

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL VILLAGE MEETING HELD ON
WEDNESDAY 26 APRIL 2017 IN THE
LECTURE HALL AT 7.30PM

Present: Chris Cadman (in the chair), Frank Aldred, Kerry Barnes, Ted Bloxham, John Fellows, Sophia Girvan, Ian Westrope.
County Councillor David Finch
District Councillor Diana Garrod
5 members of the public.
Clerk – June Argent.

Apologies: Kim Cresswell, Mary Nicholls, Simon Perry.

The Chairman welcomed County Councillor David Finch and District Councillor Diana Garrod together with all members of the public.

Acceptance of last year's minutes of the Annual Village Meeting was proposed by Frank Aldred and seconded by Kerry Barnes. There were no objections to these minutes which the Chairman signed as a true record of the meeting.

Chairman's report

The Chairman stated that the village meeting gives the Parish Council the opportunity to update the community on how it spends the Village Precept and to give an overview of the activities of the Parish Council.

The year to the end of March 2017 was fairly eventful with housing being a major issue that stimulated a great deal of debate and taking up much of our time.

Expenditure

Your Parish Council is, along with every other level of local government, suffering from the effect of Central Government's reduction in funding.

In the year 2015/16 we received additional support of £4,910 from Braintree District Council. In the year 2016/17 this was reduced to £4,114 and in the year ahead will be cut down to £2,734, then by 2020 we will see the support withdrawn completely.

The effect of these reductions will be that in order to maintain the services we provide, you will see an increase of the precept element of your council tax, which for the current year will be 5%.

Our budgeted spend for 2016/17 was £42,150 with the amount being spent in the following areas:

Street lighting	£2,456
Loan charge	£5,112
Administration	£9,590
Insurance	£1,326
Footpaths and Open Spaces	£5,575
Halls	£ 600
Churchyard and Cemetery	£3,225
Health – litter and bin emptying	£2,400
Celebrations (Queen's jubilees)	£2,082

Camping Close	£8,580
HOSB donation (taken from reserves)	£2,500
Miscellaneous	<u>£ 590</u>
Total Expenditure	£43,946

In 2017/18 we have budgeted to spend £43,042 with costs in all areas not being dissimilar to the figures reported above.

Housing

Steeple Bumpstead finds itself in a similar situation to many other rural communities in that additional housing is required in order to ensure that the village continues to thrive and develop, any proposed housing development however must be sustainable and not overstretch the infrastructure of the village.

The Gladman planning application to build 95 houses in the village was refused, only for them to put in a further application to build 65 houses, which again was refused and is now going to appeal. This gives an indication of the pressure villages are now under.

The HOSB group has continued to operate in a highly professional manner and will be representing its supporters at the appeal later this year along with the District Council.

As was reported at last year's meeting, the results of the village survey indicated that of those who responded, 91% were against the Gladman proposal.

HOSB have to raise some £40,000 to be represented at the appeal. The Parish Council, whilst not being directly involved, has supported the aims of the group. With this in mind and after much debate and divided opinion, the Parish Council has decided to make a donation of £2,500 to the HOSB appeal fund. This is a one off donation and does not set a precedent for the future.

Highways

The long awaited repair and up grading to the drainage system in Finchingfield Road and Church Street has been completed by Essex Highways at a cost reported to be between £200,000 and £250,000. The contractor is to be congratulated for the timely completion of the works and with a minimum amount of disruption to residents.

St Mary's Church Wall

The on-going saga for the repair of the St Mary's Church Wall continues. We are told that the wall is in danger of collapsing and needs repair at a quoted cost to the Parish of between £70,000 and £90,000 which is well beyond the Parish Council's resources.

The Parish Council does have limited reserves to cover emergencies, however, finding the sums quoted will be extremely difficult and the likelihood of obtaining a grant diminishes as time passes.

In the short term, action will be taken to ensure the safety of the wall.

We are striving to find a solution to this and we will have to return to this subject at a later date.

Village Wildlife Group

During the year our Village Wildlife Group with the support of the Parish Council and the Dedham Vale and Stour Valley Countryside Project Group of Volunteers carried out a significant amount of work in Humphrey's Meadow, the Riverside Walk, Camping Close and other locations throughout the village.

On behalf of the village we thank the Wildlife group of volunteers for some excellent work that has enhanced the village.

Children's Playground

Our Children's Playground on Camping Close has seen new equipment installed and existing equipment being repaired.

This area is well used and is a source of enjoyment to the children of the village.

