



MINUTES

Meeting: PARISH COUNCIL

Date: 2nd June 2025

Time: 7.30PM

Venue: PARISH HALL, THORNWOOD COMMON

PRESENT:

Councillors (8) Cllr Buckley (Chairman), Cllr Mrs Hawkins, Cllr Clegg, Cllr Mrs Jackman, Cllr Mrs Etherington, Cllr Tyler, Cllr Bedford, Cllr Spearman.

Officers in Attendance (2)

Susan De Luca, Parish Clerk

Adriana Jones – Principal Finance Officer

Members of the Public (3) – for various parts of meeting, inc EFDC Cllrs Burrows and Balcombe, and PC Andy Cook

Members of the Press (1)

C25.030 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (5)

Apologies from Cllr Irvine, Cllr Blanks, Cllr Ms Wood, Cllr Kinnear, and Cllr Lambert. EFDC Cllr Bromwich had also offered his apologies.

C25.031 OTHER ABSENCES (2)

Cllrs Born and Stroud.

C25.032 MINUTES

Subject to one typing error regarding Cllr Mrs Jackman's name, Councillors **AGREED** the Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 12th May 2025.

C25.033 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Spearman declared an interest in the Local Plan should it come up.

C25.034 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

The Chairman welcomed those present. PC Cook provided a brief update on crime, advising that for the past month there was actually very little to report, with only 36 calls to Essex Police, 19 of which were reported as incidents, with 16 being crime, and 3 non-crime. There had been a theft of motor vehicle from North Weald Airfield, and an incident in the Chip Shop in North Weald where a substance was thrown. The Chairman thanked PC Cook for his update.

C25.035 REPORT OF THE CLERK

The Clerk provided an update on current matters, confirming staff had been dealing with planning and enforcement matters, as well as cemetery matters which included a funeral booking which had actually been booked into three locations, but ultimately it was being held in Ongar. The work on the Neighbourhood Plan continued with the raw data from the recent survey being submitted to the planning consultant. The Clerk was awaiting an update from EFDC regarding the outcome of the Rural Prosperity Fund grant application, and had been advised this would be soon. The Clerk advised that EFDC had been dealing with a number of town and larger parish councils regarding a Christmas event and working together towards a town centre partnership. With regard to development in the parish, the Clerk and PFO have been working with the developers at Tudor House with regard to opening up the two pedestrian

entrance points at the top of Thornwood Common, and are discussing options in terms of barriers. The Clerk also advised that as requested she had contacted English Heritage regarding the Google Data Centre application, and they had confirmed in writing they would not support moving the listed control tower. In addition, the North Weald Park application was now in, and this would be considered at the June 16th Planning Committee Meeting.

C25.036 REPORTS & MEMBERS REPORTS

- a) **Chairman's Report** – The Chairman advised that both himself and the Clerk had met with the possible new contractor for the garden outside the shops the prior week, and that he had sent a chaser email to him earlier in the day to establish when works could start. He will also be contacting the companies who regularly sponsor this area in the coming weeks.
- b) **Vice Chairman's Report** – Cllr Mrs Hawkins advised that herself and Cllr Spearman would be completing their monthly allotment visit on 4th June, and that she had now placed plants in the planters at the front and side of the hall.
- c) **District & County Councillors Reports** – The Clerk read out a written report that had been submitted to her by EFDC Cllr Bromwich, the content of which was noted. Cllr Burrows advised that whilst he was still a District Councillor, he was no longer Leader of the Council, and that this was now Cllr Mead.

Cllr Bedford advised that there was a small section of grass by the road sign at the Debt of Honour that was not being cut and looked a little messy. The Clerk advised this was probably rewilding, and that she would liaise with the grounds maintenance contractor to confirm this. Cllr Bedford suggested that if it was rewilding, it would be better to perhaps make more of a feature of this area.

