

Chignal Parish Council

C/O 45 Cherry Garden Road, Great Waltham, Chelmsford, Essex, CM3 1DH

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Clerk: Will Adshead-Grant

Chair: Lynn Ballard.

Website: e-voice.org.uk/Chignal-Parish

Website: chignalparish.org.uk

Vice Chair: Linda Nelson.

Minutes of the Bi-Monthly Meeting of the Chignal Parish Council held on Monday 13th January 2025 at 7.30pm.

2024/797 Chair's Welcome.

Chair: Ballard.

Cllrs: Elwick, Nelson, Lewis, Polley, Stainton, and Towns.

2024/798 Apologies for Absence.

All members present.

2024/799 Confirmation of the minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council held on 11th November 2024.

Resolution: The minutes were confirmed.

2024/800 Note the minutes of the Orchard subcommittee held on 7th January 2025.

Resolution: The minutes were noted.

2024/801 Declarations of Interests of members and any requests for dispensation.

Cllr Towns – Village Hall – 2024/813 – The Parish Council Mower.

Cllr Polley – Croquet club – 2024/813 – The Parish Council Mower.

Cllr Ballard - Croquet club – 2024/813 – The Parish Council Mower.

2024/802 Public Open Session for any matters that need to be drawn to the Parish Council's attention.
(The items do not need to be on the current agenda).

Three members of the public.

- Near Gardening Express car park – bottom of the road seems to flood since the building of the car park. High volume of water in that area. Only seems to occur when there is rain, and this leads on to potentially frozen patches on the road.
- Concerns about the visibility to the right when leaving Little Hollows. Suspect that the sight lines are incorrect. The hedge was planted on the edge. In future years with a mature hedge, it will cause a problem. Speeding on the road. Blocked ditch at the end of Hollow Lane that has been closed off.

2024/803 County and City Councillors' Reports.

- i. Essex County Councillor Report – Cllr Mike Steel – Apologies –

Keep Essex Car Tax for Essex Roads

The greatest number of complaints, by far, are in relation to highway defects. Whilst highways (roads, pavements, overgrown verges and hedges, flooding, PROW maintenance, etc), affect everyone, it is allocated around 5% of the gross ECC budget.

Over three quarters of ECC budget goes on the mandatory Adult Social Care, Children's services and Education. Not everyone currently benefits from those services, but people need to be reassured that when they do need them, they will be able to access them!

As the demand for Adult Social Care, Children's services and Education services grow at a significant rate, the funds left for other services becomes less. It should be noted that the demand for SEN assessments has nearly doubled in the last 5 years, outstripping the availability of child psychologists to carry out the assessments.

It is not generally understood that Vehicle Excise Duty goes to Central Govt, whilst County Councils have responsibility for highways maintenance and the County Councils do not see the income. We often hear people saying, "*I pay my road tax and expect the roads to be fixed*". Well, it does not work like that! Vehicle Excise Duty collects £7.3Bn pa in the UK, which equates to about £300M from Essex vehicle owners, none of this gets returned to Essex. So, we have to do the best we can with the limited funds, which means prioritising according to safety, etc.

The ECC Conservative Group proposed a motion at County council meeting 10th Dec 24, to Keep Essex Car Tax for Essex Roads and calling on the Govt to add the amount paid by Essex residents to ECC's budget settlement for 2025/26 onwards and for it to be ringfenced for road maintenance. The motion was successfully passed, and the request will be sent to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretary of State for Transport and all Essex MPs.

In addition, a petition has been initiated to support this:

https://www.essexconservatives.uk/campaigns/petition-keep-essex-car-tax-essex-roads?fbclid=IwY2xjawHJUihleHRuA2FibQlxMAABHS2t8QLwxs3a6LC1fioyDnc5K4FWzZiBzPg_EYT6KTVQE_MwLJ2X0m_L_Q_aem_8Fv0wd7eZkRTy5RIYSBV2Q

Love Your Bus

Deadline for applications is 14th Feb 2025

It seems to be offering Town and Parish councils the ability to run their own bus services – either individually or jointly between several councils. The grant is purely for revenue, and does not include capital – i.e., does not appear to include any capital purchase.

I struggle to see the logic of PCs running a bus service, but there might be some rural PCs that feel the current services fall short and they could run one themselves. Pleshey might be a good example, where there are just two services a week. However, Digigo covers much of my division, including Pleshey, so it is hard to see the need. The larger parishes in my division, such as Great Waltham, Little Waltham, Broomfield, Writtle, have reasonable main bus services, so difficult to see how this could help!

