



Village Hall
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Earls Colne
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Clerk to the Council: Sarah Gaeta
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**MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
HELD AT THE VILLAGE HALL
ON TUESDAY 17TH MARCH 2026 AT 7.15PM**

Present:

Councillor R Cook (Chairman)
Councillor L Bauckham-Leys
Councillor R Dalton
Councillor C Dennis
Councillor L Hull
Councillor M Jackson
Councillor J Jemmett
Councillor B Lynham
Councillor I Sparks
Councillor P Wall
Clerk
3 members of the public

25/137. Election of Chairman

Councillors Dalton and Sparks were nominated. Following a vote, Councillor Dalton **was duly elected** as Chairman.

25/138. Declaration of Acceptance of Office

Councillor Dalton signed the Chairman's Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

25/139. Election of Vice Chairman

Councillor Dennis was **duly elected** as Vice Chairman.

25/140. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Councillor Lucking who also tendered his resignation.

25/141. Minutes

The Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 17th February 2026 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

25/142. Co-option

It was resolved to co-opt Laurence Hull to Earls Colne Parish Council.

25/143. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Hull in item 25/149(a).

25/144. Essex County Councillor Update

Councillor Siddall was not present.

25/145. Braintree District Councillor Update

Councillors Courtauld and Spray were not present. Please see Appendix 1 for Councillor Spray's report.

25/146. Public Participation session

Two members of the public raised the following:

- Thanks were given to Councillor Cook for taking on the role of Chairman when the new council was formed.
- Concerns were raised over conduct at the last Parish Council meeting.
- Mary Gee Green and Section 106 spending – residents should be involved.

Braintree District Council Street Scene Protection Officer spoke about trail cameras and their uses.

25/147. Clerk's Report

Please see Appendix 2 for the Clerk's Report on finances.

25/148. Finance and Internal Control

- (a) The budget update was received.
- (b) **It was resolved** to appoint Heelis and Lodge as Internal Auditor for the financial year 2025/26 at a cost of £440.
- (c) A brief update on the Action Tracker and Plan progress was received.
- (d) **It was resolved** to seek the organiser's consent to publicise the bi-weekly coffee morning that attracts Council funding and free use of the village hall.
- (e) **It was resolved** to appoint a Planting Committee, agree the Terms of Reference and appoint Councillor Bauckham-Leys as Chairman and Councillor Jemmett as Vice Chairman.
- (f) **It was resolved** to appoint Councillor Sparks as the Vice Chairman of the Personnel Committee.
- (g) **It was resolved** to appoint Councillor Jemmett as Chairman and Councillor Bauckham-Leys as the Vice Chairman of the Finance and Internal Control Committee.
- (h) **It was resolved** to subscribe to Council Wise for support and training for the financial year 2026/27.

25/149. Planning

- (a) **26/00511/FUL** – Conversion of agricultural building and stables to a single dwelling at Nearleigh Farm, Coggeshall Road. **Objection.** *Councillor Hull left the meeting for this item.*
- (b) **26/00315/LBC** – Repairs and re-decorations to external elevations at East of England Co-operative Society, 31 High Street. **No objection.**
- (c) **26/00418/TPOCON** – Tree works at Colne Place, 97 High Street. **No objection.**
- (d) **26/00411/TPOCON** – Tree works at 54 Park Lane. **No objection.**
- (e) **26/00357/TPOCON** – Tree works at 93 High Street. **No objection.**
- (f) **26/00317/TPOCON** – Tree works at 15-17 Upper Holst Street. **No objection.**
- (g) **26/00381/TPOCON** – Tree works at 18 High Street. **No objection.**
- (h) **26/00254/FUL** – Erection of a timber framed storage barn at Holmwood Farm, Tey Road. **No objection in principle, however, concerns regarding the scale, siting and potential use of the building will be raised.**
- (i) **26/00389/TPO** – Tree works at Bamboozle Bungalow, 7 Coggeshall Road. **No objection.**
- (j) **26/00391/TPOCON** – Tree works at 21 Queens Road. **No objection.** *Councillor Bauckham-Leys left the meeting.*
- (k) Following discussion and agreement on the content, **it was resolved** to submit the Local Plan consultation response on behalf of the Parish Council.

25/150. Village Environment

- (a) **It was resolved** to purchase a Kubota BX at £17,257 net.
- (b) The decision to purchase and install two trail cameras to cover the public toilet area was deferred as the Council accepted Braintree District Council's offer of an initial trial.
- (c) **It was resolved** to establish an 'Earls Colne in Bloom' community group to support the planting, maintenance and enhancement of public spaces within the village, with an initial budget of up to £500 to support the group's activities.

25/151. Section 106

The proposals for enhancements to the village greens will be put forward in parts for approval.

25/152. Health and Safety

An update on health and safety matters was received.

25/153. Village Hall

- (a) An update on village hall matters was received.
- (b) **It was resolved** to install cameras already owned in Chambers for staff security. The overall security of the building will be investigated.

