



**MINUTES**

**Meeting:** PARISH COUNCIL

**Date:** 14<sup>th</sup> July 2025

**Time:** 7.30PM

**Venue:** PARISH HALL, THORNWOOD COMMON

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**PRESENT:**

**Councillors (9)** Cllr Buckley (Chairman), Cllr Mrs Hawkins, Cllr Clegg, Cllr Tyler, Cllr Kinnear, Cllr Spearman, Cllr Blanks, Cllr Lambert, Cllr Irvine\*

*\* for part of meeting*

**Officers in Attendance (2)**

Susan De Luca, Parish Clerk

Adriana Jones – Principal Finance Officer

**Members of the Public (1)** –EFDC Cllr Bromwich

**Members of the Press (0)**

**C25.052 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (3)**

Apologies from Cllr Ms Wood, Cllr Bedford, and Cllr Mrs Jackman.

**C25.053 OTHER ABSENCES (3)**

Cllrs Born, Stroud and Etherington.

**C25.054 MINUTES**

Councillors **AGREED** the Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2025, and noted the notes from Remembrance Sunday Meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025.

**C25.055 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

**C25.056 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

There were no questions.

**C25.057 REPORT OF THE CLERK**

The Clerk provided an update on current matters, advising on the update from an enforcement report regarding 246 High Road, North Weald. It was suggested that the Chairman could liaise directly with Cllr Bromwich regarding this. With regard to Neighbourhood Planning, it was noted that £223 had to be refunded from the Groundworks grant as it was unspent, and that the Government had not agreed any future funding for Neighbourhood Plan groups. The Councils Administrative Assistant was working on the Town Centre Partnership programme, with various meetings having taking place including one with the Community Champion and EFDC – the project aimed at making High Streets better places. The Clerk had put in an application for funding for this project, and will report back at the September meeting. With regard to the External Audit, all the information had now been sent off, and the relevant information published in accordance with legislation. The Office Staff were also currently assisting the Queens Hall Charity regarding a complaint that had been received. The Clerk continued to work on the bus grant, but has been approached by Ingatestone Parish Council who are not happy with the terms of the grant – the Clerk will continue to investigate. With regard to the Thornwood Hall, a Lone Working Policy will shortly be introduced. Regarding the discolouration of the Queens Green Canopy Sign on Weald Common, the Clerk had heard back from three different councils who all advise theirs had gone the same

colour, and that it was thought this was the actual intended design of the sign. With regard to VJ day, this would definitely be more of a low key event than VE day, however it was agreed that a small event would take place at the Debt of Honour to lay a wreath and light the Lamp of Peace on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> August. An updated Weald Common Maintenance plan had been created, and it was hoped to replace some of the dead trees this year. Thanks were also given to Cllr and Mrs Tyler for their work in maintaining the Sensory Garden.

## C25.058 REPORTS & MEMBERS REPORTS

- a) **Chairman's Report** – The Chairman confirmed that the Council had now contracted a gardener who will manage and maintain the garden outside the shops in North Weald.
- b) **Vice Chairman's Report** – Cllr Mrs Hawkins advised that herself and Cllr Spearman conducted Allotment visits at the start of July, stating that as a result of the hot weather tenants should be given some leeway in terms of cultivation, however they would be keeping their eye on any unkempt plots. Regarding the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Thornwood Hall and the event which will be taking place on 28<sup>th</sup> October, Cllr Mrs Hawkins had spoken to 6 hirers who were quite interested in being involved, and she was also talking to various groups and people in Thornwood to obtain historical information about the original build.
- c) **District & County Councillors Reports** – Cllr Bromwich provided an update on his activities as a District Councillor, including 25 cases of fly tipping that had been reported, 16 of which had already been dealt with. He had attended a speedwatch session with Cllr Clegg and Cllr Irvine in Hastingwood for a 2 hour period, with 2.7% of people found to be driving above the speed limit. It was not a particularly good day to run the session (Sunday morning), and it was hoped a further session in Mill Street could be conducted later in the year – perhaps on a market day or later afternoon. He had conducted his second official Councillor Survey event with a number of residents attending, and had organised a litter pick for 17<sup>th</sup> August in Weald Hall Lane to address the build up of gas cannisters and glass in hedges which could spark a fire. Cllr Bromwich confirmed he had been working with the County Councillor to try and obtain funding via the Local Highway Panel to conduct a new speed review from Welling Road roundabout past Norway House. He confirmed that of the 30 dirty street signs that he had reported, all but two had now been addressed, these two being signs on private land. Work had taken place with children from St Johns school regarding litter by the bus stop and byway, and a bin was now going to be installed. There had been 4 trees on the Blenheim Estate which seemed to have had holes drilled into them effectively somebody trying to kill the tree, and he was looking into this. In August, Cllr Bromwich will be going on a tour of the Tudor House development site, and will raise the issue of the dirty pavement.

