MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF
EARLS COLNE PARISH COUNCIL HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL
AT 7.30 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY 11TH MAY 2016

PRESENT:

Mrs. M. Barrett, Mr. J. Bendall (Chairman), Mr. P. Clarry, Mrs. C. Dennison,
Mrs. G. McCubbine, Mrs. J. Parish, Mr. I. Sparks, and Mr. F. Williams

Also in attendance were Mrs. V. Holmes (Parish Clerk), District Councillor Gabrielle Spray
and 32 members of the public.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Councillors: Mr. G. Branagh, Mr. R. Curtis, Mr. C. Hazell, District Councillor Siddall and
Mrs. J. Atkinson.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING:

The Minutes of the last meeting, held on 13th May 2015 were approved and signed.

3. MATTERS ARISING:

There were no matters arising.

4. REPORT ON THE PARISH COUNCIL’S WORK DURING 2015/16:

The Vice Chairman presented a Report on the Council’s work during the previous twelve
months.

Mr. Sparks noted that, due to a number of reasons including a reduction in the Localism
Fund and Business Rates now payable on the Car Park, Public Conveniences, Workshop
and Village Hall, there had been a need to increase the Parish Precept for 2016/17. It was
expected that the Localism Fund would disappear altogether by 2020.

Mr. Sparks was pleased to note that, following the retirement of the Postmaster, the Post
Office had been relocated to Fork ‘Andles and the Parish Council were very grateful to
Peter and Jenny Lewis for taking on this service. After much discussion with Royal Mail,
the Post Box on the Village Green had been relocated to its current position outside Fork
‘Andles.

Mr. Sparks noted the resignation of Wade Bennett and the co-option of Jacqueline Parish.
Mr. Sparks wished to pass on thanks to Wade for his valuable contributions. He
welcomed Jacqueline Parish as a member of the Parish Council.

A large number of complaints received by the Parish Clerk involved the parking of motor
vehicles. Mr. Sparks requested that, wherever possible, residents use off street parking.
He also asked members of the public to give consideration to pedestrians by avoiding
parking on footways and ensuring that sufficient space was given for the access of
emergency vehicles, etc.

Mr. Sparks informed residents that each member of the Parish Council had responsibilities
for the Village and a quarterly inspection of the Village was carried out, with any problems,
which could not be resolved by members, passed on to the relevant authority.

Mr. Sparks noted the hard work and commitment of all staff during the year and thanked
them all for their efforts.
Members consider and consult on planning applications and forward their comments to the Planning Department at Braintree District Council.

Mr. Sparks advised that a monthly rota ensured that one councillor checks and reports to the Parish Council on applications received. The Parish Council were able to make representation for or against an application and would always wish the outcome to be of benefit to the majority of the community.

**War Memorial – I. Sparks**

Mr. Sparks was pleased to report that the War Memorial garden was now maintained by Earls Colne W.I. He wished to pass on his thanks to the WI for their contributions. The garden now provided a quiet place for reflection.

**Policing and Halstead Area Crime Prevention Panel – I. Sparks**

Mr. Sparks regularly attended meetings of the Area Crime Prevention Panel and reported matters to the Parish Council. He noted that the Parish Council were not happy with the service Essex Police were providing and would continue to push for improved Policing through contact with the Chief Constable and Police and Crime Commissioner. Halstead Police Station had now closed. Parish Council responsibility for Policing was shared by Mr. Sparks and Mr. Branagh. Crime in Earls Colne had not risen but there had been problems involving shed and vehicle break-ins. Mr. Sparks urged the public to ensure garden sheds are secure and cars locked when not in use.

Emily George asked what had happened to the mobile Police Unit? Mr. Sparks responded that sadly this was no longer in operation.

Mr. Stedman asked if there were any Police patrols? Mr. Sparks responded that there were still some Police patrols but rural areas were missing out.

**Planning – J. Bendall**

Mr. Bendall reported that members worked closely with the Planning Officers. 14 sites in total had been put forward by landowners in the Call for Sites. Members had resolved to inform Planning Officers that they would not support any further planning applications other than EAR3H and EARC225. The site in Monks Road had been submitted following the Parish Council's resolution.

**Highways – J. Bendall**

Mr. Bendall noted that it had been a difficult year trying to negotiate with Essex County Council Highways for schemes to improve safety within the Village.

