Toppesfield Parish Council

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Thursday 3rd May 2012 At The Village Hall, Toppesfield at 7.30pm

Peter opened the meeting by thanking all for their attendance.

1. Attendance and Apologies for Absence:

The following Councillors were in attendance:

Peter Moore - Chairman Andrew Bull - Vice Chairman Alan Collard John Levick

Also in attendance:

Kaaren Berry – Clerk to the Parish Council
Margaret Dyson – Doctors Car Service
Sheila Braithwaite – W.I.
Anne Read – Community Shop, Footpaths and Flower Show
Tony Davison – Toppesfield Parish Charities
Paul Thompson – Allotments
Malcolm Braithwaite – VANTAGE
Sally Croft – PCC
Tony Downs – Green Man
Bernie Stevenson – Red Barrows
Rob Stafford-Baker
Tina Mason
Brian Hammond

Apologies were received from:

Councillors Clare Condie and Shaun Sheldrake.

St. Margaret's School, Virginia Laskowski – Village Hall, Sian Davies-Hatton – Little Chestnuts Preschool and Zoe Hughes – Art & Craft Club, Little Hedgehogs and Fit Fun Club.

2. Minutes of the last meeting:

The minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting, 19th May 2011, were signed as correct.

3. Matters Arising from the minutes:

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

4. Parish Council Annual Report from the Chairman:

Peter Moore gave his report – see attached appendix A. In addition to his report Peter thanked Mr and Mrs Clarke for the donation of the Christmas tree for the village last year.

5. Organisation Reports / Groups Reports:

Reports were received from various organisations.

Ann Read delivered the reports for the Community Shop, Flower Show and the Footpath Group – see Appendix B. The Flower show this year is being held on 15th September 2012. Peter thanked the shop members on behalf of the parish on the excellent job they do.

Sian Davies-Hatton was unable to attend but sent a report from Little Chestnuts Pre-school which was read out at the meeting—see Appendix C.

Margaret Dyson gave a report on how the Doctors cars service is going. If anyone wishes to volunteer as a driver please speak to Margaret. Please see Appendix D for report.

Zoe Hughes sent her apologies but provided reports for the Art & Craft Club, Little Hedgehogs and The Fit Fun Club. These were read out during the meeting on Zoe's behalf—see Appendix E.

Sally Croft gave a report from the PCC – see Appendix F.

Virginia Laskowski was unable to attend but had given a report from the Village Hall committee – see Appendix G.

Malcolm gave a report on behalf of the VANTAGE group – please see Appendix H. Peter thanked Malcolm and the team for working on this massive project and for all their hard work and effort, it is much appreciated

Tony Davison gave a report from the Charities and handed a copy of the accounts to the Chairman – see appendix I for Tony's report.

Paul Thompson provided a slide show of photographs to show how the allotments have progressed. There are now 22 allotments, a herb and sensory garden and a Jubilee Orchard for which Edible Essex donated the fruit trees. Footpaths have been cleared and covered with bark chippings around the allotments and water is now available for holders. Produce has been donated and sold off and monies raised have been put back into the allotments. Please see Appendix J for photos.

Tony Downs was present at the meeting and Peter Moore thanked him for all his hard work, effort and ventures at The Green Man.

Shelia Braithwaite gave report on behalf of the W.I. – Please see Appendix K.

Bernie Stevenson was representing the Red Barrows and reported that at their AGM two months ago it was decided they would hang up the hats after 10 years. However 2 weeks later they secured a showing for the Red Barrows at a car fest for Radio 2 in August and September this year. Monies raised have exceeded £40,000 and they continue to raise monies for Breakthrough Breast Cancer by other means, such as their group Reptile Dysfunction.

6. Questions from the public:

Ann Read reported that there will be a village market held over the Bank Holiday weekend this will include craft stalls as well – more details to follow. There were market held at the shop last year but were not well supported, we are hoping things will be different this year.

Rob Stafford-Baker asked Tony Davison who sets the rates of income from for the Charities. Tony explained the income is from parish land and was set at approximately at £3.50 per acre which would not be about £65 per acre but the annuities are fixed for all time.

