



# Toppesfield Parish Council



## Minutes of the Annual Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> May 2024 at Toppesfield Village Hall at 7.30pm

### 24/68. Election of Chair and Vice-Chair for 2024 – 2025

Councillor Edwards-Holmes proposed Councillor Kitty Bourlet as chair, this was seconded by Councillor Daines. Councillor Bourlet accepted the position for the coming year and signed the acceptance of office. Councillor Bourlet proposed Councillor Edwards-Holmes as vice- chair, this was seconded by Councillor Daines. Councillor Edwards-Holmes accepted the position for the coming year and signed the acceptance of office.

Councillor Collard resigned from the Parish Council. Councillor Bourlet thanked him for all his commitment and hard work whilst he served on the parish council. Councillor Collard then left the meeting.

### 24/69. Attendance and Apologies for Absence:

#### The following Councillors were in attendance:

Councillor Alan Collard – resigned and left the meeting after the elections of office.

Councillor Kitty Bourlet

Councillor Amanda Smith

Councillor Paula Edwards-Holmes

Councillor Jane Daines

Also, in attendance:

One member of the public

District Councillor Richard van Dulken

Kaaren Berry – Clerk

Apologies were received from:

Councillor Jeremy Graves

Councillor Frances Winter

County Councillor Peter Schwier

### 24/70. Declaration of Members' interests in agenda items

Cllr Edwards-Holmes declared an interest in agenda item 24/78.1

### 24/71. Open Session – opportunity for members of the Parish to address the Parish Council.

The parishioner in attendance commented that the Park Lane car park was well used and the front part of it should be kept as a car park, and it would be nice if it was properly surfaced with marked bays. Quotes were received by the parish council 3 years ago for the surfacing and bay marking which were approximately £10,000. It was asked if the parish council would reconsider the surfacing and bay marking of the car park.

The parishioner stated they were in support of the planning application for the solar panels to The Stables, Park Lane and they would like to put forward the land adjacent to 22 Park Lane for the Braintree District Councils Call for Sites.

District councillor van Dulken reported:

- The last meeting at Braintree District Council was their AGM.
- He will be visiting the Wethersfield site next week. Numbers of asylum seekers have been capped at 800.

- Councillors Community Grant is open again this year for applications. £1250 is available for the year.
- Braintree District Councils Fit for the Future programme is looking at challenges in the future which include financial pressures and how people work, i.e. working from home.
- His annual report was sent to the parish council and is available on the Toppesfield Parish Council website and forms part of the minutes from the Annual Parish Meeting.

#### **24/72. Minutes of the last Parish Council Meeting**

Cllr Edwards-Holmes proposed the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2024 were agreed and signed as a true record of the meeting and Cllr Daines seconded this.

#### **24/73. Matters Arising not on the agenda – for report only.**

There were no matters arising.