Cllr Irvine advised that residents had been speaking about Thames Water discharging sewage into Shonks Mill and asked Cllr Bromwich if there was an update on this matter, to which Cllr Bromwich advised there was no formal update, but that this subject was one of the questions at full EFDC Council in terms of what EFDC representations have been made to Thames Water. Cllr Bromwich confirmed he had a main contact for Thames water.

- d) **Parish Councillors Reports** – Cllr Clegg advised that the Community Speedwatch team had been busy over the past 10 days with visits as previously reported by Cllr Bromwich, however advised that the data did not indicate any real evidence of there being a speeding issue in Mill Street. A further session had been conducted in Mill Street the prior Friday at 6pm, and in the space of 1 hour there were only 3 speeders out of a total of 56 cars. This visit was part of a wider

speedwatch initiative involving both Kent and Essex Police. During a recent session at Weald Bridge Road, 25% of the vehicles were speeding (going towards North Weald). Cllr Clegg advised that he had contacted the Community Speedwatch team with regard to the locations in both Foster Street and Hastingwood Road being reinstated, and was awaiting a response.

Cllr Tyler reported on the dangerous situation on market days where vehicles were driving north along Vicarage Lane West and illegally accessing the A414, which was going to cause a serious accident if not addressed. Cllr Tyler suggested the police should be stationed at this location on market days to deter people from doing this. The Chairman suggested Cllr Whitbread should be contacted and asked to arrange for additional signage at this location to try and stop people from doing this.

- e) **Queens Hall Charity Report** – Cllr Kinnear advised that things were going fine, and that the office staff were indeed assisting with a current complaint.
- f) **Highways** – The Clerk advised she had heard there would be further closures on the road between North Weald and Epping in August, probably in order to paint the white lines following the recent resurfacing works.

#### C25.059 FINANCIAL REPORTS

- a) Councillors **NOTED** the monthly cheque list for June which had been emailed to Councillors. Cllr Blanks asked if formal confirmation had been received regarding the public works loan and the final payment now having been made. The PFO advised it had not been, and that she would contact PWLB to obtain this.
- b) The Clerk advised there were two CCLA interest payments in June - £506.90 and £17.58.

#### C25.060 TREES

This matter had been placed on the agenda due to the very sad occurrence of part of a tree falling in a park maintained by a local authority. The Parish Council completes an annual visual Tree Inspection for trees on land owned or managed by the Parish Council as part of its Health and Safety routine. Two quotes had been obtained for this work – one for £800 from the regular contractor and one for £700 from a new contractor. Councillors **AGREED** the office staff should instruct whichever company could complete the works earliest. The Clerk advised that she had also asked the Cemetery Maintenance Contractor to look at the Parish Council owned land on St Andrews side of the PRow, and there were no issues found. However, there are three trees that overhang the PRow at the rear of the cemetery, which would be formally reviewed as part of the tree risk work.

#### C25.061 DONATION - £500 – THORNWOOD MARKET

The Clerk advised Members of a very generous donation received from Mrs Crosby who runs the Thornwood Market on a Saturday, of £500. The Chairman was invited to attend the Market to receive the donation, but due to a prior commitment was unable to attend, therefore the Clerk attended on his behalf and received this in his absence. The money will be spent on enhancing the Parish Hall at Thornwood, which includes the purchase of a new water heater. Councillors expressed their gratitude for this kind donation, and asked that the Clerk write to Mrs Crosby and thank Thornwood Market for their kind donation. It was noted that a further donation from the Thornwood Market had been presented a month earlier to the Over 70's Youth Club, and Seniors who would also be writing to thank the Market accordingly. The Clerk advised that Mrs Crosby had also asked permission to place a number of hedgehog houses around the Thornwood Allotments, and that the Clerk had spoken to Cllr Mrs Hawkins who was happy with this suggestion. Further conversations will take place with the Thornwood Allotment Warden.