Malcolm reported that there has been an application made of a grant towards the cost of printing the village plan but the outcome is not known yet. A copy of the village plan will go to every household in the parish. Funding for projects will need to be sort and could be an idea to set up a fund to help pay for children's university fees. The 'Big Society' – what mechanisms can be used to raise funds for the village – ideas are very welcomed. Peter stated that finding source for funding and completing application form for certain projects can be a full time job due to the time it takes.

7. Any other Business:

The Green Man is holding its beer festival on the 20, 21 and 22 July this year.

Alan Collard confirmed there is a group of people looking into a community purchase of the pub and are now in a position to call a public meeting. This will be held on 15th May at 7.30pm in the Village Hall. It will be of benefit for parishioners to attend to find out more. Peter thanked Alan for the incredible amount of work he has already done on this and encouraged all to attend next week.

Tony Davison thank the parish for all the work that has been carried out on the Chestnut trees on The Causeway and that it is looking 100% better.

Date

Chairman

Appendix A

Toppesfield and Gainsford End Parish Council

AGM

Year Overview

2011/12 has been a very busy year for the Village and Parish Council.

Councillors Fran Laskowski has decided to step down this year having served 4 years. A big thank you goes to him for his hard work throughout the year. Fran will continue his role as the tree warden in the village.

The Web site has continued to increase and expand and has good links to other village content this was down to Councillor Levick's hard work in getting the content pulled together. Our face book page has also continued to increase in popularity thanks to Councillor Bull. Any links or content from other groups in the village would be welcome.

It was the 4th year of the Christmas tree lighting and yet it was a great success thankfully better weather this year - thanks to Bridget and Sean Sheldrake and the team.

Toppesfield also carried on the "Arts in the Community" event managed for the third year by Andrew Colley. This year he booked Quicksilver but unfortunately we didn't get the support as of previous years but we will continue to support this event.

The allotments continue to be a great success championed by Paul Thompson and Rob Stafford Baker I believe it is now full. The allotment team also organised bulb planting earlier in the year which as I am sure you will all agree really brightened up the village in the last few months.

The 30mph speed through the village has finally the end is in sight, It was advertised in the papers' in February and I am told by BDC that we should see this all completed by the middle of the year. WE HOLD OUR BREATH

We have also been working with BDC on a potential foot path along the Causeway. This has now been accepted as a project and initial costing have been submitted for budget approval. Once the budget has been approved we will move into the consultation stage.

At the beginning of the year we commissioned a survey for the Playing Fields equipment. This report detailed some potential safety concerns with current equipment in the Toppesfield playing field, realistically the equipment was coming to the end of life and we therefore decided to replace the equipment. This should be fully completed by end of this month.

The Village Plan Committee has continued with its great work and I believe we will have the completed village plan in the next few months.

Overall it has been another great year for Toppesfield.

Peter Moore Chairman

Appendix B

Toppesfield Community Shop Report for Annual Parish Meeting 3rd May 2012

The Community Shop is in its' 10th Year of trading and continues to thrive.

The Post Office plays a vital role in the success of the shop and for some 18 months the shop had funded Saturday morning opening of the Post Office. As the money for that was coming to end we took a long hard look at this and very reluctantly decided to cease Saturday morning opening at the end of October. At about this time Trevor Cooper, our Post master informed us that he planned to move away and wished to retire from the post, giving us three months' notice of this. Trisha Roberts was successful in her application for the post of sub post mistress with Keely Clark as her assistant. Keely had been Trevor's relief person and Trisha and Keely plan to share the post. Also now Trevor has decided not to move away from the area and will be available to help out as well which is great news.

We do try to stock as much Local food as possible and this year have introduced Ham from Prior's Hall at Lindsell along with their bacon and sausages which we already stocked and Fairfield Farm crisps from Wormingford. The potatoes are grown on their farm there and the flavourings are all sourced locally as well. They are delicious and we are much cheaper then anywhere else! We also tried some Epicurium products which were meals in pouches and delicious crisps, nuts and sauces.

In November we hosted a visit from Dagenham Housing Association where they are planning to set up a community shop. Eight visitors came including the Plunkett Foundation Local Food coordinator and spent the morning with us. We had a question and answer session in the village hall and they 'shopped til they dropped 'in the shop.

