



Minutes of Parish Council Meeting 7pm
Wednesday 16th April 2025
in the Village Hall, York Road, Earls Colne, CO6 2RN

Present:

Nikki Spelling (NS)	ECPC Chair
Ray Ranns (RR)	ECPC Councillor
Jonathan Happs (JH)	ECPC Councillor
Lorraine Bauckham-Leys (LB)	ECPC Councillor
Shirley Newberry (SN)	ECPC Councillor
Tony Calton (TC)	ECPC Councillor
Dee Ellison (DE)	ECPC Parish Clerk
Kim Mayo (KM)	BDC Monitoring Officer

Absence:

June Jemmett (JJ)	ECPC Councillor
Chris Siddall (CS)	ECC Councillor
George Courtauld (GC)	BDC Councillor
Gabrielle Spray (GS)	BDC Councillor

Members of the Public: Ms V Doubleday, Mr R Cook, Mrs E Cook, Mr M Jackson, Mr A Striven

1. To receive apologies for absence
 - a. Notification of resignations: None
 - b. Notification of appointments: None
2. To receive declarations of interest : None
3. Public participation session with respect to items on the agenda.
 - a) Ms V Doubleday reiterated her concerns regarding the village green, and raised her awareness that during Feb 2022 it was minuted that the driveway was requested to be extended, and that Council had agreed to take the matter forward (item 13) No Parking signage was requested. **Response: Council approved, signage to be sourced for approval**
 - a) Mr R Cook raised his concern that the March minutes did not accurately reflect that the training records were not the correct submissions and that Cllr Ranns had acknowledged as such. Mr Cook agreed that if the minutes from March 2025 recorded this error he was satisfied that the minutes could be approved.
Response: Clerk to amend.
 - b) Mr R Cook raised the increased spend in the precept had minimal explanatory detail, and requested more information is required and to be uploaded to the website for all residents to have access to. **Response: Chair shared his point had been noted and that when the final budget and detail had been approved a formal response will be posted on the website.**
4. To approve the minutes of the following meeting: March 2025: **Response- Approved by all councillors present, subject to amendments being completed.**
5. To receive updates from ECC Councillor: No update
6. To receive updates from BDC Councillors :

Cllr GS had provided a report which was circulated to all councillors before the meeting.

Local Plan: work on Braintree Council's refresh of the Local Plan is well underway. The 'Call for Sites' meetings are being held in May, June, July and September at Causeway House. A list of the meeting dates and which Towns and Villages will be discussed by the Local Plan sub Committee will be sent out to all District Councillors and Town and Parish Councils week commencing 14th April.

Persimmon Site, Junction works: Update on Halstead Road/Station Road junction improvement was originally scheduled for end of February. The lead officer, Mat Wilde, has made enquiries with his contact at Essex Highways and will let me know as soon as he receives an answer. Currently, the reason for the delay is unknown.

Halstead Town Improvements: works to Halstead High Street started week commencing 7th April. There will be improved signage, new benches, cycle parking and repairs to pavements. Similar work is also taking place in Witham town centre.

Garden Waste Collection: the subscription for the bi-weekly green bin collection has been frozen at £55 for the year. Over 23,000 subscriptions have already been taken out, or renewed, so far for 2025/26, which is an excellent result.

Waste Strategy: following extensive consultation, changes to the way Braintree Council collects all waste will be confirmed at a May meeting of the Council's Cabinet. These changes are as a result of Government legislation requiring all Local Authorities to undertake more kerbside collections and improve re cycling rates.

7. Councillor Reports:

7a) Finance

1. To approve Jan, Feb & March 2025 bank reconciliation (Jan & Feb were carried over from the March meeting) **Response: Cllr LBL Abstained, all other councillors present at the meeting approved.**
2. To approve Financial Reports for Jan, Feb & March 2025(Jan & Feb were carried over from the March meeting) **Response: Cllr LBL Abstained, all other councillors present at the meeting approved.**
3. Financial Risk Assessment: **Response: Carried forward due to Cllr J Jemmett absence.**
4. Budget for 2025-2026 **Response: All councillors present at the meeting approved.**

7b) Compliance and communication

1. Governance & Compliance –
2. Governance Calendar **Response: All councillors present at the meeting agreed on its use and validation to be finalised at a separate session**
3. Working groups: **Response: All councillors present at the meeting agreed to defer to the strategy day meeting**
4. Q Admin meeting **Response: All councillors present at the meeting agreed to defer to May**
5. Action Tracker: **Response: All councillors present at the meeting agreed with it being implemented**

