



Toppesfield Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday 6th August 2026 at Toppesfield Village Hall at 7.00pm

26/123. Attendance and Apologies for Absence:

The following Councillors were in attendance:

Councillor Paula Edwards-Holmes - Chair
Councillor Coral Fordham
Councillor Jeremy Graves

Also, in attendance:

County Councillor Nathan Robins
1 member of the public
Kaaren Berry – Clerk

Apologies were received from:

Councillor Kitty Bourlet
Councillor Amanda Smith
Councillor Chris Neale
Councillor Jane Daines
District Cllr Richard van Dulken

26/123.1 To accept apologies from members of the council

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Bourlet, Smith, Neale and Daines who were unable to attend the meeting due to family commitments.

26/124. Declaration of Members' interests in agenda items

No declarations of interests were made.

26/125. Open Session – opportunity for members of the Parish to address the Parish Council.

County Cllr Nathan Robins reported:

- The pothole emergency update – repairs for the period April – June is up 30% for the same period in 2025. From May to July 5000 potholes have been addressed across the county and by 14 July 8200 Highways defects have been addressed, this includes drainage issues. A JCB pothole pro machine will be coming to Essex for a trial period; this machine should be quicker at repairing potholes.
- The Robin Hood End Solar development – we are in talks with the cabinet but these are limited as we are not the planning authority, decisions lie with Braintree District Council.
- 100-day plan ends mid-August. The 40-item plan can be found on the Essex County Council website. Concerns are being raised on the new bin collection system and increased littering. There is a backlog on SEND applications for EHCP plans.
- Local Government reorganisation – if the unitary authorities go ahead, we will have the highest demand for adult and child social care.
- Housing targets have more than doubled, Essex is asking for this to be reviewed as there is a declining birth rate so why are more houses needed. However, there is a 1000 shortfall in houses for the local plan targets so smaller sites are being looked at.

- Bin collections are causing issues for some residents. The system will be reviewed in the Autumn. However, residents can apply for extra bins at a cost to themselves.

Cllr Richard van Dulken sent in the following report:

- As I saw you just a few weeks ago, and this is the quietest time of the civic year, I have little to add at this time but would like to advise that I will be attending the Planning Forum meeting on the Robin Hood solar park proposal, at Causeway House on the 11th, and will aim to speak to your representative before that date - though as you will be aware it is not an appropriate forum to express views on the proposal.
- Regarding Local Government Reorganisation, nothing substantial to add as we still await the Structural Changes Order from central government which will give more detail of the changes in Essex, in particular the number of Councillors per unitary and their Wards or Divisions. This may be approved by Parliament in early December.
- Still on LGR I would also like to assure the Parish Council and residents generally that despite a comment I recently heard that LGR should be resisted because (and I quote) "there are no officers in Braintree, Colchester and Tendring with experience of adult or social care" unquote, those involved in the switch of responsibilities to the new North East Essex unitary authority would certainly not agree. As you are probably aware Essex County Council has an excellent reputation for social care and would not have achieved this status without having appropriately trained and experienced staff in all parts of the County.
- Re Wethersfield, no changes from my report on the 13th July, as the migrant centre prepares to accept larger numbers of migrants, up to the newly imposed upper limit of 1,245 which is the number of beds available.

26/126. To approve and sign the minutes of the Toppesfield Parish Council Meeting held on 13th July 2026.

Cllr Fordham proposed the minutes for the meeting held on 13th July 2026 were agreed and Cllr Graves seconded this. The minutes of the meeting were then signed as a true record of the meetings.

26/127. Matters Arising not on the agenda – for report only

There were no matters arising.

26/128. Actions from previous meeting:

- 26/128.1 Cllr Graves to obtain size VE Day bench and progress pad in the Churchyard. This action is ongoing.
- 26/128.2 All councillors to review costs of addressing issues raised by RoSPA and priorities list to be made. Cllr Edwards-Holmes will highlight the urgent tasks and focus on progressing the changes needed as long as it comes under £5000, 3 quotes were previously sought from suppliers, but not all responded.
- 26/128.3 Cllr Graves to look at setting up a charity bank account. This action is ongoing.
- 26/128.4 Cllr Smith to obtain quotes for fencing the wildflower area for the school following the area being marked out by the school. This action is ongoing.
- 26/128.5 Cllr Edwards-Holmes to liaise with Braintree District Council re maintaining the ground next to the allotments. This action is ongoing.

