



Toppesfield Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday 6th February 2025 at Toppesfield Village Hall at 7.30pm

25/16. Attendance and Apologies for Absence:

The following Councillors were in attendance:

Councillor Paula Edwards-Holmes

Councillor Frances Winter

Councillor Jane Daines

Councillor Jeremy Graves

Also, in attendance:

District Cllr Richard van Dulken

Richard Sidebottom and John Pearce from the Wethersfield and Finchingfield joint Neighbourhood Plan group

Alan Collard and David Oxnam from the Toppesfield Neighbourhood Plan steering group.

Kaaren Berry – Clerk

25/16.1 To accept apologies from members of the council.

Apologies were received and accepted from Councillor Kitty Bourlet, Councillor Chris Neale, Councillor Amanda Smith. All apologies were due to family commitments.

Apologies were also received from County Councillor Peter Schwier.

25/17. Declaration of Members' interests in agenda items

No declaration of interests were made at this meeting.

25/18. Open Session – opportunity for members of the Parish to address the Parish Council.

Cllr Richard van Dulken reported:

- Toppesfield Road where the bus was stuck last month has been repaired and Highways were proactive in addressing the issue once Cllr Schwier contacted them.
- The garden waste subscriptions are due for renewal at a cost of £55 for the year. More information about this can be found on Braintree Districts Councils website.
- The government has put Essex into the Fastlane for devolution. Essex, Thurrock and Southend will become Greater Essex. The area will then possibly be put into 3, 4 or 5 unitary authorities. Braintree District Council will disappear and be merged in with a larger area. More details will be released on this over the coming months.
- Wethersfield Asylum Centre – there has not been a change in numbers which remain at 580 residents, but this will increase to 800.
- Braintree District Council budgets are being prepared and an extra £470,000 is required to cover the increase in National Insurance that they will have to pay. A small amount of compensation will be received from the government to help with the costs.
- Essex County Council will increase the verge cutting to 2 cuts per year following a 1 cut trail this year.
- Braintree District Council have undertaken a review of all the litter and dog waste bins in the district which number 2100 and most are emptied once a week.

25/19. Presentation from John Pearce on Finchingfield and Wethersfield joint Neighbourhood Plan

An overview of where the plan was given:- regulation 14 was completed in December 2024 and the regulation 15 stage is hoped to be achieved in 6 – 8 weeks' time. Lots of drop-in sessions for the public were held and 60 – 70 replies were submitted by the public. The plan has 18 policies and 14 actions.

75% of the Wethersfield airbase in in Finchingfield with the remaining area in Wethersfield, Sible Hedingham and Toppesfield parishes.

The aim to get a balance of uses on the site: limitation of development, seek to protect the open character, nature regeneration and carbon zero.

Further information about the Wethersfield base and links to the joint Neighbourhood Plan can be found at <https://www.thefieldsassociation.org/>

25/20. To approve and sign the minutes of the Toppesfield Parish Council meeting held on 9th January 2025.

Cllr Edwards-Holmes proposed the minutes were agreed and Cllr Winter seconded this. The minutes were signed as a true record of the meeting

25/21. Matters Arising not on the agenda – for report only.

There were no matters arising.

25/22. Actions from previous meeting:

- 25/22.1 Clerk to write to Hedingham Buses and Hedingham School to find out what their emergency procedures are when a school bus is unable to continue its journey and what can be done to safeguard the children. Letters have been sent – no response from Hedingham Buses. Hedingham School replied saying they take the safeguarding and well-being of their pupils very seriously. However, the contracts for the school transport are managed by Essex County Council and if you have any concerns about the safety of any Essex transport service users. It was agreed that a follow up letter is sent to Hedingham Buses and to contact the Essex transport service.
- 25/22.2 Cllr Bourlet to review funding options for digitalising historic records. No update available – hold over to next meeting.
- 25/22.3 Cllr Graves to make further enquiries regarding the location of the Gainsford End Gate sign and contact Braintree District Council to see who provides the village gates should a new one be required – hold over to next meeting.
- 25/22.4 Cllr Graves to contact Cllr Peter Schwier regarding further funding for the tree project – hold over to next meeting.
- 25/22.5 Clerk to write letter of engagement to the internal auditor. Letter of engagement has been sent.
- 25/22.6 Clerk to check the Financial Regulations regarding delegated powers and to look into the Working from Home Allowance (WFHA). Action from December meeting. The Financial Regulation (point 6.9) detail delegated powers for the clerk and RFO. It appears that the WFHA cannot be claimed if your employment contracts let you work from home some or all of the time.