Additional signs and road markings in the area of Riverside Works in Station Road had been installed.

A request to improve the dropped kerb at the top end of Burrows Road to help those reliant on mobility scooters, wheelchairs, pushchairs, etc. had been rejected.

A further request to investigate traffic calming on the approach to the Village from the Halstead direction, following numerous complaints about vehicle speeds, disappointingly only resulted in the occasional Vehicle Actuated Sign (VAS) by the Bus Stop near to Green Court being made permanent.

The culvert under the A1124 at Church Hill had been relined and the area tidied.
The Parish Council continued to lobby Essex County Council to carry out the necessary works to Dungeon Bridge at Nightingale Hall Road to enable the road to re-open. It was now understood the work will be undertaken sometime after July 2016.

Following an initiative by the County Council via the Highways Panel, the Parish Council submitted a number of local lanes for consideration to be reclassified as ‘Quiet Lanes’. This submission was successful and this will mean, in simple terms, that vehicles whilst not banned, will have to give priority to other users such as pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders. HGVs will be banned and a 20mph speed limit will be introduced. However, due to budgetary constraints it may be some time before the scheme is finalised. The lanes submitted were:

- Tey Road (A1124 to Great Tey, including America Road, Burnthouse Road & Flories Road).
- Newhouse Road (west of the nursery), Nightingale Hall Road to Greenstead Green Road.

Mr. Warner asked how the above Quiet Lanes would affect access to the Airfield. Mr. Bendall confirmed that traffic surveys had been carried out and the criteria must have been met.

Works were expected to begin on safety improvements to the layout of the mini roundabout at the junction of the A1124 and Coggeshall Road and its approaches. This work had been instigated by Essex Highways Road Safety Unit following a number of accidents in the vicinity.

Mr. Atkinson noted that the directional sign had been damaged some time ago and hoped that a replacement would be included in any works carried out.

Further schemes submitted and under consideration were:

- Request for extension to 40mph speed limit on Coggeshall Road – referred to Cabinet Member for consideration.
- Pedestrian crossing on Church Hill following request from concerned resident about safety of children and parents crossing Church Hill to access the school.
- Extension to period of waiting time from 1 hour to 2 hours at lower end of High Street following request from local businesses.
- Refurbishment of some footways following members’ survey of all footways in the Village.

Members also wished to note that the County Council intend to resurface Queens Road between the High Street and Monks Road during the summer school holidays this year and this would involve some disruption to residents when the road will be closed for two consecutive days.

Members currently own a number of street lights at various location in the Village and there was an ongoing plan to replace all faulty or worn out lamps with LEDs over time.

Village Hall – Frank Williams

Mr. Williams was once again pleased to note that the Village Hall had been in regular use throughout the year by a number of organisations. It had been necessary to increase hire charges for the first time in many years. This was due to Business Rates liability now payable which had meant that also for the first time for many years income had not matched expenditure. Hire charges were, however, still competitive. Mr. Williams thanked Bill Kemp for his dedication and hard work in maintaining the halls and keeping the car park clean and tidy. Mr. Williams urged residents to encourage use of the halls and to direct any enquiries to the Clerk who would be pleased to deal with any enquiries.
Carol Service - Mrs. C. Dennison

Mrs. Dennison reported that the Carol Service and Village Open Evening had once again been a great success. It had followed the same format as previous years starting with Carols in St. Andrew’s Church and finishing at the Baptist Church. Both churches were full to capacity, which was good to see. Unfortunately, due to dwindling numbers, the Salvation Army had been unable to provide the music but the Colne Endeavour Band, although unable to lead the procession along the High Street, had accompanied the Carols at the Baptist Church. The school children sang a variety of Christmas songs and as always were a credit to both themselves and their teacher.

The band had set up their instruments in the Village Hall and while everyone was enjoying refreshments they were able to listen to the band playing. The refreshments were provided by Joyce Atkinson with tea, coffee and mulled wine served by Earls Colne WI.

The traders remained open from 4.30-7.00 p.m. and reported a successful evening with lots of support for the shops from both residents of Earls Colne and people from surrounding villages.

The winner of the Best Decorated Business Premises 2016 had been Ruori’s and a Certificate had been presented during the Village Hall refreshments.

