



Parish of Castle Hedingham

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MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY OF CASTLE HEDINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL AT THE MEMORIAL HALL ON THURSDAY 10TH MAY, 7.30 FOR 8.00PM

Present: Cllrs Higgins, Hood, Moffat, Scrivens, Southgate, Toocaram, Worley
Cllr D Finch (ECC) Cllr J Beavis & Cllr H Johnson (BDC)
Cllr Vanessa Santamauro, Chairman of Braintree District Council

In the Chair: Cllr Southgate

Clerk: Claire Waters

Also Present: 68 parishioners

Village groups and clubs were invited to attend and display information about their activities. Representatives attended from the Scouts and Guides, Friends of St Nicholas Church,, the Filling Station, Womens Group, Bowls Club, Tennis Club, Hedingham United Football Club, Gardening Club, Toddler Group, Colne Valley Railway, Solar Society, Heritage Society, Community Village Shop and Community Agent.

7.50pm CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

Cllr Southgate welcomed all attendees and introduced Cllr Vanessa Santamauro, the newly appointed Chairman of Braintree District Council, thanking her for attending.

CHAIRMAN OF BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL - OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF COMMUNITY ACCESS DEFIBRILLATORS

Madam Chairman explained that prompt use of a defibrillator increases the rate of survival from sudden cardiac arrest to 75%. In a location such as Castle Hedingham it is fantastic to have not one but three Community Access Defibrillators, in the village centre as well as at Crouch Green and Rushley Green as this gives a real opportunity for saving lives in the event of a cardiac emergency. She acknowledged the generous grant from the Big Lottery Fund for making this possible, as well as the Community Heartbeat Trust who advised the Parish Council at every step from obtaining grant funding through to supplying the best equipment for the purpose and providing ongoing training and support. The first Community Awareness Seminar will take place on Monday 11th June at 7pm at Castle Hedingham Club, and all residents are invited to attend. No special skills are needed, just a willingness to play an important role in the event of a medical emergency.

Cllr Toocaram had the Rushley Green defibrillator to show those present what is included in the package, and explained that each is kept in a locked box with the access code written on the box to enable quick access in an emergency.

Mr Chairman began the meeting at 8.00pm

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Philp & Cllr Pewter.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of 9th May 2017 were approved as a correct record of events.

Proposed: Cllr Hood

Seconded: Cllr Toocaram

Signed by the Chairman

3. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PARISH COUNCIL by the CHAIRMAN

Good evening ladies and gentlemen and thank you for coming along to our annual Parish Assembly. I hope you take advantage of all the local clubs and organisations that are represented here this evening. As you can see our village is very fortunate in having so many activities to get involved in and there are also additional classes that take place in this Hall ranging from Carpet Bowls to Yoga. I would again like to take this opportunity as I did last year to thank my fellow Councillors, our two District Councillors Jo Beavis and Hylton Johnson for all their help, support and advice over the past year. Special thanks to our County Councillor David Finch who in spite of his heavy work schedule is always available for help and has always given your Parish Council invaluable support. Also a personal thank you to our Parish Clerk Claire who was instrumental in obtaining the Big Lottery Fund grant for our 3 defibrillators and in a non-Parish Council role undertaking to organise the running of our Community Shop. I know I speak on behalf of everyone on the council when I say we are very fortunate to have you. I would also like to thank our Village Maintenance Operative Adam, often assisted by Alan who also maintains our village Public Toilets, for keeping our village looking neat and tidy and dealing with issues that we would often have to wait a long time to be resolved.

The past year has again been another testing time especially concerning our village playground. As you know we held a public meeting in January which was very well attended, with over 100 residents, which was held in order to inform everyone of the efforts that have been made on your behalf by the Parish Council. The panel at this meeting was left under no illusion as to the feeling of the residents and since that meeting we have continued to put pressure on BDC. However, following a further meeting with them it is still their intention to apply for planning permission with the only positive outcome that should this happen there would be a recreational area included in the site. Your Parish Council is monitoring BDC intentions on this whole area and will call a further public meeting as and when necessary. We are also looking at other possible options but unfortunately nothing that will resolve the issue in the short term. We are also trying to make the existing play area as safe and usable as we can under the circumstances.

