

Castle Hedingham Parish Council Meeting

Minutes of a meeting of the Parish Council of Castle Hedingham held in Memorial Hall Castle Hedingham on Monday 14 November 2011.

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

Members of the public: None.

In attendance: Mr K M King (Parish Clerk)

Item 1. Apologies for non-attendance: Mrs L Moffat. Mr D Finch. Mrs W Scattergood. Mr G Southgate.

Item 5.2. Castle Hedingham Booklet: This has now been distributed with the monthly Parish Church Magazine. A number of errors in the booklet have been found and corrections will be printed in the next monthly Church magazine.

Item 5.4. Closure of St James Street: The Clerk has met with Essex CC Highways and the necessary remedial work was identified.

Item 5.5. National Grid Proposals: Mr G Pewter has attended one consultation meeting with National Grid to date. He reported that:

- a) He felt that the consultation by National Grid was very much "going through the motions".
- b) 2 of 3 planned sites for a substation were in Castle Hedingham Parish. This substation would be very large and would have a very bad environmental impact. The substation would in fact be larger than technically necessary. This was because on cost grounds National Grid were planning to buy a one size fits all across the country.
- c) Some undergrounding may be done but Mr Pewter thought it unlikely to be the western section i.e. to Castle Hedingham.

Mr Pewter urged all to continue to object to the proposals by attending meetings with National Grid and writing to our MP.

The Parish Council has received a reply from Mr B Newmark MP. He has said as a Government Whip and member of the Government he is unable to support Tessa Munt's Private Members bill 'Electricity Transmission (Protection of Landscape 2011)'. However he will continue to work to protect the Stour Valley.

Item 5.6. Planting Oak tree in Cemetery: The tree has now been delivered. Mr Worley is to decide where in the cemetery to plant the oak in November. The Parish Council decided that a memorial plaque will be placed by the oak in 2012.

Item 5.8. Noise at the Castle - Big Bear Festival 3rd September: Following a letter of complaint by the Parish Council on behalf of parishioners, a reply has been received from Mr Garnett, Environmental Services Braintree District Council. Mr Garnett said that he has investigated issues relating to noise created by activities at Hedingham Castle. This has involved a meeting at the Castle and an examination of the noise controls in place there. Mr Garnett said:

- a) He has been told that the Big Bear Fest will not take place at the Castle again.
- b) Jousting and similar events: He concludes that the noise generated by these events would not be at levels close to be considered a statutory nuisance. However if parishioners disagree he should be contacted and consideration will be given to monitoring a future event.

- c) Weddings: He concludes that reasonable care is taken to ensure nuisance is not being caused. But again on specific complaint is willing to provide noise diary sheets.

The Council agreed that no further action was required by them.

Item 5.9. Cemetery Water Supply: Water supply has been turned off for the winter season.

Item 5.10. Adoption of red telephone box in St James Street: Contract has been completed by Parish Council and submitted to BT

Item 6. Planning:

- a) **Consideration and agreement of Braintree District Council Development Site Allocations/possible changes to village envelope:** The Parish Council has not identified any land, nor supports any suggested sites by landowners/developers for development/building within the Parish. It has made recommendations to Braintree District Council for changes to the village envelope on Nunnery Street: i) Village envelope to run 5 metres from the rear of existing properties 118- 132 Nunnery street; ii) Nunnery Farm be removed from the village envelope; and for the old allotment/open space by the Memorial Hall on Church Lane be removed from the village envelope.
- b) **Consideration of requesting that old allotment/open space by Village Hall is designated recreation/playing field:** The Parish Council agreed to submit a request to Braintree District Council that the land be so designated.
- c) **Consideration of request by Braintree District Council to identify if any land (Council owned or privately owned) could be potentially available as travellers pitches:** The Parish Council decided that i) It owns no land so the Parish Council was unable to make any pitches available; and ii) not to approach private landowners.
- d) **Recommendations:** No matters arising.

Item 8.1. Essex CC: A written report has been received from Mr D Finch:

Essex County Council Budget Setting 2012/13

The draft 2012/13 budget is based on existing plans created under the 2011/12 budget process, taking account of any changes arising since then. Reviewing these changes may lead to additional savings targets being set for 2012/13. Service based reviews took place in September and November and focussed on key areas of spend within each directorate. Energy costs are predicted to rise by at least 20% in 2012/13, there will be demographic increases of 4% in Older People, and other inflationary pressures. The impact of the changes to business rates and localisation of council tax benefit will also be considered carefully. Budget information will be shared with other authorities in Essex to facilitate a pan-Essex approach to identifying the compound effects of decisions.

Highways

Essex County Council (ECC) has selected Ringway Jacobs Limited as its preferred bidder to form one of the largest integrated highways partnerships in the UK, which will deliver significant savings whilst providing an improved level of service for residents in a challenging climate of decreasing budgets.

The contract will commence from 1st April 2012 and run for 10 years, with the option to extend for a further period of up to five years. The contract, which has an estimated value of over £1billion, will ensure that a greater proportion of money is spent on delivering frontline services and improving customer satisfaction.