Mrs. Dennison passed on congratulations and thanks to all those involved.

Millennium Green - Richard Curtis (report read by Mr. Sparks)

Mr. Curtis reported that he was a member of the Millennium Green Trust and noted that the Environment Agency had now fenced off the weir in the Bourne Brook.

The Braintree District Council Mi Community project to improve access to the Green from Atlas Road had now been completed with new gate installed. The Millennium Green Trust had contributed £400 towards the costs involved.

Footpaths – Richard Curtis (report read by Mr. Sparks)

Footpath 19 had been re-routed to re-join it’s old route over the Golf Course. The stream by Footpath 34 (from Tey Road to Tile Kiln Farm) washed away part of the footpath when a small culvert became blocked. A representative from Essex Highways had inspected the site and work is expected to be carried out to remedy the problem.

John Munson asked if the Highways Authority, who have a responsibility to keep footpaths open, were doing so. Mr. Sparks was not responsible for footpaths but asked the Clerk to follow this up with Richard Curtis and respond to Mr. Munson. Mr. Bendall noted that any defects with footpaths should be reported to the Clerk who would pass this on to the relevant Authority.

Tree Warden – Richard Curtis (report read by Mr. Sparks)

There are approximately 50 trees growing on land controlled by the Parish Council. These were inspected last year and appropriate work carried out.

Passenger Transport – Richard Curtis (read by Mr. Sparks)

It was noted that there was a link to ‘Traveline’ on the Parish Council website under ‘Local Information’ which gives details of bus times and routes.

The weekly bus to Sudbury (323) had been discontinued in April and would be replaced by Demand Responsive Transport (DaRT). Information was available via the Parish Clerk.
Richard Gravatt of Essex CC Passenger Transport had been invited to speak to the members of the Friendship Club to explain the changes to public transport in the Village.

Braintree District Council also offered Community Transport for journeys where a small mileage charge was payable. Information was available via the Parish Clerk. Tracey Corcoron explained the difference between the two schemes. The Scheme runs Monday to Friday and runs door to door.

**Community Worker – John Bendall**

Mr. Bendall reported that Lee Duncombe continued to work hard around the Village to keep it up to the high standards that he had set himself and to those expected by the Parish Council. Mr. Bendall also noted that Ted Root maintained the standards every Weekend and covered for Lee when he is on leave.

It was reported that Lee sometimes found it a thankless task with litter being dropped within minutes of him having cleared an area. Dog mess was also an unbelievably big problem especially when you consider that the Parish Council provided free doggy bags, available from the Council Office, and that they can be deposited, when suitably tied, into litter bins as well as the designated dog bins around the Village. Mr. Bendall urged the public to use them and report anyone who is seen abusing the health and wellbeing of all Villagers by leaving their animals deposits on the ground.

Mr. Bendall passed on his thanks to Lee Duncombe and Ted Root for their good work.

**Car Park and Public Conveniences – John Bendall**

Mr. Bendall reported that the Parish Council was now liable for Business Rates on the Car Park and Public Conveniences. The Parish Council felt that such FREE facilities could hardly be regarded as a Business and the Clerk had submitted and appeal. The Car Park, inevitably, continued to be well used and all users should park considerately and report any issues which are considered worthy to the Parish Clerk.

The Public Conveniences had been a drain on resources with minor plumbing problems and the obvious need to maintain the high standards of cleanliness expected adding to the costs of consumables and water usage. Members were grateful to Lee Duncombe and Ray Joslin for doing such a great job to this end.

**Braintree Association of Local Councils – John Bendall**

Mr. Bendall noted that he had represented Local Councils on the Executive Committee of the Braintree Association who had regular meetings to try to resolve matters of common concern. These are numerous and usually involve negotiations and discussions with Braintree District Council.

Mr. Bendall wished to note one significant ongoing issue which may not be widely realised, that there was a significant area of Braintree District that was ‘unparished’ i.e. they do not have a Town or Parish Council but the services are provided directly by BDC. The Association consider that an extra levy on the Unparished Areas should be applied to compensate for the situation. Mr. Bendall explained that papers that accompany the Rate Demand showed this clearly and how much more it costs you than those living in the unparished areas which are shown as zero under the Parish Rate.