Cllr Mrs Jackman stated that the old Methodist Church in the centre of North Weald looked a mess, and asked if there was anything that could be done to make the owner tidy it up. Cllr Bedford stated that this was private land, and as such there was nothing the Parish Council could do to force the owner to keep it tidy. Cllr Tyler suggested the Parish Council could perhaps write a polite letter asking them to keep it tidy, however Cllr Bedford suggested this should be done after the gardener has worked on the garden outside the shops.

Cllr Bedford advised that he had noted within the minutes of the May meeting the concerns about market traffic, stating that the bank holiday weekend was particularly bad and had been reported by BBC. The market was currently going through a boom period, but it did ebb and flow, albeit it was recognised that there were a lot of disgruntled people at present. Discussions were taking place with the Market operator who was also working hard to try and resolve the problems, and that they were trying different things to see if it works. Cllr Tyler advised that previously signs had been located at the entrance points to Church Lane / Wellington Road which had really helped, however these had never been reinstated. Cllr Bedford stated that whilst this may have solved the problem for Church Lane, it then directed traffic through the village which caused another problem further along. The Chairman stated that the market employees were fantastic at keeping the traffic moving once inside the airfield, but the problem was simply the volume of vehicles that are out on the roads. Cllr Bedford stated that the market is a revenue generator for the district council, and that perhaps traffic management out on the roads was needed, however different parts of the road network had different bodies responsible for them, which makes traffic management very difficult. Cllr Bedford stated that what was needed was the police at the top

end of Vicarage Lane West, as people were using this one way point to access the A414, which was extremely dangerous. The Chairman stated that this Council had tried so many times to contact EFDC and the Market Operator, but we had not received a response.

Cllr Mrs Etherington had emailed pictures of the tailbacks the prior weekend to the Clerk, who had forwarded these on to Councillors, stating that she believed it wasn't that the villagers didn't want the market, but that the disruption was just too much, especially for businesses such as Art Nursery. Cllr Mrs Etherington suggested a drone should be used to see the extent of the tailbacks. Cllr Bedford advised that EFDC was aware of the problem, and were trying to find a way to resolve it. Cllr Tyler said reducing the number of stalls would help. Cllr Bedford stated that EFDC was actively looking to reduce the size of the market which would help with the traffic problems, and was looking at two possible alternative locations, one being on the Parade Ground side of Merlin Way and the other being on the airfield by where the Skoda cars are parked, however work was ongoing to try and find the best alternative option.

The Clerk confirmed that a meeting with EFDC, District and County Councillors, and Parish Councillors was currently being arranged to discuss this problem, the date being either 13th or 20th June. The Clerk would provide further details with Councillors once this date and time had been confirmed.

Cllr Bedford advised that Highways England had put a block on any future building development at both Latton Priory and North Weald until September 2025 in order to resolve the issues this development will cause at the M11 Junction 7 roundabout.

EFDC Cllr Balcombe advised that he had responded to the Clerks query regarding litter picking, and that she had confirmed she would forward this to the Chairman. In addition, Cllr Balcombe reminded members that the new Blue Bin roll out would be starting today, and would take around one month to complete. Residents were able to either keep their blue box, or if they didn't want it they should leave it out with their black bin and it would be removed. Cllr Balcome also advised that Essex Police launched their new Neighbourhood Policing Teams today, with 74 new officers across Essex, 6 of which are dedicated to Epping Forest.

- d) **Parish Councillors Reports** – Cllr Clegg advised that the Community Speedwatch teams would be out the following day, and that both himself and one speedwatch colleague would be attending an update event at Kelvedon Fire Centre which included a Q&A session.
- e) **Queens Hall Charity Report** – The Clerk advised that she was aware that an extraordinary meeting was being held at some point regarding trustees.
- f) **Highways** – The Clerk advised that the works scheduled along The Plain starting 29th May were cancelled, and it was thought these had been rescheduled for late June. Cllr Clegg advised that Upland Road was closed at the Rugby Club.

C25.037 FINANCIAL REPORTS

- a) Councillors **NOTED** the monthly cheque lists for May which had been emailed to Councillors.
- b) The Clerk advised that she had not yet received the CCLA investment report for May.

