

MINUTES OF OVINGTON ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD IN THE MEETING ROOM IN THE OLD GRANARY AT OVINGTON HALL, OVINGTON ON MONDAY, 4th MARCH 2026 AT 7 PM

In the chair: Mr. P. J. Gentry
Present: Mrs. L. Lawrence
Mrs. D. Nott
Mr. A. Corder-Birch (Clerk)
Mrs. I. Parker (District Councillor)
Mr. P. Schwier (County Councillor)
Together with 2 (two) members of the public

1) APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Mr. P. E. Pawsey

2) MINUTES OF PREVIOUS ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

The minutes of Ovington Annual Parish Meeting held on 3rd March 2025 were confirmed and duly signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

3) MATTERS ARISING FROM THOSE MINUTES

Mr. P. E. Pawsey had sent a message stating that the drains in the highway had not been cleaned out, but the Ovington Councillors reported that this work had been completed. There were no other matters arising.

4) SKIP HIRE

It was agreed to hire a skip for August Bank Holiday weekend 2026. Mrs. Nott agreed to arrange the location and be the local contact with the skip company

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

Mrs. I. Parker gave the following report:

- a. The new Local Plan consultation had started and gave details of the proposals including a large expansion for Halstead to include a bypass east of the town.
- b. Recycling changes in June to include glass collected from households.
- c. Devolution – The election of an Essex Mayor had been postponed to 2028. The Government should decide this month about Unitary Authorities, for which elections should take place in May 2027.
- d. The Budget settled for 2026-2027 for which there will be no increase in Council Tax so far as BDC is concerned.
- e. The BDC Councillor grant scheme will continue.
- f. A new leisure provider has been appointed for Leisure Centre's across the district.

The Chairman thanked Mrs. Parker for her report.

8) ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT

Mr. P. Schwier gave an overview of the previous five years in his report a copy of which accompanies these minutes as appendix one. The Chairman thanked Mr. Schwier for his report and for representing the three villages so well during the last five years.

9) PARISH COUNCIL REPORT

Mrs. D. Nott gave the annual Parish Council report a copy of which accompanies these minutes as appendix two. The Chairman thanked Mrs. Nott for her report.

10) ENFORCEMENT ACTION AGAINST SOLAR FARM AT BAKERS ROAD

Mrs. L. Lawrence raised numerous issues against the developer of the Solar Farm at Bakers Road, Belchamp St. Paul on the boundary of Ovington, including damage to verges, mud on roads, the use of un-authorised roads, lorries blocking roads waiting for access to the site, lorries making narrow roads unpassable and lorries wearing away the edges of the carriageway, causing ruts and damage.

Mrs. I. Parker reported that the Planning Officer responsible for enforcement had met the developer because of several breaches of planning conditions, which the developer is hopefully remedying. It was understood that most of the aggregate had already been delivered to the site, but machinery and panels await delivery.

The Clerk reported that the Enforcement Officer had failed to visit the site until over a month after the Parish Council had made its first complaint, which was deplorable.

Mr. P. Schwier hoped the revised Traffic Management Plan would now help the situation and agreed that the service by BDC was not good enough. He will raise the issues with Cllr. G. Spray to see what lessons could be learnt and to ensure that action is taken more quickly in future.

Mrs. L. Lawrence stated that the original Traffic Management Plan approved by BDC was pure fiction and was not being adhered to. It was hoped that the revised Traffic Management Plan will work. It was unfortunate that a survey of the verges had not taken place prior to commencement of construction and the bad weather had not helped. It was understood that the developer will repair the verges when the work is complete around October 2026 and hopefully BDC will ensure that this is enforced.

Mrs. I. Parker considered that ECC Highways had not fully considered the highway impact when consulted upon the planning application and it needs to be managed better. It was generally agreed that when the new Unitary Authorities are formed that highways and planning should work better together under one authority.

The Chairman thanked Mrs. L. Lawrence for doing a good job with logging details of breaches and vehicle movements.

11) PROPOSED SOLAR FARM AT OVINGTON, ASHEN AND TILBURY

Mrs. D. Nott reported that consultation upon a second Solar Farm on the borders of Ovington, Ashen and Tilbury Juxta Clare was started in November 2025, and a meeting was held at Ashen Village Hall. However, confirmation was received in January 2026 that the project had been paused for the time being. Mrs. I. Parker added that Essex

Gliding Club was concerned about the impact and lack of sufficient space to safely operate. It was agreed to wait for an application to be made.

