

MOUNT BURES PARISH COUNCIL

Parish Clerk Kevin B. Money
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Minutes of the Annual Electors Meeting held on Tuesday 14th. May 2024 at 7.30pm in Mount Bures Village Hall.

Present: Cllrs I. Woodman (Chair), F. Willett (Vice-Chair), H. Bufton, M. Graham and Kevin B. Money (Parish Clerk). There were also 1 member of the public present.

1. Welcome by Chairman, Cllr Ian Woodman
2. Apologies for absence were received from CCC Cllr W. Sunnucks
3. Minutes of last year's Annual Parish Meeting held on 18th. April 2023.

The minutes were signed at the 9th. May 2023 meeting

4. ECC Councillor report. No report was given
5. CCC Councillor report. No report was given
6. Chairman's Report

2023 was an election year with local elections for Parish Councils taking place across England. All five places on Mount Bures Parish Council were up for election. Three of the previous Councillors, Mark Graham, Fiona Willett and I stood for re-election and we were elected un-opposed.

Not having a contested election is in one-way good news as elections cost money and the Council has a very limited budget, but it is disappointing that there is not more interest across the Parish in standing for the Council. We would very much like to see new people join the Council bringing new perspectives and fresh ideas. Some of the existing Councillors have also served on the Council for some time and might understandably be hoping to stand back at some point. Currently, there is still a vacancy for one more Councillor and the Council would very much like to hear from anyone in the Parish who would be interested in giving something back to the community by serving as a Parish Councillor. As it is, I am very grateful to Hilary Bufton, a long serving previous Parish Councillor, who kindly agreed to be co-opted back onto the Council and I would also like to express the Council's thanks to Michaela Harris for her services to the Council before standing down at the last election.

During the year, the Council has tackled a number of issues starting with the repair and repainting of the Village Sign. This work was carried out by Bakers of Danbury at a cost of £1760 which the Council funded out of its financial reserves. I hope everyone will agree that the replaced sign looks very splendid. The Council will arrange for the trimming of some of the surrounding trees at some point to ensure the sign is more easily visible

The Council also continued to look after the footpath network around the Parish. Work on cutting the vegetation last summer was unfortunately delayed by mechanical problems with the Parish Council's new strimmer. After much effort, the strimmer was finally repaired and returned with a new engine, all the work being carried out under the guarantee. The Council is most grateful to our Footpath Officer, Ian Andrewartha, for his hard work on catching up with the fast growing vegetation last year once the strimmer had been returned and also for cutting back the hedges and trees along footpath alongside Brook House Lane down to the Colchester Road; work for which Bures Hamlet Parish Council make a substantial financial contribution. The Council would strongly encourage residents to use this path in preference to walking along the road which seems to be increasingly busy. Residents are however reminded that this is a footpath, not a bridleway, and that it should not be used by horses. Horses damage the path surface and are likely to make it too muddy to be used by anyone walking, for example, to catch a bus.

The Council is not responsible for the roads in the Parish. However, we were pleased that at long last Essex County Council carried out a considerable amount of work to repair the many potholes on the roads in the Parish, particularly along Chappel Road. In addition, we also managed to successfully apply through our Essex County Councillor, Lewis Barber, for a small number of major potholes elsewhere in the Parish to be repaired using the priority member led pothole scheme. Unfortunately, the very wet weather over the winter and the ever increasing volume, and weight, of traffic has meant that new (and sometimes old) potholes have been opening up almost everywhere. All potholes should be reported as soon as possible to the Essex County Council who have a pretty good website for this purpose. If anyone does not have the ability to report the pothole themselves then the Parish Council can help in

doing so if residents let us know. We can also put forward more potholes for the priority member led pothole scheme. Sadly, ECC Councillors are given only a limited budget for this, but the scheme runs twice a year so if you do spot major potholes that need urgent filling please let the Parish Clerk or any of the Parish Councillors know and we will add it to the priority list. A photograph and an exact location (Lat and Long, grid reference or What 3 Words) are very helpful in getting action.

