

The minutes of the Meeting of the Great Waltham Parish Council held on Tuesday 17th December 2024 at Ford End Village Hall at 7.00pm.

24/2050 Chair's Welcome:

Chair: Gilbert.

Cllrs: Jenkins, Martin, Stephenson, Steel, Micklem, McDevitt and Bradley.

The chair reported that Cllr Palmer has submitted her resignation. A vote of thanks was given for her hard work over several years in support of the Parish Council's work.

24/2051 Apologies.

Cllrs Taylor and Jackson.

24/2052 Declarations of interests (existence and nature) with regard to items on the agenda and any request for dispensation.

There were no declarations made.

24/2053 Public Participation session for any items regardless of its existence on the agenda.

There were 5 members of the public present.

- 24/2073. One member of the public to request the continued support of the Parish Council to provide free public parking at Great Waltham Village Hall. The previous contract had run from December 2019 at a cost of £1,250 per year. The income is reinvested in the car park to provide a lasting asset for the community. The free parking supports local businesses, the church, visitors and various walking groups. A new agreement offers more spaces with a slightly lower cost. Also, £3,000 of repairs undertaken at the village hall this year.
- 24/2070. Three members of the public to support a resident's actions in relation to VG150.
 - The resident who erected the fence and planted the hedge on VG150 asked the Council to reflect on the correspondence in 2020 and 2021 regarding ownership of land.
 - He stated that every possible action had been taken to identify the owner of the land and had been advised that the Council did not have the land recorded as an asset on its own documents.
 - He indicated that he had maintained the land for the last 17 years and all actions taken have been precipitated by and were in response to actions by and information from the Council.
 - He stated that the Council had confirmed in emails in 2021 that the land would be added to a spreadsheet of areas of land in the parish with unknown ownership; that ownership was not recorded on the Land Registry; that the land was not on the Council's or CCC's asset list; and was not recorded on ECC Highways map to indicate the area was maintained by them.
 - The resident also confirmed that Highways have stated they have up to 6m of highways rights but that this continues to be disputed, and that VG150 states the whole area of the green is owned by the Council. (It was noted that discussions concerning the removal of the fence and hedge have been solely between the resident and Essex Highways, with no involvement of the Council).
 - The resident requested copies of all correspondence received from the Parish News and Facebook requests for information on use of VG150 from the Parish Council.
 - The resident mentioned that the land is accessible for others and is used all the time by at least one other resident, and acknowledged that as things stand VG150 is owned by the Parish Council.
 - The meeting noted the chair's comment that while in 2021 the Council was unable to immediately identify its ownership, it did not state it did not own the land, and it was confirmed that all information to hand at that time was provided.
 - The chair indicated that a number of the points raised would be covered in a statement to be read under item 24/2070, but that the outstanding legal action still restricts any detailed discussion.

24/2054 Report by County Councillor – (Cllr Mike Steel).

The full report is online in the agenda section of the website.

- Chelmsford Northeast bypass construction begins in 2025 it should relieve some pressure on parts of the B1008.
- Member led highways pothole repair scheme has been fully utilised in his ward.
- Gritting season has begun with gritting lorry tracking available online.
- Essex residents pay c.£300m p.a. in car tax – this goes into general taxation and is not necessarily allocated to road maintenance. From the money it receives ECC is able to spend only £100m on road repairs.
- Digigo is running well with good utilisation.
- Pylons – Potential for underground AC connection through the 'Waltham Gap' in a 60-80m swathe. The HVDC alternative needs large substations.
- VG150 – it is understood a s143 Highways Act 1980 notice to be issued by Essex Legal Services as resident has been recorded as being in breach of highway rights regulations.
- The Cherry Garden Road/Barrack Lane handrail work is in progress.
- The South Street pedestrians signs will be replaced.
- Any proposed footway across the green space adjacent to Duffries Close (owned by CCC) to avoid pedestrians having to walk along South Street when coming out of the recreation ground would potentially also need a drop kerb and would reduce parking spaces (which would likely increase traffic speeds).
- South Street pedestrian visibility will be improved when hedges are cut back to the required 45cm distance from the highway.
- Highways defects – on the 'Track it' system defects are shown as enquiries until they get changed to an allocated defect number when all the enquiries for a single issue are deleted.

