



Earls Colne Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday 17th July 2025 in the Village Hall, York Road, Earls Colne, CO6 2RN

Those Parish Councillors present:

Name:	In attendance	Name:	In attendance
Cllr Robert (Bob) Cook	Yes	Vacancy	
Cllr Victoria Faulks	Yes	Vacancy	
Cllr Martyn Jackson	Yes	Vacancy	
Cllr Ian Sparks	Yes	Vacancy	
Cllr Philip Wall	Yes	Vacancy	
Vacancy			

Also in attendance:

Braintree District Councillor George Courtauld
Braintree District Councillor Gabrielle Spray
Essex County Councillor Chris Siddall

Minute Reference:	
25/14	Apologies for Absence:
	There were no apologies for absence.
25/15	Declarations of Interests:
	There were no declarations of Interests.
25/16	Election of the Chairman of the Parish Council
	<p>This item was introduced by Kim Mayo, Monitoring Officer for Braintree District Council.</p> <p>Following the call for nominations from those Parish Councillors present at the meeting, a single nomination was received, and Councillor Robert (Bob) Cook was duly elected as Chairman of Earls Colne Parish Council.</p> <p>Following the election of the Chairman, Councillor Cook then presided over the meeting.</p>

25/17	Chairman's Statement
	<p>Councillor Bob Cook made a statement on behalf of the Parish Council reflecting the immediate past of the Parish Council and its future and the role the Parish Council wished to play within the community.</p> <p>The Chairman also conveyed the Parish Council's thanks to Kim Mayo, Head of Governance/Monitoring Officer and Emma Wisbey, Deputy Monitoring Officer for their assistance and support.</p> <p>The Chairman also reminded all those in the chamber of the vacancies on the Parish Council and that any person who was interested in standing for election should contact the Elections Team at Braintree District Council for a nomination form. The Chairman advised that the nomination deadline was Friday 25th July 2025.</p>
25/18	Public Question Time:
	<p>It was agreed that the Parish Council's Standing Orders for public question time be suspended to allow for those members of the public in attendance who wanted to speak on matters which were not included on the agenda to participate in public question time.</p> <p>During public question time, the following matters were raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earls Colne in Bloom and the potential for a Parish Council and residents Working Group • The poor condition of the surface/tarmac along Park Lane – who was responsible for the maintenance and repairs • Disappointment with the coordination of traffic lights in Earls Colne – need for a joint up approach between Braintree District Council and Essex County Council. <p>None of the matters put to the Parish Council during public question time required a written response.</p>
25/19	Update from Essex County Council:
	<p>Essex County Councillor Chris Siddall provided a verbal update on the following matters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Government Review (LGR) – a brief outline on the current position was provided regarding the number of proposed unitary authorities for the County of Essex and that Essex County Council was due to make its submission to Government in September 2025. • Potholes Scheme – an outline of the scheme was provided on how repairs could be funded with the Councillor Pothole scheme with reference to repairs which had been made in Park Lane and the surrounding area.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor Grant Scheme – a brief outline of the scheme was provided advising that there was a fund of £10,000 (£5,000 which could be allocated by Cllr Siddall's and £5,000 which was a joint fund) and if there were any schemes which could benefit funding, Cllr Siddall would welcome receipt of these.. • Braintree District Local Highway Panel (BDLHP) – Cllr Siddall advised that the BDLHP would be impacted by LGR, but the Panel had been given a budget to progress those projects identified, but this did not include those matters which were dangerous. <p>During the item, Cllr Siddall took questions which included responding to questions on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation that the £2,000 fund, which historically had been accessed by the Parish Council via the RCCE for pavement cleansing and repairs, was still available.
25/20	<p>Update from Braintree District Council:</p>
	<p>a) District Councillor Gabrielle Spray provided a verbal update on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Plan – An update was provided on the current work of the Local Plan Sub Committee (LPSC) which had been meeting throughout May and June to examine sites put forward as a result of the Call-for-Sites process, which focused on the small sites i.e. less than 500 homes. Following a break during August, meetings would resume in September/October to look at the larger strategic sites, some of which were for 1,000 dwellings. An update on the small sites in the Colnes Ward villages was provided which included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earls Colne: nine sites put forward for housing, no sites allocated apart from EARL2127 Land South of Morleys Road which already had permission for 20 homes, and site EARL2123 Earls Colne Farm, Halstead Road, allocated as suitable for a Biodiversity Net Gain site. • White Colne: neither of the two sites put forward were allocated. • Pebmarsh: six sites were put forward, none were allocated. • Colne Engaine: two sites were put forward, one was not allocated, the other COLE2100 Land east of Bluebridge Ind Estate was to be discussed September/October as a strategic site. <p>The public consultation on the Local Plan would be held in November/December. This would be followed by further public consultation in early 2026 before the draft Plan was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rivenhall Incinerator – following a lost Motion at Full Council on 2nd June 2025 asking the District Council to support a “Call-In” to the Secretary of State (SoS) for Housing, Communities and Local Government, to consider the planning applications for the Rivenhall

Incinerator, Officers, at the request of Cllr Spray as the Cabinet member for Planning, wrote to the National Planning Casework Unit (NPCU) asking it to investigate. The response received from NPCU advised that they needed to await the outcome of ongoing discussions between ECC and the Incinerator owners regarding outstanding planning applications, before considering whether a Call-In was appropriate.

- Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) - An update was provided on the Essex Mayoral election which was due to take place in May 2026 and the discussions between the 15 Essex Local Authorities as to how they would like to proceed with changes to local government. The elections to the new Unitary Authorities would take place in April 2027 and would operate as 'shadow' bodies until 31st March 2028, at which time the existing District and Borough Councils would cease to operate.
- Age Well Fair - 10th June 2025. Cllr Spray had attended an Age Well Fair at Causeway House, Braintree which was well attended. There were stalls from a number of organisations offering advice and support to residents.
- Earls Colne Play Park - Monday 9th June – Cllr Spray had attended the official opening of the new Play Park adjacent to Earls Colne Rec Club, which included new play equipment and groundwork funded by S106 money from housing development in the village.
- Councillor Grant Fund: A reminder that for 2025/2026, District Councillors each had £1,250.00 to donate towards local projects and would welcome bids for grants.
- Rural England Prosperity Fund: Cllr Spray would provide the application details to the Parish Council which would enable support to local projects that would benefit the community. Cllr Spray advised that there was £176K of funding available, which had two 'strands'; one was for small businesses and required 50% match funding, the other was for community groups and did not require match funding.

During the item, Cllr Spray took questions which included responding to questions on the following:

- The impact of planning applications for housing developments on the local area and infrastructure
- b) District Councillor George Courtauld provided a verbal update on the following:
- Councillor Grant Fund: Cllr Courtauld advised that he had all his grant available and would welcome applications for grant funding.
 - Farmland – Cllr Courtauld spoke of his interactions with farms in the area and put a plea out to remind everyone to consider their impact on

	<p>Farms, referencing the recent droughts affecting crops and trees, making them vulnerable to damage and fire in particular the damage caused by those walking across farmland and flytipping.</p> <p>During the item, Cllr Courtauld took questions which included responding to questions on the following:</p> <p>Councillor Grant applications – confirming that groups such as the Earls Colne Allotment Association could apply for grants.</p>
25/21	Internal Audit Report 2024/25
	<p>Information: Members were reminded that the report was for noting and that no formal decision was required to receive or accept the report.</p> <p>This item was presented by Kim Mayo, Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer, who gave an outline of the report and confirmed that the report issued by the Auditor was the final report for the Internal Audit for 2024/25 and contained recommendations to be addressed by the Parish Council.</p> <p>Decision: Internal Audit Report was noted.</p>
25/22	Revised Standing Orders
	<p>Information: Members were advised that the Parish Council's Standing Orders required amending to address irregularities in respect of the quorum figure, the application of the Code of Conduct to non-Councillors, and the public's attendance and participation in Parish Council meetings. Standing Orders also required updating following the Parish Council's adoption of its Co-Option Policy, which set out the process the Parish Council would follow.</p> <p>Members noted that their Standing Orders were their rules which guided how the Parish Council would conduct business and engage, but also provided a public document to which they could be held to account.</p> <p>Decision: The amendments to the Standing Orders were approved</p> <p>Action: The Standing Orders to be updated and published on the website.</p>
25/23	Consultation in relation to Planning Applications:
	<p>a) 76 High Street, Earls Colne, Essex – Ref: 25/01510/TPOCON (Notice of Intent to carry out works to a tree in a conservation area)</p> <p>Decision: It was agreed that no objection would be submitted to the Local Planning Authority.</p>

	<p>b) Land to the South of Claypits Farm, Earls Colne – Ref: 25/01462/FUL (Retention of extension to existing stable building)</p> <p>Decision: It was agreed that no objection would be submitted to the Local Planning Authority.</p>
25/24	Arrangement for the recruitment of a Parish Clerk
	<p>Information: Members were advised that following the resignation of the Parish Clerk, Kim Mayo, Head of Governance/Monitoring Officer and Emma Wisbey, Deputy Monitoring Officer had been assisting with that role to ensure that the Parish Council was able to continue working, however, there was a need to recruit a new Clerk to fill the current vacancy.</p> <p>It was acknowledged that the Parish Council would need to carry out a recruitment exercise for a new Clerk, however, to fill the immediate need, the Monitoring Officer had made enquiries and had identified an experienced candidate, who would be prepared to act as an interim Clerk available for 15 hours per week. The Parish Council had been provided with the candidate's CV prior to the meeting.</p> <p>Decision: It was agreed that the Parish Council would appoint the candidate identified by the Monitoring Officer for a 6-month period to meet the immediate need for a Parish Clerk, and for the Parish Council to commence a recruitment exercise for a permanent Parish Clerk.</p>
25/25	Date of next meeting of the Parish Council
	<p>Information: It was noted that the next meeting of the Parish Council was 18th September 2025.</p> <p>The Chairman closed the meeting at 7:57pm and thanked all those who had attended.</p>