

MINUTES OF OVINGTON ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD IN THE MEETING ROOM IN THE OLD GRANARY AT OVINGTON HALL, OVINGTON ON MONDAY, 3RD MARCH 2025 AT 7 PM

In the chair: Mr. P. J. Gentry  
Present: Mrs. L. Lawrence  
Mrs. D. Nott  
Mr. A. Corder-Birch (Clerk)

The Chairman thanked Mrs. D. Nott for providing the venue for the meeting.

1) APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Mr. K. R. Nott and post meeting apologies from Mrs. I. Parker and Mr. P. Schwier

2) MINUTES OF PREVIOUS ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

The minutes of Ovington Annual Parish Meeting held on 5th March 2024 were read by the Clerk, confirmed and duly signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

3) MATTERS ARISING FROM THOSE MINUTES

There were no matters arising.

4) SKIP HIRE

It was agreed to hire a skip for August Bank Holiday weekend 2025, to be located at Upper Farm or if not at the entrance to Ovington Hall.

5) NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH SCHEME REPORT

In the absence of Mr. M. Lewin no report was given.

6) RIDGEWELL AIRFIELD LIAISON AND JOINT ACTION GROUP REPORTS

Mrs. D. Nott stated that there was nothing to report this year.

7) BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL REPORT

In the absence of Mrs. I. Parker no report was given.

8) ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT

In the absence of Mr. P. Schwier no report was given. However a post meeting report was received and circulated a copy of which accompanies these minutes as appendix one.

9) PARISH COUNCIL REPORT

Mrs. L. Lawrence and Mrs. D. Nott gave the annual Parish Council report a copy of which accompanies these minutes as appendix two. The painting of the former telephone kiosk at Ovington had been completed. In connection with the Solar Farm permission it was noted that survey strips had been placed across the roads into Ovington from Tilbury Juxta Clare and Belchamp St. Paul. With regard to the Ovington defibrillator, the Chairman will pass Mr. Stephen Morgan's contact details to Mrs. Nott to arrange servicing. The Chairman thanked Mrs. Lawrence and Mrs. Nott for their report.

10) HIGHWAY ISSUES

Concern was expressed that the list of highway issues reported to ECC using its online reporting tool, some as long ago as 2021, had not been actioned. These had also been raised with Mr. P. Schwier last year and no progress made. A further Zoom meeting with him had been arranged for 6<sup>th</sup> March when the following issues will be raised:

- a. Several blocked drains in highways first reported in 2021 and each subsequent year. Despite officers giving dates for 14<sup>th</sup> May and 15<sup>th</sup> July 2024 the drains remain blocked.
- b. Overgrown verges reported but not cut.
- c. Hedges overhanging highways, which although the landowners responsibility, action is required by ECC Highways to order landowners to cut them in the interest of road safety or in default to cut them and charge the landowners.
- d. All footpaths surveyed and those without finger posts or overgrown reported
- e. Village Gateway signs cannot be installed until a licence is in place and arrangements made for ongoing maintenance.
- f. Proposed weight and width restriction limit on heavy lorry's using road from Clare to Great Yeldham through Ovington and Tilbury Juxta Clare as a short cut (except for access), which are damaging the road and causing major ruts along the edges of the carriageway.

As no progress had been made in connection with any of the above issues since the previous Zoom meeting with Mr. Schwier, the Chairman advised complaining to Mr. Tom Cunningham, the ECC Cabinet Member for Highway Infrastructure and Sustainable Transport.

11) PROPOSED LOCAL GOVERNMENT RE-ORGANISATION

The Clerk reported upon the proposed Unitary Authorities for Essex and although one tier of local government may disappear, Parish Councils should remain. The Essex County Council Election arranged for 1<sup>st</sup> May had been cancelled and existing councillors will continue in office. This item will be included on all agendas for the foreseeable future.

12) ANY OTHER BUSINESS

a) Proposed Village Sign

If the proposed Village Gateway signs do not proceed, then a Village Sign on the green outside Upper Farm could be considered.

There was no other business

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.10pm

.....  
(Date)

.....  
(Chairman)

## APPENDIX 1 – ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT

### **Essex County Council - Heddingham Division**

Cllr Peter Schwier – 2024/25 Annual Report

#### **Achievements of Essex County Council in the Financial Year 2024-25**

Essex County Council (ECC) has made significant strides across various portfolios during the financial year 2024-25, reflecting its commitment to enhancing the quality of life for its residents. Below is an overview of key achievements:

#### **1. Economic Growth and Infrastructure**

- **Investment in Local Economy:** ECC invested £1.95 million to stimulate local economic growth. This funding led to the creation of numerous jobs, supported business expansion, and attracted external investments, facilitating improvements in essential infrastructure. Since 2021, ECC's investments have resulted in over 1,200 new jobs across various industries and have provided training for more than 20,000 residents, enhancing their employability and earning potential.
- **Sustainable Transport Initiatives:** The council prioritized active travel, leading to a substantial increase in sustainable transportation. Notable accomplishments include:
  - Providing cycling training to over 6,000 pupils across 256 schools as part of the Bikeability programme.
  - Facilitating three million e-scooter rides in Basildon, Braintree, Chelmsford, and Colchester since December 2020, replacing approximately 593,508 car trips and reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 109 tons.
  - Installing 70 electric vehicle charging points across the county.
  - Enhancing cycling infrastructure in Braintree, Chelmsford, Colchester, and Harlow, including the development of cycle paths, improved signage, signalized crossings, and wider pavements.These initiatives underscore ECC's dedication to promoting greener transportation options and reducing environmental impact.

