



Village Hall
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**MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
HELD AT THE VILLAGE HALL
ON TUESDAY 21ST JULY 2026 AT 7.00PM**

Present:

Councillor I Sparks (Chairman)
Councillor R Cook
Councillor C Dennis
Councillor M Jackson
Councillor J Jemmett
Councillor C Lewis
Councillor B Lynham
Councillor P Wall
Clerk
17 members of the public

26/47. Apologies for Absence

No apologies received. Councillor Hull will be late.

26/48. Minutes

The Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 16th June 2026 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

26/49. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Jemmett in planning items 26/56 (g) and (i).

26/50. Essex County Councillor Update

Councillor Rocha was not present. Please see Appendix 1 for Councillor Rocha's report.

26/51. Braintree District Councillor Update

Councillors Courtauld and Spray were not present. Please see Appendix 2 for Councillor Spray's report.

26/52. Public Participation session

Six members of the public raised the following:

- Thanks for the Council's input into the village magazine.
- Request for reports to be published with the agenda, not just the minutes.
- Comprehensive reports on the village hall and Section 106 project.
- Concerns about the Lowefields planning application.
- Safety concerns about Station Road and Coggeshall Road in relation to speeding. Support given to lowering the speed limit.
- Small copse in Station Road is a mess following recent tree works, concerns over what may be coming in the future. Request for the Council to look out for further applications.

26/53. Chairman's Update

The Chairman's update was received. See Appendix 3.

26/54. Clerk's Report

The Clerk's update was received. See Appendix 4.

26/55. Finance and Internal Control

- (a) The budget update was received.
- (b) **It was resolved** to operate a monthly Parish Councillor surgery for residents. Dates and times to be finalised.

26/56. Planning

TPOCON

- (a) **26/01520/TPOCON** – Tree works to fell dead Cherry Tree and replace with similar at 30 Hayhouse Road. **No objection.**
- (b) **26/01418/TPOCON** – Tree works to Holly Tree, Pyracantha, Privet and Smoke Bush at 44 High Street. **No objection.**
- (c) **26/01618/TPOCON** – Tree works to Cherry Tree at Car Park, Willow Tree Way. **No objection.**
- HH
- (d) **26/01522/HHL** – Proposed single-storey rear extension at 6 Hayhouse Road. **No objection.**
- (e) **26/01534/HH** – Proposed single-storey rear extension, removal of existing chimneys and installation of two rear rooflights at 42 Coggeshall Road. **No objection on the basis that the Planning Authority is satisfied that a bat survey is not needed, and that the removal of both chimney stacks would not harm the character of the house and street scene.**

FUL

- (f) **26/01371/FUL** – Proposed installation of 308 solar photovoltaic (PV) panels and associated equipment, including battery storage at Unit 24, Lancaster Way, Earls Colne Industrial Park. **No objection.**
- (g) **26/01472/FUL (& 26/01473/LBC)** – Change of use of former public house to create two residential dwellings, and erection of one detached dwelling within the former pub garden/parking area, with associated parking and retention of the existing vehicular access at The Castle PH, 77 High Street. **Objection.**
- (h) **26/01492/FUL** – Demolition of the existing property and construction of 36 residential units with associated access, parking, landscaping and infrastructure at Woodpeckers, Lowefields. **Objection.**

Other Matters

- (i) **It was resolved** to approve that a formal request be made to Braintree District Council for the inspection, monitoring and protection of The Castle, 77 High Street, and to seek a written response on any proposed action.
- (j) Recent planning decisions made by Braintree District Council were noted as follows:
 - 26/01112/TPOCON – No objections
 - 26/01087/TPO – Granted
 - 26/00908/LBC – Granted
 - 26/00271/FUL – Granted
 - 25/02626/VAR – Granted
 - 26/01630/DD – No objections
 - 26/01272/TPOCON – No objections
 - 26/01214/TPOCON – No objections
 - 26/00991/HH - Refused

To find further information about applications and their progress, see: [Simple Search](#)

26/57. Highways

- (a) An update on Highways was received. See Appendix 5.
- (b) **It was resolved** to support the community's petitioned request to reduce the speed limit on Station Road, Earls Colne, to 30 mph.

26/58. Village Environment

No update at this meeting.