7c) Planning: 13/03/2025-10/04/2025 (excl. tree works)

1. Acknowledgement of no objections for period 13/03/2025 – 10/04/2025 (excl. tree works)

Application No.	Location	Description
Ref. No: 25/00827/HH	56 Coggeshall Road Earls Colne Essex CO6 2JR	Proposed installation of a velux roof window to the existing roof slope on the north elevation https://publicaccess.braintree.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?keyVal=SUGE8WBFHM500&activeTab=summary
Ref. No: 25/00688/HH	20 Massingham Drive Earls Colne Essex CO6 2ST	Proposed single storey rear extension https://publicaccess.braintree.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?keyVal=STQMLGBF0EC00&activeTab=summary
Ref. No: 25/00645/HH	30 Lowefields Earls Colne Essex CO6 2LH	Proposed single storey rear & side exnteion. https://publicaccess.braintree.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?keyVal=STO5L0BFH8X00&activeTab=summary
Ref. No: 25/00647/HH	63 Hunt Road Earls Colne Essex CO6 2NY	Proposed single storey rear extension https://publicaccess.braintree.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?keyVal=STO8DBBFH9200&activeTab=summary
Ref. No: 25/00581/HH	3 Hunt Road Earls Colne Essex CO6 2NX	Proposed single storey rear extension https://publicaccess.braintree.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?keyVal=STBT9CBFH3H00&activeTab=summary

7d) Neighbourhood Plan – Call for Sites Review

TC confirmed he had circulated an updated version of the proposed ECPC comments for the specific sites in Earls Colne as submitted to BDC in the call for sites. The draft comments had been previously circulated in August 24 but were not submitted to BDC at that time as BDC had halted consideration of the sites pending the government's intention to revise local authority housing targets and make amendments to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Now that the government has published these details, BDC have resumed their review of the call for sites and have given ECPC an opportunity to submit their initial comments.

Cllr LB Leys questioned if it was appropriate to include reference to the relief road concept in our initial comments as this had generated an extremely adverse reaction when originally presented to residents as part of the public consultation for the Neighbourhood Plan. TC explained that at the time it was viewed by many as a choice between the relief road and retaining the golf course however this has now radically changed with the owners of the golf course demonstrating their willingness to consider selling the entire golf course for residential development



It was agreed to amend the comments to make it clear that when the relief road concept was first presented to village residents, as part of the Neighbourhood Plan engagement process, it received an adverse reaction from many who responded and is clearly beyond the scope or remit of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Response: It was unanimously agreed that the comments, with the above amendment, should be submitted to BDC. Action Parish Clerk TC also advise that ECPC and members of the public have a further opportunity to address the BDC Planning Sub Committee when they consider the sites submitted for Earls Colne. The timing of this meeting is to be advised by BDC but should be between May and September 2025. ECPC will ensure details of this meeting, when known, are widely circulated to residents.

7e) Village Environment

1. Purchase update on lawnmower. Statement was shared by Chair.

In August 2024, this Council considered a proposal for the replacement of the zero-turn lawnmower, that it had owned for a number of years.

In bringing the proposal to that meeting advice and guidance was sought from Braintree District Council's Agriculture Team and Tuckwell's directly.

The proposal set out that the current zero-turn lawnmower would be part exchanged against a John Deere X590 petrol Lawnmower and the purchase included the road registration of the new lawnmower on a '74 plate.

The Council agreed to the part exchange and purchase of the new lawnmower at that August 2024 meeting.

Since that decision was taken, there have been some questions raised about the validity of the new lawnmower. As a result, with the help of Braintree District Council and Tuckwell's, a review of the purchase has taken place.

This Council made a decision in August 2024, and following the review it will not be revisiting that decision. It is confident that the decision it took was the right decision, based on the information it had available, and clarifications received since.

The zero-turn lawnmower was handed to Tuckwell's in November 2024, and the Council are expecting delivery of the new X590 lawnmower imminently.

There may be some individuals that do not agree with the Council's decision and will be disappointed to learn that it will not be retaining the zero-turn lawnmower. However, there are formal routes through which a challenge can be brought should anyone wish to do so.

The purpose of this statement is to affirm the Council's position on this matter, and the Council will not be entering into any further discussions on this issue at this time.