25/23. Internal Practices and management for the Parish Council:

- 25/23.1 Neighbourhood Plan update. Alan Collard confirmed the draft plan should be available soon and the grant application to progress the plan has been approved.
- 25/23.2 Wethersfield Airfield and Asylum centre verbal update to be received – update was given by Cllr van Dulken and the minutes of the last WASC meeting were sent to all councillors.
- 25/23.3 Tree planting project – verbal update to be given by Cllr Graves to determine actions to progress the project. No progress – hold over to next meeting.
- 25/23.4 Parish Council Strategy document – draft plan has been produced and will be circulated to councillors for comment.
- 25/23.5 Playfield update / progress on funding / quotes. Cllr Winter confirmed that a meeting will Cllr Bourlet has not yet been held to discuss plans further.
- 25/23.6 Telephone Box for Defib – discuss repainting, maintenance and determine actions. Discussions held re costs and possibility of volunteers to paint the telephone box. Clerk to obtain cost/type of paint required and volunteers to be sought.
- 25/23.7 Volunteers required for Doctor Car Service – discuss how to encourage people to volunteer. It was agreed to advertise this through Facebook, posters and in the newsletter.

25/24. Agenda point discuss upcoming events

- 25/24.1 Coffee Morning 8th February 2025 – Cllr Winter has purchased the refreshments for the coffee morning and volunteers to help on the day have been confirmed.

- 25/24.2 Agree date for annual litter pick – this was agreed as the 5th April with the 12th April being a back up date. Clerk to contact Braintree District Council to arrange loan of equipment for the 5th April 2025.
- 25/24.3 VE Day celebrations – Cllr Graves will lead the event organisation – it was suggested the event will be held on 11th May 2025 on the playing field and a working party to be set up to put together ideas and plans for the event. Actual costs for two silhouette figures and a commemorative bench to be presented at the next meeting for consideration to purchase.

25/25. Correspondence Received:

- 25/25.1 EALC Legal & County Updates, Essex County Council Highways Highlights, RCCE Essex Warbler – circulated to all Councillors prior to meeting.
- 25/25.2 Braintree District Council Local Plan Review 2041 Update - Issues and Options Consultation Now Live until 07 March 2025. The Council is reviewing its plan because it will be considered “out of date” in February 2026 as it will have been 5 years from the date of its original adoption. Residents and parish councils find out more and comment via www.braintree.gov.uk/localplanengagement
- 25/25.3 Essex Air Quality Strategy - public consultation launched. The Essex Air Quality Strategy has been developed by the Essex Air Quality Consortium to work together to improve air quality in Essex, under the banner of EssexAir. The strategy sets out a shared vision, aims and a series of actions the consortium plans to take to improve air quality in Essex and help reduce the impact of air pollution on people’s health. To find out more about the strategy is by visiting: www.essexair.org.uk/strategy. Or go straight to the online survey at: <https://consultations.essex.gov.uk/essex-highways/essex-air-quality-strategy>
- 25/25.4 Silvertime talks – are offering Free Community Talks to local groups. Their talk is called Tax, Care and The New Guy and during the talk their speakers cover essential topics such as wills, trusts and how These can protect your assets. They will also dive into the importance of lasting powers of attorney, Managing care fees and touch on sideways disinheritance in case of remarriage. It was agreed to advertise this to judge interest in such an event.
- 25/25.5 Essex Dementia Care – requested to promote their services.
- 25/25.6 Healthwatch Essex - We’re thrilled to invite you to A Healthy Dose of Humour, a free exciting evening filled with laughter and meaningful discussions about men’s health and wellbeing. To be held on 13th March 2025. If your organisation would like to send me leaflets or flyers on the services, you provide that would be great as we are giving out around 200 goody bags to attendees. This special event is brought to you by Lost Sock Productions, Braintree District Council and Healthwatch Essex’s Fella’s Fair — a unique initiative aimed at raising awareness about men’s health in a fun and engaging way. Tickets are complimentary, but spaces are limited, so don’t wait—secure your spot today! RSVP Now - <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/1139677188149?aff=oddtcreator>
- 25/25.7 Ice Cream Van – Mike & Jordy along with their ice cream van can attend charity events, local festivals, corporate bookings, school events and more. They sell everything from ice lollies to whippy trays, hot cookie dough to cold milkshakes (even doggie ice cream!) If they can be of assistance a quote can be provided. Cllr Graves to make contact to see if they could be available on the 11th May 2025.

