



# GREAT CANFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

## MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL VILLAGE MEETING Held at Great Canfield Village Hall on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2023 at 8pm

In attendance were 6 members of the Parish Council, 1 member of the public, District Cllrs and the Parish Clerk.

1. CHAIRMAN's WELCOME, Virginia Barlow as chair of the Parish Council opened the meeting and welcomed those in attendance to the Annual Village Meeting.
2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –Parish Cllr Michael Knight, Jason Asser and Robert Mackley.
3. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL VILLAGE MEETING held on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> May 2022 were proposed by Virginia Barlow as a correct record, seconded by Richard Stratton with all in agreement.
4. PARISH COUNCIL CHAIR'S STATEMENT – Cllr Virginia Barlow

On behalf of the Parish Council and the Parishioners of Great Canfield I would like to start by thanking Stuart Hepburn who decided not to stand for re-election, for his work on the Parish Council over the last 8 years. His financial awareness was invaluable and his keen eye on all things Fitzjohns Lane and the cricket ground will remain in our memories!

We welcome our new Councillor Harry Anderson and with all other Cllrs re-standing for this terms elections we are at full strength.

This past year has seen the celebration of the Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee in June 2022, followed by her death and the subsequent funeral in September 2022 and in the past week, the coronation of King Charles III.

All these events were marked by Great Canfield with community events led by the village hall committee with the support of the parish council, including a village hog roast, entertainment and beacon lighting for the Jubilee, and then the proclamation following the Queen's death of the ascension of King Charles. Most recently the village celebrated the coronation with an evening of music and a Sunday Big Lunch.

Grants supported both the platinum Jubilee and Kings Coronation events, with the Jubilee weekend resulting in a surplus of £513 which we gifted to the PCC towards the Lych Gate Repairs. It should be noted that there are funds available and it is within the Parish Council's remit to be able to award grants to any causes which are for the benefit of Great Canfield residents. If any local groups, parishioner or group of parishioners come to the Parish Council with an idea for something which might benefit the village we will always consider it.

### Traffic and Roads

In July we were visited by 4 young residents who wanted to bring the issue of speeding to the attention of the Parish Council and we thank them for their efforts and interest in making Great Canfield a better place for all to live and work. Speeding and HGVs using unsuitable lanes is something the PC has been vocal about for many years, we continue to push Essex Highways to reduce the speed limit through Bacon End and to enforce ditch maintenance, with the advice and assistance of County Councillor Susan Barker.

The Parish Council is aware of the state of some of the roads in the area and the large number of encroaching pot-holes, and increasingly the cliff edge road verges where poor drainage and large vehicles have created unreversible damage. There is ongoing dialogue about road repairs although Essex Highways restricted budgets generally mean Great

Signed  
Virginia Barlow  
Chair Parish Council

Canfields rural roads are at the bottom of the priority list. (I'd take the bit out about November budgets as in Feb 23 Essex Highways did announce additional highway budgets).

### Rangers

Without notice Essex County Council announced it was withdrawing its funding for Highways Rangers across the county. In support of a proposal from Uttlesford GPCP offered to contribute funds towards maintaining this service but not enough other PC's were willing to contribute and so the service was withdrawn at the beginning of April 2023. As a result the parish council has included budget to pay contractors to carry out the minor maintenance including finger post painting, sign cleaning that the rangers previously did.

### Planning

We were advised that there would be further delays in the Local Plan as a new Rural Lead Officer has been appointed and this will now not complete for consultation on preferred sites until later in 2024 at the very earliest. This means of course that in our small village we are always at risk speculative development applications. While Great Canfield is mindful of the requirement of new housing, this should not be at the expense of the rural nature of our village. The positive position is that currently there is a 4.89 years worth of housing in Uttlesford out of a 5 year housing need.

While we are mindful of the need to update the Village Design Statement and had hoped to carry this out in 2022, this has had to be put on hold while we await the updated Local Plan. If any villager would like to help in the update of the VDS please could they contact Ginny Barlow or the PC.

Throughout the village there have been the usual number of planning applications during the year for extensions, and other small works.

Applications for new homes have not been as intense as in previous years, however three new homes have been approved on Canfield Drive, Hope End including two recently overturned by the planning inspector and allowed on appeal. During the year Hope End and other areas in the parish have seen previous years new home applications built and new residents welcomed.

The Parish Council has undertaken a project to check all the easements for properties which have access across Council land. This has come to light as a few properties have either come to market without easements in place or have wanted to upgrade their access driveways.

It is important for all residents to be aware of the village design statement which is on the website when upgrading works to their properties. The look and feel of the village is rural. It is why people choose to live here. It is important to bear this in mind when undertaking works that might change the look of a property.

Importantly access across PC land should only be undertaken on a "like-for-like" basis and not become urban in feel.

### Footpaths

The PC continues to monitor all footpaths and bridleways. In particular there are the continued issues with motorised vehicles destroying the two green lanes in the Parish and there is ongoing dialogue about how best to remedy this.

