

Castle Hedingham Parish Council

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of Castle Hedingham Parish Council held on Friday 3rd May 2013 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 G Southgate

In attendance: 16 parishioners
Mr D Finch Essex CC Councillor to item 4.2
Mrs W Scattergood District Councillor
Mr H Johnson District Councillor
Ms Jayne Laken (Village Agent)
Mrs Claire Waters (Parish Clerk)

1. **Apologies for non-attendance:**, Mr M Scrivens, Mr Brooks Newmark MP, Mrs J Beavis District Councillor, PCSOs Kim Chapman and Belinda Ruffle
2. **Minutes of and Matters Arising from the Previous Minutes:** The minutes were proposed by Mrs R King seconded by Mr J Ripper 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 Clerk:** The Chairman introduced parishioners to the new Clerk, Claire Waters, and also thanked Kieron King for his stalwart work over the last 4 plus years.
- 3.2 **Post Office:** to keep it open the Parish Council donated towards the cost of a relief postmaster to enable the new postmistress to be trained. This has worked out very well and it's all up and running again.
- 3.3 **St Nicholas Church Wall:** Because of all the rain we have had over the last year, our church wall needs urgent repair in 2 places, one in Church Lane and one in Church Ponds. The builder came to see it last week and is sending an estimate, this will have to be done urgently.
- 3.4 **Public Toilets:** Our beautiful public loos are now in our sole charge, as Braintree District Council has handed over responsibility to the Parish Council. This won't be without cost, as we have to pay for a cleaner, loo paper, cleaning materials and light bulbs etc., but we believe this will be worth it.
- 3.5 **Litter and Dog Waste:** Dog fouling seems to be getting worse despite our best efforts to get extra dog bins and make people aware, so we have been given an idea by the Dog Warden to approach the school and see if we can involve the children in getting a campaign going, because if children make their parents more aware, they might do something about it. A Braintree District Council Refuse Manager has been to look at our litter bins, and has advised us

that dog poo should not be put in general bins, as they recycle everything they collect from these. We are in the process of finding new litter bins to replace the really old ones, but they are a lot of money..

3.6 Superfast Broadband: This is a project of vital importance for many businesses and residents, and the more we ask for it the quicker we will get it. It's really a case of first come, first served.

3.7 Annual accounts: . The Parish Council has strong cash reserves, it has actively looked to reduce costs and has not increased its charge on parishioners for three years, also burial fees have not been increased. Future expenditure will include the upkeep of the Public Toilets, and the renovation of the War Memorial, not to mention the immediate repairs necessary to the churchyard wall.

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

4. Other Reports:

4.1 Essex County Councillor's Report: Cllr David Finch had recently been re-elected, and was thanked for his continued support of the parish. He reported on the following work of Essex County Council

4.1.1 Council Tax: Frozen for the third successive year, while continuing to deliver quality value for money services to residents. Investment will be made in additional school places, supporting vulnerable people, and helping economic growth across the county, while also seeking to make £55 million savings and efficiencies.

4.1.2 Transformation Programme: Already £364 million savings and efficiencies have been made, the next phase to 2017 has a target of £200 million by 2017.

4.1.3 Roads and Footpaths: ECC will spend more than £180 million over the next four years on maintaining and enhancing its network of 8,500 roads and footpaths.

So far this financial year Essex Highways has fixed in excess of 55,000 carriageway defects, with another 4,200 inspected and scheduled for repair shortly. 44 specialist gangs are working across the county, with the aim of fixing all potholes by June. In answer to questions by a parishioner and a councillor, Cllr Finch said that the work is being done by Ringway Jacobs, a multinational with extensive research facilities. There is a failure rate of less than 1%, but repairs are only good when the road is dry, in temperatures above 3 degrees. The Braintree Local Highways panel has spent £35 million in addition to pothole repairs this year.

Essex Local Highways Panels are focusing on Community projects for speed reduction, this could include new 20mph zones in local areas and outside schools.

4.1.4 Ethical Government Award: ECC is proud to have won the LGC Award 2013 for Corporate Governance, and were also placed second in the Council of the Year Award.

4.1.5 Public Health: As part of the NHS reforms, ECC has taken over responsibility for Public Health from 1st April 2013. The aim is to provide a joined up service, with some of the local priorities being smoking, alcohol and drug misuse, obesity and mental health.

4.1.6 Essential Living Fund: this is a localised scheme funded by the Department for Work and Pensions to meet emergency welfare needs of vulnerable Essex residents. Support will be given in the form of vouchers, not cash.

4.1.7 Computers for charities: This scheme was launched in January 2013, cleaning up computers at no cost to the council and offering them to groups such as pre- and after-school clubs, older peoples' computer schemes etc. So far 200 computers have been given away.

