



## **Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held in the Memorial Hall Thursday 14 April 2016**

Present; Councillor P Johnson (Chairman), Mrs. L Johnson (Parish Clerk)

Members of the Public; 8. Parish Councillors, Cllr. R Franklin, Cllr. M Jackson and Cllr. A Gleeson. Essex County Councillor, Cllr. R Gooding. District Councillors, Cllr. E Parr and Cllr. R Gleeson.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. Apologies; Cllr. P Clear, Cllr. F Lambert, Cllr. C Dunn, Cllr. P Lees, Mr. and Mrs. Segar and Mrs. S Johnson.
2. Minutes; the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on the 21 May 2015 were approved and signed by the Chairman as a true record. There were no matters arising.

### **3. County Councillor's Report Cllr. R Gooding**

Cllr. Gooding reported on the changing nature of the County Council. The Council is doing a lot less than they did in the past and will do even less in the future; this is all to do with money. At the end of 2015 the final details of the Comprehensive Spending Review were published and Essex suffered particularly badly in this process. The effect of this is that Essex will lose approximately £53 million; making reductions to budgets spending and services. There are still statutory responsibilities that Essex County Council has to continue to provide, but they cannot and should not always be the provider of last resort. Children centers are changing the way they are run; with some centers reducing their opening times, but with more officers going to visit the families in their homes, this will make sure that families get the help they need.

Essex Youth Service is an excellent informal education, social and personal development service targeted at the most vulnerable young people from those communities that need the most support. It is commissioned through community capacity building to enable and support young people and partners from within the communities to deliver positive

leisure and personal development activities for themselves; enabling young people to achieve their full potential.

There is £364 million in the budget to spend on new schools for the next three years; which includes £88 million going towards special schools. Schools in Essex are above the average in every key stage. The Government has announced that all primary and secondary schools rated as “requiring improvement” or “inadequate” by Ofsted could be given new leadership and converted to academies. Under the Ofsted inspection framework, schools are now placed in four categories – outstanding, good, requires improvement and inadequate. Currently only schools rated in the fourth tier – inadequate – can be forced to become academies.

The number of people in Essex having ‘Meals on Wheels’ has dropped in the last few years from 2500 to 600’ this is mainly due to convenient meals. The Council would like ‘Meals on Wheels’ to be more localised which would make it more efficient.

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In the last few years Essex Highways have concentrated improving the main roads while local roads and pavements were left to deteriorate; Highways have a budget this year of £66 million which is to be used on improving local roads and pavements.

**Cllr. R Gleeson and Cllr. E Parr joined the meeting**

#### **4. District Councillors’ Report**

**Cllr. R Gleeson and Cllr. E Parr**

A lot has happened to our village in the last year, most of it related to housing developments and applications.

We are still waiting for a response to the Fairfield Appeal; it currently sits at the highest level of Government with no timetable in place. Seeing that we were promised a response this time last year, I don't hold out much hope on hearing anything anytime soon.

Sadly planning permission was granted to sites both North and South of Stansted Road, despite a fierce opposition from local residents and businesses. This has resulted in increased construction traffic through the village, and the roads are showing the strain. The increase in lorries making illegal journeys up Grove Hill is a cause for concern, and I urge all residents to report any lorries travelling up the hill to the Police, information on how to do so has been published in the Elsenham News.

Thankfully, not every application thrown at Elsenham has been approved. The detailed application for the land West of Hall Road has been refused repeatedly, with the Planning Committee sending developers back to the drawing board. Also a proposed Travellers Site at Hilltop Yard in Henham was thrown out by the planning committee last July after representations following many people including myself, and an appeal will be heard this summer.

Lizzy and I have had £3,000 each to give to village organisations. Last year we spent our money on the following: A defibrillator outside the Doctors Surgery, new flower beds in Elsenham, a new boiler in the memorial hall, fixing the roof in Henham Village Hall, a marquee at the village fete, and helping towards repairing damages at Henham Village

shop after it was broken in to. We are pleased to say that we have £3,000 each again to spend this year, and we welcome all bids from village groups. It's been a pleasure serving you as your councillors, and we look forward to doing so in 2016 and beyond.

