

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON MONDAY 13 MAY 2024 AT 7.30 PM AT THE VILLAGE HALL

Present: Chairman: Councillor C L Atkinson.

Councillors: Cllrs. Mrs C Adams, Mrs J M Bass, F A Delderfield Mrs H R Dundon, Mrs A V Heaviside, J.V Keyes, B S Marshall.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor T E Gegan and District Councillors Jade Hughes and Richard Siddall.

052.24 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

(Cllr F A Delderfield in the Chair) The Chairman asked for nominations for Chairman. Cllr. Mrs C Adams proposed that Cllr. C L Atkinson is elected and the proposal was seconded by Cllr J V Keyes. There were no other proposals and Members signalled their approval. Cllr Delderfield thanked Members and the Clerk for their support over the past three years and handed over the Chair to Cllr Atkinson.

053.24 CHAIRMAN'S STATUTORY DECLARATION

Cllr Atkinson made a Statutory Declaration of Acceptance of Office and thanked Members and the Clerk for their support.

054.24 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no disclosures.

055.24 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN.

It was proposed by Cllr. F A Delderfield that Cllr. Mrs C Adams be appointed Vice-Chairman and this was seconded by Cllr J V Keyes. There were no other nominations and Members agreed unanimously that Cllr. Mrs Adams be appointed.

056.24 APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO COMMITTEES AND OTHER POSITIONS

It was agreed to appoint Members to the following positions:

Amenities Committee: Cllrs. Mrs C Adams, C L Atkinson (ex-officio), Mrs J M Bass, T E Gegan and B S Marshall.

Planning Committee: All members of the Council

Social Media Coordinator: Cllr Mrs H R Dundon

Trustee: Great Totham Village Hall: Cllr. Mrs C Adams

Contacts and Lead Members:

Essex Fire & Rescue Service Speedwatch Co-ordinator: Cllr C L Atkinson.

Maldon District Council Emergency Planning Contacts: Cllrs. Mrs C Adams and (vacancy).

Essex County Council Public Rights of Way Contact Cllr. Mrs A V Heaviside

Essex County Council Public Transport Contact: Cllr. Mrs A V Heaviside.

057.24 ADJOURNMENT FOR THE PUBLIC TO SPEAK

No members of the public were present.

058.24 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 15 April 2024 were confirmed and signed.

059.24 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising.

060.24 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS, REPORTS OF OTHER BODIES AND GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE.

County Councillor: A report from County Councillor Mark Durham was received and noted. A copy is attached.

The Kings Portrait: The Kings framed portrait has arrived and arrangements are being made to hang it in the meeting room at the Village Hall.

Ride London: Notice of the ride including the local area, was received

Safeguarding our Heritage: This communication had arrived from the Rural Engagement Team.

061.24 PLANNING POLICY AND STRATEGY:

There were no policy matters to consider

062.24 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Planning Decisions: The Clerk reported on the latest planning decisions of the Maldon District Council.

Latest Applications: Comments on planning applications received up to week ending 10 May 2024 were as follows:

(Note: The Parish Council receives notification of and may give its views on planning applications, in accordance with planning legislation, policy and local plans. The Maldon District Council is responsible for making decisions on them.)

HOUSE/MAL/24/00289 Single storey rear extension and two storey side extension. 80 Staplers Heath Great Totham – The Council has no objection to the application, which allows additional living space, provided there is no overlooking of neighbouring properties.
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HOUSE/MAL/24/00324 Erection of brick boundary wall and black metal railings with sliding electric gate. Oaklands, Kelvedon Road – The Council has no objection but is concerned about the apparent urbanisation of the area.

FUL/MAL/24/00372 Conversion of existing outbuilding to Annexe; Proposed Annexe Paynes Cottage Walden House Road - The Council has no objection provided the conversion forms part of the main dwelling and does not become a separate dwelling.
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NMA/MAL/24/00388 Application for a non-material amendment following a grant of planning permission 23/00803/FUL (Erection of a building to accommodate a virtual driving range and associated works). Amendment sought: Relocation of the approved building approximately 3.7m to the west. Forrester Park Golf And Tennis Club Beckingham Road – Noted.

