



# Toppesfield Parish Council



## Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> January 2025 at Toppesfield Village Hall at 7.30pm

### 25/1. Attendance and Apologies for Absence:

#### The following Councillors were in attendance:

Councillor Kitty Bourlet  
Councillor Paula Edwards-Holmes  
Councillor Chris Neale  
Councillor Frances Winter  
Councillor Amanda Smith

Also, in attendance:

District Cllr Richard van Dulken  
County Councillor Peter Schwier – arrive 9pm  
Kaaren Berry – Clerk

### 25/1.1 To accept apologies from members of the council.

Apologies were received and accepted from Councillor Jane Daines and Councillor Jeremy Graves

### 25/2. Declaration of Members' interests in agenda items

No declaration of interests were made at this meeting.

### 25/3. Open Session – opportunity for members of the Parish to address the Parish Council.

Cllr Richard van Dulken reported:

- A public consultation on the proposals to improve waste collections is open until the 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2025. More information can be found on the Braintree Council website or go to [www.braintree.gov.uk/wasteconsultation](http://www.braintree.gov.uk/wasteconsultation) to complete the survey.
- It was also reported that a meeting will be held on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2025 at Braintree District Council to discuss the devolution /reorganisation of local government and whether they will become part of the Greater Essex Group with Southend and Thurrock.
- Construction on the medical centre in Sible Hedingham was due to commence this winter (2024/2025) and be complete in spring 2026.
- Wethersfield Asylum Centre has approx. 580 residents now, but this will increase when a few issues have been resolved.

Cllr van Dulken asked if there were any questions, and the parish council expressed their concerns about a school bus getting stuck in a large pothole on the Toppesfield Road and the pupils being asked to leave the bus and walk home. It was agreed that the parish council would write to Hedingham Buses and Hedingham School to ask what their emergency procedures are should this happen again. It was also discussed what could be done to safeguard the children in this situation. Cllr van Dulken will also speak with Cllr Schwier regarding this.

Cllr Schwier reported that:

- Essex County Council are looking at setting their budget for 2025/2026. Nearly half of their budget is spent on adult and child social care. The budget meeting will take place on 20 February 2025 and there is potential that there will be an increase of 4 – 4.5% increase.
- Primary school places need to be applied for by the 15<sup>th</sup> January 2025.
- The Royal Countryside Fund is open for applications. More information will be sent out via EALC.

**25/4. To approve and sign the minutes of the Toppesfield Parish Council meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2024.**

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

**25/5. Matters Arising not on the agenda – for report only.**

There were no matters arising.

**25/6. Actions from previous meeting:**

- 25/6.1 Cllr Bourlet to follow up with Alan Collard regarding funding for digitalising historic records. Alan has forwarded some funding options and Cllr Bourlet to review them before the next meeting.
- 25/6.2 Cllrs Bourlet, Winter to arrange and meet with a third representatives regarding possibilities for the playing field. Cllr Bourlet has approached two other companies for quotes but all three need to be consistent. Cllr Bourlet and Cllr Winter to liaise.
- 25/6.3 Cllr Bourlet to research funding for the playing field project. Some options have been identified but they need to be looked into further to see the qualifying criteria.
- 25/6.4 Cllr Bourlet to report back to the playing field group with response from the Cricket Club representative regarding boundaries for the cricket pitch. Cllr Bourlet has spoken with the Crick Club and the tree line area needs to be avoided. However the bottom of the field and the far side could be used.
- 25/6.5 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 ne be required. No update available – carry over.
- 25/6.6 Cllr Graves to contact Cllr Peter Schwier regarding further funding for the tree project. No update available – carry over.
- 25/6.7 Clerk to seek quotes for an internal auditor. Two quotes have been received. To be discussed under agenda point 25/9.3.

**25/7. Internal Practices and management for the Parish Council:**

- 25/7.1 Neighbourhood Plan update. It was reported that the latest stage is near to being ready to be submitted to BDC for regulation 14 approval. Quotes for work to be done, such as printing, data analysis etc are being sought in order to submit a grant application.
- 25/7.2 Wethersfield Airfield and Asylum centre verbal update to be received – Cllr van Dulken gave an update during the open session.
- 25/7.3 Tree planting project – verbal update to be given by Cllr Graves to determine actions to progress the project. No update available – carry over.
- 25/7.4 Christmas Event – Feedback and suggestions for the next Christmas event. It was agreed that a wet weather plan needs to made and planning needs to start earlier in the year.
- 25/7.5 Parish Council Strategy document – it was agreed to simplify the document after re-grouping some areas and enquiry about layout and printing. Parishioners will be asked what they priorities are in the proposed plan or otherwise.
- 25/7.6 Coffee Morning 8<sup>th</sup> February 2025 – Cllrs Neale and Bourlet will be available to help. Cllr Winter will ask the village hall committee if they wish to help as well. Posters/Facebook adverting to progressed.
- 25/7.7 Date for Annual Parish meeting for 2025 to be agreed. This was agreed as 24<sup>th</sup> April 2025.
- 25/7.8 Compile a list of events for the coming year where council representation is required – suggestions to be passed to the Clerk. A list has been started any other events need to be added as known.

