



# Toppesfield Parish Council



## Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> May 2014 At The Village Hall, Toppesfield at 7.30pm

### 14/77. Attendance and Apologies for Absence:

#### The following Councillors were in attendance:

Councillor Peter Moore – Chairman  
Councillor Clare Thompson  
Councillor Andrew Bull  
Councillor David Bagnall  
Councillor Alan Collard  
Councillor Sally Croft

#### Also in attendance:

Kaaren Berry – Clerk to the Parish Council  
Margaret Dyson – Doctors Car Service  
Dave Dyson – Village Hall Committee  
Anne Read – Community Shop, Footpaths and Flower Show  
Tony Davison – Toppesfield Parish Charities  
Paul Thompson – Allotments  
Malcolm Braithwaite  
Sheila Braithwaite  
Jane Moore  
Ray Papworth  
David Allen  
Tony Downs  
Brian Hammond  
Councillor Finch – Essex County Council

#### Apologies were received from

Councillor Sheldrake, Sian Davies-Hatton - Little Chestnuts Pre-School, Kim Hall - St Margaret's School, Trisha Roberts - Toppesfield Yarnies, Zoe Hughes – Little Hedgehogs, Art & Craft group, Golden Chestnuts and Fit Fun Club and Ginny Laskowski – Village Hall committee.

### 14/78. Minutes of the last meeting – 2013 Annual Parish Meeting:

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2013 were signed as an accurate record of the meeting.

### 14/79. Matters Arising from the minutes:

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting.

### 14/80. Parish Council Annual Report from the Chairman:

Peter Moore gave his report – see attached appendix A.

## **14/81. Organisations / group Reports:**

Reports were received from various organisations.

Ann Read gave reports on behalf of Toppesfield Community Shop, The Parish Paths Partnership Group and the Village show – please see appendix B.

Paul Thompson gave a report on behalf of the Allotment Committee – see appendix C.

Tony Davison gave a report on behalf of the Toppesfield Charities and handed a copy of their accounts to the Parish Council. For Tony's report see appendix D.

Margaret Dyson gave a report on the progress of the Doctor's car service – see appendix E.

Trisha Roberts of Toppesfield Yarnies was unable to attend but a report was submitted and read out on their behalf – see appendix F.

Kim Hall from St Margaret's C of E Primary School was also unable to attend but a report was submitted and read out on her behalf – see appendix G.

Alan Collard gave a report on behalf of Toppesfield Community Pub – see appendix H.

Sian Davies-Hatton from Little Chestnuts Pre-School was unable to attend but a report was submitted and read out on their behalf. See Appendix I.

Andrew Bull gave a summary of the LARG progress – see appendix J.

Ginny Laskowski from the Toppesfield Village Hall Committee was unable to attend but a report was submitted and read out on their behalf– see appendix K.

Zoe Hughes was not able to attend but submitted reports on behalf of the Golden Chestnuts, Little Hedgehogs Toddlers, The Art & Craft Club and The Fit Fun Club which were read out on her behalf - see appendix L.

Sally Croft gave a report on behalf of St Margaret's Church – see appendix M.

Malcolm Braithwaite gave a report on behalf of the Toppesfield Stringed Appreciation Society – please see Appendix N.

Councillor Finch arrived at this point and gave an overview of issues being looked at by Essex County Council. These included the Care System in Essex, pot holes around the county – prioritizing main route roads first, Children in Care, Adult Social Care, the increasing ageing population, care costs and health integration of the NHS. He then answered a few questions from those present before leaving.

Peter thanked all the organisations, groups and Councillors for their support and commitment to the running and organising of the groups and societies within the parish.

## **14/82. Questions from the public:**

Malcolm Braithwaite asked for an update on the progress of the village plan. Councillor Moore apologised for not preparing this and stated it will be on the agenda for next week's parish council meeting and a full review to be given on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2015.

