



Toppesfield Parish Council



Minutes of the Annual Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday 14th May 2026 at Toppesfield Village Hall at 7.30pm

26/73. Election of Chair for 2026 – 2027

Councillor Paula Edwards-Holmes received a majority vote for as chair for the coming year. Councillor Edwards-Holmes accepted the position for the coming year via text as she was unable to attend the meeting.

26/73.1 Election of vice Chair for 2026 – 2027

Councillor Chris Neale received a majority vote for vice-chair for the coming year. Councillor Neale accepted the position for the coming year.

26/74. Attendance and Apologies for Absence:

The following Councillors were in attendance:

Councillor Chris Neale – Chaired the meeting
Councillor Jane Daines
Councillor Jeremy Graves
Councillor Amanda Smith

Also, in attendance:

District Cllr Richard van Dulken
County Councillor Nathan Robins
2 residents of the parish
Kaaren Berry – Clerk

Apologies were received from:

Councillor Kitty Bourlet
Councillor Paula Edwards-Holmes

26/74.1 To accept apologies from members of the council

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Edwards-Holmes who was unable to attend the meeting due to work commitments and Cllrs Bourlet to family commitments.

26/75. Declaration of Members' interests in agenda items

Cllrs Neale and Graves both declared they are members of the Solar group.

26/76. Open Session – opportunity for members of the Parish to address the Parish Council.

Cllr Nathan Robins introduced himself and then reported:

- That reform have already written to the secretary of state to oppose the local government reorganisation.
 - They are reversing the reserving fee at libraries.
 - They are launching DOLGE – Department of Local Government Efficiency
 - The Highways contract is being looked at and why it was not put out to tender.
- Cllr Robins will chase up progress of local pothole repair with Highways.

A resident from Gainsford End reported that some of the footpaths around Gainsford End have not been maintained and asked if the landowners could be contacted to rectify this. Cllr Neale confirmed that once

landowners have been identified the parish council will write to them asking to reinstate/maintain the footpaths.

Brian Moody attended on behalf of St Margarets Church and thanked the parish council for their kind donation towards the clock project in the last financial year. He reported that the clock is now back in place but there is still £4000 to be raised to pay the full invoice. Events and donations have covered half the costs of the project. Brian also stated that it would be nice if the VE Day bench was secured in the Churchyard before the fete in July. Cllr Graves to obtain costs for a pad for the bench to be secured to.

Cllr Richard van Dulken reported:

- Braintree District Council are continuing to work with Colchester, Tendring and Essex County Council towards the creation of the unity authority North East Essex.
- New waste collections being in June. Schedules for collections and information are currently being sent out.
- Special collections for Absorbent Hygiene Products are available. Full details, including eligibility criteria, accepted items and how to apply, are available on the Council website: <https://www.braintree.gov.uk/ahpcollections>
- Wethersfield Asylum Centre currently has 768 residents.
- The bus museum in Great Yeldham is now open.
- £50,000 has been awarded to Konect buses who have taken over Heddingham buses towards new services from Great Yeldham and the Heddingham's to Braintree, Colchester and Sudbury.
- The Councillor's Community Grant fund pot this year is £1700 and is now open for applications.

26/77. To approve and sign the minutes of the Toppesfield Parish Council Meeting held on 15th April 2026.

Cllr Smith proposed the minutes for the meeting held on 15th April 2026 were agreed and the minutes were signed as a true record of the meetings.

26/78. Matters Arising not on the agenda – for report only

The hedge on the corner of Great Yeldham Road needs cutting back as it is encroaching onto the road and beginning to restrict the view. Cllr Neale will speak to the owner of the hedge and ask for it to be cut back.

