

Castle Hedingham Parish Council Meeting

Minutes of a meeting of the Parish Council of Castle Hedingham held in Memorial Hall Castle Hedingham on Monday 9 January 2012.

Present: Mrs S Allfrey (Chairman)
Mr I Higgins
Mr M Scrivens
Mr G Pewter
Mrs J Hart
Mr G Southgate
Mrs J Hart
Mrs W Scattergood
Mr H Johnson (from item 5)
Mr D Finch

Members of the public: Mr A Crowther.

In attendance: Mr K M King (Parish Clerk)

Item 1. Apologies for non-attendance: Mr J Philp, Mr R. Worley

Item 3. Public Forum: Mr Crowther said that he was concerned that the Parish Council had recommended to the Braintree District Council Strategic Planning Review that Nunnery Farm should be removed from the village envelope designation. He said that whilst he planned some future development on the site in addition to the applications for development currently being considered, all development would be to existing structures with no building on "green" land.

The Chairman confirmed that at the October Parish Council Meeting, the Parish Council had agreed, without a vote, to propose to Braintree District Council that Nunnery Farm be removed from the village envelope. Mrs W Scattergood said that the Parish Council's proposal had been accepted and the local development framework had Nunnery Farm outside the village envelope. This plan would now be made available for consultation before adoption, the public and interested parties would be able to make representation/proposals and Mr Crowther would be able to put forward his views at this time.

Mr Crowther then left the meeting.

Item 5.4. National Grid Proposals: Covered in depth under Essex CC and Braintree District Council reports. Various Councillors have attended various presentations hosted by National Power and there was a consensus that all information is not being fully disclosed.

The next presentation by National Power will be in the Memorial Hall on 1st February.

Item 5.5. Planting Oak tree in Cemetery: The tree has now been planted in the cemetery. The Parish Council agreed that a small plaque in slate should be erected to mark the planting of this jubilee oak. The Clerk was instructed to get quotes for the work.

Item 5.7. Cemetery Water Supply: The Clerk reported that he had checked the meter 5 weeks after the supply had been turned off and there had been no consumption recorded. Work to repair the two standpipes has been commissioned.

Item 5.8. Adoption of red telephone box in St James Street: Completed contract was returned to BT two months ago and there has been no response. The Clerk reported that he has spoken to BT and had been informed that there is a backlog but they should be in a position to respond by the end of January.

Item 5.9. Village Handyman: The Clerk and Mr I Higgins have met with the village handyman and agreed with him the extent and scope of his duties.

Item 5.10. Village Entertainment/Fete: A further meeting of Parish Chairmen, led by Sible Hedingham Parish, was held to discuss options for celebrating the Queen's Jubilee with village children. Mr Scrivens said he will research costs of issuing of jubilee coins but initial indications are that it will be very expensive.

No response has been received from the Castle to the letter sent 15th November 2011 asking for permission to install a new piece of play equipment on the playing field. The Clerk was instructed to write again.

Concert evening - nothing to report.

Item 8.1. Essex CC Mr D. Finch had given a detailed written report, details of which are given further below. At the meeting he gave a verbal summary of current developments:

- **Budgets:** No increase in Council Tax 2012/13. Difficult budget pressures in coming years due to cuts in central Government funding. Central Government have initiated changes to the ratios of splitting revenue spend of various budgets e.g. apportionment of business rates between central/county/district levels. The overall result is that District Councils will have greater power, at the expense of Central/County levels. Investment in improvements to Broadband provision.
- **Police:** Police Authority to be abolished and replaced by an elected Police Commissioner.
- **Adult Learning:** Low take up. The paperwork required to apply is to be simplified to address the problem.
- **Council Tax Relief:** Reduction in grant amount received from Central Government, Essex CC will concentrate relief on the old, young and vulnerable groups.
- **Community:** Essex CC is one of four councils where all involved agencies are working with families that cost large amounts of money in benefits. The aim is to reduce costs by getting family members into work and off benefits.
- **Highways:** Essex CC is rationalising its current 15+ contractors down to one provider in order to increase efficiency. Despite budget pressures there will continue to be capital investment e.g. to address congestion black spots.

Essex County Council Written Update – November 2011

Transformation:

Essex County Council has saved over £38m so far this year and £110m over the past two years through a number of innovative procurement solutions. This is a key part of the Council's Transformation plan to save £300m by March 2013, whilst at the same time providing better quality services to residents. The total savings Essex County Council have achieved since Transformation started two years ago is £160m.

One of the ways these savings has been achieved is through the Property and Facilities Management contract the Council has signed with its new provider - MITIE. This will be the largest contract of its type in the UK and the first to combine property and facilities management. By combining the property and facilities functions there is a more joined-up approach to managing our buildings.

In addition to this, Essex County Council has also reached this saving by changing the way Waste Management is handled. This is a market which is dominated by a small number of companies which means that in the past, the county council had to pay higher prices for the services. More companies

are now being encouraged into this market, which means that competition has increased and prices have been reduced.