However, I am open to debate and will support any bid from any of my PCs.

An alternative proposal might be that the PCs write to Chelmsford City council and ask them to consider making a bid for the Chelmsford area and the locations that have shortfalls. However, I do see several gap fillers such a Digigo and Community Transport, so I doubt there is a large demand for additional services.

Devolution and Unitary Councils

The White Paper for Devolution (and Unitary Councils) has now been published.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/676028c9cfbf84c3b2bcfa57/English_Devolution_White_Paper_Web_Accessible.pdf

It offers a range of Local Govt reforms which ties into the number of devolved powers from Central Govt. it would be fair to say that it encourages the mayoral approach to a unitary council. For Essex, which would mean splitting it into 3 or 4 unitary councils that then encompass the County level and District level.

The leader of ECC is keen to bring decision making and power closer to the people therefore Essex will be a front runner for devolution. County Councils have until 10th Jan 25 to submit a proposal which in our case, needs to reach agreement with Southend and Thurrock as well.

An ECC extra-ordinary meeting on the 10th of Jan, agreed to make a submission to Central Govt, to be included in the next tranche of Devolution and LGR. This requires that the County Council elections of May 25, are delayed for at least one year. Central Govt will respond by 24th Feb as to whether this has been accepted, and elections are delayed.

Whilst I have many reservations about the whole concept of such reforms, the over-riding issue is that it is clear that Govt will impose a solution if we do not manage it ourselves – therefore better to be in control.

I voted to make the request to Central Govt. Ultimately, the decision to make the proposal, rests solely with the leaders of ECC, Thurrock and Southend, but the leader of ECC wanted to debate the issue at the meeting of 10th Jan and give all ECC Cllrs the opportunity to express their views. The result was that the members voted to endorse the request to move forward and delay elections.

Highway defect reporting

Residents and road users have more options when reporting road defects following a major update by Essex Highways.

The update comes as users will no longer be able to raise issues via third-party sites, such as Fix My Street, from 1 January 2025 due to the lack of detail they provide inspectors.

The '[Report It](#)' webpage by Essex Highways has been tailored to capture all necessary information. This now includes different types of emergencies and if issues have worsened over time.

The '[Track It](#)' webpage lets users see the progress of reports, from inspection to repair, and whether similar issues have already been raised.

Issues logged through third-party platforms are often duplicates of reports already received via Report It, or unrelated to the roads managed by Essex Highways.

By moving exclusively to Report It, Essex Highways can ensure the 50,000 reports received annually are managed in one place, resulting in a faster and more transparent process.

There is also a major cleansing project under way – to clear outdated enquiries on the system. If you look at Track-It, you need to understand the difference between Enquiry References, and Defect Numbers. The former are the problems logged by the public, which when inspected, get converted to a Defect Number. In many cases there are several Enquiry References for one fault, and the process is that when the inspection occurs, several Enquiries will be closed and one Defect Number raised. But it does not always work like that – so a data cleanse project is currently underway.

Highways' Highlights Nov/Dec 24

We have been hit with a couple of major storms over the last few weeks (Bert and Darragh).

Highways responded to 301 emergency calls on seventy-nine tree issues and 222 flooding issues. In November, we fixed 2,254 potholes, 942 pavement defects, cleared 9,994 drains and fixed 1,228 streetlights.

As you know, I have made extensive use of the Members' Highways Initiative which enables County Cllrs to identify road and pavement issues which matter most to residents. I have submitted fifty-nine separate defects, which will keep the extra team busy until next year, so I have pretty much used up (over-used) my quota.

However, a new "*Winter Damage*" Members' scheme has been introduced – it appears that not all Cllrs have been as proactive as me in using the Members' Initiative and there is spare capacity which is being offered for defects that have deteriorated due to winter conditions. I have already submitted some defects for this scheme. Let me know if you have any that might fit – existing track-It ref and photo please (if safe to take).

I say this often, but the problem is that more than three quarters the gross ECC budget goes on Adult Social Care and Children's services, so there is little left for all the other services, including Highways, but I do try to make the most of any initiatives!

