



Toppesfield Parish Council



Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday 7th December 2023 at Toppesfield Village Hall at 7.30pm

23/191. Attendance and Apologies for Absence:

The following Councillors were in attendance:

Councillor Alan Collard
Councillor Jeremy Graves
Councillor Amanda Smith
Councillor Frances Winter

Also, in attendance:

Kaaren Berry – Clerk

Apologies were received from:

Councillor Kitty Bourlet
Councillor Paula Edwards-Holmes
Councillor Jane Daines (following her co-option)
County Councillor Peter Schwier
District Councillor Richard van Dulken

23/192. Declaration of Members' interests in agenda items

There were no declarations of interest reported.

23/193. Open Session – opportunity for members of the Parish to address the Parish Council.

Councillor van Dulken sent in his report as below:

- I was pleased on your part to note, from the November Minutes, that BDC can find nothing in their records which prevent the PC from disposing of part of the car park.
- You will perhaps be aware that BDC Planning Dept. has approved the retention of the Great Yeldham Men's Shed (plus additional containers) in the Recreation Ground in the neighbouring village, with the proviso that the metal containers be clad in wooden slats, and landscaping carried out.
- You should be hearing soon of the introduction of the Home Upgrade Grant (HUG2) scheme in the District, which will be of particular interest to areas such as Yeldham Ward, off the gas grid. Braintree has been awarded £2,466,000 for distribution to households where income is less than £31,000 p.a. and where the house is off the gas grid and EPC Band D or lower. Grants will be made available towards improvements in energy performance and heating systems.
- It is the hope that the Councillors' Community Grant fund will continue to operate during 2024-25 however there may be changes to the form of operation.
- Wethersfield, you are probably aware that the judgement on the Judicial Review went against the Councils in Braintree and at Scampton in Lincolnshire, unfortunately deciding that the Home Office acted lawfully when making the decision to use the site as a migrant centre. BDC has asked for permission to appeal.
- Still on Wethersfield, I am now taking part in regular Zoom meetings with fellow Councillors and other interested parties, and the relevant Home Office staff, regarding the day to day running of the migrant centre. I'm not terribly sure how useful this is as at the last meeting I was assured that most migrants were content with the location and conditions on the base, and 2 days later they held a demonstration at the gates to show how unhappy they are!

- You may have seen reports of the financial problems of many Councils across the country, with a number actually declaring bankruptcy (as they are not allowed to operate at a loss). I am pleased to be able to assure you that while BDC is certainly facing challenges, it is far from having that level of problems, with relatively negligible long-term borrowings of under £6 million, and a medium-term deficit which is manageable and hopefully will not affect the statutory services to residents and businesses. The introduction of the subscription service for Garden Waste was unfortunately necessary in order to help bridge the budget gap, and last I heard an unexpectedly high number of eligible households – 36% - had signed up for the subscription service, going a long way towards making this non-statutory service self-sustaining.

23/194. Minutes of the last Parish Council Meeting

It was proposed by Cllr Collard and seconded by Cllr Smith that the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 2nd November 2023 were agreed and signed as a true record of the meeting.

23/195. Matters Arising not on the agenda – for report only.

There were no matters arising.

23/196. Actions from previous meeting:

23/196.1 Cllrs Bourlet and Smith to continue with Christmas planning.

Planning was completed and the event was well attended and there has been a lot of positive feedback. Thank you to everyone who helped make it a success.

23/196.2 Clerk to obtain further quotes for a replacement for the damaged slide and for a stand-alone small slide.

Quotes received ranged from £1800 to £5000. It was agreed to defer this until Cllrs Bourlet, Smith and Winter have progressed a plan for the whole playing field in the New Year.

23/196.3 Clerk to enquire with EALC whether the clerk's salary should increase as a result of gaining the CiLCA Qualification.

It is stated in the Clerks contract that a salary point should be given on achieving relevant qualifications which include the CiLCA qualification.

The clerk's contract and job description are in need of updating – the clerk and chairman will liaise re this before being presented to the Council as a whole. The council also agreed to increase the Clerks hours from December 2023 to 9 hours per week.

23/196.4 Cllr Collard to apply for further funding to complete Neighbourhood Plan. Further information needs to be supplied before the application can be assessed. Cllr Collard is progressing this.

23/196.5 Clerk to write to BDC regarding RAF Wethersfield Museum as per November agenda item number 23/183.2. A letter of support has been sent to Braintree District Council.

23/197. Internal Practices and management for the Parish Council:

23/197.1 Neighbourhood Plan update.

Cllr Collard advised that once the grant is received the consultant is ready to work on progress the next stage of the plan.

23/197.2 Wethersfield Airfield and Asylum centre update

This was covered in Cllr van Dulken's report above.

23/197.3 Tree Planting and Christmas event feedback.

The trees were planted on the 25th November – thank you to Cllr Daines for organising the planting of the trees. The trees are a good size and they are not spreading trees as they are nearer the road.

It was agreed to seek other places around the parish where further trees could be planted.

23/197.4 Consideration to adopt updated Complaints procedure policy and safeguarding policy.

Cllr Collard proposed both these policies were adopted and this was seconded by Cllr Smith.

23/197.5 Consideration of putting on Coffee mornings for January & February 2024.

