

Minutes of Parish Council Meeting

held at 7pm on Wednesday 20th March 2024

Village Hall, York Road, Earls Colne.

1. **PRESENT:** Cllr N Spelling (Chair), Cllr T. Calton (Vice chair) County Cllr. Chris Siddall, Cllr. N. McKean (minute taker), Cllr. J. Parish, , Cllr. L. Baukham-Leys, Cllr J. Jemmet, Eleanor Fitch (assistant clerk)

Public attendees; G Brown, C Cannings, I Newman, R Barton

2. **Briefing from the chair:**

The Chair welcomed everyone back and introduced Mr Newman to the new Parish Councillors.

3. **To receive notification of absence**

Cllr. J. Happs, Cllr R. Ranns, Cllr K Kerslake (maternity leave), Dee Ellison (clerk), Cllr G Spray

4. **To receive declarations of interest –**

No declarations of interest.

5. **Public participation session with respect to items on the agenda**

NS brought forward items 10 and 16 as most in attendance were present to discuss the museum and D Day celebrations.

6. **To approve the minutes of the following meeting (January 2024)**

JJ questioned the timings of minutes being published. TC replied that minutes should be out within 6 days of the meeting in draft form and should be published no more than 28days after the meeting.

Minutes approved by all Cllrs.

7. **Essex County Council Matters**

CS announced that a cabinet member for the highways will be visiting to assess the state of Coggeshall Road. **NM** asked the condition of the roundabout was considered too, as this is now almost unrecognisable, as well as the condition of the road surface in this area.

NS questioned the signage that was put out ahead of temporary road closure for the High Street, which subsequently did not happen. **CS** replied that this was probably to complete the work at the zebra crossing which was delayed by the weather.

CS advised that more funds have been made available for road repairs and EC Councillors will have a team available for a week-long working party. There has also been a change in delegation to contractors from ECC.

ECC 20/21 Audit has now been completed for Highways. The delay was explained a valuation had to be done of the asset.

CS is pushing for the relining of the High Street complete, as this has the effect of highlighting the carriageway and acts as a speed reduction aid.

ECC is to extend its support for troubled families after a successful trial period.

Bookings for recycling centres are to remain.

Essex Climate action has been nominated for 2 awards.

EF made **CS** aware that there were complaints about overhanging trees near Chalkney Woods which were in the part owned by ECC. These are overhanging the road. **EF** to email **CS** about this matter.

NS has asked for an update on the Speed Camera pilot scheme rolled out in Maldon. **CS** has said he will follow this up.

8. **Braintree District Council matters**

GS submitted a report (attached)

9. **Planning**

a. **TC** gave an over-view of recent decisions on planning applications. Note was also made that the planning application for 52 High Street, the former Fork 'andles shop, has been withdrawn.

b. **TC** gave overview of current applications. Question raised about the need for the oak tree in application no. 24/00401 to be removed.

TC proposed no objections but a comment to be submitted questioning the need for the removal of the tree in app. No. 24/00401

10. **Museum update (Earls Colne Heritage Museum ECHM)**

IN recalled the meeting hosted by Rev. Payne and updated on progress since. **IN** met with **CC** to discuss how to progress. To move this forward, with the end date of the lease with ECPC being 4/11/2024, there are 2 options of how this can be confirmed. The first option is that **IN** will serve notice to ECPC of his intent to redevelop the site. This is to determine the end date. A new lease can then be granted between **IN** and the ECHM. This lease will be up to the 4/5/2026 to give the ECHM time to raise the agreed sum of £110,000 to purchase the museum building. There is an agreement that the purchase can be made before the 4/5/2026, however the lease will not be extended beyond this date. The serving of the notice will be carried out by **IN** to ensure no expense to ECPC or ECHM. The second option is for ECPC to serve to **IN** that it does not intend to continue the lease. This would incur cost to ECPC so **IN** was keen to avoid this. ECPC are permitted to withdraw from the current lease if ECHM can establish a charitable trust before the end of the current lease.

NS thanked **IN** on behalf of ECPC and ECHM for his flexibility on the lease.

GB thanked **CC** for his input and confirmed that a charitable trust has been formed with trustees: Malcolm Hobbs, Cllr Chris Siddall, Cllr George Courtauld, Colin Canning and Gordon Brown.

NS ask if the trust should have a member of the PC as a member, and that ECPC will continue to support the ECHM until they take ownership.