26/59. Section 106

It was resolved to agree the proposal to improve the multiuse games area (MUGA) at the Recreation Club by using Open Space contributions (Agreement Reference P.0646) to fund the purchase of a mini tractor for artificial grass surface maintenance and to authorise its purchase from ETC Sports Surfaces Limited at a cost of £5,500 + VAT.

26/60. Health and Safety

- (a) An update on health and safety matters was received, including:
 - Health and Safety audit carried out by Worknest last week. Significant improvements were noted. Only an interim report was required as the inspector was satisfied with the improvements made in the year since his initial visit.
 - Health and Safety talks carried out with all staff.
 - A solution to the risks associated with ladder use has been identified and will be investigated further.

Councillor Hull joined the meeting.

- (b) **It was resolved** to agree the purchase of appropriate Lone Worker Monitoring Devices for staff, including any associated subscription or monitoring costs, with the Clerk delegated authority to determine the most financially viable and GDPR compliant scheme.

26/61. Village Hall

An update on village hall matters was received. See Appendix 6.

26/62. Good Citizen Award

Following approval of the scheme, **it was resolved** to establish a Citizen Award Panel to develop the nomination criteria and process, consider nominations and make recommendations to council. Councillors Sparks, Dennis and Lewis will form the panel.

26/63. Accounts for Payment

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

Staff costs	£8,323.82
British Gas	£326.27
Essex County Plumbing	£2,670.00
Yu Energy	£43.43
Seton	£42.11
Daisy Communications	£79.97
L Bauckham-Leys (expenses)	£193.00
P Wall (expenses)	£136.78
H Collins (lunch club)	£79.93
Braintree District Council	£669.00
J Townsend	£525.00
Essex Supplies Ltd	£159.67
Beck Plumbing Service (BPS)	£294.00

Unity Trust Bank	£17.25
AO	£3,095.69
The Safe Shop	£255.22
ICO	£47.00
Siemens Financial Services	£211.46

26/64. General Information

The following matters were raised:

- The Clerk is on annual leave week commencing 27th July and again for the last week of August/first week of September. The Assistant Clerk is on annual leave for the first two weeks in August.

26/65. Confidential Matters – Staffing Arrangements

- Under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 s.1(2), **it was resolved** to exclude members of the press and public for the duration of this meeting to consider the following confidential employment items.
- The resignation of the Clerk/RFO with her last working day of 7th October 2026 was noted.
- & (d) **It was resolved** to create a full-time (37 hours per week) Clerk/RFO post and appoint Sophie Blair-Walker to this role with effect from 8th October 2026.
- It was resolved** to agree the salary for the Clerk/RFO role at Spinal Column Point 32, rising to SCP 34 after a three month probationary period, within the LC3 below substantive range scale.
- The resignation of a Community Worker with effect from 3rd July 2026 was noted.
- Following consideration of the Community Worker Staffing Confidential Report dated 15th July 2026, **it was resolved** to appoint William Arthy, a candidate identified through the recruitment process undertaken in April, as a part-time Community Worker for 10 hours per week on a permanent contract with effect from 28th July 2026. **It was further resolved** to amend Malcolm Cornell's existing contract from seasonal to permanent. Both Community Worker roles will be paid at SCP 9.

Meeting closed at 9.22pm

Date of next Parish Council Meeting – Tuesday 18th August 2026

Appendix 1

Local Casework

On the Woodpeckers site planning proposal, I'll wait to hear the outcome of the discussion at Earls Colne Parish Council tonight and then aim to circulate something across my social media pages tomorrow morning. It is really important that residents object to these as each of the objections need to be individually looked into.

On Station Road, the proposed development is currently at consultation stage rather than a live planning application. I'm keeping a close eye on it so residents aren't caught out if and when it progresses to a formal submission. Planning at Braintree are already aware of my interest in this land as well.

On the poultry units at Chalkney Mill, I haven't heard anything directly back in reference to my objection but will keep monitoring it.

The Stone Bridge works — that's the A1124 bridge replacement at Earls Colne — started on the 9th of July. I'm also looking into the disability space on Earls Colne High Street which was raised at the last meeting and separately, into how I can best support a much needed youth club in Earls Colne.

On the A1017, I've secured ECC agreement for a road safety audit to be performed on the stretch between the two 40mph zones, which is currently 60. That stretch has bus stops used by children, and it had previously been considered too dangerous for the police to safely carry out speed checks on.

There are also ongoing road safety concerns at the top of Sloe Hill going into White Ash Green which I'm also looking at.