We received a fee of £300 for hosting this visit under their skills sharing project.

We continue to respond to special events and seasonal items with our window displays and products in the shop. The logs and coal that we introduced last year continue to be really useful and this year we added rock salt as well just in time for the freeze up. We also had new Toppesfield Christmas cards this year with three different views of the village made from photographs taken by people in the village.

On the volunteer front we are delighted to have two new volunteers this year, Lee Howard and Pat Potter. It is great to have some new ideas. Also Sue Simmonds who has joined the committee. Louisa Starkey has moved to Hedingham so is unable to help in the shop but does pop in when she is in the village. In November we received a surprise visit from the district Food Officer who carried out a hygiene inspection of the shop. We were awarded 5, the top mark in the Food hygiene standard rating. Congratulations and thanks to all our volunteers for keeping everything up to scratch.

Each year we put aside some of our surplus into a grant fund. This fund is available for any organization in the village to apply to fund a specific project.

This year we have given grants to The Football Club for the Dick Ruggles Shield, Allotment Association for cutting equipment, Village Hall for their 50th anniversary celebration, Diamond Jubilee committee for the medallions, banners and food for the tea,W.I. for their 40th anniversary celebration and the Village show for the prize money at the show.

Future plans: - It is the 10th anniversary of the opening of the shop so I'm sure there will be a celebration. We plan to have some new Christmas cards and possibly a calendar so keep your eye on the shop!

Toppesfield and Gainsford End Village Show

Report for Annual Parish meeting 3rd May 2012

The show returned to Toppesfield Village Hall in September 2012. We were blessed with a pleasant day and as ever the hall was a splendid sight with all the exhibits. The children's entries were a bit down as they had returned to school just a few days before after the Summer holidays but despite this were of a very high standard.

In the adult classes it was good to see an increase in the number of exhibitors and exhibits. The handicraft classes and the fruit and vegetable classes were particularly well supported and we are hoping for even bigger and better exhibits this year with the flourishing village Allotment Association. The Art and Craft Group staged an exhibition of their work during the year. What talent we have in the parish. The Village Hall grounds were a riot of colour and activity with stalls and games of all sorts.

As ever the finances of the show are a worry We did make a very small surplus last year but have lost money in previous years. Last year we put up the price of entry into the show and entry for the exhibitors but the costs of running the show are considerable and the committee was reluctant to increase prices again this year.

However I am very relieved to be able to report that the Committee has been successful in its' application to Toppesfield Community Shop for a grant to cover the cost of the prize money. This will make a huge difference, enabling us to concentrate on staging a really great village event without the financial worry.

The date for your diary Saturday 15th September 2012.

Toppesfield Parish Paths Partnership Group

Report for Annual Parish Meeting 3rd May 2012

For several years I have organized a Parish walk on New Year's Day and am also a leader for Walking For Well Being Project previously run by Braintree District Council and now run by BDVSA. (Braintree District Volunteer Services Agency) I have always felt quite passionate about the delights and benefits of walking and we are so lucky to have lots of paths in our beautiful parish. One of the things that came out of the Village Plan questionnaire was that a lot people were interested in walking but didn't know where the paths and rights of way were.

Adam Jenkins, P3 officer for our area, attended a parish council meeting informing those present of the Parish Paths Partnership scheme (P3). This scheme is a partnership between Highways and the Parish Council whereby local volunteers carry out surveys on all the paths, identifying any areas that need attention and then carry out the work if of minor nature or get help from other bodies if necessary. This is funded by and supported by your P3 officer. This includes bridleways and bye ways as well as footpaths.

I have taken on being P3 contact for our parish and already have a small team of people who are keen to be involved. We get funding for equipment and also training for some of the work as well. Jacquie Stafford-Baker and I have already attended a course on introduction to P3 which we have found most useful. We are now waiting for Adam Jenkins to visit when he will show us how to do the surveying. Highways carry out a complete survey of all the paths in any one area every 5 years. Toppesfield was surveyed last year hence all the new bridges and markers. This will make our job much easier.

In addition to the paths themselves we plan to publish maps and directions for walks around our parish. Again we will get help with this from P3.

