



FOXEARTH & LISTON PARISH COUNCIL

Parish Clerk / RFO: Kevin B. Money
 7 Roach Vale, Colchester, Essex. CO4 3YN
 Tel: 07810781509 – Email: theclerk@foxearthandliston-pc.org
 Website: <https://www.foxearthandliston-pc.org>

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Electors held on Monday 20th. May 2024 at 7.30pm in Foxearth Village Hall.

Present: K. Robson (Vice-Chairman), M. Clayton, S. Ham, K. Holmes, BDC Cllr I. Parker and Kevin B. Money (Parish Clerk). There were also 4 members of the public present

1. **Apologies for absence** were received from ECC Cllr P. Schwier, Cllr F. Binks and Cllr M. Posen
2. **To approve the minutes of the last Annual Electors meeting held on 18th. May 2023.**
 These minutes were signed at the 20th. July 2023 meeting
3. **Report from ECC Councillor** – Cllr Peter Schwier
 Cllr P. Schwier annual report can be found at <https://e-voice.org.uk/foxearthandliston-pc/minutes/2024/>
4. **Report from BDC Councillor** - Cllr Iona Parker
 - The Council's budget for 2024/2025 of £19.6m was approved at the meeting of Full Council on 19th February. Despite ongoing cost pressures and increased demand for services, the Council remains in a sound financial position for the forthcoming year compared to other councils.
 - There remains a forecast deficit over the medium term to 2027/28 of £2.3m. The Council will be looking at ways to address this and will be developing a "Fit for the Future" transformation programme to look out how resources can be used more effectively. The priorities will be to look at what opportunities new technology offers to improve services and reduce cost, how we can work more closely with partner organisations to share resources and assets to deliver better outcomes for residents, looking at our workforce to make sure we have the skills needed and an effective organisational structure, developing an asset strategy to make sure we are getting the best value out of our assets and considering how Causeway House can be refreshed to provide an agile and flexible workspace. and how we can work better with other partners.
 - The main highlights from the Budget as far as my ward is concerned are:
 - Councillor Community Grants to continue – each Councillor to be allocated £1250 to award to community projects in their ward.
 - Street cleansing grants to Parish councils to continue.
 - The garden waste subscription service has proved more popular than anticipated with a take up of over 50% bringing in an income to the Council of around £900k.
 - The Council is looking to charge a Council Tax premium of 100% on second homes in the district with effect from 1st April 2025.
 - The new business park near Gt Notley, Horizon 120, has proved a success. This was delivered by BDC who secured over 50% match funding from the South East Local Enterprise Board. There is now nearly 90% occupancy and as well as providing jobs, is providing an income to the Council.
 - The Council has updated its Livewell Health and Wellbeing strategy in conjunction with partners in the health services. The aim of the strategy is to focus on prevention and early intervention and to move beyond simply treating health conditions after they have arisen. The intention is to create an environment where everyone has the right facilities available to them to actively participate in improving their own health and wellbeing. The data shows a strong link between deprivation and poor health and we are particularly conscious that parts of Braintree and Halstead feature in the 20% most deprived areas in the country.
 - The NHS is shortly due to approve the final business case for the Sible Hedingham medical centre. Once it is approved, the land can be transferred by BDC to One Medical who can then start construction. This is in addition to the new Community Diagnostic Centre due to open shortly in Braintree and the ward space that has opened at Halstead hospital for patients who are medically fit to be discharged from hospital but not ready to go home.
 - The Council has a number of partnerships with other organisations which either operate across a wider geographic area or bring together different organisations working in the same place. These include the North Essex Economic Board, the Community Safety Partnership, the Essex Resilience Forum and the Mid Essex Alliance which covers health and wellbeing referred to above.

- We have delivered 1064 new homes in the District in 2021/22, the highest in Essex. For the year 2022/23, we have delivered 329 affordable homes against a target of 250.
- The Council is required to review its Local Plan every 5 years. The first stage of this review has now started with a call for sites. Developers and Landowners have been invited to put forward sites which might be suitable for development. The deadline is 24th May. The sites will then be assessed to see if they are suitable and available.
- We are trying to address the increasing demand for affordable (social) housing which has been exacerbated by the reduction in private lets. As part of this we have produced an empty homes strategy to bring empty properties back into the market. There are over 3000 empty homes in the District. We are also developing a landlord incentive scheme to support the private rented sector and increase the number of homes available to rent. Our housing team prevented 50 cases of homelessness in the third quarter of this year.
- The Council has launched a small grants scheme providing funding of up to £10,000 to start or enhance existing community projects that support local residents with the cost of living. See <https://www.braintree.gov.uk/news/article/630/braintree-district-council-launch-cost-of-living-grant-scheme>. The Council has also launched a £100,000 fund to support community groups and parish councils who wish to reduce their carbon footprint. Grants are available for up to £10,000 and monies for the fund have come from the Government's Shared Prosperity Fund. See <https://www.braintree.gov.uk/braintree-district/climate-change-1/7>.
- The Government has secured a Special Development Order for the use of Wethersfield airfield for a further 3 years but the maximum number of asylum seekers will be reduced from 1700 to 800. The Council receives funding from the Home Office for the asylum centre but this is per bed not per person and is solely to cover the cost of our statutory duties eg waste collection. For the latest updates regarding Wethersfield, please see the Council's website.
- Home phone digital switchover is due to be rolled out next year. Anyone who does not use broadband at home, or uses a personal alarm, or lives in an area with no mobile coverage needs to get in touch with their home phone provider.

