



# GREAT CANFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

## MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL VILLAGE MEETING Held via Zoom on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> May 2021 at 8pm

Present: From the Parish Council, Cllrs Ginny Barlow, Stuart Hepburn, Jenny Jewell, Michael Knight, Robert Mackley (chair), and the Clerk Allison Ward (secretary).

0 members of the public

County Cllr Susan Barker

District Cllr Neil Reeve

1. CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME, Robert Mackley as chairman of the Parish Council opened the meeting and welcomed those in attendance to the Annual Village Meeting.
2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE – District Cllr Geof Driscoll, Parish Cllr Keir Donald and Parish Cllr Chris Easter.
3. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL VILLAGE MEETING held on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2019 were proposed by Stuart Hepburn as a correct record, seconded by Jenny Jewell with all in agreement. There were no matters arising.

For the record there was no meeting in 2020 due to Coronavirus; whilst new emergency legislation was passed to enable Parish Councils to meet and make decisions remotely (The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020), Parish Meetings were not included in these Regulations. Therefore, the Annual Parish Meeting was not permitted to meet remotely, and it was not held in 2020.

4. PARISH COUNCIL CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT – Cllr Robert Mackley

Since my last statement in 2020 (included in the village newsletter) the parish council have endured a year of COVID restrictions leading to every meeting being held remotely via Zoom. I for one cannot wait for what I hope will be our first face to face meeting in June and then without restrictions in July.

For once I am not going to lead with planning but with what I consider our biggest achievement in the last year. After much negotiation by the Great Canfield Community Trust (GCCT) for which I thank them, in November the Parish Council became the sole leasee of the village hall signing a 7-year lease with an option on another 7. The hall is still run by the same village hall committee; however, this has now become a sub-committee of the parish council. I am also pleased to report that the GCCT gave the Parish Council a grant for the next seven years rent, this is on top of COVID grants encouraged and given by the local authorities; the village hall is financially secure for many years to come. Apart from the continuing refurbishment of the hall, over the coming months the committee plan, restrictions allowing a non-profit making pandemic end celebration party on 13th August, let's hope it's possible as I'm sure many of our villagers would love to meet up again.

During this last pandemic year, it has been great to see the community spirit throughout the village, with the active What's app groups in the various ends and an active Facebook page, this I know has helped many of our villagers to keep in touch during the various lockdowns we have endured. The village still managed to hold COVID friendly VE

Signed  
Robert Mackley  
Chairman Parish Council

Day celebrations and two very well attended litter picks. The current community spirit is the best I have seen for many years.

The Parish Council is very aware of the importance of footpaths to the community over the last year and continues to monitor their condition, we are also chipping away at trying to find solutions to the ruination problem of our two green lanes. Whilst we have seen an increase in usage of the PRow we have also seen an increase in people straying from the paths onto private land, please keep to the marked footpaths and let us know if you come across any problems. We have a very good map on the village website where you can also find suggested walks, and two physical copies on display, one at the village hall and another on the noticeboard at Hope End.

Green Street was finally resurfaced late summer to various degrees of success, and we await repairs to be made. We are aware of potholes on some of our smaller lanes and continue to report these, we have seen repairs completed recently along Fitzjohns Lane and Cuckoos Lane. Surface water flooding along the Lower Road to Church End was particularly challenging this winter and the Parish Council has allocated budget to carry out works to try and reduce the impact, which should be completed before the Autumn.

As I write this speech the installation of the underground Gigaclear Fibre-optic superhighway in the village will be nearing completion, I think this will be one of the most important developments to take place within the village for many years and in the future could lead to the disappearance of the telegraph wires and poles, TV aerials and Satellite dishes. We expect Gigaclear to contact householders and businesses soon to introduce the service.

Leaving the best till last I will now address the subject of planning. Firstly, the parish council is aware of increased activity at Crumps Farm waste site and is currently monitoring activity.

