

Woodham Mortimer and Hazeleigh Parish Council

ORDINARY PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

MINUTES – TUESDAY 12 DECEMBER 2023

Convened at Woodham Mortimer & Hazeleigh Village Hall at 7:30pm

In attendance: Parish Cllrs: Simon Brady (SB Presiding), Kim McDonald (KM), Pauline McDonald (PM), Graham Harle (GH), Stephen Pemberton (SP), Richard Britton (RB).
County Cllr Jane Flemming (departed after minute item 157.23)
Andrew Ritchings (AR) Clerk to the Council recording proceedings
2 members of the public in attendance

155.23 APOLOGIES OF ABSENCE

Parish Cllr Loraine Cobb was not able to attend and sent her apologies. District Cllr Simon Morgan sent apologies as he had to attend another Council meeting.

156.23 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

SP declared an interest in Highways item diversion of Footpath 17 Woodham Mortimer.

157.23 COUNTY COUNCILLORS REPORTS

County Cllr Jane Flemming had to be at further meeting with ECC members on the same evening therefore SB moved her agenda item up the published list so she could leave straight after presenting her report. County Cllr Jane Flemming reported that ECC have launched a £120million highway resurfacing fund which will extend over a 10yr period. They have also allocated a £1.75million grant programme for unpaid carers; the Carers Community Fund will be available for eligible community groups and organisations. There is now a dedicated website to help improve air quality, the site identifies highly polluted areas and provides other information.

SB advised that foliage growth is obscuring access onto the A414 from Post Office Road and requires cutting back, it was decided that an approach by the Parish Council to the landowner would be the best initial course of action.

JF advised ECC may have some old LED street lighting lamps that will probably become available free of charge should the Parish Council be interested.

158.23 PUBLIC FORUM

A representative of the development company associated with the crematorium on the land opposite St Margaret's Church on the A414 attended the meeting to explain the reasoning behind the application to divert Footpath 17 which the Parish Council are not supporting. The access road and part of a parking area affect the current route of Footpath 17 and in order to allow the development to proceed the Footpath requires diverting as shown within the approved Planning Application. Ground works are due to commence in January 2024 and the path is likely to be temporarily closed periodically whilst the legal process for the diversion proceeds.

A member of the public was also in attendance to provide details associated with the 2 planning application agenda items for Keepers Cottage, Bryants Lane.

159.23 PREVIOUS MINUTES

Minutes of ordinary Parish Council Meeting 14 November 2023 were approved as a true record of events as proposed by RB seconded by GH and agreed by all present at that meeting.

160.23 PLANNING

23/01036/SCR – LAND EAST OF TOM TIT LANE MALDON ROAD WOODHAM MORTIMER – EIA Screening Opinion request for a proposed solar photovoltaic farm together and associated infrastructure. **EIA NOT REQUIRED 06/12/2023**

23/00800/LDP – BRELADES BURNHAM ROAD WOODHAM MORTIMER – *Claim for lawful development certificate for a proposed flat roof dormer (extension of existing flat roof dormer).*

LPA Deadline 28/12/2023. TO BE DETERMINED BY THE LPA

23/01070/LBC – KEEPERS COTTAGE BRYANTS LANE WOODHAM MORTIMER – *Construction of gazebo.* **LPA Deadline 04/01/2024.** The Council do not consider that the location of the gazebo will impose a negative effect to the street scene and surrounding environment and recommend GRANTING the application.

23/01069/LBC – KEEPERS COTTAGE BRYANTS LANE WOODHAM MORTIMER – *Installation of solar panels to existing cartlodge roof.* It is considered the solar panels will provide a more environmental friendly source of energy for the property, the siting of the panels do not appear to cause a detrimental impact to the street scene and Clls recommend GRANTING the application.

161.23 SOLAR FARM ON HALL FARM LAND HAZELEIGH HALL HAZELEIGH

There still has not been any communication in response to the Councils request to identify the proposed Community Benefit payment sum within the legal agreement.

The Parish Council have received parishioner complaints about the condition of the public footpath that crosses from the back of Hazeleigh Hall to the old railway line; solar farm construction traffic is rendering the path unusable and hazardous when frozen, Clerk to contact Essex Highways and developer to raise concerns and request path is reinstated to a condition fit for public use.

162.23 LOCALITY FUND

Litter picking equipment costs will be funded by the County Council Locality Fund but the two new proposed village waste bins are cost prohibitive and have been withdrawn from the application.

163.23 HIGHWAY MATTERS

A414 Pedestrian Crossing – *measures to aid crossing the hazardous A414 Maldon Road.* Scheduled for early 2023 feasibility study. Now delayed due to lack of funds.