**14/83. Any Other Business:**

Progress on the village plan was raised – Councillor Moore apologised it was not on this agenda but stated an update would be given at the next parish council meeting. An agenda point will also be entered for next year's Annual Parish Meeting to give a review of progress.

**14/84. Time and date of next Parish Council Meeting:**

The next Parish Council meeting will be on the 8<sup>th</sup> May 2014 at 8pm. This will be the Annual Parish Council Meeting.

**14/85. Close:**

The meeting closed at 8.55pm

## **Appendix A**

Toppesfield and Gainsford End Parish Council

AGM Year Overview

Another great year for Toppesfield 2013/14 – it has been a very busy year for the Village and the Parish Council.

It was the 6<sup>th</sup> year of the Christmas tree lighting and yet again it was a great success. The event was very much enhanced by the Christmas tree competition in the Church which was really well attended.

We have now completed the refurbishment of the playing field areas both in Toppesfield and Gainsford end and are now excitedly awaiting the new plans to expand the equipment from LARG and the new plans for the refurbishment of the pavilion in Toppesfield.

Councillor Bull continues to work hard on the village newsletter and I am sure you will all agree it's one of the best village newsletters around. Again a big thanks to Andrew for the time and effort he dedicates to this.

The allotments continue to be a great success championed by Paul Thompson and Rob Stafford Baker. I believe we are full and are looking to reclaim a bit more land – a big thanks to the allotment committee for their continued community drive.

High speed broadband has also been implemented across the Village with a community hub being installed in the Village Hall. I understand there are now 50 to 60 users across the village but of course we are still looking for more. This service will be enhanced shortly with the introduction of a Superfast network for which wireless links are now in place.

Finally I would like to thank my fellow Councillors for their commitment and hard work throughout the year.

Overall it has been another great year for Toppesfield.

Peter Moore  
Chairman

## **Appendix B**

### **Toppesfield Community Shop**

Report for Annual Parish meeting May 2014

Your community Shop continues to thrive and provide a vital service to the village.

It is a bit of a sad reflection of the times that more and more legislative pressures on suppliers have meant that some suppliers have had to give up supplying us however we have endeavoured to fill the gaps to still give our customers a comprehensive choice.

Trisha and Keely have just completed two years in the post office which provides a vital service to the village. We are also very grateful to Trevor who continues to help out in the holidays.

The shop has promoted Village Markets from time to time and the Christmas one was fantastic with live music provided by our local Ukelele band. Keep an eye out for poster for the markets in the forthcoming months.

It is our plan always to award grants to organizations and projects within the village. This year we have given grants to The Allotment Association, LARG group, Katy Landon for her Wold Challenge,

Parish Council towards renovating the War Memorial and to me towards updating and republishing the booklet about our Church .

The shop would not survive without its' volunteers. Unfortunately several volunteers have moved away or are no longer available so as always covering the rota, especially at holiday times, is a challenge however we are really pleased to welcome new volunteers Maureen Dimmock and Helen Ellis to the fold. We always welcome new volunteers so do have a think about it and chat to volunteers in the shop. It is great fun and such a good feeling to know that you are really helping everyone in your village.

So Future plans:-

My father Sidney Read wrote three books about the village. The first one was about The Church, the second one about The Chapel and then the one about the Village of which we still have copies and they are on sale in the shop. I have decided to update the booklet about The Church this year to commemorate the 100 years since the beginning of 1<sup>st</sup> World war and also to celebrate it is 100 years since St Margaret' s Church became part of Chelmsford diocese and I will probably re-do the chapel one. The booklets will be on sale in the shop. Also the Red Barrows are organising a DVD for Christmas – the shop will be part of this and also selling the DVD.

It is our AGM on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> May in the Village Hall at 7.30pm. The business meeting will be followed by refreshments. If you are a shareholder do come along and have your say.

Ann Read

## **Toppesfield Parish Paths Partnership Group**

Report for Annual Parish Meeting 1<sup>st</sup> May 2014

The p3 group has been quietly working a behind the scenes and positive progress has been made.

