



Toppesfield Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Meeting held on Thursday 7th August 2025 at Toppesfield Village Hall at 7.00pm

25/128. Attendance and Apologies for Absence:

The following Councillors were in attendance:

Councillor Paula Edwards-Holmes - Chaired the meeting.
Councillor Frances Winter
Councillor Jane Daines
Councillor Amanda Smith

Also, in attendance:

County Councillor Peter Schwier

Apologies were received from:

Councillor Kitty Bourlet
Councillor Jeremy Graves
Councillor Chris Neale
District Cllr Richard van Dulken

25/128.1 To accept apologies from members of the council.

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Neale who was unable to attend the meeting due to work commitments.

25/129. Declaration of Members' interests in agenda items

No declaration of members interests were made at this meeting.

25/130. Open Session – opportunity for members of the Parish to address the Parish Council.

Cllr Richard van Dulken sent in a report:

- You will no doubt be aware that because of the summer surge of illegal migrants, the Wethersfield facility is slowly ramping up its numbers towards a ceiling of 1200 from the usual 800 maximum. It is hoped that the numbers will go back down to 800 or less in the near future. There have been no significant issues at the facility in recent months.
- From October 2025 we will cease using landfill to dispose of general household and business waste - this will be treated and incinerated at the new Rivenhall Integrated Waste Management Facility which will also generate electricity for the grid.
- Work is continuing on the different suggested configurations of the local authorities in Greater Essex, with the latest one promoted by ECC which would involved a North Essex composed of Tendring, Colchester, Braintree and Uttlesford.
- The authorities will, together, in late September send a submission to the relevant Minister with one or suggested arrangements. BDC has not taken a position on the matter pending receipt of the all-important facts and figures for the various options, being worked on at this moment.

County Cllr Peter Schwier reported:

- Some of the potholes along Great Yeldham Road have been marked up and will hopefully be fixed soon.
- Essex Transport strategy – a public consultation is open until the 24th September 2025 and people are encouraged to respond. More information can be found at [A Better Connected Essex - Essex County Council - Citizen Space](#)
- The number of potholes in Jan 2023 were more than 5000, in January 2024 it was down to 4000 and January 2025 the figure was at 1600 reports so numbers are decreasing.
- Beaulieu Park station will be finished in the Autumn of 2025- 9 months ahead of schedule and it is within budget.
- An inclusive app is being devised to cover all types of transport is being developed in order for people to plan their whole journeys.
- It is business as normal at Essex County Council, but they have to submit their preferences for the number of unitary authorities by the 26th September 2025.

Councillor Schwier was asked if there was any update of the no HGV signs for Church Lane as well as the 20mph speed limit for Toppesfield – Cllr Schwier asked if the clerk can email him re this and he will respond.

25/131. To approve and sign the minutes of the Toppesfield Parish Council Meeting held on 3rd July 2025.

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

25/132. Matters Arising not on the agenda – for report only.

There were no matters arising.

25/133. Actions from previous meeting:

- 25/133.1 Cllr Neale to contact Cllr Schwier with regards to alternative street lighting options from the centre of the village to Camoise Close. Cllr Schwier responded to say there was no budget to do this. However Cllr Edwards-Holmes to email Cllr Schwier expressing an interest in this project and roughly how many lights would be required and ask for the project to be included in his budget.
- 25/133.2 Cllr Edwards-Holmes to look at funding options for digitalising historic records. So far there is only one cinefilm and one video for digitalising. Ann Read is speaking to a local museum/historical society to about this as they maybe able to help.
- 25/133.3 Cllr Neale to contact Cllr Peter Schwier regarding further funding for the tree project. No update available.
- 25/133.4 Clerk to follow up with Community Heartbeat Trust regarding paint for the Gainsford End telephone box. The supply of paint has been approved – however it needs to be collected from Braintree.
- 25/133.5 Cllr Edwards-Holmes to draft a revised process for the Doctors car service and circulate to all Councillors for review – circulated and to be discussed under agenda point 25/134.6
- 25/133.6 Clerk to draw up a list of required actions following receipt of the RoSPA reports – circulated and to be discussed under agenda point 25/134.4
- 25/133.7 Cllr Edwards-Holmes to advertise on Facebook the extended date for Strategy responses. This was advertised.
- 25/133.8 Cllr Bourlet to update the councils Biodiversity Policy. No update available.
- 25/133.9 Clerk to make enquires with Unity Trust Bank with regards to switching bank accounts. Information was circulated to all councillors prior to the meeting. It was agreed to defer this to next month to gain all councillors' views on this.

25/134. Internal Practices and management for the Parish Council:

- 25/134.1 Neighbourhood Plan update. No further updates received.
- 25/134.2 Wethersfield Airfield and Asylum centre verbal update to be received. An update was provided in Cllr van Dulken's report.
- 25/134.3 Playfield update / progress on funding / quotes / work carried out – Cllr Winter is still waiting for a meeting with Cllr Bourlet to progress this.
- 25/134.4 RoSPA reports action list produced – determine who/how the actions required will be undertaken. Action list was produced and it was agreed to seek someone to do the work. Cllr Smith to seek 3 quotes.

- 25/134.5 Strategy Document – review of responses received now the survey has closed. Cllr Edwards-Holmes presented the Councillors with a summary of the responses. It was agreed that everyone should review this and discuss them at the next meeting.
- 25/134.6 Doctor Car service - to review and proposal to agree the updated process of the service – the updated process document was agreed and signed.
- 25/134.7 Action from the internal audit report – consider setting up a Personnel/Staffing Committee – draft terms of reference to be considered / adopted. Circulated to councillors prior to meeting for consideration. An amendment was agreed to be made before the document is accepted/signed.
- 25/134.8 Action from the internal audit report – adopt a Biodiversity Policy - draft policy to be considered for approval. Draft policy has not been circulated for consideration.
- 25/134.9 Village Solar Project – Cllr Neale to report. No information available – hold over to the next meeting.
- 25/134.10 Tidy up of area for salt storage by the barns in the Green Man Car Park. Clerk to find costs of additional salt bins to store the salt and everyone to look at potential locations for the bins.

