



Toppesfield Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Meeting held on Thursday 2nd October 2025 at Toppesfield Village Hall at 7.30pm

25/159. Attendance and Apologies for Absence:

The following Councillors were in attendance:

Councillor Chris Neale - chaired the meeting
Councillor Frances Winter
Councillor Amanda Smith
Councillor Jeremy Graves
Councillor Jane Daines

Also, in attendance:

1 Member of the public
District Cllr Richard van Dulken
County Councillor Peter Schwier
Kaaren Berry – Clerk

Apologies were received from:

Councillor Kitty Bourlet
Councillor Paula Edwards-Holmes

25/159.1 To accept apologies from members of the council

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

25/160. Declaration of Members' interests in agenda items

No declaration of members interests were made at this meeting.

25/161. Open Session – *opportunity for members of the Parish to address the Parish Council.*

A proposed timetable for the process to conclude the Neighbourhood plan was presented to the parish council. Which detailed consultation periods, open session and what the potential costs to the parish council will be as no further funding is available to complete the project.

Cllr Peter Schwier Reported:

- That Essex County Council are not taking on anymore projects at present as there is no money left in the budget but the Highways matters raised by the Parish Council can be looked at again next year.
- He will follow up about the potholes along the Great Yeldham Road.
- Updates have been sent through and forwarded to Councillors for their information.
- The Local Government reorganisation – four proposals for unitary authorities have been put forward for consultation. Keep up to date about local government changes in Essex and your questions answered at: [A stronger Greater Essex | Essex Local Government Reorganisation Hub](#)
- May 2026 – there will be elections for the first mayor of Essex.
- Essex County Council are looking at their budget for next year. Social care is taking most of the budget and the thinking is that there will be an increase in council tax next year and updates will be sent out regarding this.

Cllr Richard van Dulken reported:

- Braintree District Council did a poll which showed 65% voted for three unitary authorities as this seemed more cost effective.
- At the recent local plan subcommittee meeting the development boundary extension was supported to include two call for sites submissions in Park Lane. In Great Yeldham the addition of 60 – 70 homes was also passed.
- The number of residents at Wethersfield Asylum Centre stands at 1050 with a maximum of 1200.
- The number 89 bus service has been drastically reduced – Cllrs Schwier and van Dulken are in talks with TMS (Transport Made Simple) to increase the service provided.
- Waste collection changes – residents will be sent a letter to confirm they are in a standard or non-standard category. Standard being you have space for the new bins and non-standard would mean you would have a different arrangement. There will be opportunity to appeal if you disagree with which category, you are placed in.

25/162. To approve and sign the minutes of the Toppesfield Parish Council Meeting held on 7th August 2025 and 4th September 2025

Cllr Winter proposed the minutes for the meeting held on 7th August 2025 were agreed and Cllr Daines seconded this. Cllr Neale proposed the minutes for the meeting of the 4th September 2025 were agreed and Cllr Graves seconded this. Both sets of minutes were signed as a true record of the meetings.

25/163. Matters Arising not on the agenda – for report only

There were no matters arising.

25/164. Actions from previous meeting:

- 25/164.1 Cllr Edwards-Holmes to email Cllr Schwier expressing an interest in this project and roughly how many lights would be required and ask for the project to be included in his budget. Cllr Neale reported that there is no money available for this from Essex County Council. Action closed.
- 25/164.2 Cllr Neale to contact Cllr Peter Schwier regarding further funding for the tree project. To be held over to next meeting.
- 25/164.3 Cllr Bourlet to update the councils Biodiversity Policy. To be held over to next meeting.
- 25/164.4 Cllr Smith to seek three quotes to carry out the work on the RoSPA action list. Quotes have been sought but not received. Cllr Neale to follow this up.
- 25/164.5 Clerk to find costs of additional salt bins to store the salt and everyone to look at potential locations for the bins. Quotes received and it was agreed to purchase two bins, one for Park Lane and one to be placed near the school. Clerk to progress purchase.
- 25/164.6 Clerk to investigate the rules on placing wheelie bins on the highway permanently. Information has been gained and Cllr Neale to speak to the resident.

