



# Toppesfield Parish Council



## Minutes of the Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> April 2026 at Toppesfield Village Hall at 7.30pm

### 26/50. Attendance and Apologies for Absence:

#### The following Councillors were in attendance:

Councillor Kitty Bourlet - Chair  
Councillor Paula Edwards-Holmes  
Councillor Amanda Smith

#### Also, in attendance:

District Cllr Richard van Dulken  
Nathan Robins - Reform Candidate  
Kaaren Berry – Clerk

#### Apologies were received from:

Councillor Chris Neale  
Councillor Jane Daines  
Councillor Jeremy Graves  
County Cllr Peter Schwier

### 26/50.1 To accept apologies from members of the council

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Neale who was unable to attend the meeting due to work commitments and Cllrs Graves and Daines due to family commitments.

### 26/51. Declaration of Members' interests in agenda items

No declaration of Members interests were made at this meeting.

### 26/52. Open Session – opportunity for members of the Parish to address the Parish Council.

#### Cllr Richard van Dulken reported:

- The new waste bin collections start on the 6<sup>th</sup> June 2026. Calanders will be available shortly. Green Waste bin permits are being posted out.
- Paid parking was being looked into for Halstead High Street, but this has been squashed.
- Public Rights of Way (PROW) are in discussions about Church Lane repairs.
- Local Government Reorganisation – Essex has merged with Colchester and Tendring and will be known as North East Essex Council.
- Parish Elections could be aligned with new unitary elections.
- Cllr van Dulken suggested that the road signs could be clean by volunteers on the litter pick.
- Local Plan consultation is open until 17<sup>th</sup> April 2026.
- Wethersfield Asylum Centre – there has been a slow increase in residents and currently stands at approx. 800.
- Information has received regarding 6 blocked drains near Cust Hall and a request that BDC clear them.

**26/53. To approve and sign the minutes of the Toppesfield Parish Council Meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2026 and 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2026.**

Cllr Edwards-Holmes proposed the minutes for the meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> March and 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2026 were agreed and Cllr Smith seconded this. The minutes were signed as a true record of the meetings.

**26/54. Matters Arising not on the agenda – for report only**

Cllr Bourlet reported that Cllr Frances Winter has resigned and thanked her for contributions in her role as parish Councillor.

**26/55 Actions from previous meeting:**

- 26/55.1 Cllr Bourlet to relay comments from Finchingfield and the joint NHP plan to the steering group. The information has been relayed to the NHP steering group.
- 26/55.2 Cllr Neale to contact Cllr Peter Schwier regarding further funding for the tree project. No update available – to be held over to the next meeting.
- 26/55.3 Cllr Neale to follow up on quotes to carry out the work on the RoSPA action list. No update available – to be held over to the next meeting.
- 26/55.4 Cllr Graves to look at setting up a charity bank account. No update available – to be held over to the next meeting.
- 26/55.5 Cllr Smith to mark out the area the school council are hoping to use for the wildflower project and to obtain quotes for fencing the area. Requests for quotes have been sent out. It was suggested that the area be planted with wildflowers prior it being fenced and the area marked with stakes and string.
- 26/55.6 Cllr Bourlet to speak to the Cricket Club about the possibility of combining Crinders and a Summer fete. Cllr Bourlet has reached out the Cricket club but no response received to date.
- 26/55.7 Clerk to purchase 12 boxes of dog poo bags for use in the village bag dispensers. Purchased and ready for distribution as needed.

**26/56. Internal Practices and management for the Parish Council:**

- 26/56.1 Neighbourhood Plan update. 15 responses have been received from residents. These will be reviewed along with the comments from the Statutory consultees.
- 26/56.2 Wethersfield Airfield and Asylum centre verbal update to be received. Given by Cllr van Dulken in the open session.
- 26/56.3 Update on Strategy document actions. Cllr Bourlet has circulated a list of the top 8 priorities and it is proposed each councillor will own a priority and take it forward.
- 26/56.4 Proposal to adopt the Council's updated IT Policy. This was proposed by Cllr Bourlet and seconded by Cllr Edwards-Holmes. The policy was adopted and will be uploaded to the website.
- 26/56.5 Grit bins in Park Lane car park and the playing field update. The grit bin in Park Lane has been filled and the one in the playing field is to be done.
- 26/56.6 New website update. It was agreed that updated Bio's and photos of the councillors are required. Cllr Bourlet to review the website and agree content. Clerk to enquire about time/cost of moving information across from the current website.
- 26/56.7 Playsafety RoSPA inspection of the Gainsford End and Toppesfield playing fields are due in May 2026. Cost has increased to £83 + VAT for each site. Proposal to instruct the inspection. It was agreed to instruct the inspection to be carried out.
- 26/56.8 Braintree District Council - Grounds Maintenance Contract for 2026/2027 to be signed. The contract was signed by the chair and will be sent to BDC.
- 26/56.9 Internal audit has been booked for 21<sup>st</sup> April 2026. Information requested by the auditor will be made available at the inspection.

**26/57. Upcoming events**

- 26/57.1 Annual village Litter Pick, 18<sup>th</sup> April 2026 – finalise arrangements. Equipment is being delivered on Friday and collected on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> April along with the litter collected.
- 26/57.2 Summer fete – discuss proposal to hold a summer fete. Cllr Bourlet will liaise with the Cricket Club to see if something can be arranged alongside the Crinders match. Possibility of stalls, ice-creams, picnic etc and raise funds for play equipment upgrades and a percentage to the village clock repair fund.

**26/58. Correspondence Received:**

- 26/58.1 EALC Legal & County Updates, Essex County Council Highways Highlights, RCCE Essex Warbler -

circulated to all Councillors prior to meeting.

