

**BIRDBROOK PARISH COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING**

**HELD ON TUESDAY 13 MAY 2025 AT 7.15PM (TO FOLLOW THE APA)  
AT THE COMMUNITY HOUSE, BIRDBROOK**

**PRESENT:** Mr Alan Cook  
Mr Steve Rhenius  
Mrs Anita Chadney  
Mr Tim Chadney

**ALSO PRESENT:** Cllr Diana Garrod (BDC) (arrived late)  
Mrs Debbie Hilliard (Clerk)

**IN ATTENDANCE:** 7 members of the public

**25/38 ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR FOR 2025/26**

The Clerk led this item. Nominations were invited for Chair and Vice-Chair of the Parish Council.

Alan Cook nominated Steve Rhenius as Chair of the Parish Council for the year 2025-26. This was seconded by Tim Chadney with all in favour. Steve Rhenius was duly elected.

Anita Chadney nominated Alan Cook as Vice-Chair of the Parish Council for the year 2025-26. This was seconded by Tim Chadney with all in favour. Alan Cook was duly elected.

**25/39 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Cllr Peter Schwier. It was noted that Cllr Garrod would arrive late.

**25/40 OTHER ABSENCES**

None.

**25/41 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed.

**25/42 ACTION LIST**

None.

**25/43 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

**25/42 DOCUMENTS ON DEPOSIT**

- Financial Regulations (NALC updated version 2024)
- Standing Orders

The documents had been circulated to parish councillors prior to the meeting and were considered, noted and accepted.

**25/43 POLICIES**

- Budget Virement Policy
- Code of Conduct Policy (updated version 2024)

- Co-option Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Equalities Policy
- Expenses Policy
- GDPR Policy
- Grievance Procedure
- Health and Safety Policy
- Record Management Policy
- Sickness Absence Policy
- Social Media Policy
- Reserves Policy

There were no changes to note since 2024. The policies had been circulated to parish councillors prior to the meeting and were noted and accepted.

#### **25/44 TO AGREE REPRESENTATIVES**

- Parks (including working party for Baythorne End play equipment refurb) – Anita Chadney
- Pond – Tim Chadney
- Highways – (including working group for Clare bridge/Baythorne End speed reduction) - Alan Cook
- Footpaths – Tim Chadney
- Streetlights – Alan Cook
- Media – None

#### **25/45 MEMBERS' REPORTS**

- (a) Pond – Tim Chadney reported. It was reported that ECC Highways had been out and inspected the retaining wall to establish what repairs were needed. It was noted that ownership of the pond and surrounding area was still not clear and this needed to be clarified before any funding could be secured to improve the area.
- (b) Parks – Anita Chadney reported. It was confirmed that the dog signs had been put up. The application for CIF funding for play equipment at Baythorne End had been unsuccessful with the reasons for this decision noted as the project could not be completed on time and to budget. Anita advised that she will ask play equipment providers to revisit and recommend a smaller project.

Grass Cutting – The parish council ratified the decision to accept Mr Allen's quote for grass cutting for 2025-26 of £2,520.00.

- (c) Chair's Report – The impact of the recent clearance works on displacing wildlife in the area was noted.

*Cllr Garrod arrived at the meeting. Cllr Garrod was invited to submit her report.*

Annual Report – Local Plan Review - Braintree District Council had over 350 sites put forward. It was noted that Birdbrook had 3 sites submitted but Braintree had not confirmed the size, despite Cllr Garrod asking for this information, which might be relevant as sites for more than 500 houses would be considered in September. Smaller sites including any at Birdbrook were due to be considered on 12 June and a parish councillor and/or member of the public could attend.

There was a discussion around the local plan process and the call for sites with members of the public raising questions and concerns about this. Cllr Garrod explained the process.

Questions asked by members of the public:

What would be a viable reason to reject the land? They will consider amenities round the area and infrastructure.

Anglia Water – New England site – It was noted that work on this site was linked to the new pipeline from Stambourne and Birdbrook and upgrading the sewer system.

There was a long discussion between the parish council, members of the public and Cllr Garrod regarding the Call for Sites. In particular issues with a boundary dispute between the landowner of one site and property owners of The Street.

There was another in depth discussion regarding continued efforts to get the speed limit in Baythorne End reduced to 30mph.

- (d) Highways – Mr Cook reported and thanked Mr McIver for the success regarding Clare Bridge noting that signage was going to be upgraded and the white lining was scheduled to take place early in June including highlighting the pedestrian walkway on the bridge.

Mr Cook reported that the Parish Council continued to try and get the speed limit in Baythorne End reduced to 30mph. There was progress with Suffolk County Council but Essex County Council was intransigent.

Mr McIver was invited to report and advised that he continued to communicate with Cllr Schwier. One issue was the implementation of Department of Transport policy particularly around what was the definition of a village. Neither the Department of Transport or ECC used the word “hamlet” they referred to villages and defined a village as having 20 or more houses over a specific distance. Essex County Council’s definition was 11 houses over 350m including schools, post offices and shops. Mr McIver advised he had measured the distance of Baythorne End as 0.95miles (1380m) and 46 houses. However, Essex CC stated that Baythorne End did not meet the criteria for a village and ECC’s argument regarding a 30mph speed limit appeared to relate to the criteria of a village rather than actual speed of vehicles. At present there appeared to be an impasse and the only way forward would be to carry out a speed survey.

It was agreed that:

- Quotes would be sought to repair the VAS signs on the A1017.
- Debbie will work through the parish council’s finances to identify any surplus which might be used towards the cost of repairing the VAS signs and/or carrying out a speed survey. **Action.**
- Mr McIver will write to the Head of Highways.

BDC Streetscene – approved and signed.

- (e) Media – None.

#### **25/46 PLANNING**

It was noted that a response was awaited from BDC Planning regarding work taking place at Ricmar.

#### **25/47 VERGE CUTTING 2025**

It was noted that ECC had issued a purchase order for verge cutting for 2025. It was agreed that 2 cuts would be made by M & N Pyman.

**25/48 FINANCE**

The Clerk confirmed that the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2025 had been completed and approved by the internal auditor. It was confirmed that copies had been circulated to parish councillors prior to the meeting for consideration. The accounts for the year ended 31 March 2025 were approved and signed.

- (a) Annual Governance Statement 2024-25 – The governance statement was read out and confirmed.
- (b) Accounting Statement 2024-25 – The accounting statement was considered and agreed.
- (c) Insurance Renewal – The renewal documents from Zurich had been circulated prior to the meeting. After consideration it was agreed to accept the 3-year agreement at a cost of £693.59 for 2025.

**25/49 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS**

There were no items to consider which required the public and the press to withdraw from the meeting.

**25/50 CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS**

There were no confidential items to consider.

**25/51 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS**

8 July 2025  
16 September 2025  
11 November 2025

All at 7pm in the Community House, Birdbrook

Items not on the agenda but agreed to discuss –

- field gate in Birdbrook Play area – it was noted that the gate would need to be repaired/replaced once the hedge was trimmed.
- VJ event – noted there would be a public meeting to discuss events in the Community House on 5 June.

There being no further business to discuss the meeting closed at approximately 8.45pm.

Signed:  .....

Dated: .....8/7/25.....