25/154. Events

- (a) **It was resolved** to hold a Christmas village social event on Friday 11th December from the Christmas budget of £500.
- (b) **It was resolved** to donate the £200 raised from the 2025 Christmas raffle to the village Christmas lights fund.
- (c) **It was resolved** to waive hall charges for the Four Colnes Horticultural Society and Earls Colne PTA Christmas event booking on Saturday 12th December.
- (d) **It was resolved** to approve the use of Community Workers to help decorate the village hall for the Christmas events.

25/155. Accounts for Payment

It was resolved to approve the accounts for payment, as follows:

Staff costs	£7,334.09
A&J Lighting	£96.00
Datapartners	£74.60
British Gas	£766.96
Red Parrot	£145.77
Blake Tree Care Ltd	£1,368.00
Yu Energy	£623.05
WI	£65.00
RCCE	£124.80
Daisy Communications	£62.36
P Wall (expenses)	£139.32
S Gaeta (expenses)	£25.00
Council Wise	£234.00
Hall hirer deposits	£200.00
Currys	£549.00
Hull Fencing	£1,152.00
Unity Trust Bank	£11.80
Siemens Financial Services	£788.22
R Dalton (expenses)	£100.08



25/156.General Information

The following matters were raised:

- Reminder that if any councillor's work overlaps with another group's work to please let the group lead know.
- Request to redefine group responsibilities at a future meeting.
- A resident's feedback on the meeting was given.
- Informal meetings will help the Council to unify.

Meeting closed at 9.20pm

Date of next Parish Council Meeting – Tuesday 21st April 2026



Appendix 1

REPORT FOR EARLS COLNE PC MARCH 2026

LOCAL PLAN: The Regulation 18 Public Consultation on the District's Local Plan opened on 3rd March and will run for six weeks. The Council has been given a mandatory housing target to deliver 1,264 new homes per year and all residents, businesses and community groups are encouraged to share their views on where we want to see development over the next 15 years. At this stage of drafting our updated Local Plan nothing is decided or fixed. Full details, including how to comment, are available at www.braintree.gov.uk/localplanreview

COUNCIL TAX 2026/27: The level of Council Tax for this financial year was discussed at Full Council on Monday 16th February and it was agreed that Braintree Council's portion of Council Tax for this financial year will be frozen. This measure acknowledges that the cost of living still presents challenges for many residents. No front-line Council services will be cut as a result of the Council Tax freeze and your District Council intends to continue providing the best possible service for all residents.

Norwich-Tilbury National Grid Upgrade: The first public examination sessions took place in mid-February covering the areas for Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex. The scheme, which Braintree Council acknowledges is needed in order to maintain a sustainable supply of electricity across the Eastern Region, will result in miles of new pylons appearing across our countryside. I logged onto the examination hearing for the Essex session and it was clear from listening to the speakers that communication between residents and National Grid has fallen short of what was expected; this is particularly relevant to the farming communities whose land will be affected by the route of the pylons, and it was made very clear to the Examiner from the Planning Inspectorate that the consultations were unsatisfactory in many instances. Further examination sessions will take place and the Examiner will also conduct site visits where she feels this would be appropriate.

AGE WELL Fair: On Thursday 9th April Braintree District Council will be hosting the Age Well Fair at Halstead Leisure Centre, Colne Road, CO9 2HR. The event is free to attend and runs from 10.00am – 13.00pm. Over 30 local organisations will be attending to offer advice, support and help with ageing. Previous Age Well events have been very well attended and feedback shows that people find the information provided really helpful.

With best regards
Cllr Gabrielle Spray

Appendix 2 – Clerk’s Report on Finances

Year-End Finance Summar (as at 17 March 2026)

The Council’s bank balance as at 17 March 2026 stands at £161,307.79. From this, payments due for approval at this evening’s meeting (excluding February retrospective salaries already paid) total £6,957.11, which reduces the balance to £154,350.68. In addition, approximate staff costs for March payroll, estimated at £5,500 bring the adjusted balance down further to £148,850.68.

This figure provides an approximate year-end balance balance, noting that:

- Some payments included in this meeting’s approvals may have already been processed via direct debit.
- Others may not be paid until April and will therefore fall into the next financial year.

The current earmarked reserves position, following recent amendments, is £31,072.82 (subject to confirmation, as this figure is not yet fully verified).

Assuming this figure is correct, the estimated general reserve at year end would be £117,777.86. This remains an approximate position and should be treated with caution pending final reconciliation of payments and confirmation of reserves.

Budget Overview for 2026/27

The Council’s agreed budget for the 2026/27 financial year sets out total anticipated income of £200,011.50, comprising £17,679.50 in other income and £182,332 from the precept.

Planned expenditure for the year is £209,183.03, resulting in a budget deficit of £9,171.53. This shortfall will need to be met from the Council’s general reserves.,

Based on the estimated year-end general reserves position of £117,777.86, drawing down this deficit would reduce the opening general reserves for 2026/27 to approximately £108,606.33.

In line with guidance set out in the SAPP (Smaller Authorities’ Proper Practices) guide, authorities with income and expenditure in excess of £200,000 should plan towards holding a general reserve equivalent to approximately three months of expenditure. For 2026/27, this equates to around £52,295.76.

On this basis, the projected general reserves of £108,606.33 remain comfortably above this recommended minimum level. However, the position should still be monitored throughout the year to ensure reserves remain at an appropriate and sustainable level.