



Toppesfield Parish Council



Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday 4th February 2021 Via Google Meet at 7.30pm

21/16. Attendance and Apologies for Absence:

The following Councillors were in attendance:

Councillor Alan Collard – Chair
Councillor Chris Neale – Vice chair
Councillor Amanda Smith
Councillor Boyd Page

Also, in attendance:

District Councillor Richard van Dulken
County Councillor David Finch
4 members of the public were in attendance.
Kaaren Berry – Clerk to the Parish Council

Apologies were received from:

Councillor Andrea Chinery

21/17. Declaration of Members' interests in agenda items:

No declarations of Members interests were made.

21/18. Open Session – opportunity for members of the Parish to address the Parish Council.

The head of St Margaret's school expressed her apologies for not attending the parish council meetings in a while but matters of running the school have proved difficult during the covid-19 pandemic. Mrs Newland thanked the village groups have provided support. A third of the pupils remain on site and the staff are working incredibly hard both in school and with delivering home learning. Mrs Newland hopes that the school can work more closely with the parish council once we are out of the covid-19 lockdown restrictions. Councillor Neale will liaise with the school on behalf of the parish council as matters arise.

County Councillor David Finch reported that Essex County Council have debated their budget and are mindful of the current situation with many people being furloughed and with this in mind their part of the precept will not increase. There will be a 1.5% increase for the social care element.

The vaccine rollout seems to be going well but some parts of Essex are currently lagging behind the national figures.

Flooding – there has been a significant amount of flooding in the last 3 – 4 weeks of both properties and roads. Essex County Council are working with the fire brigade and have used their fire engines as emergency pump out vehicles for the last 2 weeks.

Laptops for schools – nearly 4000 have been collected and reallocated to schools. The Hungry Holidays Campaign has been stepped up and is trying to support more families and children.

The economy has been a significant move in which Harwich and Felixstowe ports are looking at becoming Free Port Zones.

Councillor Finch asked if there were any questions – a resident asked why the bridge at Cust Hall was not made higher during its rebuild as it has flooded frequently this year. This will be relayed back to Essex County Council.

District Councillor Richard van Dulken reported that Cust Hall Bridge is now able to be driven over but it is not yet open. The District Council is finalising its budget and it looks like there will not be an increase in their portion of the council tax bill and car park charges may be frozen for this year. The Councillor's Community Grant has set aside £250 for football team project and this should be able to be rolled over to the next financial year.

Councillor van Dulken also mentioned there are links to the Essex Essential Living Fund on the Essex County Council website.

Recycling – people need to be vigilant as to items being placed in the bags as some are contaminated or wrong items put in them which means whole bags could be rejected. Wet cardboard cannot be recycled so needs to be kept dry.

Network 5 is hoping to restart and the clerk at Great Yeldham is fixing a date for a meeting.

21/19. Minutes of the last Parish Council Meeting

Councillor Neale proposed the minutes from the Parish Council meeting held on 7th January 2021 were signed as a true record of the meeting this was seconded by Councillor Page.

21/20. Matters Arising not on the agenda – for report only

The clerk reported that there are some issues with a drainage problem on a footpath by the fishing lakes on Great Yeldham and the Public Rights of Way & Enforcement & Liaison Officer is aware of this and is in communication with the landowner.

21/21. Actions from previous meeting:

- 21/21.1 Councillor Smith and the clerk to follow up with Telec as no response from County Broadband has been received regarding works along The Causeway. An email has been sent to Telec but no response has been received to date.
- 21/21.2 Clerk to seek prices for litter pickers – quotes were circulated to councillors prior to the meeting and it was agreed to purchase a pack of 6 for £14.75 – clerk to progress.