**Questions addressed to Uttlesford District Councillors**

**Are there any plans to have more retail in Elsenham, this may help the traffic on Grove Hill with people shopping in other villages.**

Cllr. E Parr said that retailers would have to purchase land in Elsenham and then apply for building permission; at present all the land was being purchased for housing developments.

**It was asked if our District Councillors would support the Parish Council when asking for bungalows to be built rather than further housing.**

Both Councillors agree to support the need for bungalows in the village.

**Councillor R Gleeson and Councillor E Parr left the meeting.**

**5. Parish Council Chairman's report**

**In the absence of the Parish Council's Chairman, the vice-chairman gave the Parish Council's report.**

This last year has presented the Parish Council and its councillors with numerous challenges and on the whole, we have been able to deal with them successfully, as they have arisen. Some problems and issues are, of course, ongoing and this year will see us continuing to fight on, and hopefully reaching solutions that are generally acceptable to the village and its residents.

The Planning committee has through this last year addressed numerous planning applications and appeals in an effort to try and bring some reason and sense into ever-present demand by developers for new homes. At present, we are campaigning for more bungalows on The Crown Estate's latest site, where the extra-care home was going to go. This TCE application for 20 homes has now been twice refused, and we are forever hopeful that our proposals for the site are listened to. Council members regularly attend the UDC planning committee meetings and we are still campaigning for Bovis Homes to present an acceptable detailed planning application for its site behind the school.

The drafting of the Uttlesford new Local Plan continues and will be ongoing for the rest of this year. Elsenham, unfortunately, still features strongly in UDC's future housing proposals and the Council will continue to fight the large-scale housing plans for the village.

The Playing Field is the largest area of recreational land in the village and is used by a wide range of people and organisations, and the Playing Field committee, chaired by Peter Clear, continues to maintain the field to a high standard and as a consequence, involves a lot of work going on behind the scenes.

The Elsenham Rights-of-Way Committee, also works tirelessly in the background, keeping the Spinney looking wonderful, consistently ensuring that the local footpaths are maintained and accessible and always pushing to ensure that the footpaths stay open.

The regular village walks are always interesting and long enough to deserve some chocolate after!

The village is more aesthetically pleasing, with the flower beds and the flower plantings around the village adding to the existing areas of daffodils, crocuses and snowdrops. The Flowerbeds committee is planning some wild flower areas and we can look forward to seeing these adding to the splashes of colour through the year.

The fence next the cemetery lych gate has now been replaced and looks more in keeping with the gate and work is ongoing to make improvements to the chapel and its interior.

We've had our annual clean-up day, arranged by Councillor Franklin and our litter pickers continue to work diligently to keep our village tidy and clean.

We now have a defibrillator in the village (at the doctors' surgery) and there has been a well-attended information day on how to use it.

Louise continues to be an excellent Clerk, coping with the myriad of Council business and paperwork that needs to be dealt with through the year, dealing with members of the public and the Councillors, and also keeping us all in check. Her procedural knowledge and professionalism is a definite asset to the Council and to the village and without her, we would be hard-pressed to cope with all of the problems and bureaucracy that are thrown at us through the year.

I would like to thank our County Councillor and two District Councillors along with the other members of the Parish Council, who have all given their time and energies to supporting our village and its community and for the members of public who attend our meetings.

We see the village growing and though disappointed that our objections have been ignored and our suggestions overlooked, we are hopeful that Elsenham will continue to be a great place to live.

## **6. Parish Council Financial Report**

### **Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer, Mrs. L Johnson.**

The Parish Council has had another good financial year, ending up with a surplus of £7000, this has been added to the general reserve for next year.

All Councillors are aware that they are spending your money, so their first priority is to ensure that public money is spent professionally to provide an effective service, not always the cheapest option but the one that gives good value for money.

At the beginning of the financial year the Parish Council set budgets, which is an essential tool for controlling the Council finances and as you will see on the report by the end of the year most of the budgets were under. It is of course more difficult to set some budgets than others; we have exceeded the street lighting budgets by 120%. The Parish Council is only responsible for the street lights in Station Road, leading into New Road and one at Fullers End, the rest belong to ECC, and out of these few that we own, I think nearly every other street light had some kind of fault this year, so in cases like this we have to exceed our budgets, we have no other option but to call on our reserves; and who would have predicted that a white mulberry tree would fall down on De Mandeville green

on Easter Monday, my thanks to Peter Raven who gave up his bank holiday to make the tree safe.