26/79 Actions from previous meeting:

- 26/79.1 Cllr Neale to contact Cllr Peter Schwier regarding further funding for the tree project. This will be considered as part of the strategy document.
- 26/79.2 Cllr Neale to follow up on quotes to carry out the work on the RoSPA action list. A new report will be published this month so the action list will be looked at once the report has been received.
- 26/79.3 Cllr Graves to look at setting up a charity bank account. The parish council cannot hold the money as it is Charity Land. Cllr Graves to seek a bank to hold the funds.
- 26/79.4 Cllr Smith to obtain quotes for fencing the wildflower area for the school. Quotes are still being sought.
- 26/79.5 Cllr Bourlet to speak to the Cricket Club about the possibility of combining Crinders and a Summer fete. No update available.
- 26/79.6 Cllr Bourlet to review the new website and agree content. No update available.
- 26/79.7 Clerk to purchase 3 dog poo bag dispensers. Dispensers were ordered at the beginning of May and should be delivered later this week.
- 26/79.8 Clerk to complete an enforcement request with North Essex Parking Partnership with regards to parking in Church Lane. Request was completed in April, but no response has been received apart from the automated acknowledgement.
- 26/79.9 Clerk to liaise with Essex County Council re the footpath from Camoise Close to the Church and find out a rough figure for repairing the surface. Essex County Council has been emailed but no response has been received. Clerk to follow this up. Cllr Neale will also enquire with a resident to see if solar lights can be put up to light the footpath.

26/80. Internal Practices and management for the Parish Council:

26/80.1 Neighbourhood Plan update. No update received.

26/80.2 Wethersfield Airfield and Asylum centre verbal update was given in the open session by Cllr van Dulken.

26/80.3 Update on Strategy document actions. No updates were given.

26/80.4 Placement of grit bins in playing field update. Cllr Edwards-Holmes to asked if she has been able to speak to a parishioner for help with this.

26/80.5 New website update. Cllrs at the meeting thought the new website was clean, informative and not cluttered. The website is still be update and information transferred over.

26/80.6 Community Solar update. There is growing momentum for community solar initiatives. A group of residents from the village are working with Stour Power to see if there is a possibility of consolidating the charity land for a solar farm. They are also considering looking at placing solar panels on the village hall as part of this initiative.

26/80.7 Internal audit inspection report to be considered and determine actions.

The report was circulated to councillors prior to the meeting for consideration and the following actions were agreed.

- a) The reserves policy to be updated for the July meeting for approval
- b) The Standing Orders and Financial Regulations will be reviewed for the July 2026 meeting to be considered.
- c) The council will produce a Publication scheme for the July meeting for consideration.
- d) The parish council owned website will be live by the end of July 2026.
- e) FOIA – it was agreed that parish council will become complaint as soon as possible following the above actions.
- f) The Risk Assessment is due to be reviewed in February 2027.
- g) The Internal Financial Control Policy will be review and considered at the June 2026 meeting.

26/80. Upcoming events

26/80.1 Summer fete – discuss proposal to hold a summer fete. It was agreed that this would be looked at next year as the Church are holding their summer fete on the 11 July 2026.

26/80. Correspondence Received:

26/80.1 EALC Legal & County Updates, Essex County Council Highways Highlights, RCCE Essex Warbler - circulated to all Councillors prior to meeting.

26/80.2 Braintree District Council are consulting on two Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs):

- Waste Collection and Storage SPD
- Affordable Housing SPD

These SPDs provide additional details as to how policies in the current adopted Local Plan should be used when the Council considers planning applications which include the provision of affordable housing and arrangements for the collection and management of domestic waste on sites.

The documents have been published along with an online response form at:

<https://www.braintree.gov.uk/policyconsultation> The consultation is open between Wednesday 22nd April and 5pm on Friday 5th June 2026.

26/80.3 Essex Village of the Year & Rural Community Awards 2026 - This year's Essex Village of the Year Competition and Rural Community Awards, which include a new Playing Field and Playground Award. The deadline for entry is Friday 5th June and the winners will be announced at the RCCE Annual General Meeting on Wednesday 8th July.

26/80.4 Braintree District Council have confirmed the casual vacancy can be filled by co-option. One application for co-option has already been received and will be considered at the June meeting.

26/80.5 Email from Heddingham United Football Club re the possibility of training at Toppesfield Playing field and facilities required. Clerk to respond re state of facilities and how the football club would need to provide their own toilet facilities.

26/81. Financial Accounts:

26/81.1 To receive the Clerk's Report indicating receipts and payments requiring approval. The report was presented and accepted. Payments as detailed in Appendix A were agreed and signed by Cllrs Neale and Graves.

26/81.2 To approve the asset register for 2025/2026. The Tommy figures and the VE Day Memorial bench were added to the asset register and Cllr Neale signed it.

