



Toppesfield Parish Council



Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday 4th April 2024 at Toppesfield Village Hall at 7.30pm

24/46. Attendance and Apologies for Absence:

The following Councillors were in attendance:

Councillor Alan Collard
Councillor Amanda Smith
Councillor Frances Winter
Councillor Paula Edwards-Holmes
Councillor Jane Daines

Also, in attendance:

County Councillor Peter Schwier
District Councillor Richard van Dulken
Kaaren Berry – Clerk

Apologies were received from:

Councillor Kitty Bourlet
Councillor Jeremy Graves

24/47. Declaration of Members' interests in agenda items

There were no declarations of interest reported.

24/48. Open Session – opportunity for members of the Parish to address the Parish Council.

It was questioned if the parish council hold a record of where they have planted trees and if not, volunteers have come forward to start such a map/record which then would need input from the parish council to add any further information to it and maintain it. The Parish Council do not hold a record at present.

County Councillor Peter Schwier reported:

- Essex County Councils LED lighting programme is hoped to be completed by the end of the year. There have been 4000 fewer faults reported with the LED lights than last year.
- The 5-year tree planting initiative has been completed a year early with 375,000 trees planted and another 100,000 are hoping to be planted next year. £380,000 was budgeted but grants received for the project more than covered the costs.
- Essex County Council has launched its first ever water strategy at their Spring Climate Summit – details of which can be found on their website at: [New Water Strategy for Essex | Essex County Council](#)

District councillor van Dulken reported:

- Wethersfield - Asylum Centre: the organisers have recognised some of the challenges and are aiming to cap the number of residents to 800.
Wethersfield – Prison: Braintree District Council are still going ahead with their final appeal on the 11th and 12th April 2024, however it would appear the project maybe fading away as other more suitable sites have been identified.
- Councillors Community Grant – Last year £300 was given to Little Chestnuts Preschool for their upcoming 50th Anniversary event and £100 to St Margarets for their summer club activities. SO far this year £312 will be given to the Parish Council for Dog poop bag dispensers and bags.
- There was over a 50% take up in the green waste subscription service.

- Braintree District Council has adopted its Corporate Strategy for 2024.
- It is the 50th Anniversary of Braintree District Council this month.

24/49. Minutes of the last Parish Council Meeting

Cllr Winter proposed the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 7th March 2024 were agreed and signed as a true record of the meeting and Cllr Smith seconded this.

24/50. Matters Arising not on the agenda – for report only.

There were no matters arising.

24/51. Actions from previous meeting:

- 24/51.1 Cllrs to review and approve Clerk's contract and job description following changes made. This has not been reviewed and will be held over to the next meeting.
- 24/51.2 Cllrs to review and approve policies as mentioned in the Clerks contract. The Sickness Policy, Disciplinary Policy and Grievance Policy were all approved and adopted.
- 24/51.3 Cllr Collard to seek grants for digitalising historic photographs. Sources of funding have been identified, But their qualifying conditions need to be looked into. The amount of information for digitalising needs to be identified. Cllr Collard will progress this.
- 24/51.4 Clerk to write a letter regarding Common Land and the use of bonfires on such land. A letter was written and delivered to a parishioner regarding this. It is not known where the hardcore on the common land came from. An article will be placed in the parish newsletter regarding the use of common land.
- 24/51.5 Cllr Bourlet & Winter to arrange meetings with representatives from two other playground equipment companies regarding possibilities for the playing field. No progress reported.
- 24/51.6 Clerk to progress a more efficient mobile phone contract – ongoing as the Council do not hold a debit card the value bundle contract may not be able to be accessed. Clerk to enquire further.

24/52. Internal Practices and management for the Parish Council:

- 24/52.1 Neighbourhood Plan update – Cllr Collard reported that Paul Munson is working on this as instructed.
- 24/52.2 Wethersfield Airfield and Asylum centre update – updates have been sent to Councillors and the WASC minutes are available on the parish website.
- 24/52.3 Coffee morning and annual litter pick, 23 March 2024 – feedback. There were few people in addition to the litter pickers. There was a nice atmosphere during the event but the length of time between the litter picking and the Easter egg hunt was too long. It was felt there needs to be a theme for future coffee mornings.
- 24/52.4 RoSPA play area inspections due May 2024 – is a meeting with inspectors required? It was agreed to arrange to meet an inspector when the inspection is carried out. Clerk to arrange this.
- 24/52.5 Playing fields Plan – update on obtaining quotes for consideration. No progress to report.
- 24/52.6 Annual Parish Meeting arrangements – The meeting will be publicised on noticeboards, Facebook and the parish website. It was agreed to purchase light refreshments for the evening. Reports from organisations will be available and views on what the biggest challenges are for the village organisations will be sought.