5. Report of the Chairman of the Council. In the absence of the Chairman (Mark Posen) the Vice-Chairman read out the statement below

I'd like to welcome all local electors who have come along this evening to participate in the Annual Meeting of Electors of Foxearth and Liston Parish Council. As usual, this is not a meeting of the Parish Council. We are required to hold an Annual Meeting of the local Electors, separate from the Parish Council Meetings, so as to give all local Electors an opportunity to hear what the County, District and Parish Councils have been doing for the past year and to have their say on any topics or issues that they think the local community or the Parish Council should be thinking about.

You have already heard reports from our County Councillor and District Councillor. I will now provide a report regarding the Parish Council's activities in the past year. After that, we'll have a public forum where any Elector may raise a concern or make a proposal.

This has been a year of floods, potholes, footpaths and some contested planning applications. Although as a small, rural Parish Council, the scope of our activities is somewhat limited, I'd like to give you a brief overview of what we've been up to in the past year.

In November, our villages experienced some of the worst flooding that we have seen in a long time. Although this was a rare event, it seems likely that the climate emergency will continue to lead to more extreme weather in the future, and the risk of flooding will likely increase. In response the Council formed a Working Party made up of Councillors and residents to try to look both at what can be done to reduce the risk of flooding in the future, and how we can deal with it should it occur. I have recently handed over the organisation of this group to volunteer residents Graham Griffiths and Mark Williamson, who will, I hope, be able to take things forward in a positive way.

We continue to be plagued by potholes. These have, throughout the year, continued to cause damage to vehicles passing through our villages—especially shredding tyres. The Parish Council, and local residents, have repeatedly reported these issues to Essex Highways, but it seems that only temporary repairs—often ineffectual—get done and vehicles continue to be damaged. My understanding is that Essex Highways denies liability for vehicle damage, and that people are not being successful in getting compensation for the costs of the damage. Personally, I believe that this situation is unacceptable. Either the roads should be maintained properly, or people should be compensated for damage caused. We keep hearing that more money is to be spent on maintaining our roads, and we wait to see the impact of this in Foxearth and Liston. The Parish Council will continue to monitor this situation, and I hope that our elected representatives at District, and especially at County level will take due note of our concerns.

Regarding traffic speeds through the villages, although the potholes perhaps have slowed things down a bit, this does continue to be an issue. Unfortunately, we ran into some snags getting licencing from Essex Highways, owing to there being no really suitable locations to mount the speed indicating device which we

purchased. Further discussions with Highways are planned, and I really hope that we can find a solution to this very soon.

We also monitor the local footpath network and try to report problems to Essex Highways before they become serious issues. In the 2023/24 year, we employed a contractor to allow the Council to take over the responsibility for cutting the footpaths from Highways. Our aim was to allow us to keep footpaths open more effectively, by cutting when needed, rather than having to wait for the scheduled cut from Highways. Unfortunately, the contractor we used last year is not available to do this work in the coming year, so we are looking to find an alternative. If we cannot engage a suitable contractor in time, then the responsibility will revert to Essex Highways and cuts will be done as and when Highways can schedule them.

As a statutory consultee, the Council continues to review and comment on planning applications that affect our communities. Although we are not the final decision-maker for planning applications, the views of the local community, as represented by the Council, are an important part of the planning process. The Parish Council has considered all planning applications which have come before us, have listened to the views of residents, and attempted to reach a Parish Council view that best reflects the opinions of the local community and the best interests of our villages.

We continue to use a significant part of our Council budget to provide donations to local organisations. In the last year, we provided a grant to Foxearth Church for the maintenance of the church clock and the graveyard, we provided funding for the cutting of the village green at Liston, and we supported the work of the Local History Society.

The Council continues to fund the support and maintenance of the defibrillator outside Foxearth Village Hall. We hope that it never needs to be used, but it is good to know that it is there “just in case.”

We have continued to hold evening meetings of the Parish Council, rather than the Saturday mornings as we used to have, but we have recently moved these from Thursday evenings to Monday evenings. We hope that this further change has made it easier for people to participate in our meetings, and we'd welcome any comments about this from our Electors.

We are in the process of switching over the Parish Council website and emails to an official “. gov.uk” domain, as is required of us by the government. The new website and email addresses will hopefully go live in the coming month or two, and the old ones will stop working a month or two after that. We'll publish the new website and email details as soon as they are set up and working.

I'd like to end my report by mentioning that following the co-option of Maureen Clayton to the Council at our last meeting, we now have a 'full slate' of six Parish Councillors in place. I'd like to thank Maureen for offering to join us and to participate in our work.

Finally, I'd like to thank our Parish Clerk, Kevin Money, for all his work on our behalf during the past year. His support is much appreciated by us all.

In closing, I'd like to let everyone know that I have decided not to seek renomination as the Parish Council Chair for the coming year. The Council will therefore have to elect a new Chair at the AGM which follows this meeting. It has been my pleasure to serve as your Chair for the past year, and I'd like to thank everybody, our Clerk, my fellow Councillors and members of the public, for their support during this time.

6. Public Forum

Can, via Iona Parker, chase up the numerous amounts of dangerous pot holes in both villages which have been constantly reported to ECC Cllr P. Schwier? The response from Essex Highways is slow and the temporary works do not stand up to constant traffic use. The pot holes do slow the traffic down in the villages. The directional signs are in a dreadful state. Other Counties are doing a far better job than Essex/BDC.

Foxearth Meadows supervisor spoke and circulated a leaflet on Foxearth Meadows Nature Reserve. A call to have a person to open and close the gates at the Meadow. This is an ongoing problem at the weekends.

The Vice-Chairman then closed the meeting at 8.10pm and thanked everyone for attending

Signed

K Holmes

Keith Holmes
Chair

22nd. July 2024