5. **FINANCIAL REPORT:**

The Clerk gave a brief financial report on the monies spent by the Parish Council during the year. She advised that each year the accounts were available for public inspection.
in the Council Chamber prior to the Annual Audit, notice of which was displayed on the noticeboard.

A question was raised about future increases in the Parish Precept. The Clerk was asked how much the Localism Fund and Precept amounted to.

6. REPORT BY DISTRICT COUNCILLORS:

Written reports by Cllr. Spray and Cllr. Siddall had been made available for all members of the public to read.

Mr. Warner asked if all the sites put forward would be included in the new Local Plan. Cllr. Spray responded that the existing and new sites would be included.

Mr. Warner commented that the Village boundary would be moved and Cllr. Spray replied that this would be the case but only where it was felt it would be suitable.

Mr. Moles commented that the infrastructure of villages such as Earls Colne, Marks Tey, etc. could not sustain the number of houses planned. Cllr. Spray said she understood the concerns but these would be taken into consideration when planning applications were submitted but that the vast majority of housing would be around towns such as Witham. Developers had to provide money via S106 Agreements which provide additional resources. Cllr. Spray understood there were concerns about the Surgery coping with additional numbers but NHS England were responsible for this.

Mr. Stedman asked why the sites were not classed as Greenfield sites but Cllr. Spray responded that they were designated sites.

Mr. Munson asked if BDC had any regard at all for the Village Envelope when considering applications as the site at Station Road was outside the Village Envelope. Cllr. Spray confirmed that the planners do consider this and on occasions applications are refused. However, housing targets had been set and where the planning authority think it is appropriate to move the Village Envelope they may do so to provide more housing.

A resident commented that it did not feel as though the District Council were listening to the views of residents of smaller villages. Cllr. Spray said she did not agree that residents do not have a voice and are not heard but that decisions had to be made on planning grounds.

7. ESSEX POLICE – no report from Essex Police.

8. CENTENARY AWARD:

Three applications had been received and the Chairman announced grants for the 2016 Centenary Award as follows:

- E.C. Twinning Association £500.00
- St. Andrew’s Church £500.00
- Heart of the Valley Community Responders £500.00

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

Monks Road – Mr. Bendall reported that Crest Housing had requested meeting a with the Parish Council and Crest were informed that this was an information gathering meeting on behalf of the Parish Council. Crest had made it clear that they planned to go forward with a detailed planning application and not outline. An exhibition would be held in the Village Hall on 18th May for Crest to show the plans they have for the field at the end of Monks Road. The Parish Council would be interested to hear the views of residents following that
exhibition. Any objections should be made on planning grounds. Residents were asked to provide the Parish Council with copies of any letters of support or objection and any photographs which will show the difficulties which may arise in Queens Road with additional vehicles.

Mr. Shynn asked what the status of the site on Halstead Road was. Mr. Bendall replied that the Parish Council were awaiting a date of the meeting of the Planning Committee to consider the outline planning application.

Mr. Shynn asked if the proposal included any additional parking for the surgery. Mr. Bendall confirmed that the Parish Council had requested additional parking be included.

Mr. Tuffen commented that he had put forward suggestions to BDC and that his comments had been noted. Mr. Tuffen was disappointed that so few residents had sent letters to BDC.

Mr. Taylor asked about access to the Monks Road site and Mr. Bendall said that it would appear that the main access would be via Monks Road with a pedestrian access only from Hillie Bunnies.

Mr. Atkinson wished to make the point that many people who live in the Village have moved into Earls Colne within recent years and that additional housing was needed for families and their growing families. He noted that S106 monies may be available should the development go ahead.

Mr. Moles reiterated that he was very concerned about the access should the development go ahead in Monks Road.

Mrs. Boatman noted that a planning application on the Monks Road site had been submitted some time ago and been refused.

Mrs. Wooldridge asked if, during the presentation to the Parish Council, Crest had commented on the access and Mr. Bendall confirmed that Crest felt they could address the access problems.

Mr. Bendall urged residents to attend the exhibition on 18th May and provide the Parish Council with copies of any correspondence sent to BDC.

Mr. Munson noted that the Hunt Trust had been very supportive of the Village for many years but on investigations he had discovered that it no longer exists as a Trust. Mr. Munson asked that a note of thanks be recorded for all that the Hunts had provided over the years, supporting heritage and community development projects.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 10.00 p.m.