Great Canfield Parish Council

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL VILLAGE MEETING

Held at Great Canfield Village Hall on Thursday, 21st May 2026 at 7.30pm

In attendance were 0 members of the public, 5 members of the Parish Council and the Parish Clerk and District Councillors, Neil Reeve and Geoff Driscoll.

1. **Chairman's welcome**

The Chair, Cllr Barlow opened the meeting at 7.38pm with 0 residents in attendance and 2 District Councillors.

2. **Apologies for Absence**

Cllrs Keir Donald and Harry Anderson.

3. **Minutes of the previous Annual Village Meeting** on Monday, 12th May 2025.

The meeting **resolved and agreed** to approve the minutes and the Chair signed them as a record of the previous meeting last year.

4. **District and County Council Statement**

District Councillors Neil Reeve and Geoff Driscoll gave a short update on Local Government Reform and Uttlesford District Council.

5. **Parish Council Chairman's Statement**

Cllr Barlow read a report of the previous year.

Good evening, everyone. It's my pleasure to present this report on the work of Great Canfield Parish Council over the past twelve months.

Crumps Farm

The dominant issue of the year has been Crumps Farm. In July, we learned of a planning application for 121 industrial units, a solar farm, and retrospective regularisation of illegal waste tipping — half a million tonnes dumped over many years with no proper remediation.

Parish Councillors attended an Extraordinary General Meeting in August with Little Canfield. The concerns were clear: Increase in traffic through the narrow lanes, no clarity on toxic materials in the landfill, and commercial development not conditional on proper remediation.

Parish Councillors resolved unanimously to object. We met with our MP, Chris Vince, who raised

concerns with Essex County Council and the Environment Agency. We contacted media and environmental groups. Over 150 objections were submitted — and crucially, Essex Highways formally objected.

By December, County Cllr Barker confirmed the application was likely to be refused and the site would undergo a 15-year periodic review. In March, Cllr Jewell met with Environment Agency officers to push for stronger enforcement.

This fight continues, but the parish has shown what we can achieve together.

The Village Hall

The Village Hall has been transformed. We completed major improvements in the spring and celebrated with a reopening barbecue in September which doubled as a wonderful opportunity for new neighbours to meet each other.

Works a full redecoration, new furniture, smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, fire door repairs, blinds, music system, and emergency lighting. We received grants to assist with the works from the District Councillors' Fund and Canfield Community Trust.

In December, we learned the Parochial Church Council wishes to sell the Hall. A valuation has been obtained, and the Parish Council has expressed formal interest in purchasing the building to secure its future as a community asset. Discussions are ongoing.

Highways and Road Safety

Bacon End has been pushing for a road calming scheme and a scheme of work was approved in principal including measures to deter HGVs and improved signage. This has yet to materialise but we will keep pushing.

Potholes remain a problem — we continue pressing Essex Highways for repairs at Water Hall, Hellman's Cross, and Green Street. We're also working on verge markers to protect our roadsides.

We successfully flagged the green lane between Bullocks Lane and Cuckoo Lane on Amazon's mapping system, reducing delivery traffic on unsuitable routes.

The footbridge on footpath 21 — awaiting repair for five years — has finally been replaced.

Planning

Beyond Crumps Farm there have been the usual volume of planning applications which we comment upon as appropriate for the village as a whole.

The new Uttlesford Local Plan was approved in March and now carries significant weight.

Environment and Community

We're progressing plans to restore the ponds at Hellman's Cross.

We held successful litter picks in December and May. Thank you to all volunteers who pick the litter and also to those who kindly supplied bacon rolls for the volunteers.

Signed
Virginia Barlow
Chair of Great Canfield Parish Council

Dead trees at the Cricket Ground were removed, with costs shared with the Cricket Club.

Crime Prevention

Vehicle theft remains a concern. Essex Police held a crime prevention event at Ashfields offering DNA marking kits. We're exploring ANPR cameras for key village routes.

Governance

We welcomed Oliver Rogers as Parish Clerk following Allison Ward's resignation. Oliver has completed his training and is now pursuing the Certificate in Local Council Administration.

In January, councillors visited Parliament as guests of Chris Vince MP — an excellent opportunity to strengthen our relationship with our representative.

Sadly, we lost former councillor, Gordon Sives in October. Gordon served two terms and campaigned tirelessly for road safety improvements. He is greatly missed.

The Local elections saw Susan Barker stand down as our local County Councillor after more than 20 years and Geoff Bagnall elected. We thank Susan for all her hard work over the past 20 years and look forward to working with Geoff.

Looking Ahead

Key priorities for the coming year:

Securing the Village Hall's future

Continued vigilance on Crumps Farm

Delivering the pond restoration project

Pressing for further road safety improvements

Thanks

My thanks to fellow councillors Michael Knight, Jenny Jewell, Richard Stratton, Harry Anderson, Magnus Mildwater, and Keir Donald for their dedication.

Thanks to our Clerk, Oliver Rogers; to District Councillors Neil Reeve and Geoff Driscoll, and County Councillor Susan Barker; and to Chris Vince MP for his engagement on Crumps Farm.

Most importantly, thank you to the residents of Great Canfield who attend meetings, volunteer, report issues, and care deeply about our village.

[Precept has risen in 26/27 to £8,900, which will show as a 5.01% increase on the current year on council tax bills for the Parish Council portion of the Precept. The average band D cost will be £36.27 per annum an increase of £1.73. On a Band H house it will be an increase of £3.46 beginning the total cost to £72.54 per annum]

6. **Report from any other village groups or organisations**

Signed
Virginia Barlow
Chair of Great Canfield Parish Council

Rob Mackley, joint Chair of the Village Hall Committee sent an email report read by Cllr Barlow on behalf of the Village Hall Committee.

It is now about a year since we reopened the hall after the prolonged repair works and the highly successful renovations undertaken by the Parish Council.

The Village Hall Committee has organised three events since to great success, a non-profit making reopening party to show off the hall and encourage new residents to meet others within the community [*September 2025*], the locally renowned Fireworks Party [*November 2025*] with support from the Parish Council and a sold-out Quiz Night [*February 2026*]. These events added approximately £2,000 to the hall accounts.

This coming year the committee plan another summer party, a harvest celebration, and of course the Fireworks Night and a Quiz Night in early 2027.

Rob Mackley thanked Jane Giles and Allison Hepburn 'the Hall booking Clerks' who are stepping down this summer for their help over the last few years. Also a big thank you to the Hall Committee members for their dedication and the Parish Council for their support over the last year.

The Village Hall Committee are very excited with the current garden works and future plans the Parish Council have for the hall and can only see this fine village asset going from strength-to-strength.

Cllr Barlow thanked Rob Mackley and the Village Hall Committee for their hard work on behalf of the village.

7. Parishioners Questions and Comments

None.

8. Date and Time of Next Meeting

7.00pm on Monday, 17th May 2027.

Meeting closed by Cllr Barlow at 7.46pm.

Signed
Virginia Barlow
Chair of Great Canfield Parish Council