



Parish of Castle Hedingham  
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**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY  
OF CASTLE HEDINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL  
AT THE MEMORIAL HALL ON WEDNESDAY 22nd MAY, 7.00 FOR 7.30PM**

**Present:** Cllrs Doe, Hood, Jordan, Southgate, Tassell, Toocaram, Veater  
**In the Chair:** Cllr Southgate  
**Clerk:** Claire Waters  
**Also Present:** 24 parishioners

Village groups and clubs were invited to attend and display information about their activities.

**CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME**

Cllr Southgate welcomed all attendees and introduced individual members of the new Parish Council which was elected to office in May 2019

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Westrop. Apologies were also received from Cllr David Finch (ECC) and Cllr Hylton Johnson (BDC) for absence, and from Cllr Jo Beavis (BDC) for late arrival due to another meeting.

**2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of 10<sup>th</sup> May 2018 were approved as a correct record of events.

**3. ANNUAL REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PARISH COUNCIL**

Good evening ladies and gentlemen and thank you for coming along to the Parish Council Assembly this evening. This has been a difficult and sad year for the Parish Council as one of our most dedicated Councillors Lynne Moffat passed away earlier this year and she will be greatly missed. This together with four other Councillors deciding to retire after many long years serving our village meant that we approach the forthcoming year with four new Councillors joining the team and we are very fortunate to have so many people willing to undertake the role.

Can I take this opportunity to thank all the outgoing councillors, Rob Worley, Miles Scrivens, Ian Higgins and John Philp for their excellent work, commitment and support they have given me and the Parish whilst serving on the council. At the same time I would like to welcome our new Councillors, Penny Doe, Jessica Westrop, Tony Tassell and Charlie Jordan who I am sure will all be valuable members of the team and bring a wealth of experience to the council. We still have one remaining vacancy and have a very good applicant prepared to take the seat once we are given permission by Braintree District Council in early June which will bring us up to our full quota of 9 Councillors

I would also like to thank our Village Maintenance Operatives Adam and Alan, who also maintains our village facilities, 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.

During the past year the subject of the village playground reached a critical point and we had to vacate the old site. I am sure that everyone is now aware that after years of stalemate your council has managed to come to an agreement and are forging ahead not only to provide a purpose-built playing area but a community open space. Please be assured as promised we will be holding public meetings

to discuss proposed plans and at this time we are hoping to commence construction in spring next year and open in May 2020.

Another major issue and expenditure undertaken this year was the repair of our village clock. We received numerous communications about the clock once it had stopped and it became apparent that it was sorely missed. Because this is our public clock for the village, we undertook to take on the responsibility of having it repaired and this turned out to be a major operation. Believe it or not there appears to be only one company in the country, Smiths of Derby, that could carry out the repairs and this is why it took a while to arrange. It was necessary to hire two forms of spider cranes to complete the task but I am pleased to say that the repair has been a success. We are grateful to all residents who made personal donations towards the repair.

We have continued to try and resolve the issues you have reported and undertaken to take the initiative rather than trying to obtain help from district or county. An example of this has been erecting our own signs to slow traffic at church lane, and to clear footpaths.

All in all it has been another active year for the council who continue to act in best interests of everyone and we 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 and I speak for everyone when I say we look forward to another year of representing you.

#### **4. STATEMENT OF THE PARISH COUNCIL ACCOUNTS 2018-19 BY THE CLERK INCOME:**

**Precept:** This is the main source of funding for the parish, which is requested from BDC as the Parish Council's proportion of the Council Tax. This is decided alongside the budget at the January meeting each year. A 5% increase was requested for 2019-20. This is £54.55 per year and represents an increase of £2.60 or 5p per week for a Band D property.

**Localism Fund:** This has been reducing year on year as a result of cuts in government funding, from nearly £6,000 in 2014. From this year there will be no more funding from this source.

**Cemetery:** Non-residents are charged triple fees, this reflects the contribution made by residents in their Council Tax to the upkeep of the cemetery.

**Grants:** ECC Local Services Fund £5162 grant was received in the 2017-18 financial year for enhanced Village Maintenance. This year one grant of £120 was received for clerk training.

#### **SPENDING:**

**Grants:** The Parish Council has a transparent grant awarding policy for projects which benefit the community. We have funded the Scouts, Tennis Club, Village Shop this year. In light of the reduction in Parish Council funding and a major new project to finance in the new play/recreation area this year, no grant budget has been allocated in 2019 – 2020. In exceptional cases of need or merit, projects may still be awarded a grant this year which will be funded from reserves.

**Additional spending in 2018-2019:** Church clock **£2,894.97** Memorial board Cemetery **£1,260.00**

**Village Maintenance and Grass Cutting:** Thanks is due for the good work done by Adam and Alan, our Village Maintenance Operatives, and our Grass cutting contractors M D Landscapes from Finchingfield – we are managing well within the budget.

**Transparency Code** All items of spending are reported on the website and also reported monthly in the Parish Council minutes together with the bank balances of all 4 bank accounts, 1 current and 3 deposit. Funds are protected by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme.

**Ringfenced reserves:** £50,000 playing field reserve, £20,000 historic village infrastructure reserve, £10,000 community projects reserve, and £5,000 public toilets maintenance reserve

**Summary:** What appears to be a reported deficit this year is due to the Local Services Fund grant which was received at the end of the 2017-18 financial year and spent during 2018-19.

#### **5. TO INVITE VILLAGE REPRESENTATIVES TO ADDRESS THE MEETING**

In the absence of Cllrs Finch (ECC), Beavis and Johnson (BDC), no report was given. Cllr Johnson sent a written statement which was read by the Chairman

## 6. TO INVITE THE PUBLIC TO RAISE ANY MATTERS OF INTEREST

The following questions were raised by residents:

**Footpaths:** Problem areas at some village footpaths, particularly between Sheepcot Road and Pottery Lane, from Maiden Ley farm to the Colne Valley Railway, and at Warren Farm at Kirby Hall Road.

*Answer:* The maintenance of footpaths is not all Parish Council responsibility. Some areas are mown twice annually by Essex County Council or their contractors. Areas closer to the village are managed by our Village Maintenance Operatives, although their all-terrain mower has recently broken and is undergoing a repair. Some walkers including Cllr Johnson's health walk group clear vegetation as they walk. A footpath audit was completed by the Parish Council last year but we are still waiting for new equipment and training from ECC Public Rights of Way to complete the work. The PROW officer is one person looking after the whole county. Volunteers are welcome to support the Parish Council but the appropriate risk assessments and training would need to be considered. The clerk will follow up the particular problem areas reported.

**Microphone:** Could the microphone be used for next year's meeting as some of us can't hear you

*Answer:* Yes, we will make sure we use it next year

**Hedge obstructing visibility:** An overgrown hedge at the junction of Nunnery Street and Crown Street continues to obstruct visibility for pedestrians walking into Crown Street.

*Answer:* We will take steps to deal with this, it is the responsibility of the property owner but we will encourage them to keep it cut back.

**Christmas Decorations:** After the success of the Living Advent Calendar which was initiated by a resident, could the Parish Council consider a few Christmas decorations around the village?

*Answer:* This is difficult where we need permission from Highways to run electricity cables, e.g. Forge Green. Solar lights were tried here unsuccessfully. Cllr Doe agreed to consider Christmas decorations at the Bell. This will be an item for consideration at a future meeting.

**CCTV:** In light of crime reported on village Facebook pages, might the Parish Council consider installing CCTV at the 3 roads entering and exiting the village?

*Answer:* This will be an item for consideration at a future meeting.

**Speeding traffic:** Is the Parish Council still carrying out speed watch? How can we slow down speeding traffic, including buses at Pye Corner by the 20mph sign?

*Answer:* No, speed watch has been discontinued. A number of speed surveys have been carried out in recent years by Essex Highways at the request of the Parish Council, and in all areas (Station Road, Nunnery Street and Sudbury Hill) they measured the vast majority of vehicles keeping to the speed limit. Speeding buses at Pye Corner can be reported directly by residents to the bus company. If details are forwarded to the Parish Council, we can write a letter to support a complaint. The visibility of the 20mph signs at Pye Corner will be looked into.

**White line markings:** Can we renew the white lines around the village, some of which are practically invisible?

*Answer:* Yes, we have thermoplastic line marking equipment for renewing lines, although this is easier with straight lines than letters. With faded letters in the road we will look into buying letter templates and using white line spray paint, although this doesn't last as long as the thermoplastic method.

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

The meeting closed at 8.05pm. Cllr Beavis arrived and spoke to a number of residents informally.

SIGNED (CHAIRMAN)

DATE