In last year's annual parish meeting I reported that two application to divert the route of footpaths had been lodged with highways, one at Bradfields House and the other around Berwick Hall farm road. I am pleased to report that both applications have now been agreed and the new way marker posts will be put up shortly.

In August Eddie Human and Bob Ellis assisted me and our P3 Officer Rob Venables with the putting up of new waymarker posts at footpath 35/36 down the road to Mortimers and the bridleway approaching Gunces. Thank you to Bob and Eddie. This is exactly the sort of thing that p3 can be doing. I also cleared the bridge on footpath 4 which is at the back of Mortimers where it crosses the ditch approaching Elms.

After the storms in November I was walking on footpaths near the lakes at Great Yeldham and noticed that a huge tree had come down across the bridge on Toppesfield footpath 29/30 completely obstructing the bridge and also bending the bridge. I reported it as urgent on Essex County Council website and within a few days it had been cleared. Reporting problems on the website really does work.

There is still some confusion over the route of the footpath down the field at the side of Olivers . This issue is being addressed and hopefully will be sorted out soon. Once this is done we can get on with producing a map of the parish footpaths and a leaflet of walks.

I was unable to commit myself to dates to organise many walks last year because of an on going family commitment however 9 walkers enjoyed the walk at New Year when we walked down Church Lane, on to Great Yeldham, towards Little Yeldham, turning right to the back of Spains Hall, coming down Spains Hall drive and through White Hart Garden and then back up Scotneys Lane. Sadly no one

joined me for the walk I had organised for 23<sup>rd</sup> March.

I plan to organise some more walks this Summer so keep an eye for the posters. If anyone would like to join me in being more proactive with P3 matters please do contact me.

Ann Read

## **Toppesfield and Gainsford End Village Show**

Report for Annual Parish Meeting 2014

The show was held in Toppesfield Village Hall on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2013.

Again a tricky growing season resulted in rather fewer entries in the Fruit and Vegetable section but still gardeners managed to find excellent entries for the flower and pot plant section. As always the children's section was well supported and fantastic fun. I would like to thank the staff Little Chestnuts for their terrific support in helping to organize the entries from all the children attending. The exhibits in the Art classes were amazing as was the exhibition of artwork by the Art Group. What amazing talent we have in our village.

Last year, as we have a lot of cups for the different classes, we decided to not give prize money for the adult classes but retained it for the children's classes. This did ease the financial burden of running the show.

Chris and Brian Hammond joined the committee this time and organized all the outside stalls and events. They did a terrific job and arranged to borrow the marquee from The Green Man to house all the stalls. It looked terrific and was most fortuitous as the afternoon did turn rather wet. A huge thank you to all the chaps who helped put it up and take it down. The cricket match going on in the afternoon on the playing field just completed a splendid village day.

The show this year is on 13<sup>th</sup> September. As always more help would be most welcome as it is a huge job to set up and run the show. Again there will be a cricket match in the afternoon as well and possibly a Talentless competition in the evening making it a great village day again.

Ann Read

## **Appendix C**

Allotment Review of the Year.

Last Year we had a splendid day out in Norfolk at the Sandringham Flower Show, it was very well attended – as seen in the village news. This year we are off to the Royal Norfolk Show – tickets are still available. Constant grass cutting of the new orchard and we now have reclaimed extra ground from the shrub land. Thanks to Peter Moore and George for all their help.

We have lost 2 allotment holders and gained 1, Amanda Smith. With George and Victoria taking one on after they have finished the new house. The daffodils looked marvellous this year. The next phase is to make a few smaller garden patches for those who find a larger patch daunting.

Thanks to the shop committee for their continued support – with barrows and fencing. Thanks also to Linda Pritchard for tending the herb garden.

Watch out for the barrow again this year!

Paul Thompson.

## **Appendix D**

Annual Charities Report – 2014

At the Annual Meeting of the Charities held in December 2013, the Committee consisted of:- Tony Davison & Dusty Millar (Parish Council Representatives) and Brain Moody & James Blackie representing the Church. Apologies were received from the Rev. Barbara Hume.

