

**BIRDBROOK PARISH COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING**

**HELD ON TUESDAY 8 JULY 2025 AT 7.00PM  
AT THE COMMUNITY HOUSE, BIRDBROOK**

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

**ALSO PRESENT:** Cllr Peter Schwier (ECC)  
Cllr Diana Garrod (BDC)  
Mrs Debbie Hilliard (Clerk)

**IN ATTENDANCE:** 6 members of the public

Questions raised by members of the public

What about the railway cutting clearance? There was nothing the parish council could do. It was on private land and any alleged transgressions of environmental or planning rules should be raised with Braintree District Council. There was no PROW along the cutting.

Cllr Schwier was invited to comment. It was noted he had sent information to the Clerk at Ridgewell Parish Council.

The solar farm at Water Hall has been approved? There was likely to be an impact for residents of New England during the construction period. There should be a transport plan, and conditions applied to that.

*Cllr Garrod arrived at the meeting.*

**25/52 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**  
None.

**25/53 OTHER ABSENCES**  
None.

**25/54 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**  
The minutes of the meeting held on 13 May 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed.

**25/55 ACTION LIST**  
None.

**25/56 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**  
None.

**25/57 REPORT OF DISTRICT AND/OR COUNTY COUNCILLOR**  
Cllr Schwier reported. Points noted were:-

- Potholes - 40% fewer people using the online reporting tool for potholes which was evidence of the progress made compared to 2 or 3 years ago.

VAS sign and Baythorne End speed limit – Cllr Schwier noted that the VAS signs had not worked for many years. Regarding the request for a reduction to a 30mph there was a difference of opinion between national highways and ECC highways as to the definition of a village and any change had to be data led. Cllr Schwier proposed that a speed survey was needed. Speed surveys could be done by ECC at a cost of £375.

It was noted that the Local Highways Panel were not accepting any new schemes for this financial year as they were going to clear the backlog of approved schemes with the limited funds available. This may be further impacted by the devolution programme.

Regarding the VAS – Cllr Schwier advised that he, an ECC Highways Officer and cabinet lead for Highways made a short visit recently to look at the signs. Their conclusion was that ECC would look at all 4 VAS signs as they had been out of action for 4 years. They were going to look at these and the cost of what was needed and report back, hopefully by the end of summer.

It was noted there had been another 2 accidents in the last month.

Mr McIver responded that he understood that a speed survey would be needed. However, unless the question of whether Baythorne End and New England were defined as villages could be resolved, the request for a 30mph speed limit would not move forward.

It was noted that the national highways definition of a village and ECC definition of a village did not match, nor was there any consistency with the allocation of speed limits in Essex. It was noted that the Highways Engineer did not consider Baythorne End to be a village.

Cllr Schwier concurred but advised that if the current 40mph was not oversped by vehicles it would be difficult to prove that the speed limit needed to reduce to 30mph.

One proposal was that the Parish Council should write to Highways asking for their definition of a village and the reasons why a 30mph speed limit did not apply.

- Solar Farm projects (Essex and Suffolk) and traffic implications on the A1017 – There was a discussion regarding the apparent lack of co-ordination between Essex and Suffolk counties as there were solar farm projects planned either side of the county border which had traffic restrictions during the construction period, noting that if they were constructed at the same time there could be traffic problems due to the proposed routes of construction traffic accessing the sites.

Cllr Schwier was thanked for his report and input and left the meeting.

Cllr Garrod's report was circulated prior to the meeting. Points noted were:

- Anglian water – work continued on the New England site. No concerns regarding traffic.
- Water Lane closure – noted.
- Water Hall solar farm – traffic issues noted with work due to start in 2027. It was noted there could be issues with the solar farm at Sturmer if both being constructed at the same time.
- Bottle banks – It was noted that with the implementation of new recycling systems, the bottle banks would not be removed immediately as when surveyed 12 % of residents had stated they would continue to use them.

- Devolution – Update noted.
- Local Plan sub-committee – It was confirmed that all the sites put forward for Birdbrook had been turned down. However, it was noted that a developer could still apply via the normal planning process. It was proposed that the parish council download and file a copy of the minutes and agenda of the meeting on 12 June 2025. **Action.**
- Royal Prospect Fund for grants of £2,000-£20,000 for capital projects in rural areas.
- Police – Braintree centre public desk was closing and would become appointment only.
- National telephone alert taking place September 2025.

There was a brief discussion regarding the railway cutting, noting that there had been a great deal of speculation and any proposal would be under BDC jurisdiction and permissions.

There were no questions, and Cllr Garrod was thanked for her report and left the meeting.

## 25/58 MEMBERS' REPORTS

- Pond – Tim Chadney reported. It was noted that no progress could be made until the boundary dispute involving adjacent properties and ownership of the site was resolved.
- Parks – Anita Chadney reported. It was noted that some of the play equipment needed cleaning. The annual inspection had taken place and the report was awaited.
- Chair's Report – Steve Rhenius reminded councillors that any decisions made had to be by the parish council as a whole and not individuals, noting it was important to follow proper procedures.
- Highways – Mr Cook reported and was pleased to note that the VAS signs had now been inspected and possible repair of them was moving forward.

It was proposed and agreed that 2 speed surveys be requested on the A1017 at Baythorne Hall and at the top of Four Ash Hill. Debbie will contact ECC Highways. **Action.**

Streetscene – It was noted that the risk assessment had been completed and submitted.

Bus shelter licence – Debbie to action. **Action.**

Clare Bridge - Costs of signage – The costs were considered and noted. It was proposed and agreed to await the decision of Stock by Clare Parish Council at their meeting on 23 July 2025. Debbie will contact the Clerk for information and report back. It was noted that item 25/60 below (ring fenced sums) included an allocation of funding for this. **Action.**

- Media – None.

## 25/59 PLANNING

Nothing to report.

## 25/60 FINANCE

- Financial Report – considered and approved.

- Ring fenced sums – report considered. It was agreed to update as follows:-
  - Baythorne End Play equipment - increase to £9,000 (£2,900 additional allocation),
  - Budget overspends £2,000.
  - Clare Bridge signage £2,500 subject to Stoke by Clare PC meeting outcome.

**25/61 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.

**25/62 CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS**

There were no confidential items to consider.

**25/63 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS**

16 September 2025

11 November 2025

All at 7pm in the Community House, Birdbrook

There being no further business to discuss the meeting closed at approximately 9.00pm.

Signed:  .....

Dated: 18/11/25 .....

**Action List**

Minute	Action	Responsibility	Outcome
25/57	Download and keep copy of local plan subcommittee agenda and minutes 12 June 2025	Clerk	Completed 18 July
25/58	Speed Surveys A1017. Contact Highways.  Bus shelter licence  Clare Bridge signage costs. Await outcome of Stoke by Clare PC and report back	Clerk	Email sent to <a href="mailto:saferessexroads@essexhighways.org">saferessexroads@essexhighways.org</a> 29 July 2025 Email to Cllr Schwier for support. Asked SR for photo both 29 July Emailed Clerk of Clare Town Council 29 July