



Toppesfield Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Meeting held on Thursday 3rd July 2025 at Toppesfield Village Hall at 7.30pm

25/112. Attendance and Apologies for Absence:

The following Councillors were in attendance:

Councillor Paula Edwards-Holmes - Chaired the meeting.

Councillor Amanda Smith

Councillor Chris Neale

Also, in attendance:

District Cllr Richard van Dulken

One member of the public

Apologies were received from:

Councillor Kitty Bourlet

Councillor Frances Winter

Councillor Jane Daines

Councillor Jeremy Graves

25/112.1 To accept apologies from members of the council.

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Daines, Cllr Bourlet, Cllr Winter and Cllr Graves who were unable to attend the meeting due to prior commitments.

25/113. Declaration of Members' interests in agenda items

No declaration of members interests were made at this meeting.

25/114. Open Session – opportunity for members of the Parish to address the Parish Council.

It mentioned that there is an article in the newsletter about the possibility of setting up an Historical Society to help index, catalogue and store old documents, photos etc relating to the parish.

There are many photos, newsletters, videos, cine films etc being stored in people's homes and it would be good if these could be centralised and digitalised for prosperity.

Cllr Edwards-Holmes stated that she will speak to the Church/Essex Records office re storage of such items and grants can be looked at to help fund digitalising. The cost of digitalising the cine films will be looked at before looking into other costs.

Cllr Richard van Dulken reported:

- Community grants – an application for the tree project would be welcomed. Cllr Neale reported that the consensus seems to be for more mature trees rather than saplings, however sites have not yet been identified/confirmed. Cllr van Dulken suggested that an application to help with digitalising costs could be made instead.
- We are Group – funded by UK power networks is offering free energy advice. A link to this is on the parish councils website.
- There is no money available from Essex County Council for new lighting schemes - however could solar power be considered. Cllr Neale suggested that overhead power could be used, and he will contact Cllr Schwier.

- Under the Rural Prosperity Fund there is £176,000 available for capital projects. To check criteria please see BDC website at: [Grant Funding for Rural Businesses and Community – Rural Prosperity Fund – Braintree District Council](#)
- The new waste & recycling bins/collections will start in June 2026. Some properties will have boxes rather than bins due to space/access issues. Communications will be sent to households regarding the new scheme.
- Cllr van Dulken did not attend the meeting regarding the call for sites on the 25th June but mentioned that the sites should be entered in the Neighbourhood plan as they are outside the village envelope.
- The reorganisation/devolution is ongoing and it is looking like September Local Authorities need to submit their suggestions of how many unitary authorities there should be in the new Greater Essex area.

25/115. To approve and sign the minutes of the Toppesfield Parish Council Meeting held on 5th June and 23rd June 2025.

Cllr Neale proposed the minutes were agreed and Cllr Smith seconded this. The minutes of both meetings were signed as a true record of the meeting.

25/116. Matters Arising not on the agenda – for report only.

There were no matters arising.

25/117. Actions from previous meeting:

25/117.1 Cllr Edwards-Holmes to contact Highways regarding lighting of roads from the centre of the village to Camoise Close. The response from Cllr Schwier was: 'The budget for street lighting is allocated for the maintenance of the existing lighting stock only. Unfortunately, there is no allocation for additional lighting units or new street lighting schemes. Other local authorities (boroughs, districts and parish councils) may be in a position to arrange for the installation and maintenance of additional street lighting.' Cllr Neale will follow this up with Cllr Schwier to see if there are other alternatives.

25/117.2 Cllr Bourlet to review funding options for digitalising historic records. Cllr Edwards- Holmes agreed to take on this action.

25/117.3 Cllr Neale to contact Cllr Peter Schwier regarding further funding for the tree project. This action is ongoing.

25/117.4 Clerk to speak to Community Heartbeat Trust regarding paint for the Gainsford End telephone box. Email was sent enquiring, but no response has been received. Clerk to follow up.

25/117.5 Cllr Edwards-Holmes to draft a revised process for the Doctors car service and circulate to all Councillors for review. This action is ongoing.

25/118. Internal Practices and management for the Parish Council:

25/118.1 Neighbourhood Plan (NHP) update. List of Statutory consultees received from Braintree District Council. David Oxnam is progressing the NHP to public consultation.

25/118.2 Wethersfield Airfield and Asylum centre verbal update to be received. Minutes of the Wethersfield Parish/Ward Cllr engagement minutes were circulated to councillors prior to the meeting.

25/118.3 Playfield update / progress on funding / quotes / work carried out – no update received.

25/118.4 RoSPA reports received – determine actions required. Clerk to draw up a list of actions required.

25/118.5 Strategy Document – update on responses received. More responses have been received. There is an article in the newsletter encouraging people to respond and Cllr Edwards-Holmes will advertise that the date for responses has been extended to 31st July 2025. It was also agreed to ask Louis Finch for summary of responses once the consultation closes.

25/118.6 Toppesfield Parish Council Risk Assessment – the risk assessment was approved by those present and signed by the chair of the meeting.

25/118.7 Doctor Car service - to review the process of the service. This action is ongoing.

25/118.8 Agree plan for actions in relation to the internal audit report. It was agreed to carry this point over to the next meeting.

25/118.9 Biodiversity Policy - draft circulated for reference and comments to be submitted to the Cllr Bourlet who will update the policy as necessary.

25/118.10 Request received for the council to consider the storage of historical documents and photographs. This was discussed under the open session.

25/119. Upcoming events

25/119.2 Christmas Event – Cllr Neale has made enquires with regards to using the PA system for the event.

25/120. Correspondence Received:

25/120.1 EALC Legal & County Updates, Essex County Council Highways Highlights, RCCE Essex Warbler – circulated to all Councillors prior to meeting.