24/2055 Report by Chelmsford City Councillor – (Cllr Mike Steel).

The full report is online in the agenda section of the website.

24/2056 Confirm the minutes of the ordinary meeting of the Council held on 18th November 2024.

Resolution: The minutes were confirmed.

24/2057 Note the minutes of the Highways & Transport Committee meeting held on 25th November 2024.

Resolution: The minutes were noted.

24/2058 Note the minutes of the Recreation Committee meeting held on 2nd December 2024.

Resolution: The minutes were noted.

24/2059 Planning decisions by Chelmsford City Council.

<u>Reference</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Status</u>
24/01406/LBC	Church View Cottage The Village Great Waltham Chelmsford Essex CM3 1DE	Application Permitted
24/01361/FUL	Rye Cottage Larks Lane Great Waltham Chelmsford Essex CM3 1DT	Application Permitted
24/01363/FUL	Garnetts Farm Mashbury Road Great Waltham Chelmsford Essex CM3 1EG	Application Permitted
24/01364/LBC	Garnetts Farm Mashbury Road Great Waltham Chelmsford Essex CM3 1EG	Application Permitted

Resolution: The planning was noted.

24/2060 Local Planning.

1. Reference: 24/01488/FUL

Address: Fordhams Little Green Road Great Waltham Chelmsford

Description of works: Proposed demolition of existing dwelling and new replacement detached dwelling with associated garage.

Resolution: The Parish Council has no objections. However, the Parish Council would request that the condition of any new building remains ancillary to the main dwelling.

2. Reference: 24/01554/FUL

Address: Primrose Cottage Larks Lane Great Waltham Chelmsford

Description of works: Installation of an air-source heat pump

Resolution: The Parish Council supports this application.

3. Reference: 24/01548/CUPAQ

Address: Barn North Of Top Farm Black Chapel Lane Great Waltham Dunmow

Description of works: Determination as to whether the prior approval of the local planning authority is required for the proposed change of use of an agricultural building to 1 dwellinghouse (class c3).

Resolution: The Parish Council does not believe it would qualify for part Q as it is on a Protected Lane and is a dilapidated barn with heritage value. Approval of the local planning authority is required for the proposed change.

24/2061 Finance Report.-(Clerk).

Accounts information taken on 10.12.24 at 20.47

Current Account; **£ 4,911.93 (0% interest)**

Reserve Account; **£71,439.19 (2.6% interest)**

Redwood Account **£17,000 (4.1% interest)**

Interest accrued – Not Paid £87.84

Total £93,351.12

Resolution: The accounts were noted.

24/2062 Confirmation of payments-(Clerk) :

Payee	Item	Budget heading	Payment
Staff	Combined Salaries	Salaries	£1,180.07
Clerk	Clerk Expenses	Expenses	£167.45
HMRC	PAYE	PAYE	£629.99
Staff	Essex Pension Fund - Staff pensions	Pension	£1,091.22
Handyman	Handyman Expenses	Expenses	£69.85
Cleaning	Cleaning services	pavilion	£50.00
Clerk	Soil for GW Playground	general reserve	£234.00
Clerk	Keys for Hirers	pavilion	£18.00
Unity	Bank Charges	Bank Charges	£6.00
Amazon	Twine for the jute bags	Handyman consumables	£3.47
Amazon	Office stamp x 3	stationery	£46.89
Three	Mobile Broadband	pavilion	£18.70
Parishioner	Return of payment	pavilion	£100.00
Cllr Steel	Tree lights additional parts	general reserve	£40.85
Amazon	Business membership	general reserve	£114.00
Nik De'ath	Allotment Works	external labour	£140.00
JCM	4/4 Payment	Grounds Maintenance	£1,530.00
Amazon	HP 62XL Printer Cartridge x 2	Stationery	£81.98

Cleaning Services	Toilet Roll	Pavilion expenditure	£5.00
Cleaning Services	Floor Cleaner - neat	Pavilion expenditure	£16.99

Total	£5,544.46
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Resolution: The payments were approved.