24/53. Correspondence Received:

- 24/53.1 EALC Legal & County Updates, Essex County Council Highways Highlights, RCCE Essex Warbler – circulated to all Councillors prior to meeting.
- 24/53.2 Open Spaces Society – Open Space Spring 2024 edition received – would the Parish Council like to subscribe to this publication. It was agreed not to sign up to this publication.
- 24/53.3 Toppesfield Community Shop – request for permission to have the grassed garden area outside the shop professionally levelled and artificially turf laid. Following discussions the parish council did not agree with the proposal and will be asking for alternative solutions to be looked at.
- 24/53.4 Braintree District Council -A Steeple Bumpstead Neighbourhood Plan was submitted to Braintree District Council in February 2024 by the Parish Council. Views are being sought on the Plan (under Regulation 16 of The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012). The consultation is open between Tuesday 19th March and 5pm on Friday 3rd May 2024. Any comments to be made directly to Braintree District Council.

24/53.5 The Spring/Summer edition of the Countryside Voices was received.

24/39. Financial Accounts:

24/54.1 To receive the Clerk's Report indicating receipts and payments requiring approval. The report was received and payments approved. However, clerk to enquire if a joint membership for Parish Council and the Village Hall is possible.

24/54.2 Approval to purchase dog poop bag dispenser and poop bags for Clean up Our Village project. This was approved and Clerk to progress this.

24/54.3 Annual Governance and Accountability Returns (AGARs) need to be completed, signed and submitted by 1st July 2024. This was noted by the parish council.

24/54.4 BDC Grounds Maintenance Service Level Agreement and Street Cleaning Agreement consideration for approval and signing. Both agreements were signed, and Clerk submit both agreements to Braintree District Council.

24/55 Highways:

24/55.1 Kerb defects along Church Lane and flooding outside The Chapel, The Street reported to Essex County Council. Tracking numbers 2908788, 2908790 and 2908794.

24/55.2 Church Lane – increasing traffic is using the lane as a turning point. Could anything be put in place to reduce traffic flow along the byway.

This was discussed as Google maps is showing the byway as a proper road and vehicles are getting stuck in the unmade, large potholed and boggy road. It was asked if the common land could have a surface laid on it to allow it to be used as a turning point. It was agreed to enquire with Highways for guidance regarding signage and a way forward. Clerk to progress.

24/56. Planning:

Application No:	Description	Address	Action
24/00369/FUL	2No. Single storey holiday lodges	Toppesfield Hall Great Yeldham Road Toppesfield CO9 4LS	Comments to Braintree District Council by 9 th April 2024
24/00628/AGR	Application for prior notification of agricultural or forestry development- -Erection of agricultural grain store	Flowers Hall Farm Gainsford End Toppesfield CO9 4EN	For information only

Planning application 24/00369/FUL was discussed and the parish council support the application, however some concerns were raised regarding lighting being possibly to intrusive to neighbouring properties.

24/57. Communications:

No items were discussed under this heading.

24/58. Information exchange / Items for the next agenda

No items were discussed under this heading.

24/59. Date of the next meeting:

The next Parish Council Meeting is scheduled to be held on 9th May 2024 at 7.30pm at Toppesfield Village Hall. Please note this is the second Thursday of the month due to elections being held in the village hall on the 2nd May 2024.

24/60. Close

The Chair closed the meeting at 9.00pm

Signed:

Dated:

Action Summary:

- Cllrs to review Clerk's contract and job description following changes made.
- Cllr Collard to progress funding for digitalising historic photographs/documents.
- Cllr Bourlet & Winter to arrange meetings with representatives from two other playground equipment companies regarding possibilities for the playing field.
- Clerk to continue progressing a more efficient mobile phone contract.
- Clerk to arrange a meeting with the RoSPA inspector for the playing field inspections.
- Clerk to enquire if a joint membership with the RCCE is possible for the Parish Council and Village Hall.
- Clerk to purchase dog poop bag dispensers and poop bags for Clean up Our Village project.
- Clerk to enquire with Highways for a solution to the issues on Church Lane regarding increased traffic, surface and signage.

Appendix A

Accounts -4th April 2024				
			£	
Community Account				
	Closing Balance as at 2nd April 2024		£36,071.62	
	All previous payments issued balance should be		<u>£36,081.62</u>	
	Income Received Included in the balance figure of 2nd April 2024			
			£0.00	
			<u>£0.00</u>	
			£0.00	
	Direct Debits Included in the balance figure of 2nd April 2024			
01.04.24	EDF Energy - The Pavilaion electricity supply		£10.00	
			<u>£0.00</u>	
			<u>£10.00</u>	
				Unrecoverable VAT
Payments to be approved:				
Date of invoice		Chq No:		
22.03.24	F Winter - Reimbursement for coffee morning expenses	By Bacs	£31.85	£0.00
24.03.24	RCCE - Membership renewal	By Bacs	£44.10	£0.00
01.04.24	EALC & NALC Affiliation fees 2024/2025	By Bacs	£183.10	£0.00
01.04.24	HMRC - Tax on March salary	By Bacs	£47.80	£0.00
01.04.24	K Berry - March salary	By Bacs	£695.15	£0.00
			<u>£1,002.00</u>	
			£35,069.62	