C25.038 WEALD COMMON – BUG HOUSE

The Chairman advised that this matter had been placed on the agenda as it was discussed 6 months ago, and at that time Members were not in agreement that they would support a Bug House on land at Weald

Common however advised they would re-consider this again in 6 months. Councillors once again discussed the matter, and there was general agreement that a bug house was not needed on Weald Common given that it was already very rural in nature, teeming with natural life. In addition, a bug house could attract antisocial behaviour. It was therefore **AGREED** not to move forward with a bug house.

C25.039 EXTERNAL AUDIT (ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN) 2024/2025

Each year the Councils Accounts and Practices (known as the Annual Governance and Accountability Return - AGAR) are reviewed by an external auditor appointed by the Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments Ltd. For this Council, PKF Littlejohn are this Councils appointed auditors. Councillors noted that the AGAR must be approved by 30th June 2025 and submitted to PKF Littlejohn by 1st July 2025. It was agreed that the requirement for the public inspection period (which must include the first 10 working days of July) will start 16th June and will end on 28th July 2024. As the income for this Council was over £200,000, it is subject to an Intermediate Review as part of the limited assurance review process. The Clerk is also responsible for completing numerous documents to submit to the auditor, as well as publishing the notification of public rights. The Parish Council:

- a) Reviewed the effectiveness of the system of internal control of this Council, and considered the findings of the review
- b) Prepared the Annual Governance Statement (Section 1)
- c) Approved the Annual Governance Statement by way of **RESOLUTION. PROPOSED** Cllr Bedford, **SECONDED** Cllr Tyler. Unanimously agreed.
- d) Considered the Accounting Statements (Section 2)
- e) Approved the Accounting Statements by way of **RESOLUTION. PROPOSED** Cllr Bedford, **SECONDED** Cllr Tyler. Unanimously agreed.
- f) Ensured that both the Annual Governance Statement and Accounting Statement was signed and dated by the person presiding at the meeting.

C25.040 STATEMENT ON PARISH COUNCILLORS REMUNERATION

Members agreed at the last meeting that they that did not wish to receive any allowance for being a Councillor, and that they did not wish this matter to be considered again until after the next election cycle. They instructed the Clerk to write a statement advising that **North Weald Bassett Parish Councillors did not wish to receive an allowance for being a councillor as they were volunteers undertaking their civic duty.** The Clerk has now published this statement, passing it on to the Parish Councils press officer and placing it on all notice boards in the Parish. It has also been picked up by the Guardian Newspaper. Thus, this matter will not be placed on the agenda again for the duration of the remainder of this Council period.

C25.041 NORWEGIAN COMMEMORATIVE STONE ON REVETMENTS AT NORTH WEALD AIRFIELD

Councillors noted that the Clerk had chased Brigadier Lieutenant Major Kenneth Øvland, COS/Deputy Commander RNoAF in relation to the Revetments and the commemorative stone at North Weald Airfield. Members recalled that the Revetments have fallen into considerable disrepair, and it had been the suggestion of the Environmental Committee that the Commemorative Stone placed there by the Norwegians in 2012 should be moved adjacent to the Hawker Hurricane (Gate Guardian) at the new entrance to the airfield when this is constructed, together with an explanatory plaque as to the reasoning why it was moved. Members had asked the Clerk to contact the Royal Norwegian Airforce for their comments. This was done a number of months ago and emails have been received, however they have now been passed 'higher up the chain' in the chain of command, and we are still awaiting a formal response on this request.

C25.042 COUNCILLORS SURGERY – CLLR TOM BROMWICH

Members noted that a District Councillors Surgery would be held in the Queens Hall on Saturday 12th July, and that the Clerk had placed notices on Council noticeboards for Cllr Bromwich, and it would also be advertised on the Councils Facebook page. The Clerk advised that she had spoken to Cllr Bromwich with regard to another Councillor being present as she was unable to attend this event, and there needed to be two people present. The Clerk advised that this facility was available to all District and County Councillors, and Cllr Mrs Hawkins advised she would check with Cllr Whitbread to see if he wanted to hold a surgery.