During the year the Council also received a number of representations about hedges and ditches affecting visibility for drivers or contributing to flooding on the roads. Again, none of these are directly the Parish Council's responsibility – and the majority of both hedges and ditches are on private land and it is the land owners or house holders' responsibility rather than the responsibility of any public body to cut and clear them. Residents concerned about flooding from blocked ditches should therefore do their best to alert the relevant landowner/householder and ask them to do something about it. Ultimately the landowner or householder will be liable if damage is caused to the property of others by flooding from a blocked ditch, or water on the road from a blocked ditch causes an accident, so it is very much in their interest to take action. The Council has published what we hope is a very clear summary of who is responsible for what in dealing with drainage and we can easily provide more copies of this if anyone would find them useful. If it is not obvious who the responsible landowner is, or you think it may be publicly maintained drainage that is at fault, then the Parish Council might be able to help so do get in touch with your Parish Councillor or contact your County Councillor.

During the year, the Council commented on a number of planning applications. As a statutory consultee the Parish Council comments on all planning applications within the Parish and residents are most welcome to make their views known to the Council, either in support or against, on any current planning application to help inform the Council's deliberations. Comments on applications should however always also be submitted directly to the Colchester City Council as the relevant Planning Authority. It is easy and quick submit comments through the City Council website.

The majority of the planning applications received are domestic and largely uncontentious. However, two commercial applications affecting the Parish are still ongoing. The first of these (ESS/30/22/COL) covered retrospective planning permission for a composting facility to process 25,000 tonnes a year of green waste on the concrete apron on Woringford aerodrome at the top of the old road from Wellhouse Farm. The Council objected to this application on the grounds that an industrial facility of this nature in a very rural location would be inappropriate and also that the large number of proposed HGV movements along the old perimeter track running from the entrance at Fairfields Farm to the location would seriously impact on the amenity of anyone walking along the footpath that also runs along this perimeter track.

The application was rejected by Essex County Council but is currently the subject of an ongoing appeal to the Secretary of State. The Parish Council will continue to oppose the application as necessary. The second application (224291) also relates in part to the same location and covers the construction or conversion of lagoons or reservoirs for the storage of digestate from green composting operations at Fairfields Farm for subsequent use as fertiliser on the fields. One of the proposed locations for the storage of this digestate is the existing reservoir next to the concrete apron at the top of the old road from Wellhouse Farm.

While recognising that there might be environmental benefits from using this digestate in this way, the Council had reservations about the proposal and asked that, if converted, this existing reservoir should be lined or tanked to avoid continuing leakage along the neighbouring footpath; that it should be adequately fenced to avoid dogs being walked along the neighbouring footpaths entering the stored digestate; and that planning should not be granted if there was any possibility of odours from the stored digestate affecting the amenity of those using the neighbouring footpaths. Overall, the Council considered that it would be better if all storage of digestate were concentrated with the other proposed lagoons closer to Fairfields Farm. The Council has yet to hear the outcome of this planning application.

Finally, in recognising just how lucky we are to live in such a beautiful and largely unspoilt landscape the Council has also published some advice on preserving our lovely dark skies with their spectacular displays of stars and auroras (for those lucky enough to have seen it). This is again an area where it is for all of us as individual householder or businesses rather than for public bodies to take action, but a few simple steps to in limiting the impact of external lighting can make an enormous difference to everyone's enjoyment of the night's skies. Certainly, I always think that darkness and quietness are two of the most wonderful benefits of living in the countryside and while some noise and light is inevitable I hope that everyone would agree that it is incumbent on us all to try and preserve as much of the dark and quiet as we can.

7. Financial Report

The accounts for 2023/2024 have been submitted to the Internal Auditor. The accounts will be approved at the next Parish Council meeting later this evening. The accounts are exempt from an external audit due to the fact that the income and expenditure does not exceed £25,000. Therefore, the Council

Certifies itself for this internal audit. Mount Bures Parish Council must hold at least 50% of its Precept in reserve. This equates to approximately £1650

8. Open Forum discussion (matters raised by residents)

Any news on the crossing cottage? No response as yet. The cottage is on a 150 year lease with a substantial amount of time still remaining. There has been some interest in taking on the project. The dangerous junction on the B1508 is still ongoing with Bures Hamlet Parish Council making another LHP application. This issue has not been resolved

The Chairman then closed the meeting at 7.50pm and thanked everyone for attending

Signed

Woodman

10th. September 2024

**Ian Woodman
Chairman**