IN is happy to continue to liaise with **CC** and the PC openly.

TC asked it to be recorded that ECPC will continue to support the ECHM until 4/5/2026 or when the lease changes, to allow us to budget accordingly.

IN and **CC** left the meeting.

11. **Hobbs Way open space update.**

TC explained boundaries were still being clarified with CALA. This remains a point of discussion as the boundary currently runs through the middle of trees. Cala has proposed that the boundary id moved a

few feet to allow the trees in question to be included in the land belonging to MR Long. Cala are to liaise with Mr Long's solicitors. The land to Mr Long's side of the new proposed boundary would be given back to him at no cost. If agreed, this will be marked with posts / fencing. Once completed this would release S106 funds.

CS explained to all that this area was always proposed as a green space for the village, an area for kids to play on etc.

12. **Neighbourhood Plan**

Report submitted by TC and read by all PC's. TC suggested that the polling day in early May could be combined with the vote on the NP referendum. Date to be confirmed. All reports have been submitted to BDC. The invoice has been received for the works done to date by the consultant. Approx £270 is due to be refunded to the grant provider.

13. **Warm Hub**

LBL produced an extensive report for the warm hub, distributed to all PC's. All PC's acknowledged that this had been read. NS and NM both responded that a lot had been learned from the report and it was valuable feedback for future similar initiatives. Key points for future ventures were early engagement with groups in the village, including schools, care homes etc. Grants so far have been used for food and equipment, vouchers to be used in charity shops for warm clothing and the purchase of new thermal clothing from Age Concern in Halstead. The discussion expanded to future grants and NS announced that we have been successful in securing more funding. Further details to be announced.

JJ questioned the process for reclaiming expenses. EF confirmed that a specific form must accompany any receipts ensure the correct procedures are followed. LBL questioned whether a credit card could be made available. NS suggested that this should be taken up with the responsible financial officer and the lead on finance at a separate meeting.

LBL asked for views of extending the hub past the winter period. EF has been made aware of potential funding and is looking into this further.

LBL questioned hall hire, as the hall had been reserved in principle for the warm hub. EF explained that the small hall has a potential booking starting from April, although timings of the hub could alter to work around bookings.

14. **Village Hall Caretaker**

NS clarified Mia's intention of leaving her position as caretaker / cleaner by mid April, and that a replacement needs to be found. Advert will be required to be posted as required. NS and TC suggested that this might be better as a position for 2 people to give flexibility over the week and that cover needs to be arranged for all hirers. Discussion required for criteria for replacement. NM and JP to meet and discuss.

16. **Wombles**

EF has liaised with the Refillery and members of the community referred to as the 'Wombles' to arrange a litter pick. Insurance cover to be checked and risk assessment to be completed before the event. Declaration of participants responsibility also to be arranged. EF to check on these points. BDC have been approached and will provide equipment and hi viz vests. Signage to be obtained for litter picking. Event is being promoted via Facebook, community posters and through the school.

16. **D Day 80th Anniversary**

GB explained to the PC that the 80th anniversary of the D Day landings is to be commemorated nationally on Thursday the 6th of June. There will be events on the day including bell ringing and beacon lighting. It is also national fish and chip day. The ECHM are putting on several talks, Saturday 1st June in the village hall, Wednesday the 5th of June and Thursday the 6th of June in the village hall.

PC asked if they would like to host an event.

GB informed the PC that a memorial and bench are to be erected to commemorate bomber crews who were killed near Chalkney Woods on 20/08/1944.

GB left the meeting.

17. Communication Matters (discussed in committee after the public session had ended)

LBL volunteered to head the communications and notice boards

JJ volunteered to assist with finance.

18. Village Hall PA system

NM explained the situation regarding the current PA system. Upgrade is required. **NS** and **JJ** suggested getting several quotes for comparison. **NM** asked if current approved grants would cover work on the PA system. **NS** to clarify.

19. Christmas

NS explained that discussions have begun with other groups within the village regarding Christmas events, however the PC have not yet been included in these. **NS** suggested a Christmas sub-committee. Sub-committee to comprise of **LBL, NS, JP, JJ** and **EF**

RB and **CS** left the meeting

20. Items for the April agenda

No points raised

Meeting closed to public at 21.02

End of public session. Parish council went into 'committee' to discuss item 17 on the agenda.

Signed as a true reflection of the meeting:

Chair

Date:.....