### Ditches and Flooding

Flooding has always been an issue along the Lower Road (Watery Lane), in early 2022 the parish council carried out initial works and local farmer Jonathon Clarke has now carried out extensive work on clearing his ditches which has had a huge effect. Given the amount of rain that has fallen over the past couple of months, we would have expected the road become a river, but this has not happened, and the water was contained. This will also help maintain the road surface which used to get washed away. It would be good to see a similar ditch clearing in along the Bacon End stretch which cannot cope with the water quantities we see during rain storms.

The Parish Council would like to thank the Village Hall Committee for all its hard work in managing the hall, carrying out maintenance and improvements, and for producing many events over the past year – from the Jubilee to the karaoke to the Fireworks, to the Coronation. The social events are the lifeblood of this village. They pull everyone together and keep the community spirit in the village alive.

In closing I would like to congratulate District Cllr Geof Driscoll and District Cllr Neil Reeve both from Residents for Uttlesford and who were successfully re-elected in the recent District Council elections. Thank you also to you both for their support over the last year and your attendance and contribution at our meetings. Thanks also to my fellow parish councillors who voluntarily give up their time to attend meetings, read the large amount of correspondence we receive

Signed  
Virginia Barlow  
Chair Parish Council

and who support the parish in many other often unseen ways, as a parish council we work collectively to maintain the rural environment and to make Great Canfield a better place for all to live and work.

Finally on behalf of the Parish Council I would like to thank our Clerk Allison Ward, without whom this Parish Council could not run! She provides invaluable advice and counsel to all of us.

## 5. DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUCNIL STATEMENT

District Cllr Reeve reported that the new council is being formed and new portfolio holders will be decided whilst ensuring continuity, there is a lot of passion to get issued fixed including the draft Local plan which is scheduled for consultation in the Autumn.

District Cllr Driscoll thanked Great Canfield parish council for their support and added that District Cllrs have funds available to grant to small groups, please get in touch.

## 6. OTHER VILLAGE REPORTS

### 6.1. VILLAGE HALL – Written statement read by the Clerk and provided by Robert Mackley

The village hall is ticking over and we have seen hall bookings steady with regular groups providing activities for the community as well as contributing to the running costs. The social events take a lot of the committees time to organise and are a great way of bringing the community together as well as raising vital funds to cover the shortfall in running costs, maintaining the hall and ensuring we meet all the legal requirements for public buildings.

As lease holders the parish council manages the village hall accounts and these are publicly available and noted in parish council minutes. In the last year the hall saw a small deficit of £1k which is covered by reserves and ended March 2023 with a cash balance of £13.7k. Precept monies have not been used to fund the hall.

We would like to have redecorated the hall in the last year, however this is on hold until the issue with the damp on the internal wall between the hall and School Cottage is resolved by the Parochial Church Council who are the owners of the hall and cottage. During the year the village hall committee purchased a gazebo which can be used to extend the village hall facility onto the car park for community events, we are grateful to the Canfield Community Trust for their grant to cover this cost. We are currently progressing a plan to replace the ladies toilet and have plans in the coming year, in addition to internal decoration, to replace the entrance hall carpet.

We are keen to attract new members to the village hall committee in order to ensure the workload does not fall on a few. If you are interested in volunteering and getting more involved in village life we would love to hear from you.

### 6.2. GREAT CANFIELD PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL – David Turner

Most noticeable is that the Lych Gate is no longer supported by yellow plastic and has now been made safe and restored, we would like to record our thanks to all those who contributed to the costs of repair.

During the year we carried out a churchyard survey and any gravestones that were leaning have either been laid flat or embedded them. We continue to work on producing a churchyard map to ensure we have a record of marked graves and their exact location.

Recently out church architect has retired and we are actively seeking a new church architect in order that they can carry out the 5 year building inspection which all churches are required to complete and provides a list of repairs to ensure the building is maintained, this is due in the summer of this year.

One other scheme which has been on the back burner is the addition of toilet and kitchen facilities within the church. We are grateful to Keir and Jo Donald who have offered the use of the coach house facilities adjacent to the churchyard once this is complete, and whilst we continue to investigate the options and feasibility.

After 17 years our treasurer, Tony Hughes is ‘retiring’ on 21<sup>st</sup> May and we continue to look for a replacement from within the wider community, if anyone is interested please get in touch as without a treasurer this responsibility falls to the churchwarden .

The church and village hall are in communication re the works to the party wall. Rentokil have given a quote (£20k) and opinion that it isn't rising damp and is an issue with the hall floor, we are currently seeking alternative views and advice.

Church services continue twice a month with c.15 people at ordinary services, although this increases greater at festivals.

7. PARISH COUCNIL FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2022/23 – The Clerk

The parish council accounts show a surplus for the year of £2,245 primarily due to lower than expected spend on projects including some which rollover into 2023/24.

Reserves are £75,134 of which £18,880 is general, £13,727 village hall and the balance of £42,528 the easement fund which has a reserve policy for use either to support projects that will benefit residents or to support planning consultants if required.

8. PARISHONERS QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS - None

DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING – Monday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2023 at 8pm.

The meeting closed at 8.30pm.