Footway Defect A414 – *Foliage/soil restricting width of footway/pavement between Runsell Green Danbury and Woodham Mortimer Church. (First logged by Essex Highways at site meeting with SB 14/09/2018. Logged again by AR as a defect on 06/12/2022 Ref: 2808413). Added to LHP list and Footway Clearance Scheme by County Cllr Flemming - June 2023.* Now delayed due to lack of funds.

Footpath 11 Hazeleigh – *width and gate restrictions.* Awaiting information from Essex Highways.

Burnham Road Hazeleigh gateway structure – *sightline restrictions.* Nothing to report

Proposed Diversion of Footpath 17 Woodham Mortimer – Following the Parish Council's comments to the proposed diversion of Footpath 17 in order to allow the crematorium development to commence, the Planning Authority wrote to the PC with further information asking for Cllrs to reconsider their opposition to the proposed order. Whilst the specific proposal of the footpath diversion was not separately identified in the Councils response to the crematorium development application (21/01276/FUL), it was considered the overall objection

encompassed the Rights of Way aspect having been included in the application. Cllrs now realise it would have been beneficial to raise the specific concern associated with the Footpath and have taken note of the LPA advice for future applications. The contents of the most recent LPA email still do not lead Cllrs to believe the public should be inconvenienced by relocating the Footpath when the highway access and small section of car park could fairly easily be moved so that the Footpath could remain on its existing alignment and wish to maintain their previous position. Cllrs will review and discuss again once the details of the formal legal Order and Order Plan have been received and assessed.

164.23 BUS SHELTERS – REMOVAL OF GRAFFITI

Clerk had approached three companies for estimates to remove the bus shelter graffiti but received no responses from any of the companies. SB suggested to contact Danbury and Sandon Parish Councils to see if they have experienced similar problems and can recommend a suitable contractor.

165.23 FINANCIAL MATTERS

165.23.1 Balance of Accounts

Unity Trust Instant Access Savings Account	£5,417.49
Unity Trust T1 Current Account	£784.89
Total funds on deposit	£6,202.38

165.23.2 Budget proposals and precept demand for year 2024/25 – Financial items discussed for consideration during the next budget year included:

- Clerk advised the Council’s laptop computer is now 11 years old and is beginning to struggle with certain tasks, Microsoft have advised they will no longer be supporting the current laptop operating system and it’s not possible to upgrade the aging computer to the latest software suggesting the computer will be more vulnerable to security attacks. The current suite of Microsoft software is also out-of-date and any new computer upgrade will require new software
- As the existing street lighting bulbs become degraded they will require upgrading to new LED types which are more expensive
- Having experienced graffiti vandalism to 2 of the village bus shelters, costs associated with repairs should now be factored into calculations
- New waste litter bins are likely to be needed at a few locations so allowance should be made to accommodate these
- Cost of living increases look to be easing but inflation is not predicted to return to pre-pandemic levels until 2025
- Cllrs were reminded that the Internal Audit report advised that General Reserves held by the Council tended to be at a low level
- An increase in the Clerk’s salary to be considered as advised by the latest Local Government Services Pay Agreement

In consideration to the above and general predicted price increases a Precept of £7,500 was proposed by GH seconded by SP and agreed by all Cllrs present. This equates to a Band D equivalent of £23.70 per household.

AR advised he had contacted the current appointed Internal Auditor who advised they would be content to audit the Councils business affairs next April/May and having advised their fee Cllrs agreed to again appoint Heelis and Lodge.

165.23.3 Authorisation of payments: payments were authorised for the following items:

Clerk emoluments:	
Clerk quarterly salary (NETT)	£697.66
HMR&C PAYE Tax	£174.20
Clerk work from home allowances (13 weeks)	£52.00
Printer ink	£42.99
Transfer of internal funds from Savings to Current Account	£1,000.00

166.23 CLERKS EMPLOYMENT AND SALARY REVIEW

Cllrs discussed the Clerks salary in conjunction with spinal column point tables supplied by the National Association of Local Councils following the 06/11/2023 Local Government Services Pay Agreement, and resolved to increase the Clerks SPC from 14 to 16 at the same 22 hours monthly contract, commencing 01/04/2024, as proposed by KM seconded by GH and agreed by all Cllrs present.

167.23 INFORMATION ONLY

The following Planning Application did not make the December Agenda and will be discussed at the January meeting: **23/01071/FUL – THE ROYAL OAK FAMBRIDGE ROAD HAZELEIGH – Extension to existing Public House forming new restaurant area and new toilets**

Next scheduled ordinary meeting is 09/01/2024

Simon Brady (Chairman to the Council) 09/01/2024