Nine of the 10 major highways contracts in Essex will expire on the 31 March 2012, with the final contract terminating in 31 March 2013. All these existing contracts to operate Essex's highways will be replaced with one single long-term partnership arrangement.

Adults Services

Essex County Council is celebrating after triumphing in two categories at the Great East of England Care Awards.

Held on the 28 October the Great East of England Care Awards is a regional event that celebrates excellence across the care sector. The awards pay tribute to those individuals and teams who have demonstrated outstanding excellence within their field of work. Neil Evans, Operational Manager at Social Care Direct won the Frontline Leaders Award. Essex Social Care Direct (ESCD) is Essex County Council's social care referral route for all new requests for a social care service. Neil was nominated for his passion in encouraging, supporting and inspiring others to develop their confidence and capabilities, and to realise their full potential. His belief in ESCD shines through at all times, and is an example of how a "can do" attitude can ensure a robust service not just for service users and their careers, but also third sector partners and professionals. Safeguarding Essex won the Care Team Award. Safeguarding Essex aims to protect people from abuse and provide support and advice to professionals working across the county. The team also works closely with children's safeguarding services to jointly promote a "Think Family" approach and works in collaboration with the Police and Health to ensure the widest possible awareness of potential abuse. The result has been a year on year rise in awareness of safeguarding issues in Essex, with the team anticipating supporting around 4000 vulnerable people this year. Also nominated from Essex were the Prison Pilot, a partnership project that supports vulnerable offenders and the Service Placement Team who are responsible for sourcing services across AHCW, including residential and social care; short-term breaks and interim placements; and day care provision. Winners of the regional awards go through to the national final to be held in spring 2012.

Children's Services

Essex County Council is pleased its efforts to improve the services provided to children and young people in Essex will be formally recognised by Ofsted as its annual children's services assessment rating improves to adequate.

The rating follows a successful inspection of the safeguarding service in September which noted how significant improvements had been made to safeguard children.

Ofsted noted how the majority of services, settings and institutions that they inspected are good or better. Most provision supports children and young people well in staying safe and the large majority help them to enjoy their learning.

Particular strengths identified include:

- Early years and childcare continues to improve and the large majority is at least good. The very large majority of regulated childcare provision is now good or outstanding.
- For children under five, the large majority of provision in nurseries and primary schools continues to be good and some is outstanding.
- The majority of secondary schools including those that have become academies are good or better. The large majority of secondary schools inspected in the last year sustained the same grade or improved.
- Specialist provision is usually good or better. Almost all local authority special schools are at least good with eight of 17 schools being outstanding.
- A higher proportion of looked after children attain Level 4 in both English and maths tests at the age of 11 than found elsewhere and by 16 years-old those attaining five A* to C grades in GCSE including English and maths matches that found in similar areas.
- The proportion of 16-year-olds from low-income families and minority ethnic groups attaining five A* to C grades in GCSE examinations including English and maths is higher than their peers in similar authorities.

Essex County Council has evaluated the feedback from Ofsted and has already put in place measures to improve the areas highlighted by Ofsted as needing more consideration.

Item 9.4. Audit Report:

The independent half year audit has been carried out and there were no issues arising.

Parish Precept 2012/13: Braintree District Council has advised that there will be no change in the Parish Support Grant 2012/13. The Parish Council agreed not to increase its precept for 2012/13 and the Parish Council proportion of council tax rates for 2012/13 will therefore be unchanged.

Item 10. Consideration of Employment of Village Handyman: The Parish Council agreed to make no changes to the current arrangements whereby contractors, Braintree District Council, and Essex County Council are used to carry out various maintenance jobs.

The Clerk and Mr I Higgins will meet with the village handyman to discuss his current and future duties.

Item 11. Parish Council support for, and input to village entertainment/fete: The Parish Council is currently planning to celebrate the Jubilee in 2012 by the following actions:

- a) Replacement of bench on Forge Green; and
- b) Issue of Jubilee coins to village children up to the age of 11. This would be in conjunction with a number of other parishes across the County.

In addition Mr G Pewter proposed, seconded by Mrs J Hart, that the Parish Council buys a new piece of play equipment. This was not agreed after a vote. Mr R Worley then proposed, seconded by Mr M Scrivens, that the permission of the playing field landowner, Mr Lindsay of Hedingham Castle, be sought for installation of a new piece of play equipment prior to its purchase. This was agreed and the Clerk was instructed to write to Mr Lindsay.

It was agreed that Messrs R Worley and M Scrivens will investigate options for village entertainment such as a concert evening. Financial support for such an event will be considered at a future Parish Council Meeting.

Mrs Allfrey suggested a village beacon to celebrate the Jubilee. The Clerk will investigate options.

Item 13.1 AOB: Mr Worley said two parishioners had reported that a way marker on FP 3 is missing. Mr J Philp, on whose land this path runs, said he will investigate.

Item 13.2 AOB: Mr Worley said he had given an interview to BBC Radio Essex as part of a feature on the question of whether Edward De Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, was the real Shakespeare. He had said the village would welcome more tourists visiting the village but that the village lacked the infrastructure to cope with a large influx.

Item 14. Date and Time of next meetings: 7.45 pm on 9th January 2012, 13th February 2012 and 12th March 2012 at the Memorial Hall.