25/165. Internal Practices and management for the Parish Council:

- 25/165.1 Neighbourhood Plan update – this was presented during the open session.
- 25/165.2 Wethersfield Airfield and Asylum centre verbal update to be received – update was given in open session.
- 25/165.3 Playfield update / progress on funding / quotes / work carried out. No progress.
- 25/165.4 Strategy Document – review of responses received now the survey has closed. Working group to look at the responses and report back.
- 25/165.5 Action from the internal audit report – amended staffing committee terms of reference to be considered / adopted. Circulated to councillors prior to meeting for consideration. The amended terms of reference were adopted and will be available on the Parish Council website.
- 25/165.6 Action from the internal audit report – adopt a Biodiversity Policy - draft policy to be considered for approval. Cllr Neale to look at drafting this policy.
- 25/165.7 Village Solar Project – Cllr Neale reported there is funding available for this type of project and this is ongoing.

25/166. Upcoming events

- 25/166.1 Remembrance service – 9th November 2025 – Proposal to purchase Poppy Wreath for Remembrance Day and arrange the installing of the commemorative bench and silhouette figures. It was agreed to purchase a poppy wreath – clerk to progress this.
The bench and silhouette will be placed in the churchyard. Cllrs Neale and Smith to progress the installation of the silhouettes and volunteers to instal a pad for the bench will be sought via the next parish newsletter.
- 25/166.2 Christmas Event – update on progress of actions from previous meeting. Confirm budget/funding for event to include refreshments, decorations, lights, gifts agree if anything else is required. Volunteers for the planning and the event itself to be agreed.
Cllr Neale and Graves have drawn up a list of jobs and allocated most of these to volunteers. Some actions still to be confirmed. Discussions held and budgets agreed, a budget for presents was agreed in principal but Cllr Graves to identify potential presents for children before progressing.

25/167. Correspondence Received:

- 25/167.1 EALC Legal & County Updates, Essex County Council Highways Highlights, RCCE Essex Warbler – circulated to all Councillors prior to meeting.
- 25/167.2 Email from parishioner re any potential security concerns associated with the Wethersfield Refugee Centre.
- 25/167.3 Braintree District Council – PSPO Vehicular Nuisance Consultation - A Public Spaces Protection Order represents a proactive step towards protecting our communities, improving public safety and reducing the harmful impact caused by anti-social vehicle related behaviour. The proposed PSPO would provide Braintree District Council and Essex Police with additional enforcement powers to prohibit such behaviours. The consultation closes at midnight on Sunday 7th September 2025. Paish council to respond via – <https://www.braintree.gov.uk/council/public-spaces-protection-order-pspo-consultation>
- 25/167.4 Braintree District Council has launched a new set of dedicated Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) web pages to support residents and partners in understanding, reporting, and managing ASB concerns. This can be viewed at: www.braintree.gov.uk/community/antisocial-behaviour
- 25/167.5 Campaign to Protect Rural Essex – invitation to their Annual General Meeting on 4th October 2025 received.
- 25/167.6 Email received from Toppesfield Parochial Church Council asking if the parish council would agree in principal for a grant towards the cost of the village clock on the Church tower. It was agreed that the parish council would consider a grant application but could not comment of value at present.

25/168. Financial Accounts:

- 25/168.1 To receive the Clerk's Report indicating receipts and payments requiring approval. The report was presented and Cllr Winter proposed they were accepted. Payments as detailed in Appendix A were agreed and signed by Cllrs Winter and Neale.
- 25/168.2 Updating of Asset Register 2025 – on going.
- 25/168.3 Discussion/decision on whether to switch bank account to Unity Trust Bank. It was proposed by Cllr Neale and seconded by Cllr Daines to progress discussion with Unity Trust Bank with a view to switching accounts. Clerk to progress.
- 25/168.4 Consideration of the final external auditor report and decide what, if any, action is required. External auditors report was read out and points raised were noted.
- 25/168.5 Proposal to approve a schedule of regular payments in relation to a continuing contract or obligation so the council may authorise these for the financial year 2025/2026. The schedule was proposed for acceptance by Cllr Neale and seconded by Cllr Daines.
- 25/168.6 Proposal to adopt a Internet Banking Policy and an Internal Financial Control Policy & Procedure. Draft policies circulated prior to the meeting. To be held over and resent for consideration.

25/169 Highways:

- 25/169.1 Response from Cllr Schwier re several Highways matters – Cllr Schwier reported that Essex County Council are not taking on anymore projects at present as there is no money left in the budget but the Highways matters raised by the Parish Council can be looked at again next year.