21/22. Internal Practices and management for the Parish Council:

- 21/22.1 Co-option of Councillors – three residents were interested in becoming parish councillors and provided details of their interest in the parish council. As candidates were interested in attending the whole parish council meeting it agreed to discuss this the co-option at the end after they had left the meeting. Following lengthy discussions, it was agreed to co-opt Daisy Watson and Gemma Mackman onto the parish council.
- 21/22.2 Neighbourhood Plan Update – there was no further update to give but 3 people have expressed an interest in helping out and their details will be passed on.
- 21/22.3 Updates from
- Project Working Group – Councillor Collard reported that an offer has been given to Toppesfield Community Pub for the barn and is waiting for a response from them.
 - Environment working group, including tree project and Climate Crisis Conference – Councillor Collard reported that this winter 40 trees are being planted around the parish. 12 of which have already been planted and the other will be planted shortly. If this project works well it is hoped to repeat it next year. Other project ideas are needed.
 - Climate Conference – copies of the presentation will be circulated to Councillors.
- 21/22.4 Dates for parish council meetings for the rest of the year including a provisional date for the Annual Parish Council Meeting if restrictions allow. Dates for the rest of the year were discussed and agreed as follows. These will either be held virtually or in person depending on the government advice at the time.
- Parish council meetings will be held on: 4 March 2021, 1st April 2021, 6th May 2021, 3rd June 2021, 1st July 2021, 12th August 2021, 2nd September 2021, 7th October 2021, 4 November 2021 and 2 December 2021.
- The Annual Parish Meeting date has been agreed as 22nd April 2021.

21/23. Correspondence Received:

- 21/23.1 EALC Legal and County Updates, Essex County Council Highways Highlights, RCCE Essex Warbler – circulated to all Councillors prior to meeting. BALC – Braintree Association of Local Councils – Councillor Collard attended the first meeting and will attend the second and report back to the parish council.
- 21/23.2 Letter from resident regarding water running down Mill Hill, from The Causeway to Harrow Hill causing the road surface to wash away and a smell of sewage from the water. They also reported an issue with a drainage pipe in a ditch being covered. These have both been reported to Essex Highways for inspection.
- 21/23.3 Parking Surgeries North Essex Parking Partnership – Online surgeries will be held every week to address any parking issues. Time slots are available for councillors and clerks only.
- 21/23.4 Request for consideration of signing a party wall agreement between Mr & Mrs Littler, the village hall committee and the Parish Council prior to building works commencing at Church Farmhouse, Church Lane, Toppesfield. This was discussed and the parish council are happy for the Village Hall committee to sign the agreement.

21/24. Financial Accounts:

- 21/24.1 To receive the Clerk's Report indicating receipts and payments requiring approval - The report was received. Councillor Page proposed this was approved and Councillor Neale seconded this. See Appendix A.
- 21/24.2 Proposal to purchase devices to help students with the parish of Toppesfield and Gainsford End. Councillor Page proposed devices were purchased for St Margaret's School and Hedingham School for residents of the parish to assist with their home learning during the lockdowns. St Margaret's have identified 2 pupils from the parish who would benefit from the support and a specification of requirements have been received from Hedingham School. District Councillor Richard van Dulken will seek views from Braintree District Council regarding supplying electronic devices to schools. The parish council will take advice on how this proposal can be supported. In principle this was agreed by those present once a final proposal and costings are available an extra ordinary meeting will be called to discuss this. Councillor Collard suggested building up a village fund that could be used for multiple things that the parish council are unable to do.
- 21/24.3 Proposal to ask Karen Baker to audit the accounts for year ending 31st March 2021. Councillor Page proposed that Karen Baker is tasked with auditing the parish council accounts and Councillor Neale seconded this.

21/25. Highways:

- 21/25.1 Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 – Section 14(1) - Temporary Traffic Regulation Order of Gainsford End Road, Toppesfield. This link <https://one.network/?tm=118487535> shows details of the intended closure of Gainsford End Road, due to commence on 10th March 2021 for 1 day. The closure is required for the safety of the public and workforce while BT undertakes pole test.
- 21/25.2 Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 – Section 14(1) - Temporary Traffic Regulation Order of Gainsford End Road, Toppesfield. This link <https://one.network/?tm=116507210> shows amended details of the closure of Gainsford End Road, which commenced on 16th September 2020 for 126 days. The closure is required for the safety of the public and workforce while Essex County Council undertakes bridge replacement works.
- 21/25.3 Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 – Section 14(1) - Temporary Traffic Regulation Order of Gainsford End Road, Toppesfield, This link <https://one.network/?tm=118487535> shows details of the intended closure of Gainsford End Road, due to commence on 10th March 2021 for 1 day. The closure is required for the safety of the public and workforce while BT undertakes pole test.
- 21/25.4 Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 -Section 14 (1) - Temporary Traffic Regulation Order of Robinhood End, Toppesfield -Finchingfield Road-Howe Street to Dyer's End-ZC161, Finchingfield. This link <https://one.network/?tm=120210039> shows details of the intended closure of Robinhood End, due to commence on 17th February 2021 for 3 days. The closure is required for the safety of the public and workforce while Anglian Water undertakes new connection.

21/25.5 Park Lane Car Park – update and discussion regarding the car park project – Councillor Page reported That 2 out of the three vehicles in question have been moved and the brambles have been cut back and left in the car park. Despite promises of removing the third vehicle it still remains.

Councillor Page also reported that once the vehicle is removed he will halve the car park by temporarily blocking off the back half. Re-surfacing of the car park needs to be decided upon and costings agreed. It was also suggested a byelaw is made for the carpark. There is also a need to liaise with the residents behind the car park with regards to access and possible rights.

Verge cutting – Councillor Page was tasked with looking at the verges around the parish and whether the numbers of grass cut each year could be reduced. Considering the safety aspects of this it was recommended to continue to cut all the parish verges.

21/26. Planning:

Application No:	Description	Address	Action
21/00065/HH	Replacement of existing boundary fence within the curtilage of listed property and conservation area	16 The Street Toppesfield CO9 4DJ	Comments to Braintree District Council by 16 th February 2021

The above application was discussed, and no objections were raised.

21/27. Communications:

21/27.1 Update on broadband project – Councillor Neale reported that the team have been less responsive in the latest lockdown as work is not yet finished and as a result is not accepting the invoice. More people are required to sign up for the voucher scheme as there is an £8000 deficit at present due to a couple of businesses moving to County Broadband, so their vouchers were lost. A Facebook post and article in the newsletter will be sent out to try and encourage people to sign up to reduce the deficit.

21/28. Playing Fields & The Dick Ruggles Pavilion

There was nothing to report regarding the playing fields or pavilion.

21/29. Information exchange / Items for the next agenda

Items for the next agenda – consideration of setting up a whole village charitable fund.

21/30. Date of the next meeting:

The next Parish Council Meeting is proposed to be held on 4th March 2021 at 7.30pm – this will be held virtually or at Toppesfield Village Hall depending on government advice at the time.

21/31. Close

The meeting closed at 9.55pm

Signed:

Dated:

Action Summary:

Clerk to order for litter pickers.

Appendix A

Accounts - 4 February 2021				
			£	
Community Account				
	Balance as at 31 January 2021		£29,691.11	
All previous issued cheques cashed balance should be			<u>£29,301.11</u>	
Income Received (included in the balance figure of 31 December 2020)				
	BDC - Community Grant - tree project		£200.00	
			£200.00	
			<u>£400.00</u>	
Direct Debits included in balance figure of 31.01.21				
01.01.21	EDF Energy - The Pavilaion electricity supply		£10.00	£0.00
		Balance	<u>£10.00</u>	
Payments to be approved:				
Date of invoice		Chq No:		Unrecoverable VAT
09.01.21	Community Heartbeat Trust - Rescue Safety Kit - Gainsford End	By Bacs	£15.60	£0.00
various	Mrs L Collard - Tree Planting Project	By Bacs	£417.22	£0.00
21.01.21	Harper Fencing Ltd - materials for village gates	By Bacs	£486.72	£0.00
28.01.21	Essex Association of Local Council - Climate Conference 28.01.21	By Bacs	£60.00	£0.00
31.01.21	K Berry - January Wages	By Bacs	£380.94	£0.00
			<u>£1,360.48</u>	
			<u>£28,320.63</u>	