The income from the Charities increased this year by £180 to £974 due to an increase in rent on the Parish Land as agreed with Mr Ketley.

The beneficiaries were the Church, the School and the Older people of the Parish.

Following on with the agreement reached with the School last year, it was again awarded a single Book Token for £10 from the Robert Edwards Educational Trust.

Tony Davison  
Hon. Treasurer

## **Appendix E**

Doctor's Car Service

This year we have had 61 requests for this service and only on 2 occasions where we unable to help, for those unaware of the service we are a group of volunteer drivers who will take anyone who lives in Toppesfield and Gainsford End who needs to get to the doctors surgery in Sible Hedingham – Great Yeldham – Castle Hedingham and Finchingfield. All you need to do is call us on:- 07845596092 and we will do our very best to get you there.

Once again thank you to the Parish Council for their support.

Margaret Dyson

PS. If you would like to join the group of drivers or want more information give me a call – 01787 238146.

## **Appendix F**



**TOPPESFIELD YARNIES  
EVERY TWO WEEKS  
7:30 AT THE GREEN MAN**

Open to all – novice knitter to expert crocheter, weavers, spinners – anyone who does something with yarn.

Formed in 2013, this as-yet small group meet in the pub for a glass of wine, a natter and doing something with wool. We have varying degrees of expertise in the various crafts involving wool, and help each other as needed.

We have met lots of times but have rarely managed the full Yarnies line up. We occupy the sofas near the fire and fend off the comments of the chaps at the bar – we know they are seriously interested and that at least one of them can knit!

We entered the Christmas Tree competition not realising that we needed to overcome the “tactics” of the named winners and were very proud to come second with our decorations entirely hand-made – - crocheted and knitted. We think we won☺

New members of both genders welcome. The meeting dates are in the village calendar in the shop.

## **Appendix G**

St Margaret's C of E Primary School, Toppesfield

There have been lots of changes at school this academic year. We moved from three to four classes in September, ensuring we maintain smaller class sizes and a maximum of two year groups in each class. In response to this change, a new teacher was appointed, Mrs Rachel Clayton, who has subsequently been appointed as Assistant Head teacher.

Mrs Brown and Mrs Nie left the school and have been replaced by Miss Phoebe Cox and Mrs Vivian Dopierala. Mrs Anika Allen was appointed as SENCo to ensure the needs of all children are being met. In January we were greeted with the arrival of Ofsted.

As predicted, based on the school self evaluation, we were given a grade of Requires Improvement. Since then, we have had a visit from Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) who have recognised the interventions put in place and the actions taken to address the areas of weakness and have agreed with the current school judgement that we are on the right track to gaining a 'good' at our next Ofsted inspection which is likely be in the academic year 2014/15.

It is important that we keep everyone up to date on the events that happen at the school and have launched a new website in line with current requirements.

All the children, staff and parents had great fun raising money for sports relief this year during our run a mile morning, just one of the fund raising activities to be held so far this year.

The TSA have been as active as ever and were able to provide Easter eggs for all the children again this year following a very successful Easter egg quiz afternoon. The AGM is to be held on Friday 2nd May at 2.30 in the school hall.

It is important as a church school we maintain strong links with the church; we continue to have celebration services at the church as well as take part in the Mother's Day celebrations. We are looking at strengthening these links further and are working with Sally Croft to enable this to happen. As we work our way through the final term of this academic year, the year 6's are getting ready to sit their end of year SATs, followed by their residential trip to Kingswood, West Runton at the beginning of June.

This year, our leavers are moving on to Hedingham, Clare and Kingswood Hoe.

I would like to thank all those that have supported the school this year and helped us to ensure a safe and happy environment for the children to learn and develop.

Kim Hall (Head teacher)

## **Appendix H**

**Toppesfield Community Pub Limited – Report for the Annual Parish Meeting 2014**



TCP completed its first full year of trading on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2014 and the 2014 Annual Members Meeting will be held here in the village hall at the end of May.