25/120.2 Braintree District Council – enquiring if the Parish Council has any plans for the upcoming VJ 80th celebrations on Friday 15th August 2025.

25/120.3 Essex County Council Salt Bag Partnership Scheme for Winter 2025/26. It was agreed that the parish council will take part this year.

25/120.4 All residents of Braintree district invited to annual PFCC Essex public meeting - The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) for Essex is inviting all residents from across Braintree district to attend a public meeting to learn more about crime and community safety in their area.

The meeting will take place on Tuesday 8th July at Braintree Town Hall at 7pm to 8pm. Police, Fire

25/120.5 Haverhill Wranglers country music band – introduction letter received and would like to work with the Parish Council at events. More information about the band can be found on their website <https://haverhillwranglers.com/>

25/120.6 Rural Community Council of Essex 2025 AGM – will be held on 9th July 2025 at Rivenhall Hall Oaks Golf Centre, Witham at 6.30pm. Booking for this event is required.

25/121. Financial Accounts:

25/121.1 To receive the Clerk's Report indicating receipts and payments requiring approval. The report was presented and Cllr Edwards-Holmes proposed they were accepted Payments are detailed in Appendix A and the payment schedule was signed by Cllrs Smith and Neale.

25/121.2 Updating of Asset Register 2025 – Cllr Neale is progressing this.

25/121.3 Consideration of quotes received to carry out electrical inspections on properties the parish council Insures and agree next steps. Quotes received were considered and it was agreed to appoint TSL Services to carry out the electrical inspections.

25/121.4 Proposal to move from Barclays to Unity Trust Bank to support multiple signatories per transaction as recommended in the internal audit. This was proposed by Cllr Edwards-Holmes and seconded by Cllr Neale. Clerk to make enquires with Unity Trust Bank.

25/122 Highways:

25/122.1 Village sign gate at Gainsford End – reference 2975050 – Essex Highways have updated the status of this to 'We have investigated, risk assessed and recorded this issue and we are in the process of scheduling works.'

25/123. Planning:

Application No:	Description	Address	Action
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
25/00617/LBC	Removal of internal partitions from the rear single storey element, removal of fireplace and removal of internal walls to each side of the chimney stack. Block up 4no. existing windows, 1no. existing door and installation of 3no. rooflights, installation of 1no. full height	Toppesfield Hall Great Yeldham Road Toppesfield CO9 4LS	Braintree District Council Decision: Application REFUSED

	<p>window, with a canopy to be provided to the northeast elevation of the single storey element. All existing external masonry walls forming the newly formed lounge area are to be lined internally with insulation material.</p>		
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The above applications were for report only

25/124. Communications:

No items were discussed under this item.

25/125. Information exchange / Items for the next agenda

No items were discussed under this item.

25/126. Date of the next meeting:

The next Parish Council Meeting is scheduled to be held on 7th August 2025 at 7.00pm at Toppesfield Village Hall.

25/127. Close

The Chair closed the meeting at 8.31pm

Signed:

Dated:

Action Summary:

- Cllr Neale to contact Cllr Schwier with regards to alternative street lighting options from the centre of the village to Camoise Close.
- Cllr Edwards-Holmes to look at funding options for digitalising historic records.
- Cllr Neale to contact Cllr Peter Schwier regarding further funding for the tree project.
- Clerk to follow up with Community Heartbeat Trust regarding paint for the Gainsford End telephone box.
- Cllr Edwards-Holmes to draft a revised process for the Doctors car service and circulate to all Councillors for review.
- Clerk to draw up a list of required actions following receipt of the RoSPA reports.
- Cllr Edwards-Holmes to advertise on Facebook the extended date for Strategy responses.
- Cllr Bourlet to update the councils Biodiversity Policy.
- Clerk to make enquires with Unity Trust Bank with regards to switching bank accounts.

Appendix A

Accounts -3rd July 2025				
			£	
Community Account				
	Balance as at 2nd July 2025		£39,547.67	
All previous authorised payments issued balance should be			£40,894.12	
	Payments made since last meeting (included in 2nd July Balance)			
11.06.25	Community Heartbeat Trust - replacement defibrillator pads and resusc kit		£101.94	
13.06.25	Clear Councils insurance renewal		£1,236.51	
		Balance	£39,555.67	
Income Received Included in the balance figure of 2nd July 2025				
23.06.25	Braintree District Council - Street Cleaning		£1,281.98	
Direct Debits Included in the balance figure of 2nd July 2025				
01.07.25	EDF - Pavilion electric		£8.00	
			£8.00	
Direct Debits To be taken this month				
07.07.25	Vodafone contract		£14.68	
				Unrecoverable VAT
Payments to be approved:				
Date of invoice		Chq No:		
17.06.25	Groundwork UK - return of unspent grant for Neighbourhood plan	By Bacs	£1,960.00	£0.00
05.06.25	Playsafety Limited - RoSPA annual inspection of playing fields	By Bacs	£211.20	£0.00
07.06.25	LetchWood - internal audit for 2024/2025	By Bacs	£140.00	£0.00
15.06.25	P & K & W Chinery - Verge cutting	By Bacs	£720.00	£0.00
17.06.25	Saffron Accounting Services - preparation of year end accounts 2024 - 2025	By Bacs	£75.00	£0.00
03.07.25	Eden Print - Newsletter July/August 2025	By Bacs	£250.00	£0.00
01.07.25	HMRC - Tax on July salary	By Bacs	£1.60	£0.00
01.07.25	K Berry - July salary	By Bacs	£765.14	£0.00
			£4,122.94	
			£35,410.05	