25/26. Financial Accounts:

- 25/26.1 To receive the Clerk's Report indicating receipts and payments requiring approval. The report was presented and Cllr Edwards-Holmes proposed they were accepted, and this was seconded by Cllr Graves. Payments are detailed in Appendix A.

25/27 Highways:

- 25/27.1 Update on reported issues along Toppesfield Road previously reported to Cllr Schwier. Some areas have been addressed but not all of the issues have been resolved.

25/28. Planning:

No items were discussed under this heading.

25/29. Communications:

No items were discussed under this heading.

25/30. Information exchange / Items for the next agenda

No items were discussed under this heading.

25/31. Date of the next meeting:

The next Parish Council Meeting is scheduled to be held on 6th March 2025 at 7.30pm at Toppesfield Village Hall.

25/32. Close

The Chair closed the meeting at 9.05pm

Signed:

Dated:

Action Summary:

- Clerk to send follow up letter to Hedingham Buses and write to Essex transport services to find out what their emergency procedures are.
- Cllr Bourlet to review funding options for digitalising historic records.
- Cllr Graves to make further enquiries regarding the location of the Gainsford End Gate sign and contact Braintree District Council to see who provides the village gates should a new one be required.
- Cllr Graves to contact Cllr Peter Schwier regarding further funding for the tree project.
- Clerk to find cost of paint required for the telephone box.
- Clerk to contact Braintree District Council re loan of litter pick equipment for 5th April 2025.
- Cllr Graves to provide costs for commemorative bench and silhouette figures for VE day.

Appendix A

Accounts - 6th February 2025				
			£	
Community Account				
	Balance as at 4th February 2025		35,776.98	
All previous payments issued balance should be			<u>£35,784.98</u>	
Income Received Included in the balance figure of 4th February 2025				
			£0.00	
			<u>£0.00</u>	
Direct Debits Included in the balance figure of 4th February 2025				
03.02.25	EDF Energy - The Pavilion electricity supply		£8.00	
			<u>£8.00</u>	
				Unrecoverable VAT
Payments to be approved:				
Date of invoice		Chq No:		
Dec-24	CPRE - Membership renewal March 2025 - March 2026	By Bacs	£36.00	£0.00
05.01.25	Toppesfield Village Hall - Quarterly rent and meeting charges	By Bacs	£307.50	£0.00
28.01.25	The Green Man - refreshments for Chirstmas Lighting up event	By Bacs	£400.00	£0.00
04.02.25	EALC - VAT on invoice number 18225 as not previously charged	By Bacs	£90.00	£0.00
31.01.25	HMRC - Tax on Janaury salary	By Bacs	£35.20	£0.00
31.01.25	K Berry - January salary £766.74 less overpayment of £35.20 for December's salary as Gross amount paid not Nett	By Bacs	£696.34	£0.00
			<u>£1,565.04</u>	
			£34,211.94	