Financially TCP performed in line with the initial forecasts. I cannot go into details here as the Annual Accounts have just been provided by our accountant but have not yet been signed off by the Management Committee nor approved by the members.

It is important to remember that TCP owns the Green Man; it does not run the underlying pub business. We intend to continue working closely with the tenant and providing him with support wherever possible as it is to our mutual benefit for the Green Man to be an attractive and successful pub.

The pub and TCP are, however, burdened by years of underinvestment in the infrastructure by previous owners. This means that we have to look at a medium term horizon for achieving our objectives.

In the meantime we have been able to arrange for some improvement work to be carried out. Some of this was driven by the requirements of health & safety regulations and insurers (for example the replacement and re-siting of the oil tank and the re-roofing of the barn) and others by choice, in order to improve the pub (for example the redecorating of the bars and dining room and the tidying and improvements to the gardens). Work on the garden and the decorating was carried out by teams of 'sweat capital' volunteers, to whom the committee is extremely grateful.

The major task facing the committee is the implementation of the strategic plan which has been drawn up during the past year. The plan that has resulted from extensive consultation with both TCP members and customers is very exciting and very ambitious. It will not be achieved quickly and it will require a great deal of commitment and sizeable amounts of funding. Broad details of the plans we have will be shown to shareholders at the AGM.

I would like to finish with 3 requests to everyone:

1. Please continue to use the pub. Make use of a facility that many villages no longer have.
2. Please think about ways in which the pub can provide services or support which your organisation can use. We do want to see the pub playing a very central role in the community.
3. Please support our fund raising concert on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> July. Proceeds will go to our improvements fund. Details will be in the next Newsletter.

If anyone has any questions please ask me after this meeting...in the pub of course.

Alan Collard  
May 2014

## Appendix I



Little chestnuts preschool has been very busy over the past year.

Our numbers have increased to the maximum allowed on the premises and we have had to employ another person to attend a few hours a day to play with the children, while special needs children can have a one to one with staff members.

We have been busy fundraising, which enables us to update the toys and helps to include parent involvement too.

We have been able to purchase safety grass matting to cover the grass out by the patio, which will help let the children play outside in all-weather as required by Ofsted.

One member of staff is studying level 5 in preschool management and gives us feedback on keeping paper work up to date and helping us to maintain our settings high standard.

We continue or link with the school to help transition to school for the older children more enjoyable.

WE ARE COLLECTING SAINSBURYS VOUCHERS and would appreciate any vouchers our way; we are collecting towards new sports toys and games for the outdoors, THANK YOU.

Sian Davies-Hatton  
Chair of Little Chestnuts Committee

## **Appendix J**

LARG – Leisure and Recreation Group

Projects at Toppesfield playing fields are progressing and a big thank you to the Shop Committee for their generous donation which supported the purchase of the well-used five a side goal posts.

## **Appendix K**

Toppesfield Village Hall Committee

The village hall is hired out every week day – mornings, afternoons and some evenings.....we have had some big events and functions on at weekends too e.g. Jazz afternoon, super auction, pudding night, table top sale and creams teas and a village wedding to mention a few. We host and supported the village by holding the almost monthly village markets these seems to be popular and go well.

We had the outside walls by the patio and shop area re rendered late summer, we have started to paint these areas to improve the appearance of the outside of the hall... We extended the car park area by removing the old bushes out the front of the hall. Other repairs have been carried out to the fire doors and main gate. The main hall, entrance and toilets have also been given a fresh coat of paint this will be completed during the summer holidays.

Our future plans – we have already raised close to £1000 towards the stage lighting fund this will be ongoing though out the next year. We are looking into having heating in the toilets and maybe the main hall – this is a large project and will take a lot of fundraising also considering looking into grant funding.