Our first walk is on Saturday 3rd June 2012 starting at the Green Man at 10.30am. Do join us. If anyone would like to become part of this group do let me know.

Appendix C

Little Chestnuts Pre-school

We have had a very challenging year.

After losing 2 staff close together, we advertised and interviewed 3 times – we now have two supervisors sharing the role and have a strong team of staff.

We started off with low numbers of children attending, but after advertising, leaflet drops and the good name of the school we have maxed out on our number intake on 4 out of 5 days in a week up till summer term ends and the school intake starts.

The staff and committee have worked hard together to keep everything updated, we have continued to fundraise, which has given us the opportunity to purchase new equipment, update storage facilities and have outings on a coach, also given the children many more new experiences in

learning. The purchase of our egg incubator resulted in lots of entertainment in the egg to chick cycle especially when they hatched. Staff have also had much needed training.

Ofstead appeared and resulted in a strong GOOD which the staff and committee are very proud of.

Mrs Sian Davies-Hatton

Appendix D

Doctors Car Service

Since the restart of the Doctors Car Service we have taken 19 residents of Toppesfield and Gainsford End to their appointments, the first on 13/09/2011 and the latest tomorrow the 4/05/2012.

We will be putting an item in the next village newsletter reminding everyone of the service and inviting new volunteers.

We have six volunteer drivers at this time and so far have been able to cover all requests.

Margaret Dyson

Appendix E

The Art and Craft Club

This is our 9th year of creativity – we have 12+ members from surrounding villages and of a range of ages younger to older.... We have welcomed new members nor our Art and Crafts range from water colours to Air Fix modelling and from card craft to knitting. We have introduced still life sessions on the last Wednesday of each month, for those that want to draw the same items – its surprising how different these pictures look. These will be on our exhibition board at the village flower show in September. We would also like to show our appreciation on the very kind donation of the projector and screen to the village hall, this has opened up great opportunities and our wish has come true, thank you!

We look forward to us continuing and celebrate our 10th Anniversary next year...wow.

Thank you Zoe Hughes.

Little Hedgehogs

This is our 24th year and hopefully not our last. We have been struggling with attendance for the last few months. We have members but they do not seem to be committed to attend each week. If they did we would be fine...... We have updated our advert in the "What's On" and carried out a door to door leaflet drop in local villages. It may not have helped that in January we found out Ridgewell had opened up on the same day and time as us. We do depend on surrounding villages for their support. Also with the drop off in the local birth rate, children's sleeping patterns and other early year's attractions – are our days numbered? We hope not, we are not going to give up without a fight...... I intend to write a piece for the next newsletter and hopefully update in each issue from then on. We do have a small problem and I'm sorry to raise it but without the help and support of the newsletter how do new parents/carers know we are here. Please can our advert go in each issue and our name it Little Hedgehogs and not Little Acorns – that's the name of the Great Yeldham group. Please could our name be corrected - we feed the pre-school who feed the school and we really need your support on this.

We hope our numbers will improve and long may we continue as it's our silver anniversary next year.

Thank you

Zoe Hughes

Fit Fun Club

As the Zumba instructor was unable to continue as numbers in class dropped after the 1st six weeks, we continued for another four weeks but it would come to an end at Easter. Those of us that had enjoyed and attended each week wanted to continue.....

Wow what timing a projector and screen had been kindly donated to the village hall all we needed was a DVD player and this made it possible for us to do it for ourselves. Our first class was on 19th April – 5 members attended and 9 attended the second week. We have our own name on our record of attendance cards, it is a non-profit club as we work out to Zumba DVD's we already own. We are really having fun and aiming to continue and increase our numbers so watch this space......

Yours Zoe Hughes

Appendix F

Our Vicar Barbara Hume has been with us for over a year now. In this first year she observed the benefice to see how we did things and where she could, or needed to change or add her ideas. In November there was a benefice conference held in Great Yeldham School attended by representatives of all the churches in the benefice and both Toppesfield and Yeldham schools headmistresses. We discussed what each church's strengths were and how best these could be used to serve the benefice. In case anyone doesn't know Toppesfield church share Barbara with four other churchs; Stambourne, Great and little Yeldham and Tilbury juxta Clare. We are known as the upper colne benefice.