7f) Village Hall

1. Grant update: Planning application, works progress and expenditure reported within Cllr Ranns report provided to all councillors before the meeting. Cllr Ranns sought approval for:
 - i. £ 7663 from our ECPC funds to fill the shortfall of the TOTAL project costs
 - ii. to use the General reserve to support cashflow between payments (which will be made gross) to suppliers. **Response: It was unanimously agreed by those attending the meeting**
2. Work Nest proposal: A detailed report was provided to all councillors before the meeting for a second time. Discussions were held regarding alternative suppliers of the service. It was discussed that as Worknest are used by NALC there is a security in selecting this supplier. **Response: It was unanimously agreed by those attending the meeting**

7g) Museum

Cllr LB Leys gave update on the application to National Lottery Fund.

Minute books have all been scanned. **Action: Chair N Spelling to reach to John Bendall to ascertain if he knew the whereabouts of the minutes books from 1925- 1968**

VE80 events are scheduled, leaflets and details to be shared with the Clerk.



Cllr LB Leys requested a £250 donation towards flags. **Response: It was unanimously agreed by those attending the meeting**

8. Clerks report.

ECRC Playground refurbishment is underway, and progressing. Requesting approval for timeliness in payments being released, as we are reimbursed by BDC. **Response: It was unanimously agreed by those attending the meeting**

Other matters within Clerks report were deferred to May.

Meeting closed at 8.15pm

Jennifer Smith- Comments for addition to April 16th 2025 minutes

I write further to my telephone conversation with the Parish Clerk this morning, Wednesday 7th May . and ask for the minutes to be adjusted showing the correct information.

We are most concerned that the draft minutes circulated by the Parish Council are at the least ambiguous or simply incorrect. At no time since BDC asked for call for sites has any member of the Parish Council spoken to us regarding our plans for the future of the Golf Course. The call for sites is a long-term project taking into consideration land up to 2041.

We have been at Colne Valley Golf Club for 25 years and during this time have developed the business to be an integral part of Essex Golf Union and England Golf. We host golf at all levels and our Mission statement of **'Providing Golf for every one'** has held us in good stead for the future.

Braintree District Council called for site during 2023 and a developer has put forward several sites in the vicinity, one of them being Colne Valley Golf Club. This has no relevance whatsoever to our immediate plans for our business. The term in your minutes *(TC explained that at the time it was viewed by many as DRAFT EARLY COLNE PARISH COUNCIL a choice between the relief road and retaining the golf course however this has now radically changed with the owners of the golf course demonstrating their willingness to consider selling the entire golf course for residential development)* is misleading and incorrect. We have no intention of selling the Golf Course. My family (Three generations) work tirelessly to maintain this facility and has no intention of making any changes.

I have had several representations from our membership, concerned at the draft report, and would ask that the incorrect assumption be removed from the published minutes at your earliest opportunity.

Whilst writing this would be a good time to make the Parish Council aware that one of our Young Golfers has just won the Amateur Under 18 French Golf Open Classic. The first English player to win since 1988. He then went onto represent the England squad in Spain and received a much-coveted English Cap. We are extremely proud of him and of our Club Members who support him. Not bad for a little family run village golf club! (Which is not for sale)

Jennifer Smith

Val Doubleday- Comments for addition to April 16th 2025 minutes

I have read the above draft minutes and would like to make the three following comments that are important to my objection to the change of use at the village green.

I would respectfully ask that these are included in the minutes.

Firstly I asked having found the minutes of Feb 22 that appear to give the green light to the applicants proposal “ has this already been agreed”

Secondly I requested that all councillors read the planning application as made by the applicant in which he clearly states that “ There is more than adequate parking at the front and side of the principal building , six spaces in total”.

Thirdly I commented that allowing this application was setting a dangerous precedent for any future applications for use of the village green.

Finally the minutes say “see 13” regarding the discussion around the village Green but I cannot see this within the minutes, can you advise please?

Many thanks,

Valerie

EARLS COLNE PARISH COUNCIL

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**2025-2026 Precept
Explanation of Variances**

To further develop the residents understanding of the increase in precept from 2024-25 to 2025/26 the detail below supports the summary that was included within the published Precept Demand Supporting Statement.

The increase in General Administration costs was as a result of:

- Staffing levels and associated on costs reflecting the need for cover of sickness and absence, administrative support for the Clerk and Village Hall bookings.
- Training budget for new councillors
- Supporting the funding of a Community Special
- Inflationary factor to ensure utility increased costs were covered.
- Compensation for potential loss of income from the hall hire whilst the renovation works take place

The council has strengthened its **General Reserve** position to ensure that costs from government salary increases, associated back dated costs are held separately. **Earmarked Reserves** are held/or identified to fund areas associated with the extensive renovation/restoration of the Village Hall, public conveniences and a grant to support the Museum.