

**MINUTES OF THEYDON MOUNT ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
HELD ON – 14 APRIL 2025 AT THE GATEHOUSE, ALL SAINTS
CHURCH, COOPERSALE LANE, THEYDON GARNON,
CM167NX**

1. **Apologies: Martin Gowing - Resident**
2. **In Attendance:** TMPC Councillors and Clerk, EFDC Councillor Amos, 3 x Members of the Epping Forest Community Policing Team, Residents and guests from adjacent parishes.
3. **Minutes and Notes of the last AGM and Public Meeting:** - Approved
4. **Agenda:**
 - 4.1 **Chairman's welcome** – Peter Connell (TMPC Chair) thanked all present for their attendance and particularly welcomed EFDC Councillor Amos and members of the Community Police Liaison Team (PC Karen West, PC Andy Cook and new recruit Heally) and made special reference to members of Stapleford Tawney Parish Council.
 - 4.2 **Accounts for 2024/2025** – Martin Hudson (TMPC Finance Officer) informed the meeting that the document he was referring to was also included in the information pack. He noted that the Precept sought for the coming year would not change from last year's allocation which would result in no increase in residents council tax for 2025/26 due to the activities of the parish council. He stated that the major expense was for the village Gateway Signs project which had eventually gained approval from ECC. This expense covered wood and signs and the cost of setting them in the ground. Martin Hudson offered thanks to David Cole for his huge effort to prepare the woodwork for the signs. TMPC net spend over the previous year amounted to just over £3,000 which has left a healthy balance in the bank which could be earmarked for other projects or as a war chest against unforeseen events such as professional help against future planning decisions and the possibility of erecting a village sign. He closed his report by stating that the AGAR forms (required for the yearly accounts of all parish councils) were completed and would be signed at the end of the meeting.
5. **Chairman's Report:** Peter Connell stated that the main themes for TMPC action were highways issues, planning matters, uplifting and maintaining the appearance of the parish and social events. The highways front, he stated, was the most frustrating since it took much time and effort to keep Essex Highways informed of our concerns – most often without acknowledgement, recognition or even response. In respect of highways, TMPC's main effort was on attempting to get safety improvements and traffic calming initiatives resolved. Notwithstanding the difficulties he referred to another document in the information pack which summarized the improvements that would be set in place following a recent robust submission by TMPC to the Local Highways Panel. This would result in improved signage and road markings in the vicinity of the Banks Lane/Mount Road junction as and when Essex Highways found the money to put the changes in place. Peter Connell added that a similar case for the section of Mount Road (coming down the hill past North Farm) and on the bend into the under-road drainage works had been submitted at the same time but had seemingly not been dealt with to by the Local Highways Panel. He sought progress on this issue from the Clerk. Rod Angood reported that he had asked Cllr McIvor for information about the second case and would in any case be forwarding to Cllr McIvor a copy of the second case for consideration by the LHP in the very near future.

Local Minerals Plan: Keith Farrow was asked to update the audience on developments since the promulgation of the Essex Local Minerals Plan almost a year ago. Keith started by reminding everyone that minerals extraction and provision was a County Council responsibility to support building and other strategic plans. He reported that ECC had issued no further communique on progress on site viability so had asked ECC directly for a statement. The response from ECC was that "no further public consultation would occur until mid 2026" when it was likely that a short list of preferred sites would emerge following detailed evaluation. Confirmation of whether a site had been allocated would be determined following an independent examination and plan adoption which would likely take place in 2027.

Birch Field Site, Epping Lane: Peter Connell then made reference to the Travellers Site on Epping Lane which was in Stapleford Tawney's parish and which had been the subject of some illegal tipping. In a combined and co-

operative manner both TMPC and STPC had reported the matter – and the public concern it generated – to the local EFDC enforcement officer. Without any significant punitive outcome the matter had been escalated to the Environment Crime Agency which to date had stated that they could not find or track down the owner(s) of the land. Peter Connell asked the Rural Community Police present whether they had any influence over the matter but it became clear that activity on the site had to be reported to them and only then could they respond and remind those working on the site that a comprehensive injunction order prohibiting such activity and that they should cease further activity.

Attending Parishioners expressed their deep concern that the coming weekend (a bank holiday weekend) - with no guarantee of 24 x 7 monitoring by official agencies – would attract another exercise of illegal dumping causing further hazardous waste challenges and road restrictions on Epping Lane.

Attending STPC representatives added that they were keeping their parishioners fully informed and would be seeking to collect and collate a survey from them defining wishes for additional action by STPC.

Tawney Common Solar Farm Proposal: PC then moved the discussion on to the proposed Solar Farm initiative noting that, again the matter was primarily a STPC matter but had wider adjacent parish implications. This second site was closely adjacent to the first site (Nickerlands) which had received a planning consent decision from EFDC and the issue at hand was that the company associated with this new proposal were attempting to convince EFDC that an Environmental Impact Assessment was not necessary. KF added that previous other submissions across Essex had taken a long time to resolve and not all such cases were successful in being granted Planning Consent.