25/169.2 Stumps Cross junction road sign, ref:[2955054](#). Highways have reported the work has been completed.

25/169.3 Quys/Elms Farm junction road sign, ref:[2955055](#). Highways have reported that work has been completed.

25/169.4 Malloes Lane – reports made to Highways re vegetation and surface issues. Highways reported that vegetation issues have been dealt with by the landowner and after inspection reported surface for a byway is satisfactory and does not meet the standard for action.

The fly-tipping/litter was reported to Braintree District Council who will look into this.

It was also noted that under Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 - Section 14(1) Temporary Traffic Regulation Order of Harrow Hill, Toppesfield. Please see the following link for details of the intended closure of Harrow Hill, due to commence on 29th October 2025 for 1 day. The closure is required for the safety of the public and workforce while National Grid undertakes vegetation clearance, <https://one.network/?tm=GB145580400>

25/170. Planning:

Application No:	Description	Address	Action
25/01698/FUL	Proposed change of use of land from agricultural to equestrian & erection of stables.	Land North East Of Fairy Farm Toppesfield Road Wethersfield CM7 4EP	Braintree District Council Decision Pending consideration
25/01800/LBC	Proposed internal and external alterations to rear single-storey element to include removal of glazed roof and replaced with slated to match existing and insertion of 3No. rooflights, associated alterations to fenestration and removal of internal partition walls.	Toppesfield Hall Great Yeldham Road Toppesfield Essex CO9 4LS	Braintree District Council Decision Granted
25/01843/FUL	Retention of existing single-storey detached holiday lodge	Toppesfield Hall Great Yeldham Road Toppesfield Essex CO9 4LS	Braintree District Council Decision Pending consideration
25/00475/VAR	Variation of Condition 2 of (Approved plans) and Condition 7 (Vehicle Parking) of approved application 22/00732/FUL granted on 13/05/2022 for the erection of a two-storey medical centre with allocated parking. Variation would allow a change in design.	Land North of Osier Way Sible Hedingham Essex	Braintree District Council Decision Pending consideration

25/171. Communications:

No items were discussed.

25/172. Information exchange / Items for the next agenda

No items were discussed under this.

25/173. Date of the next meeting:

The next Parish Council Meeting is scheduled to be held on Thursday 6th November 2025 at 7.30pm at Toppesfield Village Hall.

25/174. Close

Cllr Neale closed the meeting at 9.50pm

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 Neale to draft the councils Biodiversity Policy.
- Clerk to arrange purchase of Poppy wreath for Remembrance Sunday.
- Clerk to contact Unity Trust Bank with a view of switching accounts.

Appendix A

Accounts - 1 October 2025				
			£	
Community Account				
	Balance as at 1st October 2025		£44,884.20	
All previous authorised payments issued balance should be			£35,539.88	
	Payments made since last meeting			
			£0.00	
			£0.00	
		Balance	£35,539.88	
Income Received Included in the balance figure of 1st October 2025				
25.09.25	Braintree District Council - Precept - 2nd instalment		£9,375.00	
Direct Debits Included in the balance figure of 1st October 2025				
01.09.25	EDF - Pavilion electric		£8.00	
07.09.25	Vodaphone contract		£14.68	
01.10.25	EDF - Pavilion electric		£8.00	
			£30.68	
Direct Debits to be taken this month				
07.10.25	Vodaphone contract		£14.68	
				Unrecoverable VAT
Payments to be approved:				
Date of invoice		Payment Method		
05.08.25	Boyd Page - sign repair	By Bacs	£26.10	£0.00
25.08.25	Paul Thompson - materials for repairs and re painting Toppesfield phone box	By Bacs	£38.00	£0.00
01.09.25	HMRC - Tax on August salary	By Bacs	£26.20	£0.00
01.09.25	K Berry - August salary (including back pay)	By Bacs	£863.39	£0.00
05.09.25	Eden Print - September / October newsletter	By Bacs	£210.00	£0.00
10.09.25	The Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal - Poppy Wreath	By Cheque	£25.00	£0.00
15.09.25	PKF Littlejohn LLP - external audit	By Bacs	£252.00	£0.00
01.10.25	K Berry - September salary	By Bacs	£784.71	£0.00
01.10.25	HMRC - Tax on September salary	By Bacs	£6.60	£0.00
			£2,246.68	
			£42,637.52	