

Pentlow Parish Council

Parish Clerk / RFO: Kevin B. Money
7 Roach Vale Colchester Essex CO4 3YN
Tel: 07810781509 email pentlowparishcouncil@gmail.com
www. <https://e-voice.org.uk/pentlowparishcouncil>

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

WEDNESDAY 8th. APRIL 2026 at 7pm
at the Village Hall, Pentlow

Chair: Councillor Tim Bartlett

Members of the Parish and Press are welcome to attend.
Questions may only be asked by Residents of the Parish.
For more information, please contact the Clerk to the Council

A G E N D A

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of last year's Annual Parish Meeting held on 7th. May 2025
3. Chair's Report – Cllr Tim Bartlett
4. Report from ECC - Cllr Peter Schweir
5. Report from BDC - Cllr Iona Parker
6. Open Forum discussion (matters raised by residents)
7. To Close the meeting having considered and determined all items of business

Signed

2nd. April 2026

T Bartlett

Tim Bartlett
Chair of Pentlow Parish Council

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Minutes of the Annual Parish meeting held on Wednesday 7th. May 2025 at 7pm in the Village Hall.

Present: Cllrs T. Bartlett, D. Wright, I. Bower, R. Simnett, M. Stuchfield, BDC Cllr I. Parker and Kevin B. Money (Parish Clerk). There were also 4 members of the public present. Plus 1 member of the press

1. **Apologies for absence** were received from ECC Cllr P. Schwier
2. **Minutes of last year's Annual Parish Meeting** held on 29th. May 2024 **All Agreed**
3. **Vice-Chairman's Report**
 - Long list of achievements including Parish Precept was not increased
 - Thanked Ian Bower for new defibrillator for the village. A morning session in mid-July for a training programme on how to use the equipment
 - Refuse vehicle attended the village on 2 occasions with great success
 - Footpath management was returned to BDC for cutting and attending to problems
 - Pinkuah Arms is now closed and planning permission has been granted for a dwelling. This leaves the village hall as an asset to the village.
 - Solar Farm has been completed with very little problems to the village. The screening could have been done earlier.
 - Speedwatch continues but more volunteers are required. Speeding still occurs in the village.
 - Litter picking has been continually undertaken around the village.
4. **Report from ECC Cllr Peter Schweir** No report was given
5. **Report from BDC Cllr Iona Parker**

This is the end of my 10th year as your District Councillor for the Stour Valley North Ward, which takes in the villages of Ridgewell, Ashen, Little Yeldham, Tilbury-Juxta-Clare, Ovington, the Belchamps, Pentlow, Foxearth, Liston and Borley. I aim to do my best to represent the interests of your communities on Braintree District Council, help residents with their enquiries and serve on Council committees.

I am a chair of the Planning Committee and am also a member of the Local Plan sub committee, Corporate Scrutiny Committee and Licensing Committee. I also represent the Council at meetings of the Essex Rural Partnership. In addition, I endeavour to attend Parish Council meetings in my ward or send a written report if I am unable to attend in person.

I received £1,250 under the Councillors Community Grant Scheme and was able to provide funds for a new picnic bench in Ridgewell and a new fridge/freezer for Belchamp Walter village hall. Since the inception of this scheme, I have tried to distribute the funds equally around my ward. I am pleased that despite ongoing pressures on the Council's budget, the Council will be continuing this scheme in 25/26 and has maintained the Street Cleansing grant given to Parish Councils and allocated an additional £50,000 for new dog waste and litter bins across the District, something I know has concerned some Parish Councils.

As always I have been dealing with a variety of issues raised with me including bus transport, planning issues and the never ending potholes. Resurfacing has taken place on various sections of road in my ward and I know more is planned, including in Foxearth and Tilbury. I continue to report potholes on the Essex Highways website when I see them as well as reporting any fly tipping to BDC. I have been pressing cabinet members about the grass verge obstructing visibility on single track roads in the summer and am pleased to report that it has been agreed that twice yearly verge cutting should resume. I know that solar farms cause deep concerns for many residents. It is very difficult to resist solar farms under current Government policy but along with others, I have been working behind the scenes to make sure the planning conditions are as robust as they can be, that hedging is planted as early as possible to provide an effective screen and that traffic issues during construction are addressed.