We are continuing to work together with Little Chestnuts preschool offering then a place for the children's coat pegs and new notice board. We are also planning to help with the cost to replace the outside play area next to the patio with an all-weather fake grass area for all the hirers of the hall to enjoy.

We also supported a school for special needs Children by donating half of the last year's profit from the bottle tombola and Christmas drinks hamper totalling £120– this went to the Granta School in Linton. This was very gratefully received.

Yours Ginny

Chairman of the Village Hall Committee

## **Appendix L**

### **Little Hedgehogs Parent & Toddler Group**

We are still going just after our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary back in September 2013 – numbers are very low but thanks to the village hall allowing us to pay as we go we are still open every Monday 1.30pm – 3pm during term time. There are plans to revamp the shed space as I make two settings into one.

### **Fit Fun Club**

We meet 2 sessions a week Tuesday now at 4.30pm – 5.30pm, did try a later session but made no difference to numbers so we moved it earlier to fit in with meal times... The other session is on Thursday 2pm – 3pm. 10 members are on the books, average attendance is 4 – 5 people per session... Feel good factor once completed – feel brilliant ...The sessions are advertised in local newsletter.

### **Art & Craft Club**

Wednesday evenings. It was our 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary back in October, we have 12 members on the books averaging 6 – 8 members per week. Still going strong... art shows during the year – water colours, pencil drawing, sewing to crafting card making and even Lego building. Very enjoyable med week break therapy.

### **Golden Chestnuts**

Meet every Friday 2pm – 4pm, 21 members on the books to date on average 10+ members per session. Well into our second year, our 1<sup>st</sup> Anniversary was held in The Green Man where I was given a painted Golden Chestnut Box...we also have special lunches for the over 50's, our next one is planned for the 23<sup>rd</sup> May. A very enjoyable afternoon lots of laughs at the end of the week sets you up for the weekend. We also help set up for monthly markets and other events after our session – thank you to all that help..

Another year gone by

Thank you

Yours Zoë

## **Appendix M**

### **St Margaret's Church**

With Barbara's time more and more stretched over the 5 churches of our benefice we are now having to take many more services ourselves and provide the pastoral care that the vicar would do. This is not just happening in our benefice but all over England as vicar numbers decrease and new way of Church are overtaking the normal Sunday service. Brian Moody and Sally Croft take morning prayer and other services such as rogation and Rev. Barbara takes communion every other week.

We are looking to start fundraising to change heating and interior of the church to make it warmer and more user friendly and comfortable. St Margaret's is a great building with wonderful acoustics and is greatly underused.

Talking of fundraising we held our usual annual events during the year including a wet but profitable fete in June, BBQ at Oliver's Farm in July and the ever popular Auction in November where we raised

the most money ever! Together with the parish council we held the inaugural Christmas tree competition on the lighting up night which was great fun and very successful.

The Church is now open every day and we have a votive candle stand which is for everyone to use in prayer or remembrance.

Thanks to all the villagers who continue to support us and don't forget we are here to serve you so tell us what you need.

## **Appendix N**

### **Toppesfield Stringed Instruments Appreciation Society (TSIAS) Yearly Report - April 2013 – April 2014**

TSIAS plucks along still in a very limited form. With two guitarists, who also attempt mandolin, playing together on a weekly basis to enhance their repertoire of a wide range of musical styles, the concept of TSIAS continues. They occasionally play at the odd "open mic" night at a couple of local venues. A couple of other guitarists and a banjo player joined while we were playing at The Green Man, but we were unable to continue at this venue and they left us.

An "old time" band was taking shape with fiddle, guitar and mandolin, but we've lost our fiddle player and are now seeking another. A Ukulele orchestra, consisting of eight relatively local residents, was set up in the autumn of 2013 and played at a couple of Christmas events, including in the Village Hall. TSIAS also entered a decorated Christmas tree in the Village Church Christmas tree festival.

The group is open to new members, and contact from interested parties would be welcomed. We would like to return to The Green Man or, better still, to the Village Hall if numbers justified it.

**Malcolm Braithwaite**