C25.043 MEETING WITH EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

Members noted that on Friday 16th May, the Clerk and RFO met with officers and cabinet members of EFDC with regard to current and future housing and economic growth in the District. The meeting included discussion on the Local Plan, Green Belt, highway issues, changes to the NPPF and the introduction of Grey Belt. Further discussion took place regarding both devolution and local government reform. The Clerk welcomed assurances that the District Council would continue to engage constructively with the Parish Council. The Chairman of the Parish Council was also invited to attend, but was unable to do so due to a prior engagement, and he is therefore meeting with Cllr Whitbread on the 13th June. Cllr Mrs Jackman stated that she felt Councillors should have also been invited to attend, not just officers, as they too would be interested in what the District Council had to say. Cllr Bedford stated that the officers feedback information from such meetings to the Council in any case, and that if there were too many people at the meeting nothing would get done. The Clerk advised that following this meeting, Cllr Whitbread had invited all Clerks in the District to attend a meeting, however only 5 were attendance.

C25.044 FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THORNWOOD VILLAGE HALL –TUESDAY 28TH OCTOBER ‘25

Members recalled that the 50th Anniversary of Thornwood Village Hall would be celebrated on Tuesday 28th October. Cllr Mrs Hawkins confirmed she continued to liaise with local Thornwood resident Jimmy Waters regarding a commemorative event, and that she had started to contact the regular hall hirers. The event would be on the same day as the Over 70s Youth Club Hire, and it was hoped to have a joint event lasting a couple of hours around lunch time. The Clerk advised that the councils Senior Admin Officer would liaise with Cllr Mrs Hawkins regarding some other parties that should be invited to this event. Cllr Mrs Hawkins confirmed she would provide further updates going forward.

C25.045 DEVELOPERS WORKING GROUP

Members noted the notes of the Developer Working Group meeting which was held on 21st May 2025 which were attached to the agenda, noting that the application for North Weald Park had since been submitted and would be considered by the Planning Committee on 16th June. Cllr Tyler encouraged more members to attend these working group meetings, setting out that the discussion is extremely helpful and useful.

C25.046 NORTH WEALD AIRFIELD MARKET TRAFFIC

This matter was discussed earlier in the meeting, however the Clerk reiterated that she would advise Councillors once a date had been set for a meeting with EFDC.

C25.047 GRANT APPLICATIONS

The Clerk advised that as reported earlier in the meeting she was still waiting to hear back from regarding the rural prosperity fund application for a grant for works to the Thornwood Common Parish Hall. There

was also no update on the National Lottery planning application for the same. With regard to the Love Your Bus grant application, a total of £19,000 had been awarded to this Council for revenue expenditure associated with promoting and publicising the bus service between Ongar, North Weald and Epping. The funds would also be used for a QR code to promote the service, as well as promoting the school bus service between Ongar, North Weald and Epping. The Clerk advised that the request for funding for the electronic bus timetable notification boards was classed as capital expenditure, and as such grant funding was not received for this. It was noted that the deadline to spend this money was 31st March 2026. Cllr Bedford suggested there could be funding streams that local groups and organisations could apply for, confirming that he would liaise with EFDC regarding this.

C25.048 BROADBAND – HASTINGWOOD

The Clerk and Hastingwood Councillors have been contacted by Gigaclear in relation to Broadband provision regarding secured funding via the Broadband Voucher Scheme to bring ultrafast broadband to 269 homes in Hastingwood. Gigaclear would like to offer a meeting with the Parish Councillors from Hastingwood to discuss the project in more detail providing an opportunity to cover the following key points:

- How We Build: Including an overview of their construction approach, such as highway works and other necessary activities.
- Equipment Location: Information on the placement of essential network infrastructure.
- Timelines and Project Updates: An outline of the expected project schedule
- Communication Channels: Establishing clear lines of communication with parish stakeholders throughout the build.

Cllr Irvine had advised the Clerk that this meeting was expected to be held in July.