Communication

Our Village Magazine, "The Yellow Book", continues to be an excellent source of information and recognised as a first class publication. I thank the editor, John Keen, and everyone else involved in its publication.

This, along with our village website, is proving its worth in keeping the community well informed and our thanks also go to Steve Cheek and Alex Rolph.

War Memorial

Our War Memorial is in need of repair and maintenance and members of the community have generously made donations to a fund that has been set up to cover the costs of these works. In addition to this, Ian Westrope is also in the process of obtaining a grant to cover the remaining cost of the repairs and we thank the members of the community for their donations.

Section 106 monies

We have a small amount of Section 106 monies which Braintree District Council hold on our behalf. These monies are a charge to housing developers which must be spent on projects that will be of benefit to the community at large.

We have applied to spend this money on a quantity of oak posts which constantly need replacing around Camping Close and in other areas around the village.

Village Plan

The Village Plan is under review however questions are being asked as to the benefits of such plans as they involve a considerable amount of work with little evidence of any of the plan being taken into account.

Essex Village of the Year

Finally: After a number of years when we didn't enter the Essex Village of the Year Competition, last year we did so and Steeple Bumpstead was placed first in the category of villages with 800 to 2000 residents and third in the overall village category – a fantastic result.

A date for your diary

The Village Clean-up is to take place on Saturday 6th May. We are meeting at the Village Hall Car Park at 10am and we would welcome volunteers on the day.

County Councillor's report

Essex County Council, like many other Government bodies, was and is, under considerable financial pressure as the government redefines local government funding.

The previous method of funding comprised three elements – Council Tax (based on the number of properties), a proportion of Business rates and finally Government grants for specific functions and activities.

Process has, and still is, being redefined with removal of grants from 2016/17 and an allocation by 2019/20 of business rates and funding for health issues. The result is a gap in available funding of some £200 million plus.

The County Council has responded to these challenges by looking at its services and instead of reducing them has sought to reshape/redefine services so that the end result is still a deliverable service to residents.

The largest single issue facing the County is the growth of older population where 22% of our population is over the age of 65 – against a national average of 16%. The number of 85 year olds is set to double over the next 5 years.

We have lobbied Government along with other authorities and have achieved additional funding which has eased the position but not solved the ongoing problem. We have accepted that we need to take the 3% social care levy as a short term funding measure – but remain firmly committed to the principle that long term care of the elderly is a national issue not a local issue.

We continue to work with other authorities in the country and the Government to bring about a long term solution.

Work within the County Council is focused on growing the economy of Essex from £33 billion to over £60 billion – and lobbying for devolved skills funding.

We are improving the highways by investing over £200 million in road maintenance.

Providing excellent education for all our children whose achievement rates are above England average and 95% of our schools are rated as good or outstanding. 3 new secondary schools are to be built in Essex.

Essex County Council is looking to find new ways of working and new ideas to provide service to the communities. The Community Initiatives Fund may be able to support parishes with local expenses. A lottery to support local charities and voluntary groups would give local people the opportunity to buy a ticket and contribute to local charities and voluntary groups.

District Councillor's report

I was elected in October 2016 and am therefore not able to provide the parish with first-hand knowledge of activities that have taken place over the whole year. However, I have been delighted to take advantage of my allocation for the Councillor's Community Grant of £1,500 to March 2017 and a further £1,500 to March 2018, where I am able to support small community projects that are easy to deliver. I have £1,200 remaining for 2017-18 and welcome applications. I am pleased to have assisted and advised a number of residents in Steeple Bumpstead on a one-to-one basis with concerns relating to planning, school transport, waste and accommodation and I will continue to support those who need advice relating to Council services. I will provide a brief overview of some of the changes that have taken place in the last year that may be of interest.

Environment, Communities, Strategic Growth and Infrastructure

The District has achieved 71% superfast broadband coverage across the District in conjunction with Superfast Essex and continues to lobby Network Rail to improve local rail services; both are ongoing. Community Priced weddings have been introduced at the Town Hall following the closure of the Registry Office in Braintree. The Council has improved the housing conditions of vulnerable residents by launching a pilot handyman service and has awarded five organisations grant funding of £94,000 for life enhancing projects through the District and Greenfields Community Fund. The Council has also approved a District Investment Strategy to invest £28 million to improve health

facilities, town centres and infrastructure as well as investing in opportunities that support growth and provide a return for the Council.

