



# Toppesfield Parish Council



## Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2020 Via Teams at 7.30pm

### 20/137. Attendance and Apologies for Absence:

#### The following Councillors were in attendance:

Councillor Alan Collard – Chair

Councillor Andrea Chinery

Councillor Amanda Smith

Councillor Boyd Page

Also, in attendance:

No members of the public joined the meeting

County Councillor David Finch

District Councillor Richard van Dulken

Kaaren Berry – Clerk to the Parish Council

Apologies were received from:

Councillor Chris Neale – Vice chair

Councillor Robert Stafford-Baker

### 20/138. Declaration of Members' interests in agenda items:

No declarations of Members interests were made.

### 20/139. Open Session – opportunity for members of the Parish to address the Parish Council.

County Councillor David Finch spoke to the Parish Council about 1) Local Government Reform, 2) Essex County Council Budget and 3) Covid-19 within Essex monitoring service.

1) over the last 3 months there has been a lot of activity regarding the Local Government reform and the two-tier system moved to unity authorities. Councillor Finch has met with borough and district leaders. This will mean district councils, unity authorities and county council 's will be disbanded to form the unity councils. At present there are 15 bodies.

2) Essex County Council has seen a drop in fees & charges due to the shutdown and claims for universal credit increasing. £72 million has been spent by Essex CC and the government are re-imbursing £61 million towards expenses. When the furlough scheme stops in October it is envisaged more claims for universal credit will be made. Reserves will need to be used and Essex County Council will be looking at ways of reducing costs/working more efficiently. The budget will be set in January 2021.

3) Councillor Finch is part of the Engagement board – cases in Essex are presently low. Some businesses are not applying to the social distancing rules and they have been told if they do not comply, they could be shut down. At present there are 3 in 100,000 cases.

District Councillor Richard van Dulken reported that District Councillors would be representing a greater number of people and covering larger areas under the new reforms. The planning department at Braintree District Council have been busy and are up to full complement as lot of planning applications are being received. The pedestrianization of the centre of Braintree is going ahead at present and there were 3 cases of covid-19 in Braintree last week.

## **20/140. Minutes of the last Parish Council Meeting**

It was proposed by Councillor Page and seconded by Councillor Collard that the minutes of the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> August 2020 were signed as a true record of the meeting.

## **20/141. Matters Arising not on the agenda – for report only**

There were no matters arising.

## **20/142. Actions from previous meeting:**

- 20/142.1 Clerk to follow up with Essex County Council for progress on the reported salt bin at the bottom of Harrow Hill. This was previously reported and the website states 'last inspected January 2020 – issue will be prioritised for repair and passed to the relevant organisation'. No further information is available at present as they are not taking call =s on existing faults.
- 20/142.2 Councillors Collard and Page to progress a plan on how to help the vulnerable in the future – Councillor Page reported that this is being progressed and we should aim to get people to have their prescriptions delivered by organisations such as Boots, help may need to be given in order to do this. Councillor Collard will draft a letter to those who previously used the service regarding this. We also need to aim to have a group of volunteers who are able to help to continue to provide help where necessary.
- 20/142.3 Councillor Stafford-Baker to draft a plan for reduced verge cutting areas – no information available.
- 20/142.4 Councillor Smith to contact County Broadband/contractors regarding recent works along The Causeway and concerns regarding the tarmac sealing. Councillor Smith reported she is still trying to hold of County Broadband.
- 20/142.5 Clerk to make enquires with the solicitors regarding abandoned vehicles and to the EALC regarding by-laws. Enquiries and cost have been received and it was agreed by those present if the abandoned vehicle had not been removed by 7<sup>th</sup> September 2020 then clerk to instruct the solicitor to progress. Complaints regarding the commercial vehicle in the car park have been received and how the waste is sometimes left in the vehicle for long periods of time. It was suggested that the Parish Council look into setting a bye-law that no commercial vehicles are left in the carpark, it was however noted this may just shift the issue to Stambourne Road which is already congested. Councillor Smith to research as to how often vehicles need to be emptied.

## **20/143. Internal Practices and management for the Parish Council:**

- 20/143.1 Councillors' obligations to maintain their status and casual vacancy. The Clerk had consulted with the monitoring officer at Braintree DC and had been advised that if a councillor misses 6 months of meetings consecutively they are automatically self-disqualified (Local Government Act 1972 Section 85). If a casual vacancy arises then following procedure and timescales set by Braintree District Council another Councillor can be co-opted.
- 20/143.2 Neighbourhood Plan Update – Councillor Page reported the most up to date information is being published in the September parish newsletter. The Neighbourhood Plan is making progress despite the current covid-19 restrictions and as soon as practically possible a drop-in session will be scheduled.
- 20/143.3 Update from Project Working Group – Councillors Collard, Neale and Chinery have met and are looking at projects in the village. Toppesfield Community Pub have invited Councillor Collard to their next meeting to discuss ideas relating to the barn at the Green Man. Councillor Stafford-Baker is collating figures for projects on the playing fields and Councillor Chinery is looking at figures for a pre-school building. Councillor Stafford-Baker is also looking into the access road next to the village hall to see if this could be utilised. It was suggested that a house could be built on the car park and funds raised could be used for village projects. It was also noted that the carpark is a village asset and this should be considered only if another area for carparking could be identified. A more central carpark area would be beneficial to the village.

## **20/144. Correspondence Received:**

- 20/144.1 EALC Legal and County Updates, Essex County Council Highways Highlights, RCCE Essex Warbler – circulated to all Councillors prior to meeting.
- 20/144.2 Community 360 is looking to launch a new project in the near future. Funding from the ECC Locality Fund has been received to purchase computer equipment for the purpose of delivering I.T. training to the parishes within the Heddingham Ward. This was discussed and the parish council would like to be involved. Clerk to follow-up.