26/129. Internal Practices and management for the Parish Council:

- 26/129.1 Neighbourhood Plan – comments collated from the public consultation and survey to be reviewed by the parish council and consideration if the plan needs to be revised consequently. It was agreed to hold this item over to the next meeting when more councillors will be in attendance.
- 26/129.2 Wethersfield Airfield and Asylum centre verbal update to be received – this was received in Cllr van Dulken's report.
- 26/129.3 Feedback on Strategy document suggested actions. It was agreed to hold this item over to the next meeting when more councillors will be in attendance.
- 26/129.4 Filling of Grit bin in playing field update. This action is ongoing.
- 26/129.5 Privacy Policy, Cookies Policy & Accessibility Statement for Toppesfield Parish Council to be reviewed and considered for adoption. The Privacy Policy, Cookies Policy & Accessibility Statement were all accepted by councillors present at the meeting, adopted and signed.
- 26/129.6 Updated Reserves Policy to be considered for adoption. The Reserves Policy was accepted by

councillors present at the meeting, adopted and signed.

- 26/129.7 Updated Financial Regulations to be considered for adoption. The Financial Regulations were accepted by councillors present at the meeting, adopted and signed.
- 26/129.8 Update on Playing field equipment check lists for Toppesfield and Gainsford End and actions required to be reported to the parish council. No update was available.
- 26/129.9 Condition of picnic benches in the playing field, decision required if replacements are to be sought. Other benches in the playing field also needing maintenance. This will be looked at as part of the RoSPA report actions.
- 26/129.10 Litter in the parish and litter picks. Cllr Fordham has gathered names of people who are willing to litter pick on a suggested quarterly basis. Cllr Fordham to produce an article for the newsletter about the "Toppesfield Wombles".
- 26/129.11 Update on progression of scanning historic parish newsletters. Historic newsletters have been received and double checking there are no duplicates is in progress.

26/130. Upcoming events

- 26/130.1 Christmas event – the spreadsheet of timings from last year to be circulated to all councillors. Cllr Graves to enquire about the sleigh's availability and order a Christmas tree with a maximum budget of £300 agreed.

26/131. Correspondence Received:

- 26/131.1 EALC Legal & County Updates, Essex County Council Highways Highlights, RCCE Essex Warbler - circulated to all Councillors prior to meeting.
- 26/131.2 Request received from BASICS Essex charity for financial help towards the cost of leasing them Central Base / Office. The request was considered and it was agreed not to support the request.
- 26/131.3 Braintree District Volunteer and Active Braintree Awards 2026 nominations are now open. These awards recognise the individuals, groups and organisations making a positive difference across the district through volunteering, sport and physical activity, and health and wellbeing. Nominations to be submitted by 5pm on Friday 4th September 2026. The guidance document can be found at: www.braintree.gov.uk/AwardCategories2026 Cllr Edwards-Holmes to investigate nominating the community shop.
- 26/131.4 William Bendlowe Charity are inviting Parish Councils, Village Halls, District Councillors, Braintree District Councillors plus numerous other community-minded individuals to attend a Community Meeting to be held at Shalford Village Hall on Friday, 18th September 2026. To seek new Trustees and Volunteers for William Bendlowe, an historic Charity promoting socialisation and community spirit thereby fighting loneliness. For more information or you would like to attend, please contact the parish clerk.
- 26/131.5 EALC – invitation received to attend the 82nd Annual General Meeting of Essex Association of Local Councils on Tuesday 15th September 2026 via Zoom from 7pm – 9pm.
- 26/131.6 Communication for a member of the public re the Mission Hall, Gainsford End and how he feels it belongs to the village and would the parish council look into this. District Councillor Nathan Robins will investigate ownership.

26/132. Financial Accounts:

- 26/132.1 To receive the Clerk's Report indicating receipts and payments requiring approval. Payments as detailed in Appendix A were agreed and signed by Cllrs Graves and Fordham.
- 26/116.2 Unity trust Bank – update on form completion. Application forms are still with Cllr Bourlet.