From this meeting 2 areas were highlighted that needed attention.

The first being communication, between the churches and from the churches to the villagers. The second was children's work, in the schools and in the benefice.

The communication group is working on a website that hopefully can link in to the parish's one and the first children's club was held in the Easter holidays in Great Yeldham church with lots of activities including drama and bell ringing.

Our Church in Toppesfield has had good fund raising events this year with the ever popular auction in November, A cheese and wine evening and the annual fete at Berwick Hall. However we have spent a great deal of money on essential repairs to the exterior of the church which exceeded £25,000 and continue to have to spend on the upkeep of a very old and special building. We would love to continue work on the inside of the building, especially the removal of the pews and the installation of a new heating system along with comfortable chairs, but need to boost our funds before we can set this in motion.

As you may know we have been donated the funds to build a Loo in the Church! This will be blessed on Sunday evening in our Rogation Service which you are all welcome to come to.

We have just had our AGM where James Blackie was made a Church warden, as Dennis Mortlock has stood down. Brian Moody continues as Church warden, alongside James, as well as playing the organ, being the treasurer and taking some of the services!

I have been licensed by the Bishop to take communion to the sick and house bound people within the benefice to ease the burden on Barbara and am studying to become a pastoral assistant to bridge the gap between church and community.

We want to thank the villagers of Toppesfield and Gainsford end for their support over this last year especially our fundraising events and family services such as Christmas and Easter Day. We are endeavouring to bring other less formal services into our calendar to encourage more people to come to church and are always willing to hear suggestions from our villagers of services they would like to have.

Thank you for listening.

Appendix G

Village Hall Committee -2012 report.

Another year has passed. This past year has been very exciting we obtained a grant from The Sainsbury's Trust which meant that we could purchase more tables and chairs, a new fridge and floor polisher. We still have some monies left to from the grant to purchase a PA system and/or lighting for the stage area. A decision will be made on this shortly.

Also the roof has been fixed and the new stage curtains were hung. The tree out the back have been cut and trimmed and the back outside wall has been repainted.

We saw the village hall reach its 50th Birthday and to celebrate cream teas were put on for the village which went down very well and we were entertained by Richard Webb for the afternoon. The evening saw further entertainment by way of the Flaming Llamas which also went down well.

Virginia Laskowski

Appendix H

Annual Report for VANTAGE

Annual Parish Meeting - Thursday 3rd May 2012

VANTAGE, the Village Action Network for Toppesfield And Gainsford End, was established in late 2010 to focus the efforts of a number of villagers to develop a 15-year plan for the development of the Parish. A steering group was set up, with very flexible membership, to co-ordinate the process. This group has met bi-monthly over the review period. Almost 100 villagers have taken part in the open meetings and the steering group activities. VANTAGE received £2,400 from Essex County Council, via RCCE, to develop the plan from consultations with all the residents of the Parish. A 'questionnaire' was devised in consultation with many interest groups and open village meetings. and was circulated in June 2011 to give every single resident an opportunity to comment on their village facilities, activities, and organisations. At all times, the proceedings were fully reported on the Parish Council website so that everyone was informed of what was going on. An e-mail list of interested parties was compiled and its members regularly circulated with information on relevant matters. The 'questionnaire', which consisted of around 100 statements to which residents were asked to agree or disagree, was collected in late July 2011 and the responses analysed by an independent body, Warwick Data Services. Responses were received from 76% of households in the village and over 60% of residents. A separate Youth Survey attempted to focus the views of the younger residents, from whom some 30 young people responded.

Full analysis of the raw data was presented at an open meeting in October 2011. This event was also a 'cheese and wine' social gathering that enabled parishioners to 'network' over the issues. A subsequent open village meeting in January 2012 received a more focussed report on the areas of real concern, and from the discussions at that meeting a framework of the action plan was developed by the steering group.

Ten areas were identified for attention: 1) Playing Fields and Playground Equipment; 2) Speed Limits; 3) Broadband; 4) Aggregated Procurement; 5) Energy Savings; 6) Local Food; 7) Business Directory; 8) Footpaths; 9) Transport; 10) Young Persons Council

A village plan document is in the process of drafting and should be ready to launch on 1st July 2012. Projects will be constructed to address these ten areas such that the recommendations of the Village Plan can be implemented. A photographic competition is underway to find suitable photos to illustrate the flavour of Toppesfield for publication in the final document. A public launch will be planned for Sunday 1st July 2012.