063.24 FINANCE

Confirmation of Payments: Payments were confirmed for:

Amount (£)	Payee	Service
1,000.00	C R Potter	Salary/allowance £1,000.00

Audit Arrangements: The Clerk reported that Mr Wrigley has offered to carry out the Internal Audit and the offer was accepted.

064.24 AMENITIES

Report of Chairman of Amenities Committee:

Site visits by Members of the Committee: Cllr. C L Atkinson reported on a site visit on 24 April by Members of the Committee. A report is attached to these Minutes

Bull Green: Cllr Atkinson reported that a resident who is knowledgeable in these matters had advised that the installation at Bull Green should include contact details in case on an emergency regarding the equipment and the height of the fence is not compliant; and of the correct type, although, the Chairman noted, that it is based on the type of fencing at Wickham Bishops.

Public Seats: Cllr B S Marshall has been working on repairs to the seats and one needs complete replacement.

Site Visits: Members of the Amenities Committee carried out site visits on 24 April and notes are included at the end of these minutes.

065 24 HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION

Finger Posts: It was noted that the finger post near the Scouts Hut had been re-erected but not the post at the end of Braxted Lane, although both had been reported.

066.24 COMMUNITY POLICING, SAFETY AND REGULATION

Community Protection Team Report: The latest report was received and noted. Most of the time (4.5 hours) was used for Trucam work when 128 drivers were caught speeding in a total of 4.5 hours. [1 every 2.2 minutes]. The team has carried out further checks on car parking near the School and found nothing to report.

Speedwatch: Cllr C L Atkinson reported the latest Speedwatch activity.

Defibrillator at Totham North: The Clerk has placed a request with the British Heart Foundation for grant funding for a defibrillator. It provides 50% of the cost of equipment (about £1,500 in total).

Speed Indicator Update: The accuracy of the speed indicator had been questioned and the Clerk had found a report advising that the equipment is accurate but general vehicle speedometers are deliberately set high for safety reasons (see note attached).

Use of powered models at Totham Hill Recreation Ground: The Clerk had received reports of powered models being used and will ask the community protection team for advice.

067.24 THE BEACON

Beacon Lightings for the D-Day 80 commemorations on Thursday 6th June 2024 will take place at 9.15 pm across the nation and British Territories. It was agreed that the Great Totham Beacon should be fired to honour those involved including local people of the time. The event would be a simple ceremony with a short address by the Vice-Chairman followed by the lighting at 9.15 pm.

There would be no food or drink sales available. Cllr. J V Keyes agreed to prepare the beacon and enquire about closing the roads. The Clerk had advised that following the earlier decision not to light the beacon warned that he had arranged to be away for much of the time following this meeting.

068.24 OTHER URGENT BUSINESS & FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS.

There was no other business and the meeting closed 9.30 pm.

Next Meeting: Council on 10 June 2024.

Notes of Site Visits by Members of the Amenities Committee on 24 April 2024.

Present: Committee Chairman: Cllr. C L Atkinson

Councillors: Cllrs. Mrs C Adams, F A Delderfield T E Gegan and B S Marshall.

Members of the Committee carried out inspections of equipment and facilities on site and agreed the following actions:

Jubilee Recreation Ground

1. The Spring See-saw and the small roundabout will be removed and, after refurbishment, installed in the new area of Bull Green.

2. The slide will also be refurbished and moved to Bull Green.

3 The large swing that has been refurbished by Councillor Marshall will be repositioned in the area near the Rope Slide.

4. The large seat will be repainted.

Bull Green

5. One of the seats on the small swings will be changed to a flat type to enable slightly older children to use it.

6. A latch/lock will be fitted to the new gate.

Beacon Hill

7 The damaged seat will be removed if possible at the time of preparing the Beacon for lighting in June and later replaced with a new seat.