And on potholes and emergency repairs — there's a new Pothole Emergency Fund, £2 million from chair reserves plus redirected Members Highway Initiative funding, which has increased road repair teams from 9 to 12 across the county, one per division. This means potholes, pavements etc should be being addressed more quickly. That being said, I am chasing the 3 priority roads that had been identified. I am also aware of the recently re-named "Massivehole Drive" which I am raising with Highways directly. In fact I went there yesterday to measure up and take pictures.

Wider Work Affecting the Villages

On BDC's waste scheme (what residents may know as #Bingate) I'm continuing formal correspondence with the Leader of Braintree District Council, FOI requests, and escalating as needed. I'm still being copied into resident correspondence on the bins scheme every day, so this remains a very live issue of dissatisfaction locally which BDC must address. Just today, I received a copy of a response where a resident was told to put their recycling in the waste bin.

I've also been chasing down the detail behind the £300,000 that was directed to Halstead Regeneration Fund as I'm not able to tally up the numbers yet so have asked for further clarification. It is important to note that "The Centre" in Halstead was not included as part of the regeneration funding. I'm also looking into what I can do as an ECC Councillor regarding the Shelters in the middle of Halstead. If there are areas of significant historic interest which you feel isn't getting the support you need, then please do get in contact.

As Deputy Cabinet Member for Finance and Infrastructure, I'm continuing a forensic, line-by-line review of each of the portfolios that ECC has including Essex and the Passenger Transport contract, to make sure Essex taxpayers are getting best value for their money.

I've also been formally appointed as Vice Chair of both the Essex Pension Fund Strategy Board and the Investment Steering Committee which oversees Essex Pension Fund which is exciting and a lot of responsibility.

Finally, at the last ECC Full Council Meeting on 14th July, we passed a number of motions - 2 of which are worth noting here: one was calling for the withdrawal of centrally imposed housing targets for Essex, and another for the stronger protection of Essex's Green Belt and productive land from development. I wanted to take a few moments to explain why this matters. Aside from us simply not having the infrastructure (like Doctors, roads, schools) to support the scale of building; part of the reason our housing numbers are so high is that the government's own calculations are pushed up because of the pressure of London. What that means is that because London isn't building enough homes, and prices there are so high, more people



are expected to move out to areas like ours. Those expectations then get baked into the targets. But when developers do build here, only 30 to 40% of new homes have to be affordable. The rest are sold on the open market to whoever can afford them, with no requirement that they go to local people at all. So, we're being asked to indirectly absorb London's housing pressure, without a guarantee that the homes built actually help local residents. This really matters and needs to be borne in mind when thinking about and discussing the Braintree District Council Local Plan . We are trying to stop this approach at a county level. Sources for the above can be found at the bottom of this email for when this gets published with the minutes.

So, please continue to keep raising anything you'd like me to look into or support with.

Councillor Isi Rocha

Appendix 2

WASTE COLLECTION SERVICE: It is now almost two month since the rollout of the new collection system. Given the scale of the changes and the number of households involved – over 65,000 – the service is operating as intended for the vast majority of households. The Operations team do recognise that a smaller number are experiencing difficulties, these are being carefully reviewed and all resident feedback is being monitored as the new service beds in. It is important that the new system is allowed to operate for a full cycle of three months before a review is conducted, this allows the team to properly analyse the data to see where problems lie and, where necessary, changes could be made. A review will be conducted end August/ start of September. In the meantime, residents experiencing problems are asked to contact the Council, or their District Councillors, directly and we will provide advice and practical support where possible.

LOCAL PLAN: A meeting of the Local Plan Sub Committee will be held on Thursday 30th July to review all the responses to the Regulation 18 consultation; 1,800 comments were submitted and officers are continuing to work through them, grouping them together in a format that will makes it easier for Committee members to consider. The first draft of the Local Plan will be presented to Full Council on 21st September for approval to proceed to Regulation 19 consultation.

National Grid Bramford – Twinstead Upgrade – COMMUNITY FUND: As part of this scheme, a Community Fund worth more than £4.2 million is being made available by National Grid to local organisations. Applications for the first round of awards have now closed but the next round will open in November. The fund is open to Registered Charities, Parish and Town Councils, some non-profit organisations. A full list, details of eligible projects and how to apply can be viewed by visiting the Bramford – Twinstead Community Fund website. I am pleased to say that all four villages in The Colnes Ward are within the designated area and can apply to the fund. I encourage all Parish Councils and local organisations to have a look!

