

MOUNT BURES PARISH COUNCIL

Parish Clerk Kevin B. Money
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Minutes of the Annual Electors Meeting held on Tuesday 13th. May 2025 at 7.30pm in Mount Bures Village Hall.

Present: Cllrs I. Woodman (Chair), F. Willett (Vice-Chair), H. Bufton, M. Graham, ECC Cllr L. Barber and Kevin B. Money (Parish Clerk). There were 3 members of the public present.

1. Welcome by Chairman

2. Apologies for absence were received from CCC Cllr W. Sunnucks

3. ECC Councillor report

- Local Plan – Vote to progress the local plan to 2041. Decided not to submit the local plan at the February meeting. Vote last week – Chairmans attempt to get the plan through. This did not pass. Plan has not been submitted for consultation.
- Government to build another 1400 homes this year
- Devolution: Mayor elected in 2026. Between 2 - 6 Local unitary. will be set up in 2027 Councillor elections. 2028 Essex County Council will cease to exists.
- Delay in Local plan will be about 6-9 months. If the plan is submitted it could be out of date in 2 years' time and may not be sound.
- Anglian Water are now constantly objecting to planning applications due to lack of infrastructure.

Councillors asked Cllr L. Barber questions

- Are second homes taken into consideration with the "call for sites". The 1400 new dwellings do not take into account empty and second homes.

4. CCC Councillor report No report was given

5. Chairman's Report

2024 has been a quieter year than of late with fewer big public events affecting the Parish. However, it was a General Election year, and the election of a new government has focused the work of higher levels of Local Government activity on the two key issue of planning and Local Government reform and inevitably Parish Councils are being affected by this.

It is not thought that Parish Councils themselves will be the subject of any proposals for change as part of Local Government reforms. However, the work of Parish Councils, and particularly their ability to get action from higher tiers of Local Government on the many local issues for which the Parish Council is not directly responsible – something that is already quite challenging - will be impacted by whatever changes are adopted. It is too early to say whether the move towards breaking up County Councils and amalgamating some District Councils to form unitary bodies will, from this perspective, make things better or worse, but it is worth noting that we are very dependent on our City and County Councillors to get action from Council officers, and any increase in the geographical areas these Councillors have to look after as a consequence of these changes would be likely to make it more difficult to get results. This is something that the Parish Council will therefore be watching closely as the reforms develop. In the meantime, I should say a big thank you to our City Councillor Will Sunnucks and our County Councillor Lewis Barber for their willingness to take up issues behalf of the Parish Council and local residents. We are very grateful for that attention they bestow on what must be one of their smallest Councils.

On planning, the Parish Council is of course more directly involved and has already been engaged in the ongoing Local Plan Review Process. Last year Colchester City Council initiated what is called a 'call for development sites' in which anybody can put forward proposals for development for the City Council to consider. It had been expected that the results of that consideration would be issued for public consultation this spring. The change of Government and the imposition of new housing targets meant however that this time table has slipped and the new date for publication is still under debate. As a rural Parish with no major settlements, a population of only around 200 people and no services, Mount Bures is always unlikely to be the subject of any proposals for major development. But increasing development around us at Bures Hamlet, Wakes Colne and many other locations will inevitably put more pressure on local roads and local services. The Parish Council will therefore continue to engage with the development of the Colchester City local plan and liaise with other local Councils over any proposals in their areas of concern to us.

The review of the Local Plan has also allowed the Council to submit a request for our village green – which has been diligently looked after by local residents for more than 50 years – to be given some formal recognition by being designated as Local Green Space. It is expected that this will be included in the public consultation when it is published. The Council has also submitted a similar request to Bures Hamlet Parish Council for the small element of the village green that lies over the boundary in Bures Hamlet to be included as Local Green Space in their Neighbourhood Plan and subsequently in the Braintree Local Plan.

Finally on this issue, the Parish Council is aware that a site in the open countryside by the level crossing has been put forward for development by the landowner as part of the Braintree District Council Local Plan Review “Call for Sites”. All sites put forward as part of this process have to be assessed by the Planning Authority against the Strategic Land Availability Methodology and only if they passed would they be included in the Local Plan Review Preferred Options for public consultation. Following a request from Braintree District Council for Parish Councils to comment on sites submitted in the call for sites, the Parish Council has highlighted to Braintree District Council Mount Bures’ categorisation within the Colchester City Local Plan Spatial Strategy and the developing Local Plan review as a settlement that is not considered suitable for sustainable development.

Outside all of this work on the Local Plan, there has however been continuing development within the Parish, particularly with a number of barn conversions under permitted development rights. The Council is not opposed to repurposing of redundant buildings to create new homes without building on open countryside, but has concerns about extra vehicle traffic on very small protected roads and, increasingly, about the potential impact of ever-increasing ambient lighting levels on the beautiful dark skies we are lucky enough to enjoy. In commenting on these applications, the Council has therefore generally sought to ensure that adequate mitigating action is taken to deal with these issues if development is approved.

I should also mention that there are still two outstanding commercial planning applications affecting the Parish covering retrospective planning permission for a composting facility on the concrete apron on Wormingford conversion of the reservoir at the top of Wellhouse Road for the storage of digestate from green composting operations at Fairfields Farm. The Council has yet to hear the outcome of these planning applications.

A more immediate planning issues requiring Council action was the illegally erected advertising sign on Hall Road which attracted complaints from residents and where we are grateful to City Council planning enforcement officers for forcing the builder to remove the sign.

Elsewhere, the Council has continued its work to look after the footpath network where in recognition of what seems an increasing challenge in keeping vegetation growth under control the Council has agreed to increase budget for footpath cutting and, if necessary, purchase additional tools to enable this work to be undertaken. The Council will also look to encourage landowners to cut back trees and hedges encroaching upon public footpaths as is their responsibility. Unfortunately, our Footpath Officer is currently recovering from an operation and not yet able to start cutting the path this year but he hopes to be able to do so shortly and we send him our best wishes for a speedy recovery.

Following some expressions of interest from residents the Council has also been investigating the possibility of obtaining a defibrillator for the Parish. Our bid for a free defibrillator was unsuccessful but the Council is now canvassing the views of residents within easy reach of our village hall as to whether they would be willing to contribute financially towards the purchase of a defibrillator.

Finally, I should not that we are still short of one Councillor on the Parish Council and 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.

6. Open Forum discussion (matters raised by residents)

No questions were asked

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

Signed

Ian Woodman
Ian Woodman
 Chair

8th. July 2025