Speed Indicator Devices (SID)

The accuracy of the Speed Indicator Devices (SIDS) on the B1022 have been questioned by apparently showing incorrect speeds of passing vehicles as lower than that shown by the speedometer in the vehicle. However the SID's have been factory calibrated and are accurate.

Vehicle speedometers operate from the revolution of the wheels and whilst some small variation in may be due to wear of the tyres the speedometer in most cars is designed to overstate the true speed of the vehicle. This ensures that in prosecution for speeding offences the instrument cannot be cited as under-reporting the vehicle speed to the driver.

Under UK law - which is based on a European Union standard - UK speedometer regulations outline how accurate speedometers must be.

The regulation states that speedometers must never underreport a vehicle's speed, while it must never over-report by more than 110% of the actual speed + 6.25mph.

So if you're going 30 mph, your speedometer may set to read from 33 to 39 but it can never read less than 30mph. In order to stay within the law, carmakers calibrate their speedometers to over-report their vehicles' speeds.

At an actual speed of 40mph, your speedometer may read up to 50.25mph.

Vehicle Speedometer Examples

MPH	Minimum Setting		Maximum Settings		
True Speed	Plus 10%	Indicated Speed		Plus up to 6.25	Indicated Speed
25.00	2.50	27.50		6.25	33.75
26.00	2.60	28.60		6.25	34.85
27.00	2.70	29.70		6.25	35.95
28.00	2.80	30.80		6.25	37.05
29.00	2.90	31.90		6.25	38.15
30.00	3.00	33.00		6.25	39.25
31.00	3.10	34.10		6.25	40.35
32.00	3.20	35.20		6.25	41.45
33.00	3.30	36.30		6.25	42.55
34.00	3.40	37.40		6.25	43.65
35.00	3.50	38.50		6.25	44.75

Note: Speed indication within SatNav systems may also report speed.

County Councillor Mark Durham - Parish briefing. May 2024

I appreciate that there has been a long gap since the last report, but I wanted to wait until the format of the Local Highway Panel and member led Highways schemes were announced as these will be of the most interest to parish councils.

It will not be a surprise to hear that recent months have been taken up with formulating the budget for ECC as it has been for MDC. Most councils across the country are experiencing pressure on their budgets due to many factors.

Costs for all councils are increasing with inflation and recent rises in the national living wage, material costs for construction and maintenance have also seen huge increases since the pandemic.

ECC produced a balanced budget this year against some challenging issues. Adult social care, home to school transport and children's services are all currently putting additional pressure on the budget and this is unlikely to change in future.

With a gross budget of over £2b and a net budget of £1.2billion we have to prioritise spending to those services that are aimed at the most vulnerable in society. Adults are living longer which means that more residents will need social care in their old age. Although we try to enable people to stay in their own homes, sometimes they need more expensive domiciliary care or need to be looked after in residential care settings.

In addition some children born with very acute issues at birth are surviving into childhood, which they may not have in the past. Of course this is good news medically but many have very complex needs and the costs fall onto ECC children's services. ECC currently has 8 children that cost the council over £250k per week. There is also an increase in separated migrant children in Essex for which the authority has responsibility.

To put these costs into perspective, adult social care spends over £2.2m every day of the year. Children's services and younger years costs £1m per day, schools & education £1.5m, Environment and waste £250k, home to school transport £140k, libraries £44k, coroners £17k. You might ask about highways and infrastructure. This costs £108k every day.

Although it can be argued that the bulk of council tax paid by residents only benefits a small percentage of the population, in fact there are 17,000 people who are beneficiaries of adult social care, but it is entirely reasonable that the most vulnerable are looked after first. The social care budget also includes support for those with special educational needs which accounts for over £250k per year. Inevitably many of us will need social care in the future, if not us then a family member or relative. There is a strong drive to keep people able to live at home rather than be taken into residential homes, but this often incurs a high cost for equipment and domiciliary care.