### **C25.062 COUNCILLORS SURGERY – CLLR TOM BROMWICH**

Cllr Bromwich reported on this matter earlier in the meeting. The next surgery will be in October.

### **C25.063 MEETING WITH EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL RE NORTH WEALD MARKET TRAFFIC**

Five Members of the Parish Council together with the Clerk met with Cllr Whitbread, Darren Goodey, Cllrs Ray Balcombe, Les Burrows, Holly Whitbread, and Tom Bromwich and the Market Operator on the 20th June 2025 to discuss this matter. All North Weald Bassett Councillors were able to submit questions prior to the meeting, whether they could attend in person or not. Cllr Whitbread took all the questions from Members and copies of the responses were attached to the agenda. In addition to these responses, Cllr Bromwich had also added to his own comments as an Independent Councillor, as it was felt that he was often left out of the loop. Cllr Whitbread agreed that they would advise Cllr Bromwich of any responses relative to this matter. Councillors discussed the content of the meeting, noting that the Chairman asked that EFDC / Market Operator again consider additional 'Marshals on the ground' to direct traffic. Cllr Whitbread had also advised all those present that he would arrange for a meeting towards the end of the year for an update.

Cllr Lambert stated that it seemed as though the idea to resolve the traffic problems was to get rid of the market, but this was an extremely popular market, stating that surely there were other possibilities that should be considered. The Chairman stated that it wasn't a case of wanting to get rid of the market, but EFDC and Highways had to be held to account as to how they would be dealing with the traffic issues created by the market. EFDC had advised that it was expected that by the end of the year, the market itself would have considerably reduced in size, which would in turn affect the volume of people attending the market, and thus the traffic. Cllr Tyler stated that he felt this was a bit of a whitewash, and that EFDC was not really addressing anything but kicking the can down the road. Cllr Tyler reminded Councillors that devolution was coming, and suggested that perhaps the airfield could be moved to the management of North Weald Bassett PC as an asset rather than it being swallowed up by a unitary authority, however this also raised some concern.

Cllr Clegg stated that he was disappointed with the meeting, specifically concerning the fact that Cllr Chris Whitbread was the self-appointed Chairman, and how the questions were steered in a certain way. It was accepted that whilst the market was up and running there would be traffic, but the impact of this traffic was unacceptable. Following further discussion, it was **AGREED** that a meeting should be held with EFDC approximately three weeks into January 2025, for an update and to hold EFDC to account in terms of what difference there may have been with any reduction in market size. This will allow the Parish Council time to consider its position at the January 2025 Parish Council meeting.

### **C25.064 MEETING WITH EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

At the last meeting, Members noted that on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> 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. Members recalled that 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. The Clerk explained to Members that both herself and the PFO had met with EFDC on their own as the Chairman, who had also been invited, but had a prior engagement. The Chairman subsequently met with Cllr Chris Whitbread on 13<sup>th</sup> June. The Chairman advised that he had no further report to give than what was given by the Clerk at the prior meeting.

### **C25.065 RURAL PROSPERITY FUND**

The Clerk was pleased to be able to formally report that the Parish Council had been awarded £50,000 grant funding towards a new roof for Thornwood Parish Hall. An application to the National Lottery for solar panels on the roof had had to be resubmitted for a further £20,000 as the Clerk had been advised that we did not receive enough written support from hall users. As such, the Council undertook a period of public consultation which included an online survey, a direct request to regular hall users, and a written Survey to any and all users of the hall to ascertain if they would support the hall having a new roof and solar panels. It was noted there would still be a shortfall of funds which the Parish Council would have to pay out of its earmarked reserves, potentially around £40,000, and it was **AGREED** in principle that any such funds would come out of the HMRC earmarked reserve. The clerk advised that the office staff would now progress a planning application, and that this matter would be on the September agenda for further discussion and agreement. The Clerk also advised that further funding was possible from the recent developments in Thornwood.

### **C25.066 GARDEN BY THE PARADE OF SHOPS**

The Chairman was delighted to be able to report to Members that the Garden by the Parade of shops was now being maintained by a new gardening company, as briefly reported earlier in the meeting. The Chairman has met with the company and is very pleased with the work undertaken so far. The Chairman will now go out to the regular garden sponsors to try and obtain sponsorship, however this would be reduced for this year.