In terms of housing development, the picture remains very unclear and open to speculative development without a new local plan in place. The Parish Council has been taking part in the latest administration's consultation process and have submitted our desires. We hope Great Canfield will be considered, as in the previous plans to be a very rural location with no major building demands placed upon us.

That said we are still under attack from new building applications especially in the north of the parish at Hope End, where developers can take advantage of the lack of an approved Local Plan. At the start of 2021 the appeal for the 80 homes on the site north of Canfield Drive was considered by the Planning Inspector and attended by the Parish Council and residents who were able to take an active part in the discussions. The Parish Council was delighted when this appeal was dismissed.

In the recent call for sites the Parish Council has submitted a response asking that this site and the Gladman site on the opposite side of Canfield Road are both identified as non-development sites in the new Local Plan. This is to prevent the coalescence of Takeley and Great Canfield and to provide a visual separation of the urban character of Takeley from Great Canfield. We shall have to wait and see if our request is accepted.

With the exception of agricultural buildings which generally can be converted to dwellings under permitted development, it is very difficult for the Parish Council to defend the smaller applications from residents for 1, 2 or 5 new dwellings on fields or gardens, and whilst the Parish Council will continue to object to these in order to try to protect the rural character of the parish and prevent the scale of development as seen in our neighbouring parishes, there is often little we can do. Equally challenging are the sites which evolve over a number of years, with numerous planning applications which can ultimately result in additional new dwellings.

Finally, I would like to thank the County and District Cllrs for their help and support especially with their regular attendance at our meetings, and my fellow councillors for their dedication throughout what has been a difficult year and remind the public that they are all volunteers. Lastly I would like to once again on behalf on the village and my fellow councillors to thank our Clerk Allison Ward whose work and dedication is invaluable.

## 5. DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCIL STATEMENT – County Cllr Susan Barker and District Cllr Neil Reeve

County Council Susan Barker had submitted a report in advance of the meeting, and this is included in full below. A summary was shared at the meeting.

The last year has been an experience for all of us and a totally different way of working.

Essex County Council became responsible for the sourcing and distribution of PPE, to care homes and special schools, delivering help with food packages and vouchers and working with many thousands of volunteers to assist vulnerable

Signed

Robert Mackley

Chairman Parish Council

residents with shopping, dog walking, collecting prescriptions etc. At the height of the pandemic, we were receiving 1,000 requests for help a day and these were being picked up by volunteers via community Facebook pages in less than a minute.

We also arranged holiday camps for children and moved library 'Story and Rhyme' online. Libraries were closed and Librarians volunteered for jobs with Essex Welfare (now wellbeing) service, the registration service, business support and other roles.

Early in the pandemic Essex Highways contractors suspended on site works causing delays to scheduled works and much needed pothole repairs. Once able to work they have had to be socially distance with a result that all work takes longer.

Grants distributed at County and District level to organisations have run into hundreds of £000s to keep businesses and organisations afloat that would have collapsed without financial support.

All of us have adapted to working from home and this trend looks set to continue for large numbers of council staff, with office space adapted to enable teams to come together to meet on occasions.

In Uttlesford 98.5% of all reception age children have been awarded their first or second choice school and for those that did not I will support any appeal. Essex is aware of the deficit of reception places for September 2021 and two reception classes will be provided at the Helena Romanes site.

The new 'all through' (primary, secondary and sixth form) Helena Romanes School was granted planning permission in March and we shall wait to see how the access arrangements work out. I agree with the council that what is planned is far from ideal.

I am very pleased that the resurfacing of Dunmow High Street was completed last Autumn and the bypass earlier this year. The small build out at the bottom of North Street is having the desired effect of slowing the traffic and the remaining repairs to the Tesco Roundabout and the Causeway/Godfrey Way are planned.

In Great Canfield there has been disruption over the last year with Gigaclear and road works creating long diversions for residents. It has been established that Gigaclear will be proving a service to all the offshoots Fitzjohns. Marsh Lane etc.