There is a considerable predicted budget gap for the county council in three years which will be very difficult to close. The council is therefore undergoing a whole council transformation project that will see a totally different organisation in a year or two. The council is very different to how it was pre covid and it will be even more

different next year. Most areas of county hall are mothballed and further rationalisation is planned for the future.

There has been much in the news about councils declaring a section 114 which effectively says to the government that it cannot pay its outgoings. Essex is not in that position although some neighbouring counties are. We are fortunate to have delivered sound financial management in recent years with over £600m already taken out of its cost base. We cannot be complacent which is why we are acting so fast with the transformation package.

Highways is always an issue and one that occupies my inbox most frequently and will be a concern to parish councils and residents. We have seen one of the wettest winters in decades and this has made defects worse and made repairs impossible at times. In fact the six months to the end of March 2024 was the wettest since the year 1830. This year an additional £12m is being put into highways to alleviate the backlog in repairs, employ new crews for local works and to the local highways panels. Regrettably there simply isn't sufficient money to repair every single pothole and as fast as they are repaired, they keep breeding!

Nobody can reasonably say that the LHP's worked perfectly in the past and they had become frustrating for residents and councillors alike. There was some times a three to four year delivery time and in many cases schemes just stayed on the lists year after year. There had been a call to abolish them altogether but it was decided to give them another try. Initially the highways panels were designed to carry out small projects determined locally, however since their inception they had grown out of all proportion and most panels were seeing applications costing in excess of £100,000. On the 27th of March the local highways panels were relaunched with a new list of applicable schemes and a new timeline for delivery.

From this year there will be two panels, a local panel and a chairman's panel. The chairman's panel is brand new and will look at larger schemes across the county and the chairman of each LHP will sit on the chairman's panel in order to decide which schemes to fund. It has its own budget which this year is £2m and will meet on May 16th.

The local highway panel at district level has a new list of acceptable capital funded schemes which are as follows:

Signage, dropped kerbs (not for domestic access), VAS (installation only), white lining road markings, school keep clear markings, bollards / parking measures, gateway features, grasscrete, salt bins, limited crossing upgrades, railings, bus shelters (from June 2024), speed limit reduction, small cycle parking facilities, raised kerbs, safety reviews, quiet lanes, tactile paving, hand railings and traffic calming signage (Chairmans panel to fund physical works).

There will also be a very strict timeline for validation, design and costing ahead of delivery. In most cases schemes will be delivered within six months. However the panel only have a budget of £100,000 per year, so competition for schemes will be strong.

For the new scheme only ECC members can submit applications to the LHP therefore residents, parish councils and district members will have to direct applications to the division member.

However, all panels have seen their budgets cut from previous years and the Maldon panel has a budget of £100,000 for the financial year 2024/25. The Maldon panel met on 24th April and reviewed the schemes that were awaiting funding. It chose to fund 15 schemes itself and refer 4 to the chairman's panel. These schemes used all of the current year budget, therefore it will not be possible to fund any new applications or fund older schemes still awaiting funding until 2025/26. To put this into perspective, the panel had schemes costed at nearly £500k on its current lists, although many would not have been within the new criteria for delivery.

This will of course be disappointing to parish councils as it is to me but should additional funding be forthcoming during the year, we may be able to look at some new applications. In addition when we know more about the panels in the coming financial year we will be able to either fund schemes already on the list or add new ones.

Parishes will be aware that in recent years, ECC has operated a priority pothole schemes for its members. Across two tranches, ECC members were able to identify a set number of potholes that would get an urgent repair. Although this worked well, the scheme has now been updated.

ECC members will now have sole access to an entire highways crew for one week to work in their division. This will be on a rolling basis and utilises the 12 new crews that have been funded centrally. This means that across the Maldon District the three members will have 15 weeks work to allocate. The scope of work that the crews can carry out is still being finalised but it includes repairs to roads, footways, vegetation clearing etc.