#### **2. Environmental Sustainability**

- **Climate Action Plan:** ECC launched a pioneering app to engage residents in climate action. The Carbon Cutting Essex app enables users to track their carbon footprint and discover changes to reduce it. Features include interactive activities such as quizzes, blogs, and videos, with monthly themes focusing on different aspects of climate action, including waste, energy, transport, and food. Users are rewarded with points for positive environmental actions, which can be used to enter prize draws or donated to local causes.

#### **3. Social Care and Community Services**

- **Career Development for Social Workers:** ECC has prioritized the professional growth of its social workers through the Essex Social Care Academy, established in 2012. The academy offers continuous training in areas such as adult mental

health, internet safety, and understanding trauma for separated migrant children. This commitment to career progression spans from apprentices to senior staff, fostering a culture of equality, inclusion, and diversity. Such initiatives have led to high staff morale and recognition by Ofsted for outstanding performance in children's services.

- **Digital Transformation in Services:** To enhance service delivery, ECC partnered with IEG4 to implement a digital solution for processing Blue Badge applications. This modern case management system streamlines the application process, reducing administrative burdens and improving user experience. In 2023, the council received 43,000 applications—a 57% increase since 2019—highlighting the necessity for this digital transformation to meet rising demand.

#### **4. Education and Skills Development**

- **Data Academy Launch:** ECC initiated a Data Academy to bolster data literacy and analytical skills among its staff. Partnering with Multiverse, the council enrolled 40 employees in programs such as 'Data Insights for Business Decisions' and 'Data Fellowship.' This initiative aims to enhance evidence-based decision-making and modernize processes, ultimately improving services for residents.

#### **ECC Budget 2025-26**

The council plans to allocate over £2 billion across four primary sectors: the economy, environment, health, and initiatives to ensure Essex remains a great place for children and families. An additional £88 million is earmarked for portfolio budgets, with £8 million specifically directed towards road and footway maintenance.

Recognizing the importance of infrastructure, the council has committed an extra £12.3 million for highways improvements. This funding will support various projects, including:

- £8.5 million to continue the Members' Highways Initiative
- £1.6 million increase in the road safety budget
- £1.3 million for enhancements to cycle paths
- £500,000 for repairing damaged road signs
- £400,000 additional funding to improve drains and mitigate flooding risks

Despite these investments, the council faces economic challenges, including high inflation and increased service provision costs. To maintain financial sustainability, the council has identified the need for £43 million in savings for the 2025/26 fiscal year.

Through strategic investments and prudent financial management, Essex County Council aims to address current economic pressures while ensuring the continued delivery of essential services to its residents.

#### **Summary**

The responsibility of representing the diverse interests and needs of all the villages both large and small have been both demanding and rewarding across all 33 parishes of the Division. With dual responsibilities on both ECC and BDC I

have, I hope, effectively and continuously, addressed local issues, ensuring that the voices of Hedingham Division residents are heard and acted upon.

**Cllr Peter Schwier AIEMA**

**Climate Czar**

**Cabinet Member for Environment, Waste Reduction & Recycling  
Chair, East of England Regional Climate Change Forum**



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## APPENDIX 2 – PARISH COUNCIL REPORT

### Ovington Parish Council report 2024/5

The **Solar Farm** on the edge of the village was granted planning consent. The Parish Council made representations at the planning committee meeting in September 2024 to highlight concerns about the access route through Tilbury Juxta Clare & Ovington. The Planning committee voted to grant planning consent, subject to conditions, which were confirmed in December 2024. At the request of the Clerk, the Planning Department has agreed to notify the Parish Council when they receive submissions from the applicant relating to the Discharge of Conditions.

**The annual skip** was placed in the village over the August bank holiday and was as popular as ever.

**Blocked drains** have been reported by Mr Adrian Corder Birch in 2021,22 and 23 and by Louise Lawrence in 2024 and 25. Louise has been in touch with Peter Schwier for the past twelve months and despite emails saying initially the issue have been raised with officers who will be attending and later dates being given for 14<sup>th</sup> May and then 15<sup>th</sup> July, the drains remain blocked! Louise reported overgrown hedges and verges in July using the councils reporting tool and speaking directly to the council, no cuts were made by the council.

**Footpaths**, all footpaths have been surveyed and those without finger pointers and overgrown have been reported to the council. New signage has been provided in some areas.

**DaRT**, the service will remain. Following a consultation by Braintree council the service will remain for a further two years.

**Village Gateway signs** - Louise emailed Peter Schwier in December to raise the proposal of installing village gates, he reported that nothing more is going to be delivered this late in the year and that they are not classed as a safety issue and there is no evidence that the gateway signage would change drivers' behaviour. The parish would have to apply for a licence to adopt the signage to take on the ongoing maintenance of the signs, the gateways cannot be installed until a licence is in place. There must be an owner of the gateways which is the relevant council not ECC, ECC might install them, but they do not want them as an asset or to maintain them.

The book exchange in the **Phone box** has not been used over the past year, so we have removed the damp books, and it is currently being repainted both inside and out. The Village noticeboard remains in the phone box.

The **Defibrillator** is checked regularly to comply with the requirements of “The Circuit” which is the central register for all defibs in the country.

There is now a village **Facebook** page – Ovington Village (Essex/Suffolk border). It has been set up as a private group and currently has 38 members.