

Pentlow Parish Council

Parish Clerk / RFO: Kevin B. Money

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Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday 19th. March 2025 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall.

Present: Cllrs T. Bartlett, D. Wright, I. Bower, BDC Cllr I. Parker and Kevin B. Money (Parish Clerk). There were also 12 members of the public present. Plus 1 member of the press

001/2025 Apologies for Absence were received from ECC Cllr P. Schwier and Cllr R. Simnett. Apologies had also been sent by email from Cllr M. Stuchfield which were noted post meeting.

002/2025 Declaration of Interest

To declare any Disclosable Pecuniary, Pecuniary or non-Pecuniary Interest relating to items on the agenda. Cllr I Bower declared an interest in item 017/2025

003/2025 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 20th. November 2024 **All Agreed**

004/2025 Essex County Councillors report – ECC Cllr P. Schwier No report was submitted

005/2025 District Councillors report – BDC Cllr I. Parker Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation in Essex.

The Government has announced that it wishes to extend devolution to all areas of England. Essex has taken the view that it should be at the forefront of this programme and has applied to be in the priority group. This request has been accepted.

Devolution will see powers, functions and funding passed from Whitehall to local areas and leaders. This will enable decisions which would otherwise be taken by ministers and civil servants in London to be taken at a more local level, tailoring the decisions to local needs, enabling more co-ordinated action and giving local areas more say over decisions which affect them.

The proposed model for Essex will see a directly elected mayor and the creation of a combined/strategic authority consisting of representatives from Essex County Council, Thurrock and Southend. Elections for the mayor would take place in May 2026.

The areas to be devolved include:

- Transport and local infrastructure, including buses, highways and train services
- Skills and employment support
- Housing and strategic planning
- Economic development and regeneration, including business support

The Government is consulting on these proposed changes and is seeking your views. Search Greater Essex Devolution Consultation on the Gov.uk website.

In addition to this (and separate from it) the Government is proposing to reorganise local Government in 2 tier areas (i.e. where there are county and district/borough/city councils) and replace them with one unitary council. For Essex this will mean between 2 and 5 unitary Councils. Essex has been asked to submit its initial proposals by 21st. March with final proposals by 26th. September. Leaders have formed cross party working groups to look at issues such as geography, size, number and value for money. Financial viability will be an important issue as will the need to maintain quality services. There also needs to be an understanding with the Government of how existing council debts will be handled.

Given the level of upheaval this will involve, the Government has agreed to postpone elections for Essex County Council due to take place this May for one year (although this may be extended).

Signed

TBartlett
Chair

7th. May 2025

Budget

BDC agreed its budget for the forthcoming year at its meeting on 24th February. Main highlights of relevance to my ward:

- Council tax to remain low. The BDC element of Council Tax will increase by 2.97% or £5.94 a year for a band D property. This means our Council Tax is still have one of the lowest in Essex and we are able to set a balanced budget.
- Transformation programme to be adjusted to reflect Local Government Reorganisation. This Programme is looking at how we can work more efficiently and make best use of our funds.
- £1.5m to invest in community assets across the district.
- Further funding for our cost-of-living fund to help low-income households.
- £500k for temporary housing to meet the growing pressures for temporary housing for those who are homeless.
- No increase to garden waste collection charges.
- £50k for new litter and dog bins. (Thank you to the parish councils in my ward who have been pushing for new bins.)
- Street cleaning grants to parish councils to continue.
- Councillor Community Grants Scheme to continue.
- Twice yearly verge cutting to resume.

To remind you, 58% of our income comes from Council tax, 40% comes from business rates and 2% comes from Government grants. BDC collects Council tax on behalf of ECC, the police and fire authorities and town and parish councils. Of every £1 collected in Council tax, 9p is retained by the District Council.

Local Plan

The consultation on the Issues and Options for the new Local Plan has just closed. The next stage is the evaluation of the sites that have been put forward for development (housing and employment). Meetings will take place in May and June.

If any sites have been put forward in your parish, I would urge you to consider now how you wish to respond to these sites so you are ready to participate in these meetings if necessary.

Waste Review

The consultation on this has also just closed. Over 7,500 responses have been received. I hope to be able to update you on this at the meeting.