12) HIGHWAY ISSUES

Mrs. D. Nott expressed concern that the road from Tilbury Juxta Clare to Great Yeldham was getting narrower and tree canopies were overhanging the road so that large farm vehicles could not get through. This had been reported to ECC Highways during 2025, and it was hoped that they would take enforcement action against the landowners. Mrs. Nott will send full details to Mr. Schwier who will ask for the issue to be escalated and be included in ECC Highways budget.

13) PROPOSED LOCAL GOVERNMENT RE-ORGANISATION

Please see BDC and ECC reports above.

14) ANY OTHER BUSINESS

a) BDC Recycling lorry

Mrs. D. Nott reported that the previous week a BDC Recycling lorry was driven so fast that it went over the lawn at Ovington Hall. Mrs. Parker agreed to raise this with the Head of Operations requesting that the drivers drive slowly and more carefully.

There was no other business

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.20pm

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(Date)

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(Chairman)

DRAFT AWAITING APPROVAL

Essex County Council Hedingham Division

Annual Report 2025–2026

Introduction – The Hedingham Division and What It Represents

The Hedingham Division is a diverse and proudly rural part of Essex, made up of 33 parish councils and a network of villages, farmland, small businesses and community organisations that define its character.

Representing the Hedingham Division means understanding that rural issues differ from those in urban areas. Road maintenance affects farm access as much as commuters. Transport links influence young people's access to education and employment. Social care provision must take account of distance and isolation. Protecting our countryside is not an abstract policy issue — it is central to everyday life.

This annual report sets out the work undertaken during the 2025–2026 municipal year and reflects five years of steady representation and delivery for the Hedingham Division as a whole.

Throughout the year I have attended parish meetings across the division, responded to individual casework, worked with officers to resolve local issues, supported community organisations and represented rural concerns at County Hall.

The aim has been consistent: to ensure that the Hedingham Division is not simply part of Essex on a map, but actively heard, properly supported and fairly invested in.

Highways and Transport – Practical Delivery Backed by Policy

Highways remain the most frequently raised issue across our parish meetings. In rural areas the road network underpins farm access, school transport, emergency response and local business logistics.

Essex maintains one of the largest highway networks in the country. It is managed through routine safety inspections, risk-based defect prioritisation and planned resurfacing programmes.

Delivery mechanisms include the Priority One programme for proactive maintenance, the Members' Highways Initiative which enables local priorities to be addressed, and Local Highway Panels which support new safety and design schemes.

Within the Hedingham Division this year we secured and delivered:

- Resurfacing works in parts of Sible Hedingham, Bulmer Tye & Lamarsh
- Road 'top dressing' improvements in Gestingthorpe.
- Extensive white lining improvements across multiple parishes.
- Replacement and upgrading of road signage.

- Continued engagement regarding drainage and long-term maintenance priorities.

These improvements enhance safety, visibility and long-term resilience. Sustained investment in rural routes remains essential and I will continue pressing for it.

Education and Children's Services – Quality and Accountability

Children's services remain one of the most scrutinised and high-priority areas of local government.

Essex County Council has strengthened safeguarding, improved oversight and raised standards. Ofsted inspections have recognised improvements in leadership and service consistency in recent years.

Demand pressures remain particularly significant in Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), requiring continued reform, financial planning and expansion of appropriate provision.

In rural areas, access to services is often as important as availability. Ensuring families receive equal standards of support regardless of geography remains a central priority.

Adult Social Care – Managing Rising Demand with Stability

Adult social care represents the largest area of County Council expenditure and one of the greatest financial pressures nationally.

Essex continues to perform strongly, with positive Care Quality Commission assessments recognising effective commissioning, safeguarding and partnership working with NHS services.

Investment has focused on prevention, independent living, workforce retention and support for unpaid carers.

For rural communities, transport access and social isolation are important considerations. Balancing compassionate care with financial sustainability remains central to responsible governance.

Finance, Efficiency and Governance – Scale and Stability

Essex County Council is one of the largest county authorities in England, serving over 1.8 million residents and managing a multi-billion-pound budget.

In February 2026, Full Council approved a total council tax increase of 3.95%, comprising a 1.95% general increase and a 2.00% Adult Social Care precept.

For a Band D property, the Essex County Council element rises from £1,579.59 to £1,641.96 annually — an increase of £62.37 per year or approximately £1.20 per week.

Despite national pressures affecting many authorities, Essex remains financially stable and is widely regarded as one of the better-managed county councils nationally.

Disciplined budgeting, long-term planning and responsible capital investment underpin this stability.

Economic Growth, Skills and Rural Enterprise

A thriving rural economy sustains village life. Essex supports economic growth through infrastructure investment, skills development and support for small and medium-sized enterprises.