The Annual Report has outlined comprehensively events that have taken place in our village over the last year, including the installation of 3 defibrillators in our village, and I hope you are able to attend one of the demonstrations of how to use them, the first being held at the Castle Club on Monday 11th June starting at 7pm.

I would like to thank Councillor Worley and his helpers for their efforts in planting the Memorial Avenue of trees in Sheepcot Road and for the design of the Memorial Board to be inaugurated in November; it is really something special and a credit to our village in recognising the men who served and fell in the two World Wars.

Our Parish Clerk was also instrumental in obtaining additional funding for our Village Operatives so that we could undertake additional projects around the village this year which I am sure you will see the evidence of in the near future.

We are very fortunate to have a very well served village and although last year we were bordering on losing our Post Office and Village Shop it is with thanks to Lyn and Peter at Buckleys Tea Rooms for taking over the Post Office and to Councillor Jo Beavis for helping to turn our shop into a Community run shop, together with our support, that we have managed to retain both businesses. Thank you also to all the volunteers at the shop for their enthusiasm and commitment in providing a friendly service. We need more volunteers so if anyone is able to give a couple of hours a week please contact our Parish Clerk and she will find you a slot on the rota and make sure you are supported while you learn the ropes.

Our village is a wonderful place to live and your Councillors work hard behind the scenes, all on a voluntary basis. We continue to act in the best interests of everyone and would encourage you to notify us of any concerns you may have, and if it is within our remit we will endeavour to resolve them. I speak for everyone when I say we look forward to another year of representing you.

4. CLERK'S STATEMENT OF PARISH COUNCIL ACCOUNTS 2017-2018

The precept is the main source of funding for the parish, which is requested from BDC as our proportion of the Council Tax. We are legally obliged to set this alongside agreeing the budget at the January meeting each year. Councillors voted to request 2% increase in 2018-19 making an annual precept income of £25,128. This represents £51.95 per year or just under £1 a week for a Band D property. This increase takes into account the year on year reduction in our Localism Fund grant from BDC as a result of cuts in government funding. This grant was £5,908 in 2014, it is £1396 this year and will be £0 in 2020.

Grant funding applied for and received with thanks this year were:

- BDC Councillors Community Grant (memorial bench at Churchfields) - £616.20
- Community Heartbeat Trust - Big Lottery Fund (defibrillators) - £7115
- ECC Local Services Fund - £5162 to be spent during 2018 on enhanced Village Maintenance

Agency Services are carried out on behalf of other authorities:

- BDC Street Cleaning Grant £5241.59
- ECC Grass Cutting Grant £207.15

Grants awarded

In 2015 the Parish Council adopted a grant awarding policy to ensure consistency of decision making as well as making grant funding more accessible to village projects and organisations. Grants awarded this year amounted to a total of £2058.27 and included:

- £297.75 Tennis Club for new nets and court scorers
- £402.04 Bowls Club to improve the toilets
- £599.85 Cricket Club to renovate the cricket square
- £614.63 Castle Hedingham Club for repair of the shed

In the 2018 – 2019 financial year, a grant of £1,000 has already been approved to the Scouts towards the renovation of Wooding Lodge. The Parish Council is also paying for external paintwork and repairs this spring to Castle Hedingham Club and the Memorial Hall at a cost of £1,660.

Transparency code: The clerk reminded residents that Parish Council finances are transparent and available to the public, with all expenditure reported monthly in the Parish Council minutes together with the bank balances of the 4 Parish Council bank accounts (1 current account and 3 deposit accounts).

5. ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT

Cllr David Finch stated that the county has a population of 1.4 million people and in the last 7 years Essex County Council has only increased the Council Tax three times.

Education: 5 years ago 70% of the county's schools were good or outstanding. Now that figure stands at 95%

Employment & training: 11, 370 young people have been helped into apprenticeships and 1,300 people not in education, employment or training have been helped into education to find a trade.

Business: The value of the Essex economy is £40bn with a target to increase to £60bn in the next 10-15 years. Cllr Finch and his team are lobbying Government for 100% of business rates to come back to the County Council before 2021.