Sible Hedingham medical centre

Good news on this. The land for this was acquired by BDC as part of a s.106 agreement for the Bloor Homes development in Sible Hedingham. The land has now been transferred from BDC to One Medical who will be building the centre for the GP practices in Hedingham. Work on drainage is due to start shortly. One Medical will then go out to tender for the construction with work starting, all going well, in the autumn. The building already has planning permission.

Braintree Diagnostic Centre

Work has now started on this at the Braintree Community Hospital. We are extremely fortunate to have this facility which is only one of three being developed in the county. This will provide access to X-rays, MRI and CT scans and blood tests and save patients having to travel further afield.

Cllr I. Parker took questions from Councillors and residents.

006/2025 Public Participation Session

The Vice-Chair invited questions and observations from members of the public present.

Regarding the financial contribution from the operators of the Solar Farm. Could Cllr I. Parker establish whether the operation of producing electricity has started.

Has any celebrations been arranged for VE80th. Anniversary. Nothing has been organised as yet.

Cllr I. Parker left the meeting

007/2025 BDC Refuse vehicle future date – 29th. March 2025 10am – 12 noon

Councillors noted the refuse collection date from 10am – 12noon. The vehicle must stay for the 2-hour allocation at the village hall.

Signed

TBartlett
Chair

7th. May 2025

008/2025 Pinkuah Arms – update. The local public house following the approval of the appeal to be developed as a single dwelling. It is not known whether this will be for rent or sale.

009/2025 Speedwatch update – Cllr T. Bartlett

No Speedwatch activity has taken place due to inclement weather. More sessions will be undertaken. Cllr T. Bartlett went to a policing meeting for Speedwatch but only 2 Speedwatch organisations turned up. More volunteers are required to help the team going forward.

010/2025 Village defibrillator – Cllr I. Bower

A new defibrillator has purchased and erected at the side of the village hall. It has been registered on the National Defibrillator site. Cllr. I Bower offered to arrange training for use of the defibrillator. A spare set of pads should be purchased at a cost of £68.40p.

011/2025 Distribution of Parish News to Pentlow residents – Cllr T. Bartlett

Cllr T. Bartlett has taken on the delivery on the west side of the village.

012/2025 Planning – including any Current Planning Applications requiring a response

No planning applications have been received

013/2025 Planning Decision/s made by BDC affecting Pentlow

24/02523/LBC - Cherry Barn Bower Hall Lane Pentlow Essex CO10 7JT

Treatment of exposed decorative timber beams in the annexe. Replacement of two external, decorative timber posts at entrance to original listed barn. **Application GRANTED**

014/2025 Planning Appeals No planning appeals submitted

015/2025 Solar Farm update

Planting completed but will take some time to mature to effectively screen the site.

016/2025 Finance

a) To receive the Bank balances as at 28th. February 2025

Councillors noted the Bank balances as at 28th. February 2025

b) To receive the comparison of Actual against Budget 2024/25

Councillors noted the comparison of Actual against Budget 2024/25

c) Councillors to agree the December 2024, January, February and March 2025 finances and to agree a transfer of any funds to meet the Parish Council's financial requirements **All Agreed**

017/2025 Village Hall update Cllr T. Bartlett

Cllr T. Bartlett advised he was deferring this item to the May meeting as he was not in a position to provide an update.

A member of the public raised the issue of the long-standing situation with the Village Hall lease. Another member of the public suggested a working group should be established to progress the matter. Cllr T. Bartlett agreed that resolving the lease was now very much a matter of priority. A member of the public also suggested that the parish apply to Braintree Council for the Village Hall to be placed on its Register of Community Assets.

018/2025 Village Sign - update from Cllr M. Stuchfield

Cllr T. Bartlett advised that in the absence of Cllr M. Stuchfield this item would need deferring to the May meeting.

019/2025 Items for Next Agenda

020/2025 Date of Next Full Council meeting – Wednesday 7th. May 2025 at 7pm which is the Annual Parish meeting followed by PPC AGM and Full Council meeting

October meeting – 29th. October 2025 at 7.30pm

021/2025 Closure of the Meeting

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

The Vice-Chair then closed the meeting at 8.55pm and thanked everyone for attending

Signed

TBartlett
Chair

7th. May 2025