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Earls Colne
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**MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
HELD AT THE VILLAGE HALL
ON THURSDAY 18TH SEPTEMBER 2025 AT 7.30 PM**

Present:

Councillor R Cook (Chairman)
Councillor R Dalton
Councillor V Faulks
Councillor M Jackson
Councillor J Jemmett
Councillor W Lucking
Councillor I Sparks
Councillor P Wall
Clerk
23 members of the public

25/31. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Councillor Croker.

25/32. Minutes

The Minutes of the Parish Council Meetings held on 21st May, 17th July and 7th August 2025 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

25/33. Co-option

Two applications for co-option were considered. Following discussion, a vote was taken to co-opt both candidates. Before the decision was confirmed, a member of the public advised that he had submitted an application before the closing date. In light of this information, the Chairman deferred the co-option to allow the matter to be investigated.

25/34. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Cook declared a non-pecuniary interest for item 25/40 (f).

25/35. Essex County Councillor Update

Not present.

25/36. Braintree District Councillor Update

Please see Appendix 1 for Councillor Gabrielle Spray's report.

25/37. Chairman's Update

Councillor Bob Cook raised the following:

- Banking access has been difficult.
- Councillors are working towards reopening of at least one toilet.

- Work has begun on health and safety matters.
- Accounts and audit legacy – action to be taken.
- Welcome to all and thank you for coming.

25/38. Public Participation session

Five members of the public raised the following:

- Village Green proposals.
- Road sweeping and gulley clearing, and the impact on the road sweeper route.
- Damage to walls from vegetation.
- Pathway clearance.

25/39. Appointment of Vice Chairman

Four nominations were received for the office of Vice-Chairman. A vote was taken, and **it was resolved** that Councillor Jackson be duly elected as Vice-Chairman.

25/40. Finance and General Purposes

- It was resolved** that from 18th September 2025 until the next relevant Annual Meeting of the Council, that having met the conditions of eligibility as defined in the Localism Act 2011 and SI 965 The Parish Councils (General Power of Competence) (Prescribed Conditions) Order 2012, to adopt the General Power of Competence.
- It was resolved** to adopt the Financial Regulations 2025.
- The Communications Policy 2025 was approved, pending further amendments.
- It was resolved** to approve the Clerk/RFO to apply for a Unity Trust Bank corporate multi-pay card, to facilitate online purchases in accordance with Financial Regulations.
- It was resolved** to continue membership with the Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE) at a cost of £102 + VAT.
- It was resolved** to award grants to (i) WI for planting (up to £200) and (ii) Heritage Museum for a total of £5,588.31.
- It was resolved** to appoint Haward Horological to carry out works on the Church clock at a cost of £1,460 + VAT.

25/41. Committees and Member Nominations

- It was resolved** to appoint a Personnel Committee and approve the Terms of Reference.
- It was resolved** to appoint a Finance and Internal Controls Committee and approve the Terms of Reference.
- It was resolved** to appoint members to oversight roles (Appendix 2).
- It was resolved** to appoint members to external bodies (Appendix 2).
- Following discussion, the proposal of allocating 'environment zones' to individual councillors was withdrawn to allow consideration of a hybrid model.

25/42. Village and Environment

- The approval of the revised plans for the area of open space to be transferred to the Parish Council was deferred to the October meeting to allow further consideration.
- The proposed to actively support 'Autism Inclusive Earls Colne' was withdrawn, pending further consideration.
- It was resolved** to agree in principal to host a Cuppa with the Council/Fundraiser Brew for the Crew Event in October, with sponsorship to be sought.
- It was resolved** to support the Heritage Museum in its National Lottery grant funding application.

25/43. Health and Safety

- (a) An update on health and safety matters was received.
(b) **It was resolved** for Councillor Wall to attend 'Managing Safely' training at a cost of £495.00.

25/44. Village Hall

The identification of the village hall windows to be included in the replacement project was deferred to the next meeting.

25/45. Accounts for Payment

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

British Gas	£191.24
SSE	£1,124.26
Daisy Communications	£124.72
Wave	£301.08
Datapartners	£223.80
Haward Horological	£420.00
The Computer Centre	£1,303.92
SLCC	£92.40
JRB Enterprises	£225.91
E&J Fire Systems Ltd	£240.00
Hall hirer deposits	£20.00
Scribe Accounts	£933.12
Staff costs	£7,288.34

25/46. Meeting Schedule

It was resolved to hold full council meetings on the third Tuesday of each month at 7pm in the large hall.

