

Village Hall  
York Road  
Earls Colne  
CO6 2RN  
01787 224370

Clerk to the Council: Sarah Gaeta  
[clerk@earlscolne-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@earlscolne-pc.gov.uk)

**MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING  
HELD AT THE VILLAGE HALL  
ON TUESDAY 17<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2026 AT 7.15 PM**

**Present:**

Councillor R Cook (Chairman)  
Councillor L Bauckham-Leys  
Councillor R Dalton  
Councillor J Jemmett  
Councillor B Lynham  
Councillor I Sparks  
Councillor P Wall  
Clerk  
6 members of the public

**25/121. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received and accepted from Councillors Dennis and Jackson.

**25/122. Minutes**

The Minutes of the Parish Council Meetings held on 20<sup>th</sup> January and 28<sup>th</sup> January 2026 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

**25/123. Declarations of Interest**

None.

**25/124. Essex County Councillor Update**

Councillor Siddall gave an update on the following:

- ECC budget approved with a 3.95% increase on the ECC portion of the council tax.
- Cadent gas works problems. Highways added signage in an attempt to prevent use of unsuitable diversion routes.
- ECC elections are taking place in May.
- More investment in pothole repairs.
- Answered questions raised on buses, potholes and drainage.

**25/125. Braintree District Councillor Update**

Councillor Courtauld gave an update on the following:

- Earls Colne and Halstead Educational Trust requests a trustee from the Parish Council. Councillor Bauckham-Leys volunteered.
- BDC portion of the council tax was frozen for the next financial year.
- Unitary elections in May 2027, but there are some issues to resolve.
- Councillor grants – in the new financial year, both councillors will have £1500 each to offer in grant funding.

Please see Appendix 1 for Councillor Spray's report.

#### 25/126. Chairman's Update

Councillor Cook's report included the following:

- Now able to access all bank accounts.
- Budget has been approved, with a precept rise of 3%.

#### 25/127. Public Participation session

1 member of the public raised the following:

- Agenda item 25/132 (d) – there are alternatives.

#### 25/128. Clerk's Report

The Clerk's report was received.

#### 25/129. Finance and Internal Control

- (a) The budget update was received.
- (b) The roles and responsibilities were reviewed, with Councillor Dalton joining the planning team and Councillor Lynham joining the village hall team. Councillor Sparks withdrew from the highways and transport oversight role. The Health and Safety team need more support.
- (c) **It was resolved** to purchase an HP OmniBook 5 Flip laptop at a cost of £415.83 + VAT to support a councillor in carrying out council duties, in line with the Council's duty to make reasonable adjustments. *Recorded objection: Councillor Sparks.*
- (d) **It was resolved** to establish a single, formal Action Plan and Action Tracker to address governance, audit and compliance matters, improve accountability and provide Council oversight.
- (e) **It was resolved** to establish a regular informal meeting of councillors to improve coordination, communication, shared understanding and inclusive participation, and to support adherence to the Council's Code of Conduct.

#### 25/130. Planning

- (a) **26/00203/TPOCON** – Tree works at 4 Upper Holt Street. **Deferred to the Local Planning Authority's Tree Officer to determine amenity value and any need for replacement planting.**
- (b) **26/00201/HH & 26/00202/LBC** – Proposed single-storey rear extension, three front dormer windows and three side rooflights to facilitate a loft conversion, internal reconfiguration and the installation of proposed entrance gates at Lime House, Coggeshall Road. **No objection in principle, deferred to the specialist advice of the Conservation Officer in assessing whether the scale and design preserve the architectural integrity of Lime House.**
- (c) **26/00179/TPOCON** – Tree works at 6 Massingham Drive. **No objection.**
- (d) **26/00105/LBC** – Removal and structural support of redundant internal chimney breast and removal of internal wall between living and dining rooms at 17 Foundry Lane. **Deferred to the Local Planning Authority's Conservation Officer in determining whether the level of harm is appropriately assessed as less than substantial and justified.**
- (e) **26/00268/TPOCON** – Tree works at 13 High Street. **No objection.**
- (f) **26/00271/FUL** – Retention of an extension to existing farm building at Claypits Farm, Coggeshall Road. **Objection as the new application contains no additional quantitative evidence to satisfy the original refusal from the Local Planning Authority.**
- (g) **26/00236/TPO** – Tree works at Sesame House, 21 Coggeshall Road. **No objection, but would like to request appropriate replacement planting to mitigate the loss.**
- (h) **26/00082/TPOCON** – Tree works on Land Adjacent to Priory Farm, Halstead Road. **Noted.** This is the Parish Council's application.

#### 25/131. Village Environment

- (a) The proposal to install cameras to overlook and monitor the public toilets was discussed.
- (b) **It was resolved** to support the church bells refurbishment project in writing.