Planning

The Council has granted planning permission for over 1200 homes, supporting the delivery of much needed housing across the District. Braintree Council continues to work on a new Local Plan which will guide development in the District between now and 2033. Once adopted this will replace the 2011 Core Strategy and the 2005 Local Plan. As part of the Local Plan, the Council is required to boost significantly the supply of housing as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. Alongside this, the Council is also working on exploring the potential of creating three new garden community settlements. This is the largest and most complex project this authority has ever been involved in, working in partnership with Colchester, Tendring and Essex County Councils. This remains subject to decisions made by Council as part of the local plan process.

Your District Council will continue to strive to ensure the right support and resources are in place across the organisation to make sure key corporate programmes, projects and services continue to be delivered.

Questions

Kerry Barnes said it was the legal responsibility of County Council to upkeep all footpaths. Now there is only one cut per year and not all footpaths are cut then.

Dave Kuyper asked if there was pressure from Government to have Grammar Schools in Essex – David Finch said there was no pressure from Government.

Dave Kuyper asked whether there was a problem with pupils going across borders to school – David Finch thought not.

Dave Kuyper asked about Lottery money – David Finch said 65% of money raised would go towards the charities or voluntary groups involved.

Simon Rymills said pupils attending across borders was an historical problem.

Angela Rymills said repaired pot holes should be inspected for the work done.

Answering a question on the Local Plan, District Councillor Diana Garrod said the new Local Plan is to be voted on on the 5th June.

David Finch and Diana Garrod left the meeting at 8.20pm.

Reports from village charities and organisations

Ted Bloxham reported as Transport representative of the Parish Council.

The services 59/60 Saffron Walden to Haverhill and Audley End still run. On Wednesdays the bus to and from Braintree still runs. The Dart 3 – dial up service Arrow Taxis – is a transport convenience where a bus pass can be used after 9am and 2 hours' notice must be given to 01621 855111. The passengers must give their name, telephone number, where they want to go, what time they want to go and where to be collected from. There will be a charge if no bus pass available.

Liz Heyer sent in a report on the Steeple Bumpstead Surgery Parish Participation Group (PPG).

There are currently 12 members of this group who try to represent the whole patient population but more younger members and people from surrounding villages are needed.

The PPG has met with Surgery staff 4 times over the last year. It is clear the Surgery genuinely wants to hear our views and make changes wherever possible to improve and enhance the services available to patients. Our reports in the yellow book should help people keep up to date.

NHS staff continue to be under huge pressure as patient expectations increase. Our Surgery is one of the smallest in the country and this does put added strains on it in providing the widest range of services and recruiting and retaining staff.

The biggest issue continues to be the availability of GP appointments, though more patients are now opting to see the Advanced Nurse Practitioner. There are not the funds to employ more GPs and even if there were, it is highly unlikely that the Surgery would be able to recruit.

Over the last year the Surgery has focused on improving services to patients with dementia and their carers and is now a recognised “dementia friendly” practice.

The dispensary now offers a managed repeat service for certain patients on repeat prescriptions.

Also repeat prescriptions can be ordered on line. Patients should give the required 48 hours’ notice for repeats, check their medication before leaving the Surgery and attend an annual medication review.

Some upgrading has been done to the building and equipment over the last year, including new signposting. The Surgery hopes to install an electronic opening front door in the near future.

Michelina Partridge of the Friends of St Mary’s Church reported that they were a small group who wish to improve the infrastructure of the church and the church wants a toilet. An architect drew up plans for a toilet but it was too expensive so it will have to be a cheaper toilet.

John Keen of the Yellow Book wishes to thank regular contributors but more input would be good. Thanks are sent to those who distribute this magazine and thanks go to all advertisers. The Yellow Book comes out every other month and is run entirely by John Keen who is desperate for some help with this.

Sheila Walsh reported on the village library – open Tuesdays from 2.15pm to 4.15pm. Library books are exchanged at Saffron Walden library with their specialist librarian choosing children’s books and Sheila chooses the adult’s books.

Request books are available – multiple copies for book clubs.

Sue King, the assistance librarian, is extremely helpful.

Chris Bailey sent in a report from the 1st Steeple Bumpstead Scout Group.

This Scout Group caters for young people aged between 6 years and 14 1/2 years with over 100 boys, girls and adults. Adult volunteers are always needed for Beaver Scouts, Cub Scouts and Scouts or for our Executive Committee.

