

Woodham Mortimer and Hazeleigh Parish Council

ANNUAL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

MINUTES – TUESDAY 13 MAY 2025

Convened at Woodham Mortimer & Hazeleigh Village Hall at 7:00pm.

In attendance: Parish Cllrs: Simon Brady (SB), Pauline McDonald (PM), Stephen Pemberton (SP), Graham Harle (GH), Loraine Cobb (LC), Peter Harland (PH). County Councillor Jane Fleming (JF), District Councillor Simon Morgan (SM), Andrew Ritchings Clerk to the Council recording proceedings

53.25 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Cllr **Simon Brady** was the sole nominee for the role of Chairman as proposed by PM and seconded by PH. SB accepted the position of Chairman for year 2025/26 and duly signed the form of acceptance.

54.25 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN

Cllr **Pauline McDonald** was the sole nominee for the role of Vice Chairman as proposed by LC and seconded by GH. PM accepted the position of Vice Chairman for year 2025/26.

55.25 APOLOGIES OF ABSENCE

Parish Cllr Kim McDonald was unwell to attend.

56.25 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

SP declared a non-pecuniary interest to the solar farm community benefit fund item being the freehold owner of the leased land subject to the solar farm company.

57.25 PUBLIC FORUM

There were no members of the public in attendance.

58.25 PREVIOUS MINUTES

The Minutes of the Ordinary Parish Council Meeting 08 April 2025 were approved as at true record of events as proposed by SP and seconded by GH.

59.25 APPOINTMENT OF VILLAGE HALL REPRESENTATIVE

In his absence Cllr **Kim McDonald** who had already communicated to the Chairman he was willing to re-stand was appointed as the Village Hall representative as proposed by SB seconded by KM and agreed by all Cllrs present.

60.25 APPOINTMENT OF FALKLANDS TRUST REPRESENTATIVE

Cllr **Stephen Pemberton** was appointed as the Falkland Trust representative as proposed by LC seconded by GH and agreed by all Cllrs present.

61.25 REVIEW AND ADOPTION OF STANDING ORDERS

There had been no advisory changes to the current Standing Orders which were re-adopted without amendment as agreed by all Cllrs present.

62.25 REVIEW AND ADOPTION OF FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

There had been no advisory changes to the current Financial Regulations which were re-adopted without amendment as agreed by all Cllrs present.

63.25 REVIEW AND ADOPTION OF COUNCILS RISK ASSESSMENT

No changes were proposed to the Councils current Risk Assessment which was re-adopted without amendment as agreed by all Cllrs present.

64.25 REVIEW OF COUNCILS ASSET LIST

The recently purchased new laptop will be added to the Council's Asset List. It was decided to remove the litter picking equipment from the list as some items had now been distributed to parishioners with the intention to fully distribute all items around the two Parishes.

65.25 PLANNING

24/00262/VARM – HALL FARM LAND HAZELEIGH HALL LANE HAZELEIGH – Variation of condition 27 (Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP)) on approved planning application 22/00261/FUL (The construction and operation of a solar photovoltaic farm and associated infrastructure, including inverters, security cameras, fencing, access tracks and landscaping.) Variation seeks: - Inclusion of a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan as an approved document. **LPA Deadline 03/07/2024 TO BE DETERMINED BY THE LPA**

24/00844 – GOLF DRIVING RANGE BURNHAM ROAD WOODHAM MORTIMER – Reserved matters application for the approval of all matters on approved planning application 22/00482/OUT (Outline application with all matters reserved for up to 18 dwellings with a provision for affordable housing) **APPROVED BY THE LPA**

24/00869/FUL - LAND ON SOUTH SIDE MALDON ROAD WOODHAM MORTIMER - Demolish three existing buildings, redevelop the site for Gypsy and Traveller Use comprising the siting of a total of four mobile homes (including the retention of two existing mobile homes allowed on appeal under application ref. 22/00344/FUL), use of existing hay store building for storage together with associated facilities and landscaping. **LPA Deadline 12/03/2025 TO BE DETERMINED BY THE LPA**

24/01014/OUTM – LAND SOUTH OF MALDON ROAD DANBURY – Outline application with all matters reserved except for access for the erection of up to 72 dwellings with associated infrastructure. **LPA Deadline 18/04/2025 TO BE DETERMINED BY THE LPA**

25/00105/LDE - KEESTON CHELMSFORD ROAD WOODHAM MORTIMER - Claim for lawful development certificate for existing use of dwelling without complying with agricultural occupancy restriction as stated at condition 2, MAL/647/79. **APPROVED BY THE LPA**