C25.049 BATTLE OF BRITAIN SERVICE – SEPTEMBER

Members recalled that the Parish Council had pledged to undertake to continue the Battle of Britain Service which previously had been organised by Arthur Moreton on behalf of RAFA. In 2024 the Clerk received notification from St Andrews Church 2 days before the event, advising that the Church had a Church Service at 3.00pm on the same day and the Parish Council would therefore not be able to use the Church Car Park or the toilets. The Clerk responded accordingly, advising that this was a very short service and these facilities were not needed, as the Parish Council had its own Car Park and that it would advise attendees that there were no toilet facilities. In order to ensure that the Church was fully aware of the event being held in September 2025, the Council emailed details of time and date for the September event on the 21st May. The Clerk subsequently received a phone call on 22nd May from a representative of the Church advising that the email was not courteous and we should have asked for permission to utilise the Church facility, rather than say that we were simply undertaking the service there. The Clerk advised that we were simply continuing with the arrangements that had been in place for the last 12 years. The Clerk advised that it was also her understanding that in 2024 the attendance at the Church Service was indeed very small and therefore she could not see how the Battle of Britain of Service would clash with the Church's Service. The representative from the Church asked if the service could be changed to 2pm. They also advised that there was a member of the Church congregation who had indicated that if the service was changed then they would like to attend the Battle of Britain Service and could not do this if it was at 3pm.

The Clerk had advised that she did not know why the Battle of Britain Service at the Cross of Sacrifice was held at 3pm, but there was probably a justifiable reason for it, however as the Parish Council had no documentation as to why it was held at that time she could not simply change it. There was no local RAFA organisation in place anymore and Arthur Moreton had been the only conduit. The Clerk explained that the Parish Council had only taken on the organisation of the commemorative event as

there was no other organisation in the Parish who had been willing to do so, and that we only had limited staffing resources, and to undertake a full scale enquiry into why the event was held at this particular time would put pressure on valuable staff time. The Clerk further advised that whilst the Cross of Sacrifice was indeed situated within the grounds of St Andrews Church, it is in the area maintained by the War Graves Commission, and is seen by the community as an area that is open to them to visit. The Clerk also added that both the Church and the Parish Council should work together with one another in this respect, and that by advising the Church in May there was going to be an event at the Cross of Sacrifice on Battle of Britain Sunday in September, this was indeed courteous. However the Church Representative still wanted a change to the timings, and the Clerk advised that this would need to be something that had to be agreed by Council as a body, and not her.

The Church representative also had a concern that if there was a member of the Clergy present to take the service, they would need to be approved by St Andrews. The Clerk has sent a copy of last years service sheet to the Church Representative which shows there is no member of the Clergy present taking the service. Copies of the various correspondence, together with a schedule of how the Parish Council undertook to take on this service were attached to the agenda.

Since this telephone conversation, the Clerk has conducted some research via the Commonwealth War Grave Commission Website, and seemingly the responsibility for holding an event at a Cross of Sacrifice and possibly at a Parish War Memorial lies with the Commonwealth War Grave Commission in the first instance. Therefore the Clerk has completed the necessary forms and sent these off. The Chairman suggested that given the number of people who attend, perhaps this event could be held at the Debt of Honour instead, and then any wreaths etc moved to the War Memorial on the following Monday. It was **AGREED** that this matter would be placed onto the 30th June meeting being held at the Queens Hall to agree if any change should be made.

C25.050 FORTHCOMING MEETINGS – DATES FOR YOUR DAIRY

- Monday, 30 June - Meeting at Queens Hall to discuss arrangements for Battle of Britain Wreath Laying Service and Remembrance Sunday. Agenda will be sent out nearer the time.
- Reminder of change of meeting date for July Parish Council Meeting – Now 14th July (2nd Monday)
- Planning Committee meeting 16th June.

Cllr Bedford asked if there were any plans to celebrate VJ day on 15th August. The Clerk advised she would look in to this and report back at the July meeting.

C25.051 FLAG

Councillors noted that the Armed Forces Flag will be raised on Saturday 28 June to commemorate Armed Forces Day.

Meeting closed 20.41

Signed

Date