#### **24/74. Actions from previous meeting:**

- 24/74.1 Cllrs to review Clerk's contract and job description following changes made and approve/sign. These were approved and to be signed as such.
- 24/74.2 Cllr Collard to progress funding for digitalising historic photographs/documents. Cllr Bourlet to liaise with Alan Collard regarding progress of this.
- 24/74.3 Cllr Bourlet & Winter to arrange meetings with representatives from two other playground equipment companies regarding possibilities for the playing field. Cllr Winter has met with a second representative and is waiting receive his quote and recommendations. A third quote will be sought, and it was agreed to meet with a representative from the Cricket Club regarding boundaries of the Cricket pitch. Councillor Bourlet to research funding options for the project.
- 24/74.4 Clerk to continue progressing a more efficient mobile phone contract. A quote for a sim only business contract was obtained and it was agreed to progress this at £13.80 per calendar month.
- 24/74.5 Clerk to arrange a meeting with the RoSPA inspector for the playing field inspections. Inspector will contact the parish council to confirm the date of inspection.
- 24/74.6 Clerk to enquire if a joint membership with the RCCE is possible for the Parish Council and Village Hall. The response from RCCE was 'Dual membership allocation is that it is only available for those parish and town council who run a village hall/community centre directly either as a sole trustee or as part of their local government portfolio. It is not available to those who lease the building to a management committee or are the custodian trustee'. This information was shared with the village hall management committee who will renew their membership separately in light of this information.
- 24/74.7 Clerk to purchase dog poop bag dispensers and poop bags for Clean up Our Village project. Dispensers and bags have been purchased. Cllr Graves to install them in Park Lane, by the school, opposite Camoise Close and at Gainsford End Playing field.
- 24/74.8 Clerk to enquire with Highways for a solution to the issues on Church Lane regarding increased traffic, surface and signage.
- Responses from Essex Highways were that as the Lane is a byway it is open to all traffic but it is expected that people to use their common sense when deciding if their vehicle is suitable for the terrain. The condition of the surface will be looked at by the local PROW Inspector, reference number 2912625.
- The PROW Inspectors response was – 'I would not characterise it as a comfortable drive but last week I was able to drive the entire length from Church Ln to Gt Yeldham Rd. There are a number of shallow potholes that are not an easy fix. Any materials that are used as a filler would only be pushed out by the next set of tyres that drove through. There is one muddy patch that I can imagine is worse in wet weather. However, this is a rural byway and such conditions are typical of rural unsurfaced routes following an extended period of wet weather. PROW is currently reviewing byways that require maintenance and prioritising them. I will flag this up to my own management to take a view in the context of the others they are looking at.'
- It was agreed to monitor this to see if there are any updates.

#### **24/75. Internal Practices and management for the Parish Council:**

- 24/75.1 Neighbourhood Plan update – Alan Collard has agreed to continue with this project and will be asked for an update for the next meeting.
- 24/75.2 Wethersfield Airfield and Asylum centre update – minutes from the WASC meetings were circulated to Councillors and are available on the Parish Council website.

- 24/75.3 RoSPA play area inspections due May 2024 – is a meeting with inspectors required? The inspection has been requested and waiting for the inspector to confirm the date of inspection.
- 24/75.4 Playing fields Plan – update on obtaining quotes for consideration. This was discussed under agenda item 24/74.3.
- 24/75.5 Parish Paths Partnership (P3) representative – after many years Ann Read is retiring from this position and Paul Thompson will be taking on the role.
- 24/75.6 Clerk attended a training session on Domestic Abuse and Creating Safe Spaces across the Community. The J9 initiative is aimed at public and customer facing, individuals, businesses and organisations across the Community who are ideally placed to spot some of the early indicators of domestic abuse. Councillors all expressed an interest in attending this training, Clerk to progress.

**24/76. Correspondence Received:**

- 24/76.1 EALC Legal & County Updates, Essex County Council Highways Highlights, RCCE Essex Warbler – circulated to all Councillors prior to meeting.
- 24/76.2 Toppesfield & Gainsford End Allotment Society – question received regarding public liability and if the allotment land is covered under the parish council’s insurance. As if so, the allotment society do not need to pay additional sums to NAS.  
The allotments are not covered under the Parish Council’s public liability insurance. The unofficial land swap is being considered with the Toppesfield Charities to see if this could be made permanent and official. It would be for the Allotments Society to enquire with HMRC or NAS to see if they need to be registered as trustees.
- 24/76.3 Correspondence received from Toppesfield Shop Committee regarding the parish council’s response to their proposed project for the garden area outside the shop.  
The comments of the correspondence were noted and it was agreed that a face-to-face meeting with representatives from the Shop and Village Hall committees would be beneficial in order to discuss the project before presenting a final plan to the parish council for consideration as the Parish Council would like to help and support the shop committee and what they do.

**24/77. Financial Accounts:**

- 24/77.1 To receive the Clerk's Report indicating receipts and payments requiring approval. The report was received and payments approved. However, clerk to enquire if a joint membership for Parish Council and the Village Hall is possible.
- 24/77.2 Insurance renewal quote for consideration. Documents circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting. The renewal quote for the insurance was approved.