25/00019/PACUAR – LAND ADJACENT LODDARTS LODGE ROAD WOODHAM MORTIMER – Prior approval for conversion of agricultural barn to one dwellinghouse and for building operations reasonably necessary for the conversion. **APPROVED BY THE LPA**

25/00084/HOUSE – MILTON GRANGE POST OFFICE ROAD WOODHAM MORTIMER – Removal of existing garage roof with replacement roof to create first floor home office with balcony to rear. New garage door and stairs to side. **APPROVED BY THE LPA**

24/00772/FULM – LAND ADJACENT 30 CONDUIT LANE WOODHAM MORTIMER – Construction of 4No. three bedroom detached dwellings and 2No. four bedroom detached dwellings with associated garages and carports. New vehicular accesses to each property. **LPA Deadline 12/12/2024. TO BE DETERMINED BY THE LPA**

25/00160/FULM – LAND SOUTH OF WYKE HILL AND LIMEBROOK WAY MALDON – Construction of 90 dwellings (Use Class C3), open landscape, landscaping, vehicular and pedestrian infrastructure, sustainable urban drainage and other associated works. **LPA Deadline 22/05/2025.**

66.25 COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORTS

District Cllr Simon Morgan and County Cllr Jane Fleming discussed matters associated with the ongoing review of Maldon District Local Development Plan and the Local Government Review which continues to form part of many discussions as the County heads towards the May 2026 Mayoral elections. It is still uncertain how many authorities will eventually be created. ECC have joined with other authorities and made recommendations to central government. All agree the future of local council as it stands is impractical due to the aging needs and population increases of most areas of the Country. JF attended an Integrated Care Board meeting and advises the Government are also planning to reorganise the care system which she believes

could be beneficial for Essex as it is likely to lead to more stream-lined system. JF also advised that funds are available again from her Locality Fund scheme; the Parish Council will make a second attempt at procuring and installing bus stop seat benches via the fund. Cllr Fleming also advised there is again a member led Highway scheme with a separate set-a-side budget.

67.25 FINANCIAL MATTERS

Annual Governance and Accountability Return Year ending March 2025

67.25.1 – **Certification of exemption from a limited assurance review;** Cllrs reviewed the criteria of exemption and certified the Council as exempt.

Internal auditor report; Heelis and Lodge ('the Company') were appointed as Woodham Mortimer and Hazeleigh PC Internal Auditor at its meeting on 10 December 2024 (Minute item 146.24). The Company are completely independent of this Council and no representatives of the Company are known to members of the Council. The fees quoted to conduct the Internal Audit were acceptable to Cllrs and it was noted that the Auditors produced a professional and helpful report for the 2024-25 accounts. No issues or matters of concern were raised from a review of the report which will be reviewed again when setting the 2026-27 budget proposals usually at the December meeting prior to the next financial year.

67.25.2 – **Approval of Annual Governance Statement;** Cllrs acknowledged their responsibility for ensuring a sound system of internal control had been met during the financial year ending March 2025 and completed the Annual Governance Statement, duly signed by the Chairman.

67.25.3 – **Approval of Accounting Statements;** Cllrs reviewed the accounting statements as presented by the Responsible Finance Officer; no matters of concern were raised and the Accounting Statements for year ending March 2025 were accepted as a true and accurate record of the Council's business for the year of audit.

The Annual Governance and Accountability Return year ending March 2025 as proposed by GH and seconded by SP was approved by all Cllrs present. SB and AR duly signed the document which will be made available for public viewing during the statutory required period and a copy of page 2 sent to the external auditors as required by Regulation.

Balance of Accounts

Unity Trust Instant Access Savings Account	£9,968.64
Unity Trust T1 Current Account	£723.21
Total funds on deposit	£10,691.85

Authorisation of payments

Heelis & Lodge Internal Audit	£130.00
Defibrillator battery and pads	£418.00
Transfer of funds from Savings to Current Account	£1,000.00
Npower late payment fee	£40.00

AR advised that Npower have imposed a Late Payment fee as the recent bill was settled 5-days after the due date. Having contacted Npower to appeal the late payment explaining the situation with the Council whereby payments are authorised at respective PC meetings and therefore depending when invoices are received could mean there is not much time for Cllrs to authorise a payment which in itself can take some time due to the Council's secure authorisation processes. Npower advised; *"the only way we can look to remove the late payment fee is if a direct debit is set up on the account and secondly the reason for the late payment isn't strong enough for our collections team to issue a reversal"*. Cllrs resolved that as Npower have advised they will not issue a reversal then there's little point in authorising a direct debit. AR will advise the Council's disappointment and ask that next year an invoice is

dispatched with at least 6-weeks' notice which should allow ample time for the payment to be authorised.