### **C25.067 SENSORY GARDEN PLANTERS**

Cllr Tyler and the Senior Administrative Officer have replanted the Planters in the Sensory Garden. They had become somewhat overgrown and looking a little 'unloved'. They are now thriving and are being watered regularly by the Councils Grounds Maintenance Contractor when they carry out their regular play area checks and litter bin emptying at Weald Common Play Area.

### **C25.068 BROADBAND – HASTINGWOOD**

At the last Meeting the Clerk and Hastingwood Councillors reported that they had 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 had offered 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 our 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.

However, Cllr Irvine reported that OffCom had now changed the rules with regard to the voucher system, and that Building Digital UK (the funding body for the vouchers) had put a pause on this whilst they consider future funding. Cllr Irvine expressed his disappointment at this as a lot of time and effort had gone into this project, however the Gigaclear CEO will be meeting with BDUK so it is hoped an update will be available soon. EFDC Cllr Bromwich suggested the MP should get involved, however Cllr Irvine said it was best to wait until the meeting had taken place.

### **C25.069 VEHICLE ACTIVATED SIGNS**

- a) VAS at Skipps Corner - During a community speedwatch session, Cllr Clegg noticed that the VAS sign located at Skipps corner is permanently illuminated. Both Cllr Clegg and the Clerk

had visited site, and could see that the sign was installed by Wescotec. The Clerk has contacted Essex County Council to establish ownership of the sign, and who has responsibility for maintenance. The PFO advised that she had contacted ECC with regard to ownership of the sign, and the response received was as follows:

*Unfortunately, I cannot find any record of the ownership and who would have installed the sign. The sign was installed long before the LHP was established so I don't think it was put in by us. As for the maintenance side of things, I believe there is a revenue budget for this year, and I think it will be member led but it is yet to be clarified. The budget will not sit with the LHP. I believe you will have to flag any VAS repairs up to your member.*

Councillors **AGREED** that the Clerk should obtain a quote for Wescotec to visit site and see if they can resolve the problem (the cost of a site visit being around £270), and that Cllr Whitbread should also be contacted asking for a portion of his VAS funding.

- b) VAS Upland Road – It was agreed at the budget / precept meeting for 25/26 that this Council would look into applying via the LHP for permission to install two VAS for Upland Road and Weald Bridge Road, the cost of which was expected to be around £8,000 and would be funded by the Parish Council, with funds coming from the HMRC EMR. The detailed requirements for VAS have been sent to Cllr Clegg, who in turn is also investigating the latest rules and regulations regarding their installation. Councillors noted this progress. Cllr Clegg advised that he wanted Councillors to know that work was taking place regarding this project, and that it hadn't been forgotten.

#### **C25.070 UKPN WORKS ON THORNWOOD COMMON**

As advised previously (and as agreed by full Council in February 2025), as part of the electrical connection works for the Tudor House development, works are required to parts of Thornwood Common to complete this connection. The Clerk and PFO have been liaising with both the developer, the statutory undertaker, and the Councils Solicitors with regard to the formal Wayleave and the actual works themselves. This has included an onsite meeting which took place on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2025. To ensure the safety of any users of Thornwood Common during the works, areas where the works will take place will be securely cordoned off by the contractor. The footpath will remain open at all times, with the exception of when the contractor needs access to Weald Hall Lane, during which times the footpath will be temporary closed (but fully managed). Works are expected to take place within the next 2-4 months, and the contractor will provide the Parish Council with a minimum of 14 days' notice to allow the members of the public to be advised and the relevant notices to be erected. It was noted that these works would be at no cost to the Council, as the developer was paying for all legal costs, work costs, and providing the Council with compensation of £2,500.

#### **C25.071 NEW DOG BIN – ELM GARDENS, NORTH WEALD**

Members noted that the new dog bin agreed in the Budget and Precept had been ordered and was currently on an awaited 'back delivery'. As soon as it is received it will be installed by the Council's contractor.

#### **C25.072 BATTLE OF BRITAIN SERVICE – SEPTEMBER**

Following on from the Remembrance Day meeting where the matter regarding the Battle of Britain Commemorative event was discussed, the following was agreed at that meeting:

- Battle of Britain Service to be held at the Cross of Sacrifice – situated on land owned by the Commonwealth Graves Commission – within North Weald St Andrews Churchyard
- Event to commence – 11.00am
- Short event at the Cross of Sacrifice expected to last no more than 30 minutes
- Not to be advertised to the general public

- St Andrews PCC to be contