still challenging and we have no idea what is going on with Asheldham Brook Bridge and the gullies are still blocked.

More positively, funding was secured to purchase fencing for the Village Hall which looks great, and we managed to reduce the precept paid to the Parish Council whilst the local authorities raised theirs considerably. The Parish Council also funded the reduction of the bushes opposite Sandlings and with the kind work from local residents and Asheldham Residents Group, the area has been tidied, trimmed and looks amazing.

On behalf of the Parish Council, I'd like to thank Asheldham Residents Group and its committee members for all their hard work and Colin in particular, who works tirelessly to bring improvements to the village.

Thanks to Adrian and Megan Fluker who alongside ARG hosted more successful litter picks and thanks to those that attended and helped.

Jo Griffiths, our tree warden has given her time and expertise freely and we are thankful to her.

Many residents have also helped, watering plants, planting saplings, providing labour and tools and although there are too many to name individually the Parish Council appreciate everything that you do.

Kevin, although he has now left his role as Clerk had a brilliant year, keeping everything running smoothly behind the scenes and we thank him and wish him well for the future.

We are delighted to welcome Kelly Andrews as our new Clerk / RFO and look forward to working with her.

Finally, I'd like to thank Rebecca, Lisa, Sally and Andrew for their time, effort and support throughout the year.

Thank you

**4. Village Hall Committee Report**

Lyn Moull reported that, the new fencing and gates were installed by Andy Sadler and the money for this project was kindly received from Essex County Council locality funding, who also provided funding for a new bench.

Private bookings for the hall included a funeral tea held for Donald Barnard, who was a previous parish councillor.

The Harmony Club singing group held a cream tea at the hall and were extremely impressed with the facilities at the village hall. Deansbrook Farm Care Services also regularly book the hall for group sessions, as do two Caravan Clubs.

The village hall had a successful week with Hopes and Dreams, which the children enjoy attending during the school holidays. The largest booking is the Dengie Pantomime, which holds rehearsals over 12 or more weeks and is very profitable for the village hall, having also made a very generous donation towards the hall.

A joint church benefice also held a cream tea at the hall after a church service at St. James'. A number of celebrations have been held at the hall, including birthday parties.

The hall is also booked for monthly Parish Council meetings and is also used as a base after the litter picks.

Kevin Bruce also held a history talk about the area in the village hall.

## 5. Election of distribution panel for Williams & Aylett's Charity

The entire Parish Council was elected to serve on the Williams & Aylett's charity as a collective.

## 6. Tree Wardens Report

Councillor Griffiths provided a tree report on behalf of the Tree Warden, Jo Griffiths.

The only planting that has taken place this year is the planting of the Liquid Amber, which was planted to replace the tree that was planted as part of the Queen's Green Canopy, on the dip next to the bridleway in Asheldham. Saplings were planted a few weeks ago at Silverlakes.

There has been no additional reports regarding the Ash dieback and there is now an opportunity for more saplings to be ordered, up to 400 for the new planting season. Ideas are welcome from the Parish Council as to where additional planting can take place in October or November time the saplings can be ordered.

## 7. Essex County Councillors Report

Cllr W. Stamp advised that an ECC Annual report for 2024-2025 had been circulated prior to this meeting. The report can be found by visiting:

<https://e-voice.org.uk/asheldham-dengiepc/minutes-of-parish-council-meet/2025/>

Cllr W. Stamp was extremely apologetic for her late arrival to the meeting and continued by welcoming those present to ask her any questions.

Cllr D. Henson asked for an update regarding devolution and Cllr W. Stamp reported that there will be a mayor election in May 2026. Candidates for Mayor will be put forward and residents will be given an opportunity to vote.

Cllr W. Stamp stated that at present, the government has asked for submissions. Essex County Council has approximately 1.9 million residents which will be split into two unitary councils and ten district councils have been invited to make a submission for their preference.

Maldon District Council has expressed an interest to go to five unitary authorities.

By making this change of cutting out tiers of government, the government wish to reduce costs, and each unitary will have to deliver adult social care, children's social care, SEN provisions, education, highways for their own area. Maldon District Council will join Chelmsford and Brentwood.

Thurrock is unitary with Southend. Thurrock has a large debt, and the government have stated that they will not be taking on this debt. Decisions are still being made as to how the debt will be spread.

One of the benefits that the Dengie area could see by this move of unitary is an improvement in transport.

The downsides from unitary could be the lack of local representation for the area. However, you will have a representative who is voted in, and it is down to residents to raise awareness of any problems with them. The upside will be that you will have just one council to communicate with.

The local government reorganisation is going to affect everyone, but eventually, if the council delivers the services, residents should see improvements.

Cllr W. Stamp also reported that St. Peter's Hospital is set to stay and has a reprieve for 5 years and after the 5 years will be funded by section 106 money. The maternity ward will disappear as more home births are encouraged.

Cllr R. Griffiths asked Cllr W. Stamp that in terms of additional devolved powers and responsibilities for Asheldham and Dengie Parish Council, what are you anticipating with the outcome in 2028?

Cllr W. Stamp answered that there will not be too much change all at once but in the future the parish council may be approached to take on some of the services, such as grass cutting and environment services locally. However, some councils who have already devolved, have given some of their assets to parish and town councils to take on the responsibility of maintenance. Therefore, local parish councils could apply to the district council to purchase a community asset, for example a recreational ground of fitness centre but the parish council would then have to be mindful that they increase their precept to be able to maintain it. The advice would be to consult residents prior to applying to purchase a community asset.

Cllr R. Griffiths then asked, considering the possibility of moving to the three or five authorities of 350,000 population, what influence would you have to be able to push for additional devolved powers at a local level in that proposal going forward and ensure there is a voice at the local scale for planning, verges and highway issues for example.

Cllr W. Stamp advised that you should then contact the Essex Authority for Local Councils (EALC) who are the voice of parish and town councils who would consult. But depending on what it is that the parish council are requesting, then she as county councillor, can still push for the parish council's proposals. Planning issues would be very difficult as it may become a bigger strategic planning area. When you join bigger areas, the planning authority will need to ensure that the infrastructure is in place for transport, schools and health. There is no point in putting numerous houses out in the Dengie when residents

cannot connect to anything, but the mayor will have a larger voice on strategic areas of development. Verges and Highways could be taken over by the parish council but would need to consider costs of machinery. Or the parish council could join with other parish councils and share the costs.

Cllr W. Stamp added that she is more than happy to support the parish council however she can, whether it be at district or county level.

Cllr R. Griffiths asked, in regard to planning, disregarding the strategic developments, is there any scope as a parish council to be a statutory consultee for the local area.

Cllr W. Stamp as that is the law and they choose to consult. Cllr W. Stamp suggested that the parish council look at putting in place a village plan where you the parish council could then have more say over the design and fit for the village. Maldon District Council will still have some power at the moment as they are putting in place their Local Development Plan and will add weight when unitary is adopted.

Cllr A. Snowden asked if there will be any change seen in the attitude within the planning and enforcement department at Maldon District Council.

Cllr W. Stamp answered that Maldon District Council have employed more planning officers and a new enforcement lead. However, enforcement is not a legal requirement at District Council although planning is.

Cllr A. Snowden added that if that is the case then that it creates a 'do what you want' attitude.

Cllr W. Stamp agreed and gave an example of the developments in Burnham and said that residents are affected by the conditions for developments not being enforced.

A resident added that residents and developers will ignore enforcement and not comply to the building stipulations.

Cllr W. Stamp that when residents have contacted her regarding enforcement complaints, she has had good results. So, if there is an enforcement case then copy her and the District Councillor in on the email, and she can see what support they can give. Cllr W. Stamp also suggested inviting the enforcement lead to a parish meeting.

Cllr W. Stamp finished by saying that the primary schools are full and primary children from Burnham are having to travel on a bus further afield for education.

Ray Hatton from David Wilson homes helped Cllr W. Stamp to push the increase in intake through for Ormiston. Cllr W. Stamp is now pushing for Section 106 money to build an additional new school in Burnham.

Cllr W. Stamp thanked her constituents for electing her.

## **8. Maldon District Councillors Report**

Cllr M. Neall sent his apologies as he was away on business. However, he will endeavour to attend the June Parish Council meeting.

## **9. ARG Report**

Colin Cooper reported that the current subscription year for members is 1<sup>st</sup> September to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2025. There are currently 53 members.

The ARG committee consists of Keeley Pond as secretary, Rik Pond as Treasurer and Colin Cooper as Chairperson.

Since this time last year, the ARG, in conjunction with Dengie residents and Maldon District Council ward member for Southminster, Adrian Fluker, has organised Winter 2024 and Spring 2025 litter picks, which were both very successful. Megan Fluker provided a hot stew after the Winter litter pick and warm sausage rolls after the Spring litter pick and thanks go to Megan for those refreshments.

The yellow salt box is being monitored and topped up by Dave Henson, who we thank.

Ann and Shaun Barnard of Brook Lane continue to keep planted and maintained in a most attractive way the original planter opposite Sandlings, as do Jo and Rebecca Griffiths and family, of Hall Road, who look after the 6 more planters. Sharon Thick, of Sandlings, continues to kindly make available an instant water supply and ARG has organised again a watering regime manned by volunteers Sharon, Ann, Karen, Keeley, Jo and myself as well as Julie and Graham of 2, The Orchards in Hall Road. Tony Lock of Endway Cottages continues to offer a backup water supply, if ever needed.

My wife, Bernie, continues to look after the planter at the base of the Asheldham Village sign.

Whilst not an ARG member, Tony Lock gave an extremely generous donation to ARG funds.

As is usual in November, ARG positioned the wooden WW1 Tommy next to the village sign and attached various artificial poppies to various items of street furniture to commemorate the Remembrance period.

As ever, ARG has spent much time and effort expressing concerns over the everlasting failure of ECC and Essex Highways to properly deal with such matters as the Asheldham bends, Asheldham Brook Bridge, the erosion of verges by HGV's and the flooding caused by blocked drains. ARG is of the view that blocked drains caused by eroded verges will continue to be an issue unless Essex Highways grasp

the nettle and install high kerbing in strategic positions as a deterrence. Either that or the mains drains being rodded through periodically.

The ARG treasurer has recently been in contact with Mrs Carol Love of Malson District Council concerning the frequency or otherwise its contractors, Appleton's, perform litter picks in the parish including Dengie. The outcome is that ARG will let Mrs Love know when an ARG litter pick has taken place to get an idea of the efficacy of Appleton's efforts. Mrs Love will also be letting the Parish Council and ARG know when Appleton's are due to carry out their three-monthly picks so that the situation can be monitored.

Despite numerous requests by the Parish Council and ARG, the Essex Highways report on the outcome of its investigation into the possible existence of a foul sewer in the vicinity of the bridge after the weekend road closure many, many months ago has never been received. Now Essex Highways are saying that they have carried out another investigation as to its viability and that report is awaited. In the meantime, HGV's of anything between 25 and 40 tonnes of weight continue to use the bridge.

Finally, I would just mention that ARG has had several projects to clear the ground ivy on the land opposite Sandlings, with the assistance of Graham Chandler and Cllr. Andrew Snowdon.

Cllr W. Stamp added that, having listened to the issue with blocked gulleys, Wendy advised that gulleys should be rodded every five years and she will look into whose responsibility it is to clear gulleys and send an email to find out when the drains were last rodded.

### **10. Public Session**

A resident and the Treasurer of ARG, Rik Pond, added that that he is looking forward to receiving the Essex Highways response regarding the foul sewer and the Asheldham bridge.

Cllr W. Stamp suggested that correspondence is sent from ARG directly and weight restrictive signage needs to be considered.

Cllr A. Snowdon also added that there is now a dip in the bridge which suggests that there is movement on the bridge and it is beginning to fail.

Cllr W. Stamp added that any photographic evidence and 'What3Words' giving the exact location of the highways defect, should be sent to her and marked if it is urgent and she will add this to her priority list.

### **11. Closure of the Meeting**

#### **To Close the meeting having considered and determined all items of business**

The Chairman then closed the meeting at 7.19pm and thanked everyone for attending

Signed

*D Henson*

**David Henson  
Chairman**

2<sup>nd</sup>. June 2025