**25/8. Correspondence Received:**

- 25/8.1 EALC Legal & County Updates, Essex County Council Highways Highlights, RCCE Essex Warbler – circulated to all Councillors prior to meeting.
- 25/8.2 Braintree District Council Call for sites – additional site submitted. As with the previously notified sites, this site will now be subject to assessment by officers who will consider suitability for future development. Once the assessment process has been completed, sites will be considered by the Local Plan Sub Committee in spring 2025. Formal public consultation on the sites will then be carried out. Additional site:

Ref	Proposed Use	Site Address
TOPP2426	Housing/Affordable Housing	Land West of the Causeway Toppesfield

Comments from the Parish Council in relation to this site to be submitted by mid-January. This was discussed and views were sought from some parishioners. The majority of responses were negative and from the parish council itself regarding this application.

25/8.3 Government Consultation: ‘Strengthening The Standards and Conduct Framework For Local Authorities in England’ Society of Local Council Clerks will be making a response to this consultation by the deadline of 26 February 2025. Any members of SLCC who want to comment or provide information in support of their response should email comments by 12 February 2025. (Document forwarded to Councillors for review prior to the meeting). It was agreed not to send any comment.

**25/9. Financial Accounts:**

- 25/9.1 To receive the Clerk’s Report indicating receipts and payments requiring approval. The report was presented and Cllr Bourlet proposed they were accepted, and this was seconded by Cllr Neale. Payments are detailed in Appendix A.
- 25/9.2 Budget for 2025/2026 to be reviewed, amended as appropriate and approved. The budget was discussed and Cllr Neale proposed the precept of £18750 and the budget was accepted, Cllr Edwards-Holmes seconded this and all present agreed.
- 25/9.3 Quotes for the appointment of Internal Auditor to be considered and appointment offered. Three quotes were sought and two received prior to the meeting. It was agreed to engage Ann Wood. Clerk to write letter of engagement.

**25/10 Highways:**

- 25/10.1 Missing or damage signs at Quys Farm Lane and Stumps Cross, Great Yeldham Road have been reported. Reference numbers 2955055 and 2955054. Response from Essex Highways was “We have risk assessed this enquiry and determined that it does not need immediate action. We have recorded this issue and will continue to monitor the area during future inspections. If the issue further deteriorates, we will consider including it in any future works in the area”.
- 25/10.2 Clearing of leaves and branches on the access road between the Church and the School. The clerk is liaising with Essex County Council to determine who is responsible for the area. However, it was agreed the leaves should be cleared once a year and the Church may need to be spoken to about cutting the overhanging trees back.

**25/11. Planning:**

Application No:	Description	Address	Action
24/02587/PLD	Application for Certificate of Lawfulness for a proposed developments -Single storey side extension	Bradfields Cottage Harrow Hill Toppesfield CO9 4LX	For Information only as there is no statutory consultation requirement associated with this type of application.

**25/12. Communications:**

No items were discussed under this heading.

**25/13. Information exchange / Items for the next agenda**

No items were discussed under this heading.

**25/14. Date of the next meeting:**

The next Parish Council Meeting is scheduled to be held on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2025 at 7.30pm at Toppesfield Village Hall.

**25/15. Close**

The Chair closed the meeting at 9.35pm

Signed:

Dated:

## Action Summary:

- 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.
- 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 ne be required.
- Cllr Graves to contact Cllr Peter Schwier regarding further funding for the tree project.
- Clerk to write letter of engagement to the internal auditor.
- Clerk to check the Financial Regulations regarding delegated powers and to look into the Working from Home Allowance (WFHA). Action from December meeting.

## Appendix A

Accounts - 9th January 2025				
			£	
Community Account				
	Balance as at 7th January 2025		36,995.57	
All previous payments issued balance should be			<u>£36,781.17</u>	
Income Received Included in the balance figure of 7th January 2025				
12.12.24	Braintree District Council - grant for tree planting project		£250.00	
			<u>£250.00</u>	
Direct Debits Included in the balance figure of 7th January 2025				
07.01.25	Vodaphone contract		£13.80	
06.12.24	Vodaphone contract		£13.80	
02.01.25	EDF Energy - The Pavilion electricity supply		£8.00	
			<u>£35.60</u>	
				Unrecoverable VAT
Payments to be approved:				
Date of invoice		Chq No:		
04.12.24	Mr D M Jacobs - supply of Christmas tree	By Bacs	£180.00	
various	K Berry - reimbursement for Chocolate coins for Christmas tree voting and office paper	By Bacs	£16.65	£0.00
09.01.25	Paul Clark Printing - Jan/Feb 25 Newsletter	By Bacs	£212.00	£0.00
31.12.24	HMRC - Tax on December salary	By Bacs	£35.20	£0.00
31.12.24	K Berry - December salary	By Bacs	£766.74	£0.00
			<u>£1,210.59</u>	
			£35,784.98	