In wider terms, Braintree Council has continued with its priority of delivering high quality services on a balanced budget (unlike a number of well-publicised other Councils). Residents will be aware of the plans for devolution in Greater Essex which will have a Mayor elected next year, and the creation of 3, 4 or 5 new unitary Councils in 2028 which will take on the responsibilities of both District and County Council – in our case at Braintree we will be merged with a number of neighbouring Essex Councils and have a population of 400-500,000.

Some highlights of the Braintree District Council achievements or activities during the 2024/25 year are:

- Continued to support residents and communities impacted by the cost of living crisis. A new Cost of Living Grant Scheme has just been launched for groups and organisations.
- Delivered over 250 affordable homes.
- Awarded grants from the Rural England Prosperity Fund to a number of businesses and community organisations, including one for refurbishment of Borley village hall.
- New 3G all-weather pitch at Witham Sports Ground
- Delivered the Home Upgrade grant Phase 2 (HUG) for people living in cold homes or struggling with winter fuel bills.
- Introduced a landlord incentive scheme to help prospective renters.
- Launched round 2 of the Halstead Community Fund (a large part of which went to the upgrade of the Empire Theatre in Halstead).
- Put in motion the construction of a Witham Community Centre.
- Supported local investment in a number of local communities through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (Year 3)
- Starting work on physical improvements to Halstead and Witham town centres.
- Increased capacity at the successful The Plaza, Great Notley, to support local businesses, and continued work towards sale of the last remaining plots at Horizon 120.
- Organised well-attended jobs fairs and a Digital Business Expo in Braintree.
- Provided funding for transport to Essex University for 13-14 year olds from local schools to enable them to learn about further education.
- Installed solar panel arrays and LED lighting at Witham Leisure Centre to make the building largely self-sufficient in electricity.
- Collaborated with other Essex authorities to establish and begin to implement a new Waste Strategy for Essex, as well as consulting on a proposed new waste and recycling regime for Braintree, in line with government requirements, and with the aim to reducing residual waste and raising the proportion of material which can be usefully recycled.
- Continued to collaborate with other Essex Councils on shared services and begun to take part in the the process of devolution and local government reorganisation in Essex, as per government mandate.
- Followed up on the Action Plan which stemmed from the Corporate Peer Challenge which took place in late 2023 and which found BDC to be a well-run and ambitious council.
- Started work on a new Local Plan for the District to extend the current plan to 2041. A review of employment need has already been considered and additional housing sites will be considered in May and June.
- Responded to Government changes to the National Planning Policy Framework.

6. Open Forum discussion (matters raised by residents)

Refuse vehicle of advertising. Could a separate flyer be produced and put in all local residents homes and in the Parish magazine? Can the vehicle stay for the 2 allocated hours.

Solar Farm has been operating since last June supplying Sudbury.

The tree planting took place in December but BDC informed the owners of the Solar Farm that it does not need to plant the hedging until it is operational. The 2 mounds still need addressing ASAP

Can the developers be approached to obtain the donation monies.

7. To Close the meeting having considered and determined all items of business

The Vice-Chair then closed the meeting at 7.45pm and thanked everyone for attending

Signed

Tim Bartlett - Chair

8th. April 2026

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

Closing Reflection

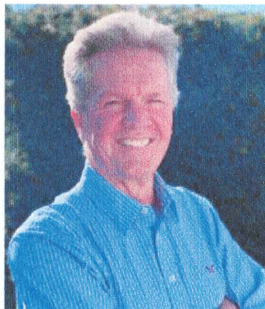
Serving the residents, businesses & 33 parish councils of the Hedingham Division has been both a responsibility and a privilege.

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

Essex County Council

Tel: 01787 460473

Email: cllr.peter.schwier@essex.gov.uk

Website: www.essex.gov.uk