Children's services: We have one of the best teams in the country and are proud of the accolades they receive. £112 million is spent on 1060 children. Surrey spends £240 million on the same number of children.

Social care: An objective of the County Council is to ensure that older people continue to enjoy good health into old age. By 2030, 32% of the County population will be over 65.

Highways: Road resurfacing taking place throughout the county represents the equivalent of 4 times the extent of the M25.

Any problems: If a resident wishes to raise an issue then please tell the Parish Clerk and we will do our best to fix it.

6. BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL REPORT

Cllr Beavis:

- **Village Shop:** For the last 6 months the village shop has been a community-run convenience store, renting half of the shop premises. Many thanks to the volunteers, many of whom are present tonight and without whom this wouldn't be possible. The shop is run on a similar model to Gosfield Village Shop and there could not be two better villages. Thankfully Castle Hedingham shop is in a less vulnerable location than Gosfield, which has been broken into 3 times. Thanks are due to a number of people for making donations towards the opening of the shop, including Mr & Mrs Jason Lindsay and Mr Angus Crowther. Braintree District Council has also made grant funding available for a replacement freezer.
- **Elections:** I have been District Councillor for the Hedinghams since 2003 and will be up for election again in May 2019.
- **Responsibilities:** Health – created a brand called LiveWell which has now been extended across Essex. I am no longer a cabinet member at the District Council but delighted to be a County Councillor working alongside Cllr David Finch.
- **Budgets:** The government is changing the way local government is funded, this is something to keep an eye on as we don't yet know what the plans look like
- **Planning:** The draft Local Plan has yet to be improved by the Planning Inspectorate. This leaves the district vulnerable to opportunist developers who can put in speculative planning applications and appeal to the Planning Inspectorate if they are refused. New developments such as the one at Oak Road in Halstead are a concern to local people. The Local Plan is looking at Garden Villages together with Uttlesford, and the outcome of those plans will influence how much development existing villages have to take.
- **Medical Hub in Sible Hedingham:** Progress on this is still being awaited.

Cllr Johnson:

- **Power Cuts:** These have been affecting the area over the last few years and so far it has proved difficult to get the utilities provider to admit there is a problem.
- **Riverside Walk in Sible Hedingham:** this is now complete with a wonderful play area going up for children.
- **Osier House:** this is the new work hub at Sible Hedingham which is coming to fruition. It is disappointing that the new Medical Hub is not progressing.
- **Councillors Community Grant:** Funding is available for the 2018-2019 financial year, shared between Sible and Castle Hedingham. Applications are simple to complete and all you have to do is ask one of your District Councillors for assistance.
- **Health walks:** Cllr Johnson has been involved with 2 walking groups in Sible and Castle Hedingham for the last 8 years, and is pleased to report that nobody has yet needed a defibrillator.

7. POLICE REPORT

None

8. PUBLIC FORUM

The following matters of interest were raised by residents:

- *Resident: At the January public meeting regarding the playing field, it was said that a Planning Application would be submitted by Braintree District Council on their land and the adjoining land*

at New Park in spring 2018. Has anything happened? And has there been a further meeting as agreed?

Chairman: Nothing has happened yet.

- *Resident: Have BDC been asked if they would sell us the land?*

Chairman: They have been asked and have said “No”

- *Mr Charles Bird: I have been appointed Local Recorder for Castle Hedingham, this is a project supported by Essex County Council and the Essex Records Office. Their job is to pick up remarkable events and make sure they are recorded. This is one of those events as it could mean losing our recreation area and our last remaining open spaces. Under current planning policy, existing playing fields are exempt from being built on. There appears to be a vendors consortium between Braintree District Council and Hedingham Castle from which the Parish Council and residents are excluded. Surrounding villages have large playing fields that are protected. Will the Parish Council apply to the ombudsman for an independent review?*

CLlr Southgate: Mr Bird’s comments and suggestion are noted.

- *Resident: Could the owner of 26 St James Street please be asked to repair their wall.*

Chairman: Your comment is noted.

There being no other questions, all parishioners were thanked for attending.

The meeting closed at 9.00pm.

SIGNED (CHAIRMAN)

DATE