



Toppesfield Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Meeting held on Thursday 4th December 2025 at Toppesfield Village Hall at 7.30pm

25/191. Attendance and Apologies for Absence:

The following Councillors were in attendance:

Councillor Paula Edwards-Holmes - chaired the meeting
Councillor Amanda Smith
Councillor Jane Daines

Also, in attendance:

One resident from Gainsford End
Kaaren Berry – Clerk

Apologies were received from:

Councillor Kitty Bourlet
Councillor Jeremy Graves
Councillor Chris Neale
Councillor Frances Winter
County Councillor Peter Schwier
District Cllr Richard van Dulken

25/191.1 To accept apologies from members of the council

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllrs Bourlet and Neale who were unable to attend the meeting due to family commitments, Cllr Winter due to illness and Cllr Graves as he was away.

25/192. Declaration of Members' interests in agenda items

No declaration of members interests were made at this meeting.

25/193. Open Session – opportunity for members of the Parish to address the Parish Council.

Cllr Richard van Dulken sent in the following report:

- Wethersfield - as of this week the number of residents was 926, down from the higher numbers of a month or two ago, and scheduled to go back down to the regular 800 number, especially as Channel crossings will inevitably reduce during winter months. I understand that the temporary buildings are being decommissioned and the migrants are being moved into barracks and apartments on the site.
- Local Plan Review - no developments affecting Toppesfield and Gosfield End since the inclusion of the small Park Lane sites, but BDC still has to allocate a number of medium sized sites for future housing, probably mainly around the A12 and major railway stations.
- LGR - as of this afternoon it appears as if the mayoral election due to take place in Essex (and a few other Counties like Kent) which was due to take place next Spring will be postponed until 2028, and after the new Councils have been established. No one is really sure why this decision has been taken by central government at this late date, though no doubt politics is an issue! At this stage it is not clear if there will be County Councillor elections next year or not.

- Community grants - I still have a portion of my grant available for a project in Toppesfield during this civic year, if not trees then something else. The BDC budget proposed for the next two years, the last years of BDC, includes an increase of the Grant amount for each Councillor back to the annual £1,500 that it used to be, and for each year, subject to agreement by Council.
- Tree planting - I have been aware that the PC has been interested in bringing about a tree-planting project. The BDC Climate Emergency Plan includes an amount of funds dedicated to tree-planting in the District next season, and if someone would like to send me brief outline of what the PC had in mind (where to put the trees, how many acres and/or trees, what types etc) I can talk to the environment team at BDC.
- Waste collections - residents should all have received letters telling them if their property would, from June 2026, have Standard Collections (i.e. with the two new extra wheelie bins) or Non-Standard (with boxes). If any resident feels that their property has been incorrectly categorised there are instructions on the letter on how to appeal to change the decision. If anyone has difficulty doing this they are welcome to contact me though I imagine that there will be very few issues in your two villages which tend to have a fair bit of outside space, and access to the rear of the properties.
- The 2026-7 BDC budget is also proposing no increase in the garden waste subscription charges.
- I understand that rural parishes should continue to receive support towards street scene expenses.

Cllr Schweir's update emails have been shared with Councillors as they are received.

25/194. To approve and sign the minutes of the Toppesfield Parish Council Meeting held on 6th November 2025.

Cllr Smith proposed the minutes for the meeting held on 6th November 2025 were agreed and Cllr Daines seconded this. The minutes were signed as a true record of the meetings.

25/195. Matters Arising not on the agenda – for report only

There were no matters arising.

25/196. Actions from previous meeting:

25/196.1 Cllr Neale to contact Cllr Peter Schwier regarding further funding for the tree project. No update available.

25/196.2 Cllr Neale to follow up on quotes to carry out the work on the RoSPA action list. No update available.

25/196.3 Clerk to format and circulate draft Biodiversity Policy and proposal to adopt it. Draft policy circulated.

25/197. Internal Practices and management for the Parish Council:

25/197.1 Neighbourhood Plan update. The open session on the 29th November 2025 was not well attended and some questionnaire responses have been received. A summary of the responses will be presented at the February meeting. It was also suggested that the strategy document is compared with the village plan.

25/197.2 Wethersfield Airfield and Asylum centre verbal update to be received. Cllr van Dulken gave an update in his report.