I am now reaching out to you to ask for nominations of work in your parishes. This is a new initiative and there are likely to be teething troubles, but the pilot areas have seen some excellent progress earlier this year. Therefore if there are lengths of road or footway that require urgent attention or other jobs that the crews can undertake, please let me know as soon as possible. I should have access to the crew on five separate weeks during the summer and it is essential that I am able to allocate sufficient work for them otherwise they will be utilised elsewhere. Please note that they cannot carry out capital works which would normally come under the remit of the LHP.

As is always the case, it is essential that highway defects are reported using the essexhighways.org website where it is also possible to track the progress of all ongoing cases. If repairs are not carried out in a reasonable time, please let me know, providing the reference number and I can try to escalate the fault.

We will have our locality funds again this year and I was very happy to have allocated mine across the division last year. We also had the community fund which was spent on buying chrome books for some schools, play items for preschools, two skate events at the skate parks, a visit by the drugs bus and we purchased 600 check your drink strips which were given out to sixth form students. These are easy to use and detect ketamine and GHB if it has been used to spike drinks. My individual locality fund is £5,000 and I am looking for suitable projects to be considered.

During the year there had been much talk of devolution, in fact ECC, Southend and Thurrock had followed a level four deal that had been offered by the secretary of state. Unfortunately this was put on hold but it is still very much at the forefront of thinking. Clearly we will have a general election this year and both main parties have already stated that local government reform is a priority. In fact the Labour Party have recently come out strongly in favour of country wide unitarization. I suspect that the finances available to either colour of government will show that the current organisation of local councils is unsustainable. We are in for some interesting times!

Yesterday saw the re-election of Roger Hirst as our Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner. I appreciate that we are in volatile political times, but Roger has actually delivered more police officers into Essex Police than there has ever been before and most types of crime have been significantly reduced. Clearly there is more to be done and some areas have seen a recent increase in rural crime. I have already tackled Roger about this and extra resources are being diverted to this problem.

I am also working on the local issues of the minerals plan, flood alleviation and of course the consultation into medical services in the area. We held an infrastructure summit recently where some of the options were discussed with the NHS, MP's, ECC Leader and other stakeholders. I think we made some progress but my previous dealings with the NHS gives me little confidence that a solution will be either easy or entirely what some residents want. It is absolutely essential that local residents have access to local medical services at least at a level we currently enjoy, ideally greater. I can assure everyone that we are putting pressure on our MP's and the NHS to find a solution to this critical issue.

In my portfolio as cabinet member for the arts, heritage and culture I oversaw a number of dedicated art and culture grants this year, a couple went to organisations in the Maldon district. I have also headed the formation of the new Essex film unit which is based at county hall. The film office now works with many producers and film companies from the UK and abroad which are bringing many exciting opportunities to various parts of the county. In fact we arranged for Mr. Bates versus the Post Office to be filmed at the Shire Hall in Chelmsford and also the recent Channel 4 production of Murder Trial. These bring in valuable income to the locations as well as very significant ancillary spend in the local areas. For example in the two weeks of filming for Murder Trial the Shire Hall received £53,000 but the local businesses benefited to the tune of over £200,000 in ancillary spend. We have arranged a major feature film to be shot in an Essex parish church which will see significant income to both the parish council and diocese as well as the final instalment of the Slow Horses franchise which is to be partly filmed in Harlow this summer. Clearly there are a myriad of different film locations in the Maldon district and the film office is working with the District Council to bring as many productions here as possible. Tollesbury has seen some major filming in the past, but I would love to see some more areas in my division featured on the big or little screen and benefit from the considerable financial impact that this brings.

We all know that at some stage this year there will be a general election at which there is every likelihood that we will see a change of government. It is often hard to emphasise to residents that what happens in Westminster has little impact over what local councils deliver, no matter what political party they may be led by. My main concern is to play my role in delivering the front line services that directly impact

residents whether it be at county or district level. It may not always be possible to solve every problem or get every pot hole fixed, but all I can do is try my hardest which I will continue to do to the best of my ability.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark FL Durham". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mark" being more prominent than the last name "Durham".

Cllr. Mark FL Durham CC.
May 3rd 2024