4.2 Braintree District Council Report.

- 4.2.1 National Grid Substation Proposals:** Cllr Wendy Scattergood reported on progress with National Grid consultations. National Grid have admitted they cannot put a substation at the Colne Valley Railway Planning policy protects the Grade II* listed buildings at Delvyns Lane, so Twinstead is the last option of the 3 proposed sites. Cllr Scattergood and others at BDC have regular meetings with other councils to put in joint objections. Braintree substation is a futureproof option, with room for expansion if required. It is on low ground, in an urban setting. The proposed Twinstead substation would have the capacity to meet current need, but it is quite likely that its size would need to be increased to meet future need. The Braintree option has expansion possibility built in. If the cable was laid underground from Braintree to Rushley Green, some existing pylons will be removed. Cllr Scattergood said the National Grid proposals will be fought on every ground, including cost and the environment. Braintree District Council also feels the consultation process has been misleading. More consultation should be undertaken with villages such as Castle Hedingham to rectify this.
- 4.2.2 Budget:** Cllr Hylton Johnson reported on an excellent Braintree District Council budget, which means no increase in Council Tax
- 4.2.3 Electoral Review:** A current consultation is in progress about the possibility of reducing the number of District Councillors from 60 to 50. This reduction could be detrimental to the service provided to communities.
- 4.2.4 Mi community:** Cllr Johnson stated that funding is available every year to support the whole costs of community projects, and urged any local organisation to consider applying for a grant.
- 4.3 Village Agents:** Jayne Laken, our Village Agent, reported on the work of this service in Mid Essex. In 2012, the organisation supported 950 customers, completing over 2,000 activities in the Braintree District. 78 activities were in Castle Hedingham, including providing help and secretarial duties for the Over 50s Tea Club. Village Agents provide people with a confidential service, offering free independent advice, linking people to services and opportunities, helping to solve problems and supporting people in regaining confidence or a more active role in the community. Village Agents can be contacted free on 0800 977 5858 or at www.villageagentsessex.org.uk. Jayne Laken can be contacted on 07540 072067 or by email at jayne.laken@vaessex.org.uk
- 4.4 Police Report:** Apologies had been received from Essex Police. The Parish Clerk read out a written report of police activity in the area. A persistent Prolific Offender in the area has been monitored closely by police. An associate has been arrested, along with another prolific burglar who was connected to 40 dwelling burglaries in the Essex/Suffolk area. Other associates have moved on, due to continued pressure from Halstead officers. Halstead Inspector Paul Davey retired in March and has been replaced by Inspector Michael Couldridge, who previously worked as a PC at Halstead so has good local knowledge and understanding of community issues. Between April 2012 and April 2013, there were 149 reported incidents. Of these, 33 were crimes including 6 Dwelling Burglaries and 10 other burglaries, e.g. sheds, business premises etc. 11 reported incidents were anti-social behaviour. This means that the majority of incidents were not crime related, however the Police stress that they welcome calls about residents' concerns on 101, or on 999 in an emergency.

5. Public Forum.

- 5.1** Mrs P Cooke hoped that Halstead police are liaising with other counties about the persistent offenders who have moved on, and was concerned about the lack of follow up by local police following a recently reported suspicious person. Cllr Hylton Johnson regularly liaises with the local police, and

requested that concerns were reported to him so he could feed them back.

- 5.2** Mrs J Ripper expressed immense frustration about the lack of adequate broadband in the village, which is a problem for many including those working from home. The Parish Clerk replied that she and Cllr Scrivens had attended a Superfast Broadband meeting presented by Essex County Council, and the Parish Council is very much in support of the upgrading of Castle Hedingham broadband to be able to meet the requirements of the 21st century. Residents need to register at www.superfastessex.org to drive demand. Posters will be displayed to publicise this on noticeboards and in the Parish Magazine.
- 5.3** Mr R van Dulken reported on behalf of himself and neighbours that the Keep Clear signs at Ruffles Yard are faded, which causes parking problems and could prevent access by emergency services. Also of concern were the faded give way signs on Station Road. The Parish Clerk will report these again to Essex Highways, and reminded parishioners that they can report problems to Highways themselves at <https://secureweb1.essexcc.gov.uk/Highways/Report-a-highway-problem.aspx>
- 5.4** Mr R van Dulken expressed concern that the Castle Hedingham website was very out of date, with the last Parish Council minutes posted in June 2012. The Parish Clerk agreed that a useable website is an essential for the village, and reported that a new, user friendly website is being built which is due to be launched in June 2013, complete with all relevant up to date information.
- 5.5** Mr J Ripper commented on the National Grid proposals and stated that as a village we need to get behind the opposition a lot more. National Grid has accepted that the information presented in consultation meetings, e.g. the 3D representations of substations, is not representative of the actual proposed structure. Information presented over the years has been misleading and contains red herrings. Cllr Scattergood replied that National Grid has not yet consulted Halstead Town Council about transport plans through the town. Braintree District Council has asked for a detailed transport plan. Mr Ripper asked about UKPN's statement that they would not remove the 132Kv line, in case they needed it in the future. Cllr Scattergood replied that she is aware of this, and it is currently a matter for debate. Mr Ripper thanked Cllr Scattergood for all her efforts in fighting the National Grid proposals at all 3 proposed substation sites.
- 5.6** Cllr Scattergood reported that next week she will be appointed Chairman of the Council, which is a civic role and means she has to give up the Planning Committee for a year. Madam Chairman asked who will support the village on planning, Cllr Scattergood reported that Cllr Foster will be the new Chair of Planning for a year..
- 5.7** Mrs R King proposed a vote of thanks to the Parish Council for all they have done, as the wife of the retiring Parish Clerk she has gained a real insight into the extent of the work involved in the role of a Councillor.

Parishioners were thanked for their attendance and the meeting closed at 9.00 p.m.