26/81.3 To consider, approve and sign the accounts for 2025/2026. The accounts were accepted by the and signed by Cllr Neale.

26/81.4 To complete the certificate of exemption for the Annual Return.

The Chair and Responsible Financial Officer/Clerk to sign:

- Annual Governance Statement.
- Accounting Statements.

The annual governance statements and accounting statements were read out at the meeting, agreed and the Annual Return forms were completed and signed.

26/81.5 First quote received for scanning parish newsletters. Further quotes are being sought.

26/81.6 Quotes for software to be received and discussed. It was agreed that the Parish Council will purchase its own Microsoft package and its own Adobe subscription. Clerk to progress the purchase of these.

26/81.7 Unity trust Bank – forms to be completed. Cllr Daines to complete the forms and pass onto Cllrs Bourlet and Edwards-Holmes for completion.

26/82 Highways:

26/82.1 Parking along Church Lane near the school and other areas in the village. This has been reported to North Essex Parking Partnership.

26/82.2 Updates on ongoing reported issues to Essex Highways. Six blocked or partially blocked drains around Cust Hall bridge have been reported to Essex Highways.

26/83 Planning:

Application No:	Description	Address	Action
26/00799/TPOCON	Notice of intent to carry out works to trees in a Conservation Area: Reduce Apple tree by 3 m using suitable growth points, tree is blocking light	4 The Street Toppesfield Essex CO9 4DJ	Braintree District Council Decision No Objections
26/00960/FUL	Proposed change of use of former agricultural buildings to holiday let accommodation and associated ancillary retail and office use.	Toppesfield Hall Great Yeldham Rd Toppesfield CO9 4LS	Comments to Braintree District Council by 28 th May 2026

Planning application number 26/0096/FUL was discussed and no objection were raised.

26/84. Communications:

26/84.1 Newsletter for July / August 2026 – articles to be submitted by 15th June 2026.

26/85. Information exchange / Items for the next agenda

26/86. Date of the next meeting:

The next Parish Council Meeting is proposed to be held on Thursday 4th June 2026 at 7.30pm at Toppesfield Village Hall.

26/87. Close

Cllr Neale closed the meeting at 9.45pm

Signed:

Dated:

- Cllr Graves to obtain costs for the VE Day bench pad in the Churchyard.
- Cllr Neale to follow up on quotes to carry out the work on the RoSPA action list once the new action list has been received.
- Cllr Graves to look at setting up a charity bank account.
- Cllr Smith to obtain quotes for fencing the wildflower area for the school.
- Cllr Bourlet to review the new website and agree content.
- Clerk to follow up with Essex County Council re the footpath from Camoise Close to the Church.
- Cllr Neale to enquire with a resident to see if solar lights can be put up to light the footpath.

Appendix A

Accounts - 14th May 2026				
			£	
Community Account				
	Balance as at 12th May 2026		£44,601.50	
	All previous authorised payments issued balance should be		£33,629.81	
	Income Received Included in the balance figure of 12th May 2026			
23.04.26	BDC - first instalment of Precept		£9,675.00	
11.05.26	Braintree District Councils Contribution to assist in Street Cleaning		£1,320.44	
	Direct Debits Included in the balance figure of 12th May 2026			
01.05.26	EDF - Pavilion electric		£8.00	
07.05.26	Vodafone contract		£15.75	
			£23.75	
				Unrecoverable VAT
Payments to be approved:				
Date of invoice		Payment Method		
20.04.26	MiJan Limited - Subscription for accounts package 2026-2027	By Bacs	£84.00	£0.00
30.04.26	RCCE - Membership renewal	By Bacs	£63.60	£0.00
21.04.26	Toppesfield Village Hall - Quartley charge for office and meetings	By Bacs	£325.50	£0.00
12.04.26	Braintree Association of Local Council - Membership renewal for 2026/2027	By Bacs	£50.00	£0.00
13.04.26	EALC/NALC Affiliation fees for 2026/2027	By Bacs	£190.10	£0.00
07.05.26	Eden Print - Newsletter for May /June 2026	By Bacs	£328.00	£0.00
01.05.26	K Berry - April salary	By Bacs	£791.31	£0.00
				£0.00
			£1,832.51	
			£42,768.99	