24/2063 Monthly Bank Reconciliations.

The October and November account reconciliations were shared with all the members prior to the meeting.

Resolution: The reconciliations were approved.

24/2064 Update on the Action Tracker (circulated with the agenda) – All.

The tracker was reviewed with several items being closed as completed.

24/2065 Clerk's Report.

- Allotments – updates and outstanding payments.
 - Payments received in October and November.
 - Several plot holder changes and some resizing.
 - Payments to be chased up in January, with delays potentially due to email changes by some allotment holders.
- Clerk Training – AdvantEdge Allotments, Finance and Asset modules.
 - Clerk has taken advantage of several free training sessions run by AdvantEdge (the software provider) across these three modules.
 - Asset module being updated with photos of each item.

24/2066 Discuss the request for an additional Dog waste Bin at Howe Street.

Resolution: Defer the item as the Howe Street councillor was unavailable.

24/2067 To receive an update of developments concerning the Council's objection to the adverse possession claim made on VG150, Ford End.

Resolution: The item duplicates 24/2070.

24/2068 To receive an update on the Council's membership and to agree the initiation of a co-option process.

The Parish Council noted the resignation of Cllr Palmer.

Resolution: The Clerk to contact Chelmsford City Council Democratic Services to start the election process and issue the vacancy notice.

Resolution: If the election process is not triggered the Clerk is to advertise the vacancy and start the co-option process.

Resolution: The vacancy to be advertised in all available media.

24/2069 Appoint a Cllr. to fill the vacancy on the Recreation Committee.

Resolution: Cllr Taylor was elected to fill the vacancy.

24/2070 To receive an update of developments concerning the Council's objection to the adverse possession claim made on VG150, Ford End, and to consider any further actions.

The chair read out a clarification statement covering developments since the last meeting.

- An article was submitted by the Council to Parish News and local Facebook pages to request statements to help back its objection to the adverse possession claim.
- The Council has since received statements both confirming the historical and current use of VG150 by parishioners for recreational purposes, as well as other statements saying such use had not been witnessed.
- The Council posted a further Facebook statement which clarified that:

- a. All the Council's previous discussions and decisions are on the parish website.
 - b. The Council's agreed position was informed following complaints received from parishioners.
 - c. The Council's ownership of VG150 (since 1984) is a matter of public record as documented in the Register of Town or Village Greens maintained by Essex County Council.
 - d. The Council has never stated it did not own VG150.
 - e. The erection of a fence and planting on VG150 was without the Council's knowledge or consent.
 - f. The Council is defending an adverse possession claim on a parish asset.
 - g. The Council understands Essex Highways are taking enforcement action to remove the fence and planting from that part of VG150 over which it has highway rights. This would have occurred regardless of who owns the land.
- In March 2021 the Council became engaged in discussions when, following complaints received, details were requested of whether there was a responsibility for the upkeep of VG150 because the area was in an unkempt condition and not being maintained. At that time the Council was unable to immediately identify ownership from its digital records and the matter was not pursued further by the parties involved. However, three years later, after the erection of the fence and planting in January 2024, and following complaints about these works, the Council made a search of its non-digital records and was able to confirm its ownership was established by the Chief Commons Commissioner in 1984.

The Council had no further updates to report from its legal advisors (Essex Legal Services) or HM Land Registry.

In summary, the feedback from residents in relation to the use of VG150 and the erection of the fence and planting of the hedge is split. Some residents have confirmed they use and/or have witnessed VG150 being used for recreational purposes, while others have not witnessed such use. Equally, some residents support the introduction of the fence/hedge, while others are against them.