At the end of the first phase of the Village Plan process in July 2012, VANTAGE will disband as an organised group but the implementation will pass to focus groups which will work to the targets set in the Village Plan. Many of these focus groups have already been formed and some have indeed commenced their work. It is intended that each of the action groups will report their progress at the 2013 Annual Parish meeting. The Parish Council, whilst not being directly responsible for the implementation of the plan, will provide the umbrella under which the small action groups will operate and will provide due governance. The success, or otherwise, of the projects will be monitored after a three year period, and the 15-year village plan revised or amended as appropriate.

Malcolm J Braithwaite - Chairman VANTAGE

Appendix I

Annual Charities Report 2012

The income for the Charities has not changed from last year remaining at £794.00.

This comes from the rent on Parish Land – and the Annuities on 'Oliver's Farm', 'New House Farm' and 'Craig's End House'. The money being allocated to the Church, the old people of the village and Toppesfield School children.

We are pleased to have the Rev. Barbara Hume join us on the committee for the first time this year and from now on she will 'chair' our meetings as an Ex-officio member of the Charities.

Tony Davison - Hon. Treasurer.

Appendix K

Annual Parish Meeting. 3rd May 2012

W.I. Report

The W.I. of Toppesfield and Gainsford End is very active and has a strong membership. We are a lively group who are **not always**, making jam, singing Jerusalem, knitting or making lampshades! **What we do** is provide a group which has fun. We follow a varied programme to suit our varied tastes. We want to learn and have new experiences. We also are committed to be supportive of each other and of the village community. As well as regular once a month meetings we have outings, evening meals out and other extra events.

This year we have held many events including a very successful Hollywood night, a 'swishing' event and a fashion show. We have recently held a large hosting event. A group chose us to provide their lunch and the venue for their AGM after a day touring other villages in Essex. The full coach load enjoyed a delicious meal sourced from the village shop and other local providers. We work with the village shop as much as possible, promoting the good food and the village life we all enjoy. Our future programme includes a visit to Kent well Hall, Gainsborough's House in Sudbury and a variety of talks ranging from beauty to Priors Hall foods! We will be holding a celebration to mark our 40th Anniversary in June 2012 and have invited past members to enjoy a celebration of our group. We always welcome visitors and prospective new members.

Appendix J

Toppesfield and Gainsford End Allotments NSALG Essex County Div The Last Year



Clearing the site







Plan of the allotments



General view of the allotments









Produce on the Barrow





A community Herb Garden has been started



Pathways re-laid





Water at last!



Preparing for the planting of the trees



27 fruit trees now planted



Donations and good wishes Thanks the following: The Moody's for donating the Daffodils and a splendid Bench. Ian Everit for the Bird and Bat Boxes. Angela Delaney for the Bluebell Bulbs. Jacquie Stafford -Baker for her little offerings. The Mortlocks for copious quantities of *Manure* and offers of help. Sally Amerio for he help with Quiz nights. And all the continued support from the Parishioners. And RCCE Edible Essex initiative.

Oyster Magazine :RCCE We have been featured in the RCC Oyster magazine this month with a full page article and photos Copies to be posted on the usual notice boards

Future Projects The woodland walk will be extended and improved . Dog fouling notices and bags will be placed at strategic points along the site, The wild life hedging will be further added to. The grass areas will be kept to a tidy length . The area to the left of the path will be laid to Wild Flowers to help with Bee, Insect and Butterfly conservation, as will the Jubilee Orchard Mixed Wild flowers seeds have already been scattered at random and we hope to have a show later in the year



We are to help Trish Roberts initiative to start up again the Village Local Market on the First Saturday in the month From June Local produce and crafts available from the Barrow! Notice Boards for details



We are hoping to fill, and line with pipe donated by a local business, a small part of the ditch at the bottom of the playing field to allow for a small garden tractor & trailer to gain access to the allotments

Thank you for your time.

