

Castle Hedingham Parish Council

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of Castle Hedingham Parish Council held on Thursday 17th May 2012 at 8.00 p.m. in Castle Hedingham Memorial Hall.

Present: Mrs S Allfrey (Chairman)
Mr R Worley
Mrs J Hart
Mr J Philp
Mr I Higgins
Mrs L Moffat
Mr G Pewter
Mr M Scrivens
Mrs L Moffat

In attendance: 17 parishioners
Mr H Johnson District Councillor (from item 5)

Mr K M King (Parish Clerk)

1. **Apologies for non-attendance:** Mr D Finch (Essex CC Councillor, Mr B Newmark MP, Mrs W Scattergood District Councillor, Mrs J Beavis District Councillor. Mr C Peel.
2. **Minutes of and Matters Arising from the Previous Minutes:** The minutes were proposed by Mrs Reading, seconded by Mrs Moles and agreed.
3. **Chairman's Welcome and the Receipt of the Parish Council's Annual Report and Accounts:** The meeting received the Annual Parish Report and a copy of the Parish Council Accounts.

The Chairman highlighted some of the key activities carried out by the Parish Council since the last annual meeting:

- 3.1 **Parish Councillors:** They had all put a lot of hard unpaid work into the village during the year. Examples of their extra activity included Mr Philp moving the old bench from Forge Green to the playing field; Mr Pewter building a plinth for and organising jubilee beacon which will be lit 10:15 pm 4 June; Mr Worley for liaising with the solicitors regarding the registration of the village greens. She thanked them all of the councillors and also the clerk for their work.
- 3.2 **BT Phone Box in St James Street:** This has been purchased by the Parish Council and is now being run by the Bell Inn Phone Box Committee, who has started restoring it using the correct and original materials. Mrs Allfrey praised the community spirit that had inspired this action.
- 3.3 **Disabled Parking in Falcon Square:** Essex County Council has agreed to the installation of a bay outside the Doctor's surgery. However the timing of this installation is entirely within the hands of Essex County Council and the Parish Council has been unable to obtain dates.
- 3.4 **National Grid Proposals:** The Parish Council continues to monitor developments. A great deal of uncertainty persists. Two of three sites for a new sub-station are in the village but the power line may now be extended to Thaxted which might mean sub-station is sited further west.
- 3.5 **War Memorial:** Repairs are likely to be expensive. One solution would be a new memorial. Was there an appetite for this from the village? Strong support

for renovation/new memorial was received from the floor and a suggestion was made that fund raising would be carried out as necessary.

3.6 Parish Magazine: A donation of £400 had been made to launch the magazine last year and a further donation of £400 had been made this year for its on-going operation. The Parish Council hoped that no further donations would be necessary as it should be self-sufficient in the future. There was support for this latter comment expressed from the floor of the meeting.

3.7 Annual accounts: The Parish Clerk gave a summary of the Parish financial position. The Parish Council had strong cash reserves, it had actively looked to reduce costs and had not increased its charge on parishioners for two years, and burial fees had not been increased. It is possible that there will be some significant expenditure soon as extensive repairs will be necessary to tombs in St Nicholas Church graveyard.

There were no queries in respect of the accounts which were accepted.

4. Other Reports:

4.1 Essex County Councillor's Report: The Parish Clerk said that Councillor Mr Finch of Essex County Council had given a written report. It was lengthy and would be printed in the Parish Magazine. He read out key points as follows:

4.1.1 Budget: Setting the budget for 2011/12 was one of the most difficult that the County Council had produced in decades. The financial situation for 2012/13 and beyond continues to be challenging. The freeze on council tax will remain for the second year running. By February 2013 Essex residents will not have seen the county council's share of council tax increase for nearly three years.

4.1.2 Priorities: Over the next five years priorities will be:

- Enabling every individual to achieve their ambitions by supporting a world class education and skills offer in the county;
- Securing the infrastructure and environment to enable businesses to grow;
- Improving public health and wellbeing;
- Protecting and safeguarding vulnerable people; and
- Giving people a greater say and greater role in building safer and stronger communities.