It was agreed to hold a coffee morning on the 20th January 2024 from 10am – 12pm. Notices to be placed on the noticeboards and invitations to be sent to people inviting them to share stories and show photos of historic Toppesfield and Gainsford End.

23/197.6 Dates for Parish Council meetings for 2024 to be agreed.

Dates for the Parish Council meeting in 2024 were agreed and are available on the Parish Council website.

23/198. Correspondence Received:

- 23/198.1 EALC Legal & County Updates, Essex County Council Highways Highlights, RCCE Essex Warbler – circulated to all Councillors prior to meeting.
- 23/198.2 Wethersfield Parish Council – request for the parish council to write to Braintree District Council to support the future of the RAF Wethersfield Museum and action being taken by Wethersfield PC – support letter has been written and sent.
- 23/198.3 Keep Britain Tidy - Buy Nothing New Month campaign in January 2024. Does the Parish Council wish to sign up to it. This will be advertised via noticeboards and in the parish newsletter.
- 23/198.4 The Local Government Boundary Commission have published draft recommendations for new divisions, division boundaries, and division names for Essex County Council and are now inviting comments on those recommendations. The consultation closes on 19 February 2024. To take part in the consultation please visit their website:
[The Local Government Boundary Commission for England | LGBCE](https://www.lgbce.org.uk/)

23/199. Financial Accounts:

- 23/199.1 To receive the Clerk's Report indicating receipts and payments requiring approval. The report was received. Cllr Graves proposed that all payments were approved and Cllr Smith seconded this. See Appendix A for details.
- 23/199.2 Budget for 2024/2025 – projects for the coming year and costs for consideration for the next year's budget. Proposed budget to be drawn up by the clerk and circulated to Councillors for comment.

23/200. Highways:

- 23/200.1 **Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 – Section 14(1).** Temporary Traffic Regulation Order of Braintree Bypass - A131, Braintree. Please see the following link <https://one.network/?tm=136383640> to find details of the intended closure of Braintree Bypass - A131, due to commence on 22nd January 2024 for 5 days. The closure is required for the safety of the public and workforce while Essex County Council undertakes surface dressing.
- 23/200.3 Salt Bin application for Camoise Close. Application does not meet the criteria so was unsuccessful. The possibility of purchasing and installing a salt bin was discussed. Clerk to obtain quotes for salt bins for presentation at the next meeting. Salt bags can be left in Camoise Close for use.

23/201. Planning:

Application No:	Description	Address	Action
23/02745/HH	Infill side extension. Erection of front porch. Alteration to fenestration.	20 Park Lane Toppesfield CO9 4DQ	Comments to Braintree District Council by 12 th December 2023
23/02423/TPO	Notice of intent to carry out works to trees protected by Tree Preservation Order No. 14/82 - Prune, tidy up and thin 1 Horse Chestnut Tree	Chapel House The Street Toppesfield CO9 4DJ	Braintree District Council planning decision: Pending Consideration

Application number 23/02745/HH was discussed, and the parish council have no objections to this application.

23/202. Communications:

There were no discussions under this heading.

23/203. Information exchange / Items for the next agenda

Thoughts about the overall Christmas Event would be welcomed and ideas for future years.

It was also suggested that further decorations are purchased during the sales.

23/204. Date of the next meeting:

The next Parish Council Meeting is scheduled to be held on 11th January 2024 at 7.30pm at Toppesfield Village Hall.

23/205. Close

The Chair closed the meeting at 9.15pm

Signed:

Dated:

Action Summary:

- Clerks contract and job description/scope of work to be updated by Clerk and Cllr Collard.
- Clerk to produce Coffee Morning invitations and posters.
- Clerk to draw up draft budget and circulate to Councillors for comment.

Appendix A

Accounts -7th December 2023				
			£	
Community Account				
	Closing Balance as at 3rd December 2023		£34,361.84	
All previous payments issued balance should be			<u>£34,413.84</u>	
Income Received Included in the balance figure of 03.12.23				
			£0.00	
			<u>£0.00</u>	
Direct Debits / Payments made since last meeting (included in the balance figure of 03.12.23)				
01.12.23	EDF Energy - The Pavilaion electricity supply		£10.00	
01.12.23	Information Commissioners Office - Data Protection renewal		£35.00	
			<u>£45.00</u>	
				Unrecoverable VAT
Payments to be approved:				
Date of invoice		Chq No:		
Various	Kitty Bourlet - Reimbursent for Christmas event	By Bacs	£206.92	£0.00
22.08.23	Boyd Page -timber to repair Gainsford End Village signs	By Bacs	£286.80	£0.00
Nov-23	SLCC membership renewal	By Bacs	£144.00	£0.00
13.10.23	Barcham trees - correction to previous payment - paid £913.02 instead of £931.02	By Bacs	£18.00	£0.00
various	K Berry - reimbursment for Christmas event, paper for Xmas flyers and general use	By Bacs	£24.60	
02.12.23	Plants That Grow - Christmas tree	By Bacs	£250.00	£0.00
04.12.23	Toppesfield Village Hall Committee - quarterly rent	By Bacs	£307.50	
01.11.23	K Berry - November salary	By Bacs	£502.92	£0.00
			<u>£1,740.74</u>	
			£32,621.10	