26/58.2 Essex Safer Speeds Strategy consultation is open until 26<sup>th</sup> April 2026 For more information about the strategy and to take part in the consultation, see: <https://consultations.essex.gov.uk/essex-highways/essex-safer-speeds-strategy> We would really appreciate feedback from your organisation or group through a response to the consultation.

26/58.3 Toppesfield and Gainsford End Garden Society – would like to put hanging baskets up at the pump. This has been done previously and the hooks are still there. Would the Parish Council agree to this? This was agreed by the parish council as long as the baskets are properly secured.

26/58.4 Essex Safeguarding Adults Board – offering advice and free training on the prevention of abuse to adults at risk.

26/58.5 A local trainer has offered to run Basic First Aid training courses including CPR and use of defibrillators for the community. It was agreed to advertise in the Newsletter to see if any residents are interested in attending a course.

### 26/59. Financial Accounts:

26/59.1 To receive the Clerk's Report indicating receipts and payments requiring approval. The report was presented and Cllr Bourlet proposed they were accepted. Payments as detailed in Appendix A were agreed and signed by Cllrs Bourlet and Smith.

26/59.2 Request received for replacement dog poo bag holders as some have broken. It was agreed for the Clerk to progress the purchase of 3 replacement holders.

### 26/60 Highways:

26/60.1 Church Lane – update on issues reported to Highways and North Essex Parking Partnership. It was agreed for the Clerk to complete an enforcement request with regards to parking in Church Lane.

26/60.2 Condition of footpath from Camoise Close to the Church grounds. This was discussed and it was agreed to liaise with Essex County Council and try to obtain a rough figure to repair the footpath.

26/60.3 Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 – Section 14(1) -Temporary Traffic Regulation Order of Stambourne Road, Toppesfield. Please see the following link <https://one.network/?tm=GB148960972> to find details of the intended closure of Stambourne Road, due to commence on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2026 for 17 days. The closure is required for the safety of the public and workforce while Essex County Council undertakes carriageway patching.

26/60.4 Quys Farm Lane – report received from Highways to say that ‘the level of standing water is not sufficient to warrant further action at this time. We also only have two low-priority carriageway defects logged for the small section of highway-maintainable road in this area. This location was inspected as part of the annual programme on 12 February 2026, where all issues were recorded at the time in line with the maintenance strategy. There were no urgent issues raised and therefore we do not have a timeframe for any repairs. Please be assured that the area will continue to be monitored during routine inspections, and any deterioration will be addressed as required’.

### 26/60 Planning:

Application No:	Description	Address	Action
25/02782/VAR	Variation of Condition 2 (Approved plans) of approved application 25/01698/FUL granted 31.10.25 for: Proposed change of use of land from agricultural to equestrian & erection of stables. Amendment would allow :-Internal alterations to reduce the number of stable rooms, and alterations to fenestration.	Land North East Of Fairy Farm Toppesfield Road Wethersfield	Braintree District Council Decision Application Granted
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	Comments to Braintree District Council by 7 <sup>th</sup> May 2025

No objections were raised to planning application number 26/007/TPOCON

**26/61. Communications:**

26/61.1 Newsletter for May / June 2026 – articles to be submitted by 18<sup>th</sup> April 2026.

**26/62. Information exchange / Items for the next agenda****26/63. Date of the next meeting:**

The Annual Parish Meeting is to be held on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2026 at 7.30pm at Toppesfield Village Hall.

The Annual Parish Council Meeting is scheduled to be held on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2026 at 7.30pm at Toppesfield Village Hall.

**26/64. Close**

Cllr Bourlet closed the meeting at 8.55pm

Signed:

Dated:

- **Cllr Neale to contact Cllr Peter Schwier regarding further funding for the tree project.**
- **Cllr Neale to follow up on quotes to carry out the work on the RoSPA action list.**
- **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 speak to the Cricket Club about the possibility of combining Crinders and a Summer fete.**
- **Cllr Bourlet to review the new website and agree content.**
- **Clerk to purchase 3 dog poo bag dispensers.**
- **Clerk to complete an enforcement request with North Essex Parking Partnership with regards to parking in Church Lane.**
- **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.**

## Appendix A

Accounts - 15th April 2026				
			£	
<b>Community Account</b>				
	Balance as at 9th April 2026		£34,707.38	
	All previous authorised payments issued balance should be		£34,926.06	
	Income Received Included in the balance figure of 9th April 2026		£0.00	
	Payments made since last meeting included in balance figure of 09.04.26			
17.03.26	Toppesfield Parochial Church - Clock project		£1,000.00	
	Direct Debits Included in the balance figure of 9th April 2026			
01.04.26	EDF - Pavilion electric		£8.00	
09.04.26	Vodafone contract		£14.68	
			<u>£22.68</u>	
				Unrecoverable VAT
<b>Payments to be approved:</b>				
<b>Date of invoice</b>		<b>Payment Method</b>		
10.03.26	Paula Edwards-Holmes - reimbursement of Dr Car Service Phone top up	By Bacs	£15.00	£0.00
10.03.26	K Berry - reimbursement of fees for email hosting for new website	By Bacs	£68.98	£0.00
03.03.26	K Berry - reimbursement for council laptop charger	By Bacs	£20.00	£0.00
8th, 9th, 10th April 26	K Berry - reimbursement for dog waste bags	By Bacs	£182.28	£0.00
01.04.26	K Berry - March salary	By Bacs	£784.71	£0.00
01.04.26	HMRC - Tax on March salary	By Bacs	£6.60	£0.00
			<u>£1,077.57</u>	
			£33,629.81	