**24/78 Highways:**

- 24/78.1 Park Lane Car Park – consideration of uses for the area alongside the potential sale of part of the Land and the costs involved.  
Concerns were raised that a sale of the carpark for £5,000 could lead to several thousand of pounds in fees in order to complete the sale which would not leave much for the parish council to use in other projects. Also would there be enough length to convert the remaining space to an electric charging station.  
It was agreed that both parties to look at alternative options to keep costs down and report back at the next meeting.

**24/79. Planning:**

<b>Application No:</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Action</b>
24/00894/HH	Installation of 24No. solar panels to barn	The Stables Park Lane Toppesfield CO9 4DQ	Comments to Braintree District Council by 29 <sup>th</sup> May 2024

24/00369/FUL	2No. Single storey holiday lodges	Toppesfield Hall Great Yeldham Road Toppesfield CO9 4LS	Braintree District Council planning decision: Application Granted
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Planning application 24/00894/FUL was discussed and the parish council support the application.

**24/79.2** Braintree District Council (BDC) Call for Sites. Submissions to BDC must be received by 5pm on 24th May 2024. Discussion on potential sites to be put forward to BDC.  
Areas which could be put forward were discussed and it was agreed that the Parish Council will put forward the land adjacent to 22 Park Lane for consideration.

**24/80. Communications:**

No items were discussed under this heading.

**24/81. Information exchange / Items for the next agenda**

No items were discussed under this heading.

**24/82. Date of the next meeting:**

The next Parish Council Meeting is scheduled to be held on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2024 at 7.30pm at Toppesfield Village Hall.

**24/83. Close**

The Chair closed the meeting at 9.05pm

Signed:

Dated:

**Action Summary:**

- **Cllr Bourlet to liaise with Alan Collard regarding progress made for funding for digitalising historic photographs/documents.**
- **Cllr Bourlet & Winter to arrange and meet with a third representatives regarding possibilities for the playing field.**
- **Cllr Bourlet to research funding for the playing field project.**
- **Cllr Bourlet & Winter to meet with a Cricket Club representative regarding boundaries for the cricket pitch.**
- **Clerk to progress agreed mobile phone contract.**
- **Cllr Graves to install the dog poop bag dispensers.**
- **Clerk to find out dates for J9 training for Councillors.**

## Appendix A

Accounts -9th May 2024				
			£	
<b>Community Account</b>				
	Closing Balance as at 6th May 2024		£45,179.26	
All previous payments issued balance should be			<u>£35,069.62</u>	
<b>Income Received</b> Included in the balance figure of 6th May 2024				
25.04.24	Braintree District Council - Precept - 1st Instalment		£8,875.00	
25.04.24	Braintree District Council - Precept - Street Cleaning Payment 2024/2025		<u>£1,244.64</u>	
			£10,119.64	
<b>Direct Debits</b> Included in the balance figure of 6th May 2024				
01.05.24	EDF Energy - The Pavilaion electricity supply		£10.00	
			<u>£0.00</u>	
			<u>£10.00</u>	
				Unrecoverable VAT
<b>Payments to be approved:</b>				
Date of invoice		Chq No:		
08.04.24	Easy PC Accounts for year 2024 - 2025	By Bacs	£78.00	£0.00
16.04.24	Pads for Defib - Toppesfield	By Bacs	£69.54	£0.00
01/04/2024	Amazon	By Bacs	£348.36	£0.00
01/04/2024	various	By Bacs	£43.03	£0.00
21.04.24	Toppesfield Village Hall Committee - Quartely rent and Meetings	By Bacs	£325.50	£0.00
15.04.24	Insurance renewal for 01.06.24 - 31.05.25	By Bacs	£1,095.08	£0.00
12.03.24	Paul Munson - further work on the preperation of draft Neighbourhood Plan	By Bacs	£1,500.00	£0.00
09.05.24	Paul Clark Printing - Newsletter for May/June 2024	By Bacs	£290.00	£0.00
08.05.24	Groundwork UK - unspent grant return	By Bacs	£6,183.00	£0.00
01.05.24	HMRC - Tax on April salary	By Bacs	£30.60	£0.00
01.05.24	K Berry - April salary	By Bacs	<u>£712.35</u>	£0.00
			<u>£10,675.46</u>	
			£34,503.80	