Just outside the parish the District Council has purchased the Banana Factory for use as a bin lorry base and office space. It is imperative that only local collection lorries are allowed to turn right out of the facility, and I will support any requests from the Parish Councils to assist with this.

District Cllr Neil Reeve reported on Uttlesford District Council (UDC).

Cllr Driscoll and I would like to express our appreciation to the calm, cheerful and efficient running of the Parish Council over the last difficult year, not only to the Chair and Clerk, but also to all members.

This is a highlights only report, since we have tried to provide details throughout the year to the Parish Council meetings.

Whilst the zoom meetings have impersonal inefficiency compared with face-to-face meetings, they have had the positive side effect of increased participation. Everyone looks forward to face-to-face meetings resuming as soon as possible.

2020/2021 has been characterized by the terrible Covid19 pandemic. UDC officers and staff have performed a remarkable job in assisting residents, organisations and businesses throughout the year. In particular the volunteers, that have mobilised to assist the unfortunate, deserve special praise. Further the majority of the services of the Council have continued as usually as possible. Covid19 caution: Please continue to follow the rules to keep fighting the virus. Even though the cases have very much reduced, we must remain vigilant.

Access to the various Covid19 pandemic related grants available from the Government can be found through the UDC website. Please keep monitoring.

Signed  
Robert Mackley  
Chairman Parish Council

Balanced budget: The Council has a balanced budget going forward, without service reduction, despite a steady reduction in Central Government support, towards virtually zero. The investment portfolio to fund the shortfall is now effectively complete.

The Airport Appeal: The Council, as well as SSE, both defended the appeal against the decision to refuse expansion of the airport. Hearings have now finished. The outcome will be made known sometime after early June 2021. UDC officers have contacted the Appeal Inspectors concerning latest (post-Appeal hearings) announced emerging regulations including aviation and marine industries in the national emission targets.

Preparation of the Uttlesford Local Plan restarted during the year. Increased stakeholder engagement is a key element of this. Ongoing input from residents, Parish and Town Councils, community groups, business, and all stakeholders is a prerequisite, and has commenced. Please continue to monitor/input.

The Uttlesford Climate Emergency Strategy has been approved. Next step is the detailed Action Plan to start specifying the discrete elements of the strategy together with the associated targets.

The post Covid19 Economic Recovery Plan to assist impacted residents and businesses has been agreed and will become even more required as the current lockdowns are eased/ceased.

Elections: Will take place on Thursday 6 May 2021. We are currently in 'so-called' Purdah, with less Council meetings. However, the main services including Planning/Licensing etc have continued as usual.

The chair thanked both County and District Cllrs for attending meetings on a regular basis.

#### 6. VILLAGE HALL UPDATE – Cllr Robert Mackley

In addition to the points in the Chairman's report, Cllr Mackley as a member of the village hall committee reported that the committee had completed the necessary risk assessments and managed to stay sporadically open for 'professional groups' when restrictions allowed, but unfortunately not for private bookings or community clubs.

Prior to the Parish Council taking over the lease, additions in the year have included new pictures on the walls which also act as sound boards. Further works are planned to re-decorate the hall and replace the carpet in the entrance hall.

It is hoped as the government roadmap advances that users will once again be back in the hall which is available for hire by any in the community.

#### 7. FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2018/19 – The Clerk

As reported the Parish Council is now the leasee of the village hall and as a result village hall accounts are incorporated within the Parish Council accounts and subject to the same regulations.

The receipts of £27k reflect the grants for the village hall. With expenditure of £5.6k the net result is a surplus for the year of £21.4k.

As at March 2021, the Parish Council has hall reserves of £15.1k, the Easement fund which is reserves for parish projects and planning appeals is £42.5k and there is £12.5k in general funds.

#### 8. PARISHONERS QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

Nothing to report.

DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING – Monday 9<sup>th</sup> May 2022 at 8pm.

The meeting closed at 8.30pm.

Signed  
Robert Mackley  
Chairman Parish Council