

Pentlow Parish Council

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Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday 23rd. January 2024 at 7pm in the Village Hall.

Present: Cllrs J. Calver (Chairman), R. Simnett (Vice-Chairman), D. Wright, T. Bartlett, M. Stuchfield and Kevin B. Money (Parish Clerk).
There were also 3 members of the public present

001/2024 Chairman welcome. The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting

002/2024 Apologies for Absence were received from ECC Cllr P. Schwier and BDC Cllr I. Parker

003/2024 Declaration of Interest

To declare any Disclosable Pecuniary, Pecuniary or non-Pecuniary Interest relating to items on the agenda

Cllr M. Stuchfield declared an interest in item 016/2024

004/2024 To approve the Minutes of the last meeting of Pentlow Parish Council

To receive and agree the minutes of the last PPC meeting held on 10th. October 2023. **All Agreed**

005/2024 Matters arising

- 1) Pinkuah Arms ACV. No update
- 2) Twenty's Plenty Campaign update. No date – Remove from future agendas
- 3) Community Speedwatch update. No activity due to weather conditions

006/2024 Essex County Councillors report – ECC Cllr P. Schwier

Cllr P. Schwier sent a report prior to the meeting that read:

Salting procedure in ECC – 50 trucks on the road. On 70 occasions over 21,000 tonnes of grit was deposited on the Essex roads. Storm Henk – ECC received an extra 800 calls with over 100 trees falling down on highways. ECC had an extra 12 tree surgeon crews deployed. Highways assets are being blocked, please ask local landowners to keep ditches cleared.

ECC budget - less 1 year settlement money had been received from Government. ECC budget has been proposed at just under 3% + 2% adult and child social care. Making a 5%+ rise in Council tax. There is a budget gap from 2023/2024. "Whats3Words" video to be circulated.

007/2024 District Councillors report – BDC Cllr I. Parker

Cllr I. Parker supplied a written report prior to the meeting. It read:

- **Devolution** – Greater Essex (Essex CC plus the 2 Unitaries, Thurrock and Southend) has been offered a level 2 devolution deal by the Government. This involves the creation of a Greater Essex Combined Authority but no directly elected mayor. The Combined Authority would be a new institution in which the three authorities alongside the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner will take collective decisions on the powers and budgets that Government devolves down to Greater Essex under the deal. There will be representatives from the district, borough and city councils on the Combined Authority. There are currently discussions underway with Government about the level of funding and the precise powers which will be devolved which will be centred around skills, support for business, strategic transport planning and nature recovery. Once the discussions have concluded (probably in December), ECC will conduct a full public consultation on the deal. The deal will enable give Essex greater control over strategic levers and will give Essex a stronger voice in Whitehall.
- **Safer Streets funding, Halstead** – The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner has secured £300,000 of funding from the Government's safer streets funding in Halstead

ACTION

CLERK

Signed



R. Simnett – Vice-Chairman

16th. April 2024

which has been match funded by a further £150,000 from BDC, Halstead Town Council and others. This will address anti-social behaviour in parts of Halstead and will build on the successful scheme in Witham which has resulted in significant reductions in crime and fear of crime.

- **Budget** – BDC has started the process for setting the Council's budget for 2024/25 and the medium-term financial strategy for the next 4 years. Despite measures that have already been taken, BDC is still facing a budget gap over the next 4 years of over £2m due to economic and national factors (e.g. wage inflation, additional pressures due to legislative changes, lack of clarity re central government funding). We are looking at ways of plugging this gap through cost savings and raising income. There will be particular focus on how we can work more efficiently, including increasing the number of services we share with other authorities.
- **Planning** – Before Christmas the Government announced changes to the National Planning Policy Framework which removed the requirement for Councils with an up-to-date Local Plan, such as Braintree, to demonstrate a 5 year supply of deliverable homes when considering new applications. Councils still have to demonstrate a 5 year supply in relation to applications already submitted but BDC can now demonstrate this. This will put us in a much better position to resist speculative planning applications on sites not allocated for development in the Local Plan.
- **Waste and recycling** – Around 27,000 properties have signed up for the year-round garden waste collection which has brought in income of £700,000 for the Council. As part of efforts to reduce the volume of residual waste, a decision has been taken to no longer collect side waste from 1st April (ie waste contained in bin liners next to the black bin).
- **Local Council Tax Support Scheme** – This is a scheme to help those on low incomes who are struggling to pay their Council Tax. BDC has introduced a revised scheme which will increase the level of support for households on the lowest incomes, replace the current means-tested scheme with a simpler banded scheme and make the scheme easier to administer.
- **Bus transport** – I am pleased to report that following the consultation on passenger transport in Essex, ECC have agreed to retain the DaRT3 minibus service that operates in our villages. This service was threatened with closure and I would like to thank all those who took part in the consultation.
- **Parking in Sudbury** – You may have seen that Babergh DC are considering introducing parking charges in Sudbury. I have written to the leader of Babergh DC and asked him to consult the villages in Essex on the plans but I regret without success.

008/2024 Public Participation Session

The Chairman will invite questions and observations from members of the public present. Any advance on the village sign design? To be placed on the next agenda. Refuse collection March / October – Cllr J. Calver to collect BDC data from last vehicle collection

Cllr J.
Calver

009/2024 Footpath Maintenance and cutting update

The footpath maintenance and cutting has reverted to BDC for 2024.

010/2024 Telephone Box – Councillors to discuss any repairs required

Cllr J. Calver proposed purchasing a door closer kit, door closer arm and Telephone sign at a cost of £130.40p +VAT. Cllr M. Stuchfield seconded. **All Agreed.** K. Hoyer to undertake purchasing and have the items fitted.

011/2024 Planning Application/s

No planning applications have been submitted to BDC affecting Pentlow

012/2024 Planning Decision/s made by BDC affecting Pentlow

23/02169/HH - Bellsden Lodge Belchamp Road Pentlow Essex CO10 7JS

Single storey rear and side extensions, removal of a chimney stack and changes to existing window

Application GRANTED

013/2024 Solar farm construction – update on development

The panels are being erected. Landscaping has not started. Traffic management plan is not being observed.

Cllr R.
Simnett

<p>Night safety lights are blinding oncoming traffic. Landscaping should have started at the beginning of the project. Enormous amount of rubbish being blown about the area. Working out of hours agreed.</p>	
<p>Cllr R. Simnett to email Cllr I. Parker at BDC to update her of PPC's concerns</p>	
<p>014/2024 Finance</p>	
<p>a) To receive the Bank balances as at 31st. December 2023</p>	
<p>Councillors noted the Bank balances as at 31st. December 2023</p>	
<p>b) To receive the comparison of Actual against Budget 2023/24</p>	
<p>Councillors noted the comparison of Actual against Budget 2023/24</p>	
<p>c) Councillors to agree the January 2024 finances and to agree a transfer of any funds to meet the Parish Council's financial requirements. All Agreed</p>	
<p>015/2024 Budget 2024/2025 - Councillors to finalise the budget expenditure for 2024/2025</p>	
<p>Cllr J. Calver proposed a budget of £7775.00p. Resulting in a Precept of £7000.00p for 2024/2025. When using the BDC tax base figure of 109.05 results in a band D property of £64.19p. Cllr R. Simnett seconded.</p>	
<p>All Agreed. The RFO to send the appropriate signed form to BDC.</p>	RFO
<p>016/2024 Village Hall – Items to discuss</p>	
<p>Cllr M. Stuchfield is progressing this item. A bespoke visit from the independent qualified surveyor (David Buttery of Jolliffe Daking) would cost £675.60 including VAT. A combined visit (with another unrelated client in the area) would cost approximately £250. Many of the defects/repairs have been undertaken following the Surveyor's Report submitted on 3rd May 2018. A recent discussion with</p>	
<p>Cllr Stuchfield and the surveyor indicated that a site visit might not be necessary.</p>	
<p>Cllr Stuchfield reported that developments had taken place in connection with Energy Performance Certificates "EPC" with the Government issuing new software for Assessors in June 2023. Electricity is now favoured over fossil fuels, the logic being that much more electricity is now generated by renewables (wind farms, solar panels, etc) than was previously the case. The surveyor advises that the EPC rating for the Village Hall is likely to be different from the original assessment in October 2019 as the radiators fed by the oil-fired boiler will now cause an even poorer rating than before although the electric water heaters will off-set this to some extent. The surveyor suggested that the Parish Council might like to consider obtaining a quotation for switching to electric heating and disconnecting the oil-fired boiler.</p>	
<p>A draft EPC could be obtained on the assumption that these works will be carried out. It is quite possible that this would result in an EPC rating of E or above and enable a Lease to proceed. The Survey Report provides for a proposed Lease to be for a term of 15 years, "or such other period as may be necessary". Cllr Stuchfield further reported that the Surveyor is open to recommending a 20, 25 or even 30-year Lease. It was agreed that quotations to have the hall "all electric" should be sought. It was also agreed to undertake a resident survey to see if the village hall is required / needed. Cllr J. Calver proposed getting independent legal advice and to see existing advice relating to the Lease. (The lease expired more than 7 years ago). Village Hall Management committee to undertake a survey of Pentlow residents to see if the Hall should be kept. VHMC to report back at the next PPC meeting.</p>	
<p>Cllr J. Calver proposed getting independent legal advice and to see exiting advice report on the existing lease. (The lease expired 6 years ago). Cllr J. Calver to ask M. Davies for further information.</p>	Cllr J. Calver
<p>Cllr M. Stuchfield to find the Village Hall Lease</p>	Cllr M. Stuchfield
<p>017/2024 Items for Next Agenda</p>	
<p>BDC Refuse vehicle next visit:</p>	CLERK
<p>Village sign – Cllr M. Stuchfield:</p>	
<p>Village Hall Lease: Solar Farm</p>	
<p>018/2024 Date of Next Full Council meetings – TUESDAY 16th. APRIL 2024 at 7pm</p>	NEW MEETING DATE
<p>019/2024 Closure of the Meeting</p>	
<p>To Close the meeting having considered and determined all items of business</p>	
<p>The Chairman then closed the meeting at 8.10pm and thanked everyone for attending</p>	

Signed

*RSimnett*16th. April 2024

R. Simnett – Vice-Chairman