26/133 Highways:

- 26/133.1 Parking along Church Lane, correspondence received. Correspondence received was read out and noted.
- 26/133.2 Update on issues previously reported to Highways.
It has been reported that Highways have filled the worst holes in Church Lane. Further work is still expected to be carried out in October.

Notification of a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order of Harrow Hill, Toppesfield has been received. Details of the intended closure can be found at <https://one.network/?tm=GB150377240> work is due to commence on 27th August 2026 for 2 days. The closure is required for the safety of the public and workforce while Essex County Council undertakes carriageway patching.

26/134 Planning:

26/134.1 Planning applications for consideration and decisions by Braintree District Council as per below table.

Application No:	Description	Address	Action
26/00765/FUL	Erection of a two-storey single dwelling house with associated access, parking and private garden amenity space.	Land West Of The Causeway Toppesfield Essex	Braintree District Council Decision: Pending consideration
26/00960/FUL	Proposed change of use of former agricultural buildings to holiday let accommodation and associated ancillary retail and office use.	Toppesfield Hall Great Yeldham Rd Toppesfield CO9 4LS	Braintree District Council Decision Pending Consideration
26/01390/LBC	Installation of secondary glazing to all existing windows.	Providence Cottage Gainsford End Toppesfield CO9 4EG	No objection comment was submitted to Braintree District Council by 28th July 2026

26/134.2 Village Planning Permissions/enforcements

Correspondence with a Braintree District Council planning enforcement officer is ongoing where concerns have been raised regarding a property in the parish.

It was agreed to publicise the Rood Hood End Solar project on the village Facebook page and ask people to send their views directly to Braintree District Council. Cllr Edwards-Holmes to respond to Braintree District Council with a unified response on behalf of the parish council.

Call for sites latest submission – clerk to request a small extend to allow this latest request to be considered at a parish council meeting.

26/135. Communications:

26/135.1 Newsletter for September / October 2026 – articles to be submitted by 17th August 2026.

26/135.2 Advertising local business in the newsletter. Update on progression of list of businesses that may be interested in advertising in the parish newsletter. It was agreed to start approaching businesses to gauge interest in advertising in the parish newsletter. Rates would be £25 for a half page advert or £100 for the year. Adverts may be limited in each issue depending on response. Cllr Graves to contact 2 businesses and Cllrs Edwards-Holmes and Fordham to contact 1 business each initially.

26/136. Information exchange / Items for the next agenda

No items were discussed under this heading.

26/137. Date of the next meeting:

The next Parish Council Meeting is scheduled to be held on Thursday 3rd September 2026 at 7.30pm at Toppesfield Village Hall.

Cllr Edwards-Holmes gave her apologies in advance as she will not be able to attend the meeting.

26/138. Close

Cllr Edwards-Holmes closed the meeting at 8.45pm.

Signed:

Dated:

- Cllr Graves to obtain size VE Day bench and progress pad in the Churchyard.
- Cllr Edwards-Holmes to highlight the urgent tasks reported by RoSPA and progress.
- Cllr Graves to look at setting up a charity bank account.
- Cllr Smith to obtain quotes for fencing the wildflower area for the school following the area being marked out by the school.
- Cllr Edwards-Holmes to liaise with Braintree District Council re maintaining the ground next to the allotments.

Appendix A

Accounts - 6th August 2026				
			£	
Community Account				
	Balance as at 3rd August 2026		£39,388.15	
All previous authorised payments issued balance should be			£38,538.26	
Income Received	Included in the balance figure of 3rd August 2026			
27.07.26	HMRC - VAT reclaim for 2025/2026		£857.89	
			£0.00	
Direct Debits	Included in the balance figure of 8th July 2026			
03.08.26	EDF - Pavilion electric		£8.00	
			£0.00	
			£8.00	
Direct Debits	to be taken this month			
07.08.26	Vodafone contract		£15.75	
			£0.00	
				Unrecoverable VAT
Payments to be approved:				
Date of invoice		Payment Method		
05.02.26	TSL - Thornmoor Services Ltd - Electrical Inspection	By Bacs	£804.00	£0.00
04.08.26	P & K & W Chinery - verge cutting	By Bacs	£810.00	£0.00
01.08.26	K Berry - July salary	By Bacs	£791.31	£0.00
			£2,421.06	
			£36,967.09	