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR GRANT: I have got £300 left in my Councillor grant pot for 2026/27. Let me know if you have a project this could help with.

With best regards

Councillor Gabrielle Spray

Appendix 3

Bit of a sad report this month. We lost Lorraine Bauckham-Leys due to personal problems and I thank her for the work she did for the Council.

We shall also be losing in October our wonderful Clerk Sarah. Sarah has been offered an appointment that she had to take and I personally agree with her that it is an opportunity that she cannot miss. Sarah has been with us for a year and what a year she has had. She came to us amidst the chaos the last Council left us with, no access to the accounts such that for nearly three months we couldn't pay our employees, no access to certain files that are required by law for us to use, Government and Council policies and procedures that had not been carried out or followed. Yet Sarah sat down and managed to unlock these items and return the Parish Council to the basis it is today. I and all the Councillors thank Sarah for her brilliant work for us and wish her the very best in her new opportunity. We have started the recruitment of a new Clerk and hope to announce details soon.

The working groups assigned to the Council have been working hard behind the scenes and some of them may have some information for you tonight.

I must thank our community workforce for their efforts during the heat we have endured and tongue-in-cheek say if you see them in the street, buy them an ice lolly to keep them going!

Appendix 4

Clerk's Report

1. Following a second formal complaint to Unity in relation to the time taken for the corporate card to be processed, the Council has been paid another £150 in compensation. The card has now been received and activated.
2. BDC has confirmed ownership of the play areas in Earls Colne apart from the Parish Council's one at the rec club. BDC have them inspected regularly and carry out required maintenance. I have therefore now appointed an inspection company to carry out the annual inspection of the PC's play area at a cost of £80 + VAT.

Appendix 5

As you will all know now after the letter drop, ECC Highways has begun the work on the Stone Bridge – works which will last for some considerable time. Whilst it will cause problems no doubt, the end will give us a better bridge area.

Disabled bays in the High Street, as I informed you last meeting, are not legal and were put there by NEPP as a 'helpful' area for disabled blue badge persons. ECC Highways do not have responsibility for the bays. Therefore, we are at stalemate. There are three options to be considered: 1) Nothing further is undertaken on this item; 2) Both NEPP and Highways are contacted again to see if they will replace the signage; 3) To start the legal process to get the bays reinstated correctly for use, a process that will be long, but more worthwhile than 2 which I believe has no chance.

My Vice Chairman, Cat, has put forward a complaint with our ECC Councillor's help, for the pavement area in Queens Road alongside the Co-op store to be renovated to take away the slope from the building to the road. We await an answer.

A further complaint has been lodged with ECC Highways regarding the overgrown hedge in Halstead Road opposite Great Pitchers, which makes pedestrians walk too close to the kerb edge for safety. Again, we wait for a reply and action.

The infamous deluge of potholes seems to be slowly having a cure. Problem is, individual potholes are being repaired, to my mind a hit-week in an area to sort them all out would be more efficient and less costly, but we shall see how it goes.

Appendix 6

Summary Report.

Our latest news is in the rather large Village Hall maintenance document that is in the agenda pack. This is a rolling document that gets monthly amendments printed in red for easy signposting to new information.

Regular readers will notice that it has grown.

We await the formal H&S and Risk Assessments reports and a Response to our reply to the Fire Inspection report that raised several queries.

By their very nature, all 3 of those tend to be urgent and unavoidable.

We have made small starts on a few items and when we have the full pictures, we will try to set priorities and get on with them.

The outside renovation works muddle has now largely been resolved, thanks to Barry's remarkable efforts. We paid them, as agreed, last month and now await their visit to complete the remaining jobs.

The purchase of floor cleaning equipment was approved last month and the payment is shown on the "Payments for Approval" list elsewhere in the agenda. We look forward to getting the new equipment into use.

As part of our Safeguarding work, we now have the lock for the lobby partition and have found the keys for both kitchen doors. We can now operate the two halls separately. The partition rollers need some attention.

On the subject of locks, payment for the long awaited electronic keysafe is on this month's Payments List. An interesting addition to the Large Report is an addendum that lists "small" jobs that we might be able to complete in house. Generally, it implies that the VH could use a CW "handyman" for probably 2 hours a week for the foreseeable future. There are certainly plenty of things that they could be doing on rainy days, given that they have the required skills.