25/135. Upcoming events

- 25/135.1 Christmas Event – no further update available.

25/136. Correspondence Received:

- 25/136.1 EALC Legal & County Updates, Essex County Council Highways Highlights, RCCE Essex Warbler – circulated to all Councillors prior to meeting.
- 25/136.2 Braintree Community Safety & Engagement Officer - Safer Essex Roads Partnership are offering to attend parish council meetings to discuss road safety concerns and how they can support the community. This includes promoting initiatives such as 'Driving with Confidence' scheme, which offers free, one-hour driving sessions for older drivers in their own vehicles at their home address. Would the parish council be interested in hosting a representative from Safer Essex Roads? Clerk to invite a representative to the October parish council meeting.
- 25/136.3 Braintree Association of Local Councils – July Newsletter received and invoice for membership.
- 25/136.4 Braintree District Volunteer & Active Braintree Awards – are an opportunity to recognise those who give up their time to help our communities to be better, healthier places to live, work and play. Nominations and more information can be found at www.braintree.gov.uk/BDVABA25 and Nominations close on the 12 September 2025.

25/137. Financial Accounts:

- 25/137.1 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 are detailed in Appendix A and the payment schedule was signed by Cllrs Winter and Smith.
- 25/137.2 Updating of Asset Register 2025 – hold over to next meeting as Cllr Neale was not present.
- 25/137.3 Local Government Services Pay Agreement 2025/2026 updated figures received and to be implemented from 1st April 2025. This was agreed by those present and will be amended for the September payroll.

25/137. Highways:

- 25/137.1 The placement of rubbish bins permanently on the Highway. Rules on this to be investigated and relayed to relevant people.
- 25/137.2 Repositioning of signs to show farm tractors not to use Park Lane and redirect to the concrete road entrance on Stambourne Road. It was agreed to put the sign back up at the entrance to Park Lane as it had fallen off, monitor the traffic and write again to landowners to remind them to use the concrete road off of Stambourne Road to access the farm. Cllr Edwards-Holmes to write an article for the newsletter about the ongoing road issues within the parish and what the parish council are doing and ask people to park respectfully. Cllr Edwards-Holmes to also write to a parishioner regarding signage and parking at the entrance of Park Lane.
- 25/137.3 Overhanging hedges on the highway reducing the road width – how can this be addressed. Letters will be sent directly to residents where this applies to.

25/138. Planning:

Application No:	Description	Address	Action
25/00475/VAR	Variation of Condition 2 of (Approved plans) and Condition 7 (Vehicle Parking) of approved application 22/00732/FUL granted on 13/05/2022 for the erection of a two-storey medical centre with allocated parking. Variation would allow a change in design.	Land North of Osier Way Sible Hedingham Essex	Braintree District Council Decision Pending consideration

25/139. Communications:

25/139.1 Articles for the September / October Newsletter to be received by the 19th August 2025.

25/140. Information exchange / Items for the next agenda

A tree has fallen down over the bridge at the back of Ollivers Farm and it has been reported by a parishioner to Essex County Council.

25/141. Date of the next meeting:

The next Parish Council Meeting is scheduled to be held on 4th September 2025 at 7.30pm at Toppesfield Village Hall.

25/142. Close

The Chair closed the meeting at 8.15pm

Signed:

Dated:

Action Summary:

- Cllr Edwards-Holmes to email Cllr Schwier expressing an interest in this project and roughly how many lights would be required and ask for the project to be included in his budget.
- Cllr Neale to contact Cllr Peter Schwier regarding further funding for the tree project.
- Cllr Bourlet to update the councils Biodiversity Policy.
- Cllr Smith to seek three quotes to carry out the work on the RoSPA action list.
- Clerk to find costs of additional salt bins to store the salt and everyone to look at potential locations for the bins.
- Clerk to investigate the rules on placing wheelie bins on the highway permanently.

Appendix A

Accounts -7th August 2025				
			£	
Community Account				
	Balance as at 6th August 2025		£38,258.12	
All previous authorised payments issued balance should be			£35,410.05	
	Payments made since last meeting (included in 2nd July Balance)			
15/07/2025	Community Heartbeat Trust - replacement defibrillator pads		£89.94	
			£0.00	
		Balance	£35,320.11	
Income Received Included in the balance figure of 6th August 2025				
07.07.25	HMRC - VAT Refund		£705.84	
31.07.25	Essex County Council - verge cutting		£2,254.85	
Direct Debits Included in the balance figure of 6th August 2025				
01.08.25	EDF - Pavilion electric		£8.00	
06.08.25	Vodafone contract		£14.68	
			£22.68	
				Unrecoverable VAT
Payments to be approved:				
Date of invoice		Chq No:		
10.07.25	Toppesfield village Hall Committee - quarterly rent and hall hire for meetings	By Bacs	£307.50	£0.00
15.07.25	BALC - subscription for 25/26	By Bacs	£24.00	£0.00
30.07.25	Braintree District Council - Annual Grounds Maintenance April 25 - Mar 26	By Bacs	£1,620.00	£0.00
01.08.25	HMRC - Tax on July salary	By Bacs	£1.60	£0.00
01.08.25	K Berry - July salary	By Bacs	£765.14	£0.00
			£2,718.24	
			£35,539.88	