PC was keen to remind all attendees that no Planning Application for the new site had yet been submitted rendering any local objection input untimely until such application had been made. The issue for all concerned parishes was whether the new Solar Farm did in fact warrant local argument for an Impact Assessment. If parishioners did feel so inclined they should individually and collectively provide such opinion to their respective parish councils.

STPC representatives were then invited to update the audience as to their perspective on the issue. Duncan Padfield (DP) showed the area of concern and its exact location and stated that it would be a 90 acre site of solar panels. He added that the major concerns were:

Heritage Environment – there were several listed buildings close to the intended site – not least The Mole Trap Public House and adjacent cottages and the Farm at Wood Hatch amongst others. *DP added that as the seller of the farm land on which the solar farm would be established the STPC chairman had stood down from his role as Chair because of the conflict of interest.* Whilst everyone understood the financial pressures farmers were subject to it was an appropriate decision to stand down.

Modern Life style: DP stated that this was not a clear-cut issue for challenge. Many parishioners who had moved on to owning electric vehicles would doubtless wish to support the solar farm proposal.

Solar Farm Power Distribution: DP pointed out that the intended electricity sub station to which the farm would deliver its output was located close to the traffic lights near Wintry Park Farm. This would be achieved by laying an underground cable from Tawney Common to the substation which raised significant issues of disturbance to and excavation near many properties and land.

Information for Adjacent Parishes: PC asked DP to keep adjacent parish councils apprised of their initiatives. PC foresaw likely differences of opinion from TMPC residents

A TMPC parishioner pointed out that the “capacity of the site when constructed - its power output was a significant factor since sites that could deliver in excess of 50 M Watts of energy would be treated through an entirely different planning process because their power output was of significance in a national energy consideration. The Nickerlands site would deliver 25 M Watts and the Tawney Common site would generate 35 M Watts. Linking the output of these two sites would exceed the level that could attract different planning procedures.

That raised an additional concern that planning consent for further solar farms that were sited close to each other and could link and combine their outputs and benefit from the different national interests and the associated planning processes. Perhaps these early development initiatives were part of a greater undisclosed plan.

Cllr Amos (EFDC) was asked to express an opinion on the matter. He stated that whilst solar energy generation was now firmly incorporated into a national multi-technology renewable energy consideration (Wave, Solar, Wind, etc), the wider impacts and implications had to be part of the up front discussions. By way of example he noted that whilst a solar farm might be quoted as having a lifespan of up to 40 years, the loss of farm production output during that time was not insignificant to a country partially dependent of feeding its population. Disposal of the solar panels, the batteries that stored the energy and the distribution cabling etc all had an impact on the overall consideration - it was a dangerous assumption to gloss over these issues when new planning consents were being sought.

RA pointed out that the Impact Assessment notification carried an EPF number which, he thought entitled parish councils and individuals to raise concerns – or support – through normal channels. He added that the EFDC document referred to earlier also mentioned a number of Local Plan principles that might render any Planning Application unlikely to succeed.

PC went on to mention other TMPC initiatives and successes. In short these were:

Village Gateway Signs – the timescale was considerable, the amount of effort need was huge not only from TMPC members but the outcome was great. He also mentioned the notion that TMPC thought it might be appropriate to site a Village Sign in the parish - artists and fabricators have been identified but he thought that a positive parishioner response to the proposal would be welcome and a survey would be organized.. Finally he mentioned the stiring work undertaken by volunteers to keep the hedgerows and verge-sides clear of rubbish through the Litter Picking activities and in particular the contribution from all those residents who went out on their own to clear sections of the parish.

PC mentioned the success of the parish Summer Bar-B-Que last year and HTB summarized the past events over 3 years or 4 years and sought opinion from the floor once the meeting finished.

PC closed his report by mentioning Devolution and the prospect of a future Unitary Authority. Cllr Amos was asked to give an update. He started by mentioning that EFDC Council Tax Levy would increase by 2.4 % and that every Councillor able to vote at EFDC had approved the increase which still made it one of the lowest increases in Essex. He added that other councils had evolved quite different council tax rates and that this would be an interesting issue for a Unitary Authority to resolve/fix.

He mentioned the shortly to be delivered Blue Lid rubbish boxes for recycled waste that would be provided from June.

Cllr Amos went on to add details of process and challenges that would in future be dealt with at a unitary authority level instead of more local district councils. The amalgamation of duties and responsibilities would provide larger budgets to deal with authority-wide challenges but that it might result in emotional and practical distances between parish councils and unitary authorities.

PC made grateful reference to the community police presence at the meeting, thanked them for their attendance and briefly asked them to present a summary of their roles and duties.

There being no questions Pc closed the meeting and invited all present to mingle and discuss the information presented.



Peter Connell - Chair of Theydon Mount Parish Council

2nd June 2025