25/197.3 Proposal to adopt the parish councils Biodiversity Policy. This was proposed by Cllr Smith and seconded by Cllr Daines. Cllr Edwards-Holmes then signed the policy.

25/197.4 Confirm meeting dates for 2026. Meeting dates were agreed as: 8th January 2026 and then the first Thursday of each month for the remainder of 2026. The Annual Parish Meeting will be held on 23 April 2026.

25/197.5 Strategy document review of responses and plan to implement to be considered. It was agreed to hold this item over to the next meeting when more councillors will be in attendance.

25/197.6 Website/email address to be updated to .org or .gov to comply with Assertion 10 and the scope of proper practices. Proposal to seek and engage provider. It was agreed for the clerk to look at some providers to gain costs with the help of Cllr Neale.

25/197.7 The Parish Council is required to appoint a second representative to the Toppesfield Charities

following the resignation of a long-standing representative. Representative to be agreed and appointed. It was agreed to appoint Alan Collard as the second parish council representative to the Toppesfield Charities committee.

25/198. Upcoming events

25/198.1 Christmas Event – update on progress. Updates were given and plans are all in place.

25/199. Correspondence Received:

25/199.1 EALC Legal & County Updates, Essex County Council Highways Highlights, RCCE Essex Warbler - circulated to all Councillors prior to meeting.

25/199.2 Request received for the Braintree District Council Amenity Vehicle to attend the parish. It was agreed to place an article in the next newsletter to gauge the level of interest of this service.

25/199.3 War Memorials Trust – publication Issue number 106 was received and is available for councillors to read.

25/200. Financial Accounts:

25/200.1 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 as detailed in Appendix A were agreed and signed by Cllrs Daines and Smith.

25/200.2 Updating of Asset Register 2025 – amendments to be made before being accepted.

25/200.3 Draft Budget for 2026 / 2027 to be discussed - amendments to be made and reviewed at the next meeting. Costing for speed restriction signs to be sought by Cllr Edwards-Holmes.

25/201 Highways:

25/201.1 Cllr Schwier has requested a cluster of potholes, and a section of road are repaired along Stambourne Road under the Member Highways Initiative.

25/202. Communications:

25/202.1 Newsletter for January / February 2026 – articles to be submitted by 29th December 2025. The poster asking for volunteers for the doctor service will be re-run.

25/203. Information exchange / Items for the next agenda

Students from St Margarets school will be attending the January parish council meeting to present a proposal so it was agreed to meet at 7pm.

25/204. Date of the next meeting:

The next Parish Council Meeting is scheduled to be held on Thursday 8th January 2026 at 7.00pm at Toppesfield Village Hall.

25/205. Close

Cllr Edwards-Holmes closed the meeting at 8.30pm

Signed:

Dated:

- Cllr Neale to contact Cllr Peter Schwier regarding further funding for the tree project.
- Cllr Neale to follow up on quotes to carry out the work on the RoSPA action list.
- Cllr Neale and clerk to seek costs and investigate .gov or .org domain names with email facilities.
- Cllr Edwards-Holmes to seek costing for speed restriction signs.

Appendix A

Accounts - 4th December 2025				
			£	
Community Account				
	Balance as at 2nd December 2025		£40,824.45	
All previous authorised payments issued balance should be			£40,879.45	
Income Received Not Included in the balance figure of 2nd December 2025				
02.12.25	Uk Power Network - reinforcement payment		£76.10	
Direct Debits Included in the balance figure of 2 December 2025				
01.12.25	EDF - Pavilion electric		£8.00	
02.12.25	Information Commissioner Office - Data Protection Registration		£47.00	
			£0.00	
			£55.00	
Direct Debits to be taken this month				
07.12.25	Vodafone contract		£14.68	
				Unrecoverable VAT
Payments to be approved:				
Date of invoice		Payment Method		
12.11.25	K Berry -Reimbursement for paper to print the Neighbourhood Plan questionnaires and copies of the draft plan	By Bacs	£15.54	£0.00
01.11.25	K Berry - November salary	By Bacs	£784.71	£0.00
01.11.25	HMRC - Tax on November salary	By Bacs	£6.60	£0.00
			£821.53	
			£40,079.02	