The Scout section entered 3 invitational teams in the Saffron Walden District Jailbreak, an event that requires the Scouts to hike thirty miles in the dark, avoiding detection by “catchers”. With a total of 28 teams entered, Steeple Bumpstead Scouts won the invitational section and also claimed 4th and 7th places.

All our Scout Groups have camped regularly, this teaches them new skills and also some independence. This year the entire group will be camping on Mersea Island at our Scout Group “Beachcomber Camp” and will all get together again for a group Christmas sleepover at Skreens Park, near Writtle.

A fairly large number of Scouts, Adult Leaders and Adult Helpers will go to “Poacher Jamboree” in Lincoln where they will be camping with around 5,000 other Scouts and Girl Guides.

Other Scouting activities enjoyed by the Scouts include cooking, craft skills, night hikes, swimming, kayaking, rafting, archery, target shooting, community service, camping, knotting, domestic chores, quizzes, campfires, amateur radio events, indoor and outdoor games, sporting events, local knowledge, learning about faith and personal reflections etc.

Helen Davison sent in this report for Junipers and Players.

The Players is 50 years old now and the Junipers are 25 years old this year. Junipers is for 6-18 year olds. Events involved are pantos, film projects, variety show and costume stock. On the 6th July there will be an open house for new members.

Steeple Bumpstead Parochial Charities. Frank Aldred reported that he and Paula Suckling, Jane Ridley, Ian Westrope and Nigel Chapman managed this small charity which gave small amounts of money to those in need at Christmas. The income of £1832.96 comes from dividends and bank interest and 18 people had £60 each and flowers for 2 people.

Ian Westrope reported on the Moot Hall Charity. The lottery sold 450 tickets. Flooding had caused damage to the Moot Hall but now the road works have been carried out in Finchingfield Road, the flooding should cease. Damp proofing is in hand and the exterior will be painted. The lead flashing was stolen but thanks to local help, this has been reinstated. Upstairs in the Moot Hall is a picture exhibition and the library downstairs is thriving. It would be good to have a war memorial book to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the end of the 1st World War. The annual car boot sale will be at the end of May. Thank you to the Parish Council for holding its meetings in the Moot Hall and paying for the cleaning costs.

Dave Kuyper spoke of the Steeple Bumpstead Bowls Club on Hempstead Road. This is a full sized green and has 40-50 members (7 new members this week alone). Member's ages range from 16 years to 90 years. In the winter there is carpet bowls. We have two County bowls players. Funds are raised from subs and quiz nights. £2,000 was donated to the club by 4 different organisations in the village.

Dave is in his 39th year as church clock winder.

Open Discussion

Simon Rymills asked about speeding vehicles around Bower Hall estate – could there be traffic calming measures. It was explained to Mr Rymills that this problem regularly cropped up and the negatives outshone the positives. Speed bumps are noisy for those living nearby. We tried for a 20mph limit but again there were issues with neighbours about signs outside or near their houses

Michelina Partridge said North Street had no speed calming particularly by the telephone exchange but the Chairman said Essex County Council say there are too few accidents to require measures to be taken.

Dave Kuyper wanted to know why the Parish Council did not put more detail into why a particular planning application had been granted or refused. It was explained that the Parish Council were not given this information so he would have to look up Braintree District Council's website.

Kerry Barnes said he had been to a Neighbourhood Planning Workshop. There are many controls which could be put into the Neighbourhood Plan to protect the village eg appearance of buildings in keeping with the architecture of the area. When agreed, the Neighbourhood Plan goes to a referendum of the village and hopefully then adopted. Rather than the Parish Council taking the lead, this should be carried out by an independent group but perhaps the Parish Council should start it off. There is a grant of £9,000 and District Council agree to fund the referendum. A Design Statement is too restrictive. Jan Stobart of Braintree District Council is the person to contact initially. The Parish Council should ask her to attend a Parish Council meeting.

Ted Bloxham said the Parish Council were going to ask Jane Catchesides from Helions Parish Council to attend a meeting.

John Fellows asked why the Village Hall Management Committee were not in attendance at this Annual Village Meeting as they should report their financial situation to this meeting. The Parish Council are Custodial Trustees to the Village Hall. This means that if the entire Village Hall Management Committee were to resign then the Parish Council must take over the running of the

hall. It was agreed to ask a Village Hall Management Committee member to attend a Parish Council meeting with the required information.

The Chairman commented that the attendance by village organisations and charities was disappointing and did not reflect the excellent work they do.

The meeting closed at 9.30pm.

Signed.....

Date

DRAFT