Adult Social Care is also an area where savings have been made. An innovative approach has been developed in the way personal budgets are used. Each quarter providers are ranked in order of quality of service and price. This increases competition and encourages providers to offer a high level of service and still achieving value for money for their clients. Adult Social Care is also using Assistive Technology to support people to remain independent and is supporting individuals to regain skills and confidence often after a period of time in hospital.

Two blue badge enforcement operations were held in September and November, both were successful and resulted in a number of badges being seized and penalty notices issued.

One Support and Family Mosaic have been awarded contracts to provide County-wide floating support services in Essex. The service will deliver a 'holistic' Approach to short and medium term floating support for 1,500 vulnerable people at any given time. The tender is to provide floating support covering Braintree, Chelmsford, Maldon, Colchester and Tendring.

Transport and Infrastructure

Essex County Council (ECC) held a winter service launch event at the Springfield Highways Depot in Chelmsford today – one of seven depots located across the county where final preparations are currently being made for the winter period.

ECC has been working closely with its contractors to ensure that salt stocks are back at full capacity in time for the start of the season. This year additional orders have been placed to ensure that the county has sufficient supplies in the event of another harsh winter.

The county's fleet of 65 winter gritters will be ready to mobilise throughout the winter season, with 120 personnel on call over a 24 hour period

ECC is required to focus its gritting resources on keeping major roads clear, so it operates a precautionary salting network. This includes all 'A' and 'B' roads, access routes for emergency services, rural link roads and major public transport routes.

Residents can check which roads will be gritted by visiting www.essex.gov.uk/winter.

Almost 40 Braintree parish councils are among 180 local councils which signed up to the Essex County Council new winter salt bag scheme to have one tonne of salt delivered ready for the start of winter. Participating councils will receive the salt – packaged in 20kg sealed bags – for use on areas of the highway which cause most concern in icy conditions. Local volunteers will take responsibility for spreading the salt which gives greater control to local communities. Volunteers will spread an extra 37 tonnes of grit across the district's roads this winter.

The county council have also ordered an extra 6,000 tonnes to be delivered between December and January on top of the usual 15,000 tonnes of grit.

Councillor Tracey Chapman, cabinet member for highways and transportation, said:
"Keeping the main Essex road network safe throughout winter is a top priority."

All ECC salt bins will be filled in time for the start of the winter. This salt is to be used sparingly on the highway, not private residencies. ECC cannot guarantee that bins will be refilled during the winter, as resources have to be prioritised to ensure the main road network is covered.

Community

The Braintree Locality Board met for the first time in November, with the key purpose of addressing the common issues that can improve the service and quality of life within the Braintree District. The challenges of the future should be tackled jointly to demonstrate an effective and cohesive two-tier local government. The next meeting in December will be to establish the priorities of the Board.

Item 8.2. Braintree D.C. Report: Mrs W Scattergood reported that she continued to hold meetings with National Grid. She remained very concerned that National Grid was “drip feeding” information and the full extent of its proposals was not transparent. She said she has recently found out that in order to upgrade existing power lines National Grid wished to widen roads/lanes destroying trees/hedgerows to allow access for heavy plant.

Mrs W Scattergood said she had been very concerned to hear that Essex CC Archaeology Department had recommended that there should be no lines laid underground by National Grid. This was very unhelpful to the campaign to persuade National Grid to install the new lines underground. Mr D Finch said that he was unaware of this recommendation and would investigate. He said that any such recommendations would be treated only as advice to the County Council and he noted that the County Council had been robustly lobbying for undergrounding.

Mr H Johnson fully agreed with Mrs W Scattergood’s comments saying that there was an appalling lack of comprehensive information from National Grid.

Item 10. Queen’s Jubilee:

- a) **New Bench on Forge Green:** The Parish Council agreed to replace this bench. The Clerk was instructed to get a quote from a local supplier.
- b) **Location of Beacon:** The Parish council agreed to purchase a beacon. Various locations for siting it were discussed. Mr G Pewter will investigate further with the relevant local landowners.

Item 11.1. Station Road Trees: Mrs J Hart raised concerns about the condition of trees/shrubs along Station Road. It was agreed that this was the responsibility of the landowner and no further action will be taken at this time.

Item 12.1 AOB: Village Shop: Concerns have been raised by parishioners about trading at the village shop. Mr G Southgate said that the new owner plans to refurbish the shop as a full village convenience store but has encountered some problems with electricity/broadband supply. She has now applied for planning permission for various works. These works will likely mean the closure of the shop for approximately three weeks.

Item 12.2 AOB: Station Road Waste Bin Provision: Mr G Southgate said that there was lack of general waste bin provision on Station Road. He will explore options and report back.

Item 12.3 AOB: Sheepcot Road Trees: Mr I Higgins said a parishioner has raised concerns about the condition of some elm trees at the Meadows Sheepcot Road. Mr G Southgate said he will speak to the new owner of the Meadows.

Item 12.4 AOB: Advertising Board in Castle Lane: Concerns have been raised about advertising boards on located properties in Castle Lane. The Clerk was instructed to raise this with Planning at Braintree District Council.

Item 13. Date and Time of next meetings: 7.45 pm on 13th February 2012 and 12th March 2012 at the Memorial Hall.