25/47. General Information

None.

Meeting closed at 9.52pm

Date of next Parish Council Meeting – Tuesday 21st October 2025

Appendix 1

REPORT FOR PARISH COUNCILS SEPTEMBER 2025

Local Plan: The meetings to look at the Large Sites, those over 500 dwellings, start at the end of this month on 24th September with two to follow on 6th and 13th October; there are 44 sites in total. The Colne Valley Golf Club has been submitted for housing development; as soon as I know which meeting agenda this site is appearing on, I will let the Parish Councils know.

BDC Officers have now confirmed to me that the sites for the North of the District, including Earls Colne, will be on the agenda for 24th September. Agenda will be published on Tuesday 16th.

Subsequent meetings on 20th October and 6th November will be looking at Local Plan Policies and technical documents. I will then bring the first draft copy of the Local Plan to a special meeting of Full Council on Monday 24th November for approval before the Plan goes out to public consultation in December. This is still early stages with another public consultation due in early 2026 before the final draft Plan goes to the Planning Inspectorate.

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR): There will be a meeting of Full Council on Monday 15th September for Braintree District Councillors to decide which Unitary model they prefer for Essex. The other fourteen Essex authorities have held, or will be holding, similar meetings over the next two weeks before the chosen model is submitted to the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) by 26th September. There are four options currently under discussion but, ultimately, it will be a Government decision to decide which one is adopted and goes forward for elections in May 2027.

Bramford-Twinstead Energy Scheme: I attended an online briefing given by National Grid (NG) to update District Councillors on the progress of this scheme which is to upgrade the electricity supply. Along with other Councillors on the briefing, I questioned whether NG felt they had consulted sufficiently with landowners (farmers especially) on how the construction of the haul road will affect their land. I remain unconvinced that this issue has been properly managed by NG despite their assurances that they have fully consulted with residents.

Anti-Social Behaviour: Braintree District Council has launched a new set of dedicated Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) web pages to support residents and partners e.g. Parish & Town Councils, in understanding, reporting and managing ASB concerns. The website link is: www.braintree.gov.uk/community/antisocial-behaviour

The pages are designed to provide a victim-centred approach to tackling ASB, set out clear definitions of ASB and how to report issues. The attached leaflet can be forwarded or printed for reference.

With best regards
Cllr Gabrielle Spray

Appendix 2

Councillor Oversight Roles

Oversight roles are intended to give individual councillors a focus area where they can support the Clerk, monitor developments and carry out relevant research or fact-finding, without holding delegated authority or individual responsibility – as all decisions and accountability remain with the full council.

Area	Councillors (who may be supported by interested members of the public)
Allotments	Cllr Lucking Cllr Wall
Car parks, toilets, EV chargers	Cllr Lucking Cllr Jackson Cllr Wall
Church clock	Cllr Cook Member of the public
Climate change, environmental initiatives	Cllr Faulks Cllr Jemmett
Community events, hall/bar	Cllr Bauckham-Leys Cllr Faulks Cllr Jemmett Member of the public
Earls Colne Heritage Museum	Cllr Cook Cllr Lucking
Health and safety	Cllr Wall Cllr Bauckham-Leys Cllr Lucking (IT support) Cllr Jackson
Highways, transport, footpaths	Cllr Sparks Cllr Dennis Cllr Faulks (education/communication)
Local business liaison	Cllr Jemmett
Planning	Cllr Croker Cllr Dennis
Open spaces and play areas	Cllr Dalton Cllr Dennis Cllr Faulks Cllr Wall Member of the public
Tree warden	Cllr Dalton Member of the public
Village Hall (structure/facilities)	Cllr Croker Cllr Lucking
War memorial	Cllr Sparks

External Bodies

Braintree Association of Local Councils – Cllr Cook
Earls Colne Recreational Trust – Cllrs Cook and Jemmett
Earls Colne Twinning Association – Cllr Jackson
Greenway North Essex – Cllr Dalton
Halstead and Earls Colne Educational Trust – Cllr Faulks
Library – Cllr Cook
Millennium Green Trust – Cllr Faulks
Primary Parking Partnership – Cllr Sparks
Police liaison – Cllr Sparks