- 20/144.3 EALC – information regarding Byelaws received – circulated to all councillors prior to the meeting.
- 20/144.4 CareCall 24 7, emergency monitoring and response service advertising leaflets received
- 20/144.5 Essex Honours it's time to nominate someone exceptional. National honours recognise exceptional acts of good citizenship and achievements in public life. Individuals who make a significant contribution to their community can be nominated for a national honour. Please contact the Essex Association of Local Councils or the parish clerk for details.
- 20/144.6 Braintree District Council - Public Consultation: North Essex Local Plan. Section 1 Proposed Main Modifications – open from 27<sup>th</sup> August and 5pm on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2020.
- 20/144.7 Birkett Long Solicitors – request if their assistance is still required regarding Park Lane car park. – this will be taken up as agreed in agenda item 20/142.5

**Late correspondence:**

Essex & Herts Air Ambulance request for funding.

**20/145. Financial Accounts:**

- 20/145.1 To receive the Clerk's Report indicating receipts and payments requiring approval. Councillor Chinery proposed the payments were accepted and Councillor Page seconded this . See Appendix A. Clerk to check regulations to see if the clerk can be a signatory on the parish accounts and to look into closing the National Savings account and transferring it to the parish Barclays account.
- 20/145.2 Toppesfield Cricket Club are looking at the feasibility of introducing an artificial grass practice wicket for training purposes over at the playing field. Would this be something that the PC would consider offering to help the Cricket Club to bring this project to fruition. This was discussed and it was felt that the parish council would consider supporting this project. A grant application will be forwarded to the cricket club for completion.

**20/146. Highways:**

- 20/146.1 Park Lane car park – how can this be utilised better. Councillor Collard asked for ideas on how the car park can be better utilised and for possible alternative car parking areas.
- 20/146.2 Temporary closure of Robinhood End, Toppesfield/Finchingfield Road, Stambourne due to commence on 10th September 2020 for 1 day. The closure is required for the safety of the public and workforce while BT undertakes pole test examination works. More information can be found at <https://one.network/?tm=117584714>
- 20/146.3 Essex Highways are making preparations to carry out works on Cust Hall Bridge located on Gainsford End Road, Toppesfield, Braintree. Works are due to take place from Wednesday 16 September 2020 and expected to be completed in January 2021. Residents/Businesses in the immediate vicinity will shortly receive a letter providing details of the plans
- 20/146.4 Proposal to attempt the adoption/purchase/ gaining of permissive rights of the access way to the pumping station next to the Village Hall (RSB)

**20/147. Planning:** - there were no planning issues to report.

**20/148. Playing Fields & The Dick Ruggles Pavilion**

- 20/148.1 Update on the re-opening the playing field equipment – Councillor Page reported the equipment has been cleaned, new signs have been erected and the playing fields have been reopened. Regular checks are to take place. 2 swings have been taken down to help maintain social distancing in Toppesfield and Gainsford End swings will be checked and a swing removed if necessary.

**20/149. Communications**

- 20/149.1 Website - information from Councillors is still required to update the website and suggestions for additional content was requested.

**20/150. Information exchange / Parish Surgery / Items for the next agenda**

The village hall are approaching regular hirers to see if they are wishing to return to using the hall from October.

The new dedicated parish phone number will be advertised on the website.

Little Chestnuts are still planning on having the Circus come to Toppesfield next year.

**20/151. Date of the next meeting:**

The next Parish Council Meeting is proposed to be held on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2020 at 7.30pm – this may be via Teams or at Toppesfield Village Hall depending on government advice at the time.

**20/152. Close**

The meeting closed at 9.05pm

Signed:

Dated:

**Action Summary:**

**Councillor Stafford-Baker to draft a plan for reduced verge cutting areas.**

**Councillor Smith to contact County Broadband/contractors regarding recent works along The Causeway and concerns regarding the tarmac sealing.**

**Councillor Smith to research into how often commercial waste vehicles need to be emptied.**

**Clerk to check regulations regarding being a signatory on the parish account and look into closing the National Savings Account.**

**Councillor Page to check the spacing of the swings at Gainsford End and remove if necessary to assist with social distancing.**

**Appendix A**

Accounts - 3rd September 2020		£		£	
National Savings Deposit Account:					
Balance as at 1st January 2020		£2,646.58			
Community Account					
	Balance as at 31st August 2020			£25,476.69	
Subtotal:		£2,646.58			
All previous issued cheques cashed balance should be		£2,646.58		£25,055.81	
Income Received (included in the balance figure of 31st July 2020)					
Payments to be approved:					
Date of invoice			Chq No:		Unrecoverable VAT
13.08.20	Stocksigns - signs for the playing fields x 3 and fixings		By Bacs	£590.29	£0.00
20.08.20	Soft Surfaces - Wet pour repair kit		By Bacs	£70.20	£0.00
21.08.20	E.on - final bill		By Bacs	£27.56	£0.00
02.09.20	Toppesfield Community Store - expenses relating to covid-19		By Bacs	£88.00	£0.00
02.09.20	Re-inbursement of unspent donation to use for covid-19 expenses		By Bacs	£2,267.24	£0.00
03.09.20	Paul Clark Printing - September 2020 newsletter		By Bacs	£180.00	£0.00
31.08.20	K Berry - August wages		By Bacs	£380.94	£0.00
				£3,604.23	
				£21,451.58	