For the Hedingham Division, agriculture, independent trades, hospitality and local services remain central to economic resilience.

County-wide initiatives promote apprenticeships, vocational training and alignment between education providers and employer demand, ensuring opportunities remain available locally.

Community Grants and Parish Partnership

- Ridgewell History Society
- Birdbrook Bowls Club
- Castle Hedingham Tennis Clubto name a few.

Strong partnership between parish, district and county levels of government remains fundamental to effective local delivery.

Environment, Waste and Energy from Waste

Essex County Council has ended the use of landfill for household waste and transitioned to Energy from Waste treatment, including the Rivenhall facility.

Residual waste is now used to generate electricity rather than being buried, reducing environmental impact.

Food waste recycling has been a particular focus this year. Food makes up around a quarter of general household waste in Essex. Through targeted initiatives, the Council has helped households increase food waste recycling by providing caddy liners, local information packs and direct neighbour support.

Thousands of tonnes of food waste from Essex communities have been diverted from general rubbish and used to produce green energy and agricultural fertiliser, reducing carbon emissions and saving money on disposal costs.

The Council continues working to improve recycling rates, manage waste infrastructure and protect rural landscapes and biodiversity.

Arts - Heritage and Culture

Essex is proud of its heritage, historic towns and rural character.

Through investment and partnership working, the Council has:

- Supported local museums and cultural organisations
- Promoted Essex's heritage assets
- Backed community arts initiatives
- Strengthened cultural tourism

Cultural regeneration supports not only community pride, but also local economic growth -particularly important in rural areas.

Libraries continue to evolve as community hubs, offering digital access, skills support and inclusive community spaces.

Local Government Reorganisation – Future Structures

National government has indicated an intention to simplify two-tier areas such as Essex by moving towards unitary authorities.

This may involve the dissolution of Essex County Council and district councils, with responsibilities consolidated into new single-tier authorities.

Service continuity, rural representation and protection of parish councils must remain central during any transition.

I will continue to ensure the voice of our 33 parish councils is clearly represented in future discussions.

Five Years of Delivery – A Rural Perspective

Over the past five years, Essex has maintained stability during significant national financial pressure.

Across Essex there has been sustained highways investment, strengthened children's services, responsible management of adult social care pressures, transition from landfill to Energy from Waste, and continued economic and infrastructure investment.

Within the Heddingham Division, my approach has remained consistent: attend meetings, respond to residents, raise issues promptly and secure practical improvements.

Closing Reflection

Serving the residents, businesses & 33 parish councils of the Heddingham Division has been both a responsibility and a privilege.

Essex County Council combines scale with stability, ambition with financial discipline, and investment with accountability.

At a time when many authorities nationally face uncertainty, Essex remains one of the strongest and best-managed county councils in the country.

Local government is not about headlines. It is about steady leadership, responsible decisions and visible results.

I remain proud to represent our villages and communities within one of the strongest county authorities in England.



Cllr Peter Schwier AIEMA

County Councillor for the Hedingham Division

Cabinet Member for Environment, Waste Reduction and Recycling

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DRAFT AWAITING APPROVAL

APPENDIX 2 – PARISH COUNCIL REPORT

Ovington Parish Council report 2025/6

The **Phone box** was repainted both inside and out in March 2025. The Village noticeboard remains in the phone box but it no longer houses a library as the books were getting damp and unreadable.

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

The Ovington Village (Essex/Suffolk border) **Facebook** page now has 58 members.

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

Construction of the **Solar Farm** on the edge of the village started in late 2025. Despite the Planning Department agreeing to notify the Parish Council when they received submissions from the applicant relating to the Discharge of Conditions, this never happened. As anticipated, the construction traffic to the site has caused considerable local issues. Lorries were parking along the nearby roads, damaging the verges leaving large quantities of mud on the roads, obstructing the roads and preventing access for other road users and emergency vehicles. As these matters were in breach of planning conditions imposed by BDC, the Clerk reported these breaches to the Planning Enforcement Team at BDC for action. This has subsequently been followed up by Cllr Lawrence who has had lengthy discussions with BDC Enforcement, the construction company, and Cllr's Schwier and Parker. This has resulted in concessions in the form of better traffic management, regular vehicle & road cleaning, and an undertaking to restore the damage caused. The construction continues and will be closely monitored through this period.

Consultation on a second **Solar Farm in Ashen** was started in November 2025, with a local consultation event held in Ashen Village Hall. Part of the proposed site lies within the Parish of Ovington. However, we received confirmation in January 2026 that the project has been paused for the time being.

DRAFT Awaiting Approval