Reminder on the gritters as we enter the season for icy roads - you can track the gritting trucks here <https://www.essexhighways.org/roads-and-pavements/winter-travel/track-the-gritting-lorries>

Chelmsford Northeast Bypass construction to begin early next year.

The first phase of the Chelmsford Northeast Bypass will be constructed by Octavius Infrastructure Limited. Works are scheduled to begin in early 2025 and finish by spring 2026.

The bypass, along with the new Beaulieu Park Station, will provide vital transport links to support planned housing and economic growth in the north of Chelmsford.

The first section of the bypass, known as 1A, will connect to Beaulieu Parkway in the south. This will provide access to the A12 at Boreham Interchange via the Beaulieu Parkway Bridge.

1A will also join a new link road to the north – being built as part of the Chelmsford Garden Community – and Wheelers Hill roundabout on A131 Essex Regiment Way.

The first section of the bypass is mostly funded by the government through the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF). Funding is also being provided by Essex County Council, alongside developer contributions through Chelmsford City Council. The HIF was secured as a result of plans for the Chelmsford Garden Community. When complete, the garden community is expected to provide over 10,000 new homes and 5,000 sq. m of employment space. This is in addition to green space, schools and other facilities. The HIF also includes commissioning Network Rail to build the new Beaulieu Park Station, which is due to be completed next year.

Pylons

Whilst our MP has been elevated to leader of the opposition, I wanted to make sure that she is still supporting local issues as our MP. So, Kemi joined me on a cold and windy Friday (22nd Nov), and landowner in the "Waltham Gap" along with one of the farmers for that area. We jointly continue to oppose the proposition of pylons spoiling our countryside, along with Essex County Council. We are pushing for alternatives but recognise that the most viable alternative would be underground AC through the Waltham gap and continuing to the West of Chelmsford. Whilst this might cause much disruption in the short term, it would be better in the long term.

Election

As reported last time, due to the death of Cllr Ian Grundy (both ECC and CCC), ECC have received a valid requisition for a by-election to be held for the Stock Division. The election returned Cllr Sue Dobson (Conservative) to the position.

LHP:

The Village gateway was scheduled for implementation in Q3 – Oct to Dec 2024. There was requested to add 40mph on the road and additional roundels, requiring a top up of £3,500 which was sanctioned by the LHP committee. I note that some 40mph painted on the roads have been done and maybe some roundels. So, I am not sure of the status of the gateways and have made enquiries – and will update the report if I get anything.

- ii. Chelmsford City Councillor Report - Cllr Nicolette Chambers - Apologies.

2024/804 Planning.

- Note the decisions by Chelmsford City Council Planning:

Reference	Address	Status
24/01480/FUL	Dwelling At Hard Oak Mashbury Road Chignal St James Chelmsford Essex CM1 4TZ	Application Permitted
24/01059/CLEUD	Hard Oak Mashbury Road Chignal St James Chelmsford Essex CM1 4TZ	Application Permitted
24/01172/FUL	Howletts Hall Mashbury Road Chignal St James Chelmsford Essex CM1 4TP	Application Permitted

- **Norwich to Tilbury:**

Update on NW/SW Chelmsford parishes group's activities

Group working on a meeting with NG to discuss an easterly route. National Grid are not accepting a meeting request.

2024/808 To note Items approved for purchase but not yet actioned.

- (CIL) Gazebos x 4 – Pop up – for Community use - £1996 (incl vat) – Approved July 2024.
- (Reserves) Impact report for Pylon route payment 1- £ 150 – Approved July 2024.
- (Reserves) Impact report for Pylon route payment 2- £344.94- Approved November 2024.
- (Cil) Picnic table for the Orchard- £690 – Approved November 2024.

Resolution: **The payments were noted with suggested action in March.**

2024/809 Discuss a bank Card for the Parish Council bank account, to pay expenses where the bank account (BACS) payments cannot be used.

Resolution: **The Parish Clerk to investigate getting the free cashback card set up on the Barclays account.**

2024/810 Consider a proposal to re-establish a Chelmsford District Association, (letter attached). Membership of the Association will be open to any local (Parish, Town, Community or Village) Council within the area of Chelmsford City Council, which is a subscribing member of the Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC). There will be a cost to membership, and this will be confirmed once it is known how many councils are interested in joining the Association.