- (c) **It was resolved** to approve the direct sale of the existing mower, deemed not to meet health and safety requirements, to R&R (Sudbury) for the sum of £5,500, subject to a prior service.
- (d) **It was resolved** to name the public open spaces being transferred from Cala Homes 'The Mary Gee Green'.

#### 25/132. Section 106

- (a) The consideration of quotes received for the supply and installation of fencing for Millennium Green was deferred pending further information.
- (b) The consideration of quotes received for the supply and installation of self-closing gates for the recreation ground play area was deferred pending further information.
- (c) The consideration of quotes received for identified MUGA improvements at the recreation ground was deferred pending further information.
- (d) The consideration of quotes received to install a self-closing gate into the existing fence/hedge line at the Queen's Road allotment site was deferred pending further information.  
*The Clerk will be centralising the S106 process and all applications, specifications and quotes will be dealt with in the office.*

#### 25/133. Health and Safety

- (a) An update on health and safety matters was received.
- (b) **It was resolved** to appoint Hull Fencing to install bollards at the end corners of the existing block paved pathway at the Queen's Road car park at a cost of £450 + VAT.
- (c) **It was resolved** to appoint Hull Fencing to install a 2-rail barrier at the Queen's Road car park at a cost of £510 + VAT.

#### 25/134. Village Hall

- (a) An update on village hall matters was circulated prior to the meeting.
- (b) The proposal to agree the purchase of a 3 door backbar 312 litre bottle cooler to replace a defective domestic fridge in the kitchen for £430.80 inclusive of VAT, plus delivery of £40, was withdrawn by the proposer.
- (c) The proposal to consider quotes received for the redecoration of the village hall was withdrawn by the proposer.
- (d) The proposal to consider quotes received for the replacement of the distribution board was withdrawn by the proposer.
- (e) The proposal for the disposal of approximately 40 plastic chairs currently stored under the stage was withdrawn by the proposer.

#### 25/135. Accounts for Payment

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

Staff costs	£5,636.32
Scribe	£501.12
Datapartners	£74.60
British Gas	£658.27
Red Parrot	£176.93
Sibley Electrical Limited	£330.00
Council Wise	£90.00
Dots	£185.54
E&J Fire Systems	£304.80
Wave	£150.54
Daisy Communications	£64.44
P Wall (expenses)	£392.75
S Gaeta (expenses)	£2.49
Yu Energy	£1,039.30
Rentokil	£96.70
Beek Plumbing Services	£502.25

EALC	£64.00
Ben Flower Carpentry	£130.00
Unity Trust Bank	£11.70
Colne Valley Windows	£4,020.00

**25/136.General Information**

None.

**25/137.Confidential Matters**

- (a) Under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 s. 1(2), **it was resolved** to exclude members of the press and public to consider a confidential item.
- (b) The consideration of matters arising from recent works undertaken at the village hall was deferred pending sight of information requested from the contractor.

**Meeting closed at 9.35pm**

**Date of next Parish Council Meeting – Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2026**

## Appendix 1

### **REPORT FOR EARLS COLNE PC FEBRUARY 2026**

**LOCAL PLAN:** The first draft of the Council's revised Local Plan was presented by me, as the Cabinet Member for Planning, to an Extraordinary meeting of Full Council on 2<sup>nd</sup> February. The aim of this special meeting was to seek approval from Councillors for the draft Plan to proceed to the Regulation 18 Consultation. There was a very good debate across the Council chamber after which the recommendation was approved. The Reg 18 consultation, which will start shortly, lasts for 6 weeks and is the best opportunity for anyone to submit their comments on the proposed sites and policies contained in the Plan. The District Council will be widely publishing the ways that residents, landowners and agents are able to respond to the consultation, including online (the preferred option) or by letter. All submissions will be collated by the Planning Policy team and then considered by Officers and members of the Local Plan Sub Committee at a series of meetings between May-July.

**COUNCIL TAX 2026/27:** The level of Council Tax for this financial year will be discussed at Full Council on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> February. The proposal, which was agreed at a meeting of the Cabinet on 12<sup>th</sup> February, is to freeze Braintree Council's portion of Council Tax for the current financial year in recognition of the continuing cost of living strain that is affecting residents of the District.

It is also proposed to continue with the popular District Councillors Community Grant scheme for 2026/27 but this will be increased to £1500.00 per Councillor from last year's £1250.00. Councillor Courtauld and I managed to distribute our Grants last year, around all four villages in our Ward, to support some excellent projects; we are looking forward to new ideas coming forward from this April. Please do contact us if you have a local scheme that will benefit your community.

With best regards  
Cllr Gabrielle Spray