Another budget that went over was the War Memorial, but I think everyone would agree that this was for a very good cause and the memorial now bears the names of all the men from Elsenham that lost their lives in conflict

## 7. Open Forum.

**Question addressed to ECC Cllr. R Gooding;**

**People have to stay in hospital longer than is necessary due to lack of Social Care, making beds unavailable for people that need them.**

Cllr. Gooding stated that ECC wanted the two sides of health care NHS and Social Care to work closer together in the future.

**What was Essex Highways doing about Hall Road; this is a very dangerous road which is very narrow in places?**

Cllr. Gooding informed the meeting that this was one of the projects put forward by Elsenham Parish Council to the Highways Panel. The Highways Panel had agreed to carry out a study on this road with a view of installing some kind of speed restrictions.

**There have been lots of complaints over the past month relating to burning on the New Farm Site on Stansted Road just over the motorway bridge, with fire engines attending for many days trying to keep a large fire under control. The concern was that ECC would end up paying the bill, which ultimately means the tax payer; the land owner should be made to pay.**

Cllr. Gooding informed the meeting that the case was heard at Chelmsford Magistrates court on the 4th April 2016, at the hearing the defendant (tenant) pleaded not guilty. The case against the tenant was heard by the Magistrates and the defendant (tenant) was found guilty and sentenced to a fine of £600, costs of £1200 and victim surcharge of £60, totaling £1860.

The final cost of the tenant continuing to spread waste materials on this land, which is a contravention of the prohibition in the TSN and the Waste Planning Authority, will exceed far more than £1,860 which he was fined. This is an example of ECC being the last resort.

**With all the new developments in Elsenham, what is ECC doing about lack of school places?**

Cllr. Gooding said that ECC are going to extend Elsenham Primary School. It would be on the same site as the current school with provisions for a pre-school. This will only be built once the new houses have been built, the reason being, that if the school is ready for, the school places may be taken by children that live outside the village.

**Why do parents from Elsenham still have to pay £700 for a school bus to send their children to Forest Hall School in Stansted, when it was costing other parents less to send their children to schools in Bishop's Stortford? The alternative was for the children to walk nearly 6 miles a day along a very dangerous road, with a very narrow footpath, no lighting, flooding, and heavy speeding traffic.**

Cllr. Gooding said he was happy to have a separate meeting to discuss this with anyone. The children traveling to Forest Hall School could always catch a local bus which is cheaper than the school bus.

**As ECC were reducing the number or hours that ‘Spangles’ in Stansted were open, would this mean that the staff may lose their jobs?**

Cllr. Gooding said that the staff would be re-trained to take the service to the parent’s home, which is far more effective.

**Cllr. Gooding was asked if he knows anything regarding a strip of land that is on the ‘Call for Sites’ map, which runs from the roundabout in Hall Road northwards and finishes in the Henham and Thaxted Road, just where Fairfield want to have the entrance onto their proposed housing developments of 800, 1,500, or up to 12,000 new homes.**

Cllr. Gooding said he was not aware of this.

**There is a pine tree on the Stansted Road, near the entrance to Stansted and Elsenham Cricket Club which looks dangerous as the top of the tree has been snapped off. This was reported to Stansted Parish Council over a year ago but nothing has been done.**

Cllr. Gooding said he would look into this.

**Question addressed to Elsenham Parish Council**

**Would the Parish Council keep a close eye on the New Daisy Mays Farm in Hall Road?**

**It would be helpful if the date of the Annual Parish meeting is added to the ‘Elsenham News’ diary.**

**With all the new housing developments already in place and the proposed land for development on the ‘Call for Sites’ Elsenham is running out of land for recreation facilities, schools, cemetery’s and allotments.**

The Parish Council has drawn this to the attention of Uttlesford District Council in their response made on the ‘new local plan’.

**It was asked how the plans for the extension to Elsenham Church were proceeding. It is thought that it was being held up by English Heritage.**

**It was still not known when footpath 31 would be re-opened; the footpath has been closed by the developers in the interest of public safety, since 7 December 2015.**

The Parish Councillors were thanked for all the outstanding voluntary work they do for the village.

8. The Chairman thanked everyone for coming and hoped to see them again next year.