Resolution: **The Parish Council has been working with its neighbouring Parish Councils for some time to deal with local issues on planning and Pylons. The Parish Council believes that the changes in devolution will affect this organisation and its membership. Therefore, they will decline the opportunity to join at this time.**

2024/811 Update on potential actions from the Chignal Community Meeting 2024:

Essex Local Nature Recovery projects and refurbishment and uses for the telephone box by The Green.

- Bird or Bat boxes to be advertised so that numbers can be established.
- Litter picking to be arranged for Saturday 15th March 2025.
- Bulbs for the area to be arranged with Chelmsford City Council. Shared cost with CCC. Plant in the Orchard and around the Gazebo.

Resolution: **Approval of up to £200 for bulbs delegated to Cllr Ballard to discuss with Chelmsford City Council.**

2024/812 Community Communications Working Group, 29th November:

Update on actions, (minutes attached). Consider roll-out of Chignal parish branding: 2-hour training session led by graphic designer, Fran Layzell for Parish Council and Chignal groups and clubs.

Resolution: **Agree to use the Canva Pro software for 12 months and understand the need after that time.**

Resolution: **Approved the spend of £450 (£350 for Canva Pro set up, branding templates and training plus £100 Canva Pro subscription for one year)**

2024/813 Discuss a policy and cost for the use of the Parish Council mower-

Resolution: **The Village Hall will pay £120 per annum. The Croquet club pays £140 per annum (Larger area cut).**

REPORTS AND UPDATES.

2024/814 Representatives' Reports: to discuss and debate any items.

A) Little Hollows / Copperfield Place Liaison - Cllr Elwick

- Landscaping.
 - i. Twelve trees have been planted by Persimmon and another twenty-two will be planted in this season.
 - ii. The siting of a hedge in Little Hollows has affected highway visibility, (see Item 802).

Resolution: Cllr Elwick was also to look further into the issue of the hedge planting and the suitability of the visibility splay from The Larthings onto Hollow Lane.

B) Village Hall Liaison - Cllr Towns

- I. An internal repaint is being discussed.

C) Community Engagement - Cllr Nelson and Cllr Stainton

- Update on changing the Parish website to gov.uk domain.
 - £50 per annum to host our website.
 - The website will migrate.
- Use of gov.uk e-mails by all councillors and Clerk. Consider opportunities to maximise benefits of the new software to facilitate updates to the website and the roll-out of the Chignal parish branding.
 - Microsoft 365. Cost of £461 from January to November 2025 as an upgrade cost.
 - Full office function is £865 per annum. Review in November budget.

Resolution: The spend was approved.

D) Community Safety – Cllr Lewis.

- Update on additional defibrillators:
 - i. St Nicholas Church. – Parochial Church Council has approved.
 - ii. Phone box by The Green. – Community Heartbeat Trust.
 - Contractor to re-paint and refurbish in Spring 2025.
 - Defibrillator is to be installed in 2025.
- Date for Parish litter pick: Saturday 15th March.

Resolution: Purchase a Defibrillator to be installed at Saint Nicholas Church.

Resolution: Repairs to the Phone box of up to £100 buying the parts from X2 Connect approved.

Resolution: Cost to be confirmed through CHT for additional Defibrillators at the Green and other sites.

E) Highways (include Hedges) - Cllr Towns.

- Update on LHP funding for village entry gates, (see Item 803)
- Update on reinstalling the directional sign to Chignal Smealey at Hollow Lane/Chignal Road junction.
 - i. No update on the white finger sign as Highways have refused the street license for Persimmon to install.

Resolution Cllr Elwick and Cllr Towns agreed to investigate the potential flood waters near to Gardening Express car park.

F) Countryside conservation. – Cllr Lewis.

- Essex Local Nature Recovery Strategy – update on public consultation.
 - I. New animal survey so that four all seasons have been covered.
 - II. Two new trail cameras to be purchased at a cost of £150.

Resolution: The expenditure was approved.

2024/815 Items for the next Agenda

- Speeding concerns on – Chignal Road, Little Hollows, Copperfield Place – Automatic Traffic Count.
- Website work.

- Defibrillators and costings.
- Chelmsford Local Plan: Regulation 19 consultation
- Essex Love Your Bus grant application: update
- improving pedestrian access to the Orchard – Cllr Polley.

Next meetings:

Monday 10th March 2025

Bi-Monthly Meeting at 7.00PM followed by the Annual Parish Meeting at 8pm

Monday 12th May 2025

Annual General Meeting and Bi-Monthly Meeting at 7.30PM.