Transactions since the previous meeting

Npower non-metred street lighting energy	-£666.72
NALC & EALC affiliation fees	-£251.26
Lloyds Debit Card monthly charge	-£3.00
Silicon Alley (new laptop)	-£630.00
Unity Trust Bank service charge quarterly charge	-£6.00
Maldon DC Precept receipt	+£7,763.00

The above payments as proposed by SP and seconded by GH were approved by all Cllrs present and payments authorised.

It was noted that Cllrs had approved a request from the Hurdlemakers Arms to defray the cost of new pads for the defibrillator and at the previous meeting agreed to also pay for a new battery, the cost of the battery which was not originally approved along with the pads in October 2024 is substantially more than the pads and no allowance had been made in the December 2024 Budget deliberations for finance year 2025-26. Cllrs resolved to meet the cost of the pads and battery for this year and the matter will be added as a specific agenda item at its Budget Setting meeting in December 2025 for the finance year 2026-27.

68.25 COMMUNITY BENEFIT AGREEMENT ASSOCIATED WITH THE HAZELEIGH SOLAR FARM

The Council are still waiting for the signed agreement to be finalised, also to be advised of the energisation date and transfer of the Community Benefit Funds. GH will review the signed agreement to ascertain specific requirement of payment details and SP will contact Low Carbon for an update.

69.25 HIGHWAY MATTERS

Footpath 11 Hazeleigh (Dragons Path) – gate restriction and return to previous character.

Vehicle Activated Speed Sign A414 adj Oak Manor Chelmsford Road. – VAS Installation. AR to locate and complete license application form.

A414 Chelmsford Road – hedge encroachment between Zara Restaurant and gravel pit (EH ref: 2942385). – No activity.

A414 Maldon Road Central island Crossing between Crematorium and Church – the

Council have been advised the pedestrian crossing point is now obstructed due to a dispute between the crematorium developers and Essex Highways.

Conduit Lane – Mobility vehicle/wheelchair access to bus stop. No activity, AR to remind JF to follow up her initial enquiry.

The following highway issues were included on the Maldon Local Highways Panel list which is now under review and no schemes are proceeding until the review has been completed.

Footway Defect A414 – Foliage/soil restricting width of footway/pavement between Tom Tit Lane and Ransell Green Danbury (LHP Scheme No. 36).

A414 30mph Speed limit – between Oak Corner and Post Office Road.

A414 40mph Speed limit – between Post Office Road and Limebrook Farm.

70.25 BUS SHELTERS - Graffiti removal updates.

Work to blast remove graffiti arranged for Monday 26 May 2025. Working party will make arrangements to apply coatings soon after contractor has removed graffiti. GH to advise product preference to so AR can procure the items for the Council.

71.25 INFORMATION ONLY

Hedge and verge overgrowth affecting site lines exiting Conduit Lane and Post Office

Road onto the A414 – The Council received a letter of concern from a parishioner advising how hazardous they consider exiting the aforementioned two roads onto the A414 due to unmaintained verges and hedges. Cllrs believe the overgrowth is the responsibility of Essex Highways and advises any parishioners with the same or similar concerns to report the issue on the Essex Highways 'Tell Us' website.

MDC have advised the Council that a Tree Preservation Order has been applied to one Oak Tree on land subject to Planning item 24/00869/FUL Land on South Side Maldon Road Woodham Mortimer.

The PC have been contacted by Priti Patel's office asking about dates and times of the monthly coffee mornings so that she can attend and listen to parishioner concerns associated with the proposed Gypsy/Traveller site.

The following application did not make it onto the May Agenda and if Cllrs wish to submit a representation before the consultation period ends a special meeting will be required, Cllrs to review details and advise SB and AR if a meeting is required or wait to discuss at the next Ordinary June meeting: **25/00277/OUT – LAND ADJACENT TO LITTLE OWLS POST OFFICE ROAD WOODHAM MORTIMER** – *Outline application with all matters reserved for demolition of twin stable blocks and replacement with two single storey holiday lets (2 bedroom) to replicate square footage of previous buildings and configured/designed to appear as low level farm buildings in a yard. LPA Deadline 20/05/2025.*

Next scheduled meeting is the Parish Council Annual Meeting 10/06/2025.

..... *Simon Brady* (Chairman to the Council) 10/06/2025