24/2071 To consider the data received from the recent automatic traffic count conducted by ECC on the Council's behalf on the B1008 at Ford End school (see discussion paper circulated with the agenda), and to agree further actions.

The discussion paper was reviewed and the following points noted:

- The average recorded speeds through Ford End have reduced from the previous count.
- The volume of traffic has increased significantly from the previous count.
- An extrapolation of the data implies that currently each year over 1.8 million drivers exceed the 30mph limit, 390,000 drive over 35mph and almost 60,000 travel at over 40mph.

Several ideas were discussed including revised signage, extending the 40mph limit so that it applies between Barnston and Ford End, average speed cameras and roundabouts.

Resolution: The Clerk to post copies of the November 2024 Essex Highways survey and GWPC discussion paper on the parish website.

Resolution: The Clerk to share the discussion paper with Essex Highways to seek their comments on GWPC observations and interpretations.

Resolution: The Clerk to ask Essex Highways to share with GWPC their analyses of the results from the November 2024 ATC and obtain details of how the results will inform and alter their strategy and approach to traffic use and speed enforcement activities on the B1008 at Ford End.

24/2072 To agree the Council's response to the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government's open consultation "Enabling remote attendance and proxy voting at local authority meetings" (as circulated with the agenda).

There was discussion about the draft response and a review of question 8. It was agreed that the draft response as presented covered the Council's views and should be submitted.

Resolution: Cllr Gilbert to submit the response.

24/2073 To consider and agree a proposed offer from Great Waltham Village Hall to continue the rental of car parking spaces on its site.

There has been ongoing discussion for several months as the parties have looked to come to a mutual agreement on a new contract as the old one contained some terms that were no longer felt to be relevant. The Parish Council has chased to finalise a new agreement several times. The new arrangement includes these proposed changes:

- Increase the number of spaces from 10 plus 2 disabled spaces – total 12.
- Continue the Monday to Friday, 08.30-17.30, rental periods. No weekends.
- Cost reduced to £1,200 per annum (from £1,250) – due January each year.
- The Parish Council to have overview of the public bays for management.
- The Parish Council to provide signage including reference to alternative parking options in the village.
- 60 days' notice either party.
- Removal of the barrier requirement and the insurance requirement.

The rest of the contract terms remain as the previous contract.

The meeting noted that the Council had made a counter offer of below £1,000 for the rent (to take into account the non-exclusive use of the spaces). This was not accepted by the Village Hall and the revised figure of £1,200 was offered instead.

The meeting discussed the occasions when the Village Hall has prohibited access to the rented bays during the permitted use periods.

Resolution: The new car park agreement as presented was approved.

24/2074 Discuss and approve any items to release for publication.

- Reporting of the Facebook publications on VG150 made since the last meeting.
- Precis of the minutes.
- Parish Council vacancy.

Meeting closed at 21.00.

Will Adshead-Grant.

Clerk to the Council.

Next Meetings:

2025

Monday 20th January 2025 Monthly Meeting at Pavilion at 7pm.

Monday 3rd February 2025 Recreation Committee at 7pm at the Pavilion.

Monday 17th February 2025 Monthly Meeting at Pavilion at 7pm.

Monday 24th February 2025 Highways & Transport Committee at 7pm at the Pavilion.

Tuesday 4th March 2025 Annual Assembly of the Parish 7pm at Ford End Village Hall.

Tuesday 18th March 2025 Monthly Meeting at FE VH at 7pm.

Monday 24th March 2025 Finance and General Purposes Committee at 7pm at the Pavilion.

Monday 7th April 2025 Recreation Committee at 7pm at the Pavilion.

Monday 21st April 2025 Bank Holiday.

Tuesday 22nd April 2025 Monthly Meeting at Pavilion at 7pm.

Monday 5th May 2025 Bank Holiday.

Tuesday 6th May 2025 Highways & Transport Committee at 7pm at the Pavilion.

Monday 19th May 2025 AGM & Monthly Meetings at Ford End VH at 7pm.

Monday 26th May 2025 Bank Holiday