



GREAT CANFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL VILLAGE MEETING Held at Takeley Silver Jubilee Hall on Monday 12th May 2025 at 8pm

In attendance were 4 members of the Parish Council, District Cllr Neil Reeve 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 were received from Robert Mackley, Magnus Mildwater, County Cllr Susan Barker and District Cllr Geof Dricsoll.
3. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL VILLAGE MEETING held on Thursday 13th May 2024 were proposed by Virginia Barlow as a correct record, seconded by Jenny Jewell with all in agreement.
4. PARISH COUNCIL CHAIR'S STATEMENT – Cllr Virginia Barlow

Great Canfield is a close and lively village. This year we have frustrated by the closure of the Village Hall in July 2024 which was necessary due to essential repairs for damp. The church as landlords were responsible for the repairs and whilst the damp work was completed satisfactorily, the replacement floor has caused numerous issues. We were pleased to see a conclusion in late April which has allowed the parish council to take back responsibility for the hall. The parish council decided the extended delays created a perfect time to consider upgrading a number of fixtures and fittings. A programme has been drawn up and works have now begun to install a new heating system together with new acoustic panels and fresh decoration. The works will be funded from the Village Hall reserves, grants from Canfield Community Trust and the District Cllrs fund, with the balance from parish council non precept funds. We will also welcome some new chairs and tables and have applied to Stansted Community Fund for a grant.

As part of the renovations, the church has agreed to divide the garden to the rear of the property and for the first time, the Village Hall will enjoy some outside space. It is the intention to reopen the Hall in July and at the end of the Summer we hope to hold a welcome party for all villagers and especially new villagers who have not yet experienced the village hospitality.

In this theme we would like to thank our Village Hall Committee who organise events with the support of the parish council. Notwithstanding the lack of village hall, we enjoyed an amazing fireworks night in November.

The parish council held a beacon lighting event along with hundreds of other villages on Thursday 8th May to celebrate 80 years since VE day, and with the support of the cricket club which opened to welcome villagers for refreshments.

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

Speeding and HGVs using unsuitable lanes continues to be something the parish council has been vocal about for many years and over the past year it has been worse with increased large vehicle use. We paid for a speed survey at Bacon End to support an application to Essex Highways to reduce the speed limit. The evidence fails to meet the criteria, however we continue to work with Highways on other speed calming measures, and an application is included in

Signed
Virginia Barlow
Chair Parish Council

2025/26 Local Highway Panel request. This will become even more important as a new supermarket is built on the edge of Dunmow.

The surface and the edges of the roads are in a terrible state of repair throughout Great Canfield and despite repeated requests for resurfacing and filling of some of the very large potholes they were assessed by Essex Highways in February as not requiring urgent attention. We will keep on trying with the advice and assistance of County Councillor Susan Barker.

Last year the farming community began a project throughout Great Canfield of ditch maintenance and this has continued into this year. We must thank our local farmers for assisting in ditch clearance which has really helped the flooding issues along Bacon End and Lower Road.

There has also been work carried out to maintain the rivers and the watercourses around the Parish and we must thank the local farmers who have formed a group of 100 farmers, The Roding Farm cluster to improve the quality of the farmland and the natural environment by improving hedgerows, drainage and waterways. There have been sustained efforts to slow water transit into ditches to reduce erosion, silt movement and therefore flooding. In turn this improves and creates new habitats for wildlife and promotes nature friendly farming as well as improving water quality.

There is a current project called BlueSpaces which is 9km of farms along the Roding which have joined to create shade across the waterways to encourage new species to migrate to this area. Wildflower buffers and hedging have been planted to stop soil running into the rivers. Habitats have been created for hedgehogs, snakes and invertebrates. Owl boxes and swift boxes have been erected along a footpath with new markers and benches. If anyone would like to volunteer to help with any of these initiatives, please contact the parish council who can put you in touch with the relevant people.

A final note on farming – please do not allow your dogs to defecate in the fields and if they do, please pick it up. Dog poo contains bacteria which can affect the grass and crops which are then fed to cattle who will then abort calves if they eat it.

Planning

The Local Plan has a hearing date starting on 10 June 2025 following examination by the Inspector. As long as the inspector finds the current plan to be sound it should then go into the adoption phase with current timetables suggesting Spring 2026.

We await the confirmation of the Plan before deciding upon updates to the Village Design Statement. Please do consult the current Village Design Statement to assist in informing on how works should be undertaken that might change the external appearance of a property.

Throughout the village there have been the usual number of planning applications during the year for extensions, and other small works. There have also been a number of applications at various stages for small clusters of new build homes, including approvals of 6 new homes on Canfield Road which were allowed on appeal, and two further dwellings on Canfield Drive. A significant development in Hatfield Broad Oak parish for 100 new homes at the Bonningtons site opposite Takeley Park was also approved and will see development south of the Flitch Way for the first time

Footpaths

The parish council continues to monitor all footpaths and bridleways. There have been official diversions of footpath 17 and 22.

Crumps Farm

We continue to work with our local councillors to have this site properly examined and dealt with safely. Any smell of sulphur locally should be reported to the Environment Agency who are keeping a record of all issues. Various parties are involved in deciding how to manage this site and control the contamination of the land and air.

Fly Tipping

Fly tipping continues although this year there have been less incidences. Any cases should be reported immediately through Uttlesford. Our thanks to those residents who helped with the Autumn and Spring litter picks and to all who regularly pick up litter from our lanes and verges.

In closing I would like to thank District Cllr Geof Driscoll and District Cllr Neil Reeve both from Residents4Uttlesford for their support over the last year and for continued attendance and contribution at our meetings.

Signed
Virginia Barlow
Chair Parish Council

Thanks also to my fellow parish councillors who voluntarily give up their time to attend meetings, read the large amount of correspondence we receive 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 who is leaving us in the next couple of months. She has provided 17 years of service, sat alongside three chairs, welcomed and worked with numerous councillors. We will miss her wise and calm counsel.

5. DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCIL STATEMENT – District Cllr Neil Reeve

No report was available from the County Council. Cllr Reeve updated on Uttlesford.

- a. As I was driving here, I reflected on what a lovely place Great Canfield is to live.
- b. Local Plan, this time last year we were just about to launch the Regulation 18 consultation and during the year we have met the planned timetable and now are preparing for the planning inspectors review which starts next month.
- c. On 1 April we changed the housing contractor from Norse to Axis which we hope will result in an improved service for Uttlesford tenants.
- d. Crumps Farm issues with illegal dumping continue, and whilst the speed of investigation is slow there is some evidence of attention from the Environment Agency. The various authorities continue to meet quarterly to progress matters.
- e. Local Government Reform this time last year was not on anyone's agenda and now it is taking up a lot of time.
- f. Good news on climate change and biodiversity, we have gone from no action plan to having one and this includes a £3.8m grant to decarbonise 10% of the council's housing stock e.g. insulation and solar. Recently expenditure was incurred to change from gas boilers to heat pumps at the council's offices in Saffron Walden. Also pleased that sustainable Uttlesford is up and running, this is a group made up of local people, supported by the council, to share and promote ideas, it includes the Rodings Farm Cluster group referred to in the chairman's report.
- g. The budget for 2025/26 is balanced.

6. VILLAGE HALL REPORT – Included in the Chairman's Report

7. OTHER VILLAGE ORGANISATIONS AND GROUP REPORTS - None

8. PARISHONERS QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS - None

DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING – Monday 11th May 2026 at 8pm.

The meeting closed at 8.17pm