4.1.3 Savings and efficiencies.

- No libraries to close.
- One main contractor to be used for highways.
- Reducing the subsidies that are paid to commercial local bus operators. Residents will be consulted on this as it is recognised that this could have implications for the viability or frequency of some services in some areas.

4.2 Police Report: Apologies had been received from Essex Police. It had provided verbal details of reported crimes in the last month in the Parish which the parish clerk reported to the meeting:

- 3 instances of criminal damage;
- 2 thefts of motor vehicles;
- 1 theft of metal;
- 3 burglaries, non-domestic;
- 1 theft from a motor vehicle; and
- 1 robbery.

There was concern expressed by the parish councillors and the parishioners attending

the meeting that this report indicated an apparently significant increase in the rate of crime. The Parish Council will follow this up with the police.

5. Public Forum.

- 5.1** A parishioner said that there had been severe problems with ice and snow in and around Falcon Square in February and asked if it would be possible to have grit bins available?

The Parish clerk said that Braintree District Council no longer operated grit/salt bins due to misuse. As an alternative the District Council will deliver grit/salt to the homes of volunteers. These volunteers, who would need to be trained and supervised, would then be expected to grit/salt whenever it became necessary.

The Parish Council decided not to use the volunteer scheme but had instead decided to use its contractors for this activity. The contractor had responded quickly when requested in February but it was accepted that this was two days after the first snow fall. Next winter they would be asked to grit/salt sooner but it was not always possible to anticipate the weather with complete accuracy.

- 5.2** A parishioner asked what the changes recommended by the Parish Council were in respect of the village envelope at Nunnery Farm.

Mr Worley explained that the Parish Council had given their recommendations to the Braintree District Council Local Development Framework Plan in response to a request from Braintree District Council. These included some changes to the line of the village envelope along Nunnery Street to remove inconsistencies. Land outside the village envelope has greater protection from development.

- 5.3** A parishioner asked if donations had been made to The Stop Stansted Campaign and Open Spaces Society. The Parish Clerk said no money had been given to Stop Stansted Campaign. The Parish Council did subscribe to the Open Spaces Society.

- 5.4** A parishioner challenged the lack of active involvement of the Parish Council in fighting National Grid's pylon/substation plans. Mr G Pewter gave details of the work that the Parish Council was doing and specifically he said that he had personally attended several Community meetings.

There then followed a general discussion regarding National Grid's plans. Everyone agreed that there is much uncertainty and lack of consistent and co-ordinated information. It had been thought that the National Grid's favoured site was near the Steam Railway. Alternatively, a sub-station may now be located further west or a new substation might not be required if the current Braintree sub-station is expanded, However Mr Johnson noted that Eadys Lane may now be the favoured site. This latter option was particularly objected to by the meeting attendees and strong views were expressed that this would be the least favoured site by the villagers.

It was noted that as and when a decision is announced by National Grid on their preferred option, there will only be a period of 28 days within which objections could be made. Therefore everyone will have to be prepared to respond quickly.

There was agreement that all should continue to actively monitor and campaign against the current National Grid proposals.

5.5 Mr H Johnson apologised for his late arrival which had resulted from his need to attend four similar meetings that evening. He took the opportunity of providing information on two Braintree District Council initiatives that he thought might be of interest:

5.5.1 **Heritage Lottery Workshop:** This will take place on 14 June 2012 and will cover lottery funding for a wide range of local history or crafts projects. He recommended that anyone who had a project which could qualify for funding should complete an application form which he had available. Copies were provided to the Parish Clerk.

5.5.2 **Diamond Jubilee Party:** The Chairman of Braintree District Council will host a Diamond Jubilee party in July 2012. An open invitation to the party is extended to anyone who is celebrating a 60th anniversary this year e.g. a wedding anniversary or 60 years employment with the same company.

5.6 A parishioner asked if Mr Lindsay had yet give permission for new playground equipment to be installed in the playing field. Mr R Worley said Mr Lindsay has refused permission.

She also asked whether the parish council would consider buying the Rising Sun as a parish community centre. The Parish Council thought the cost would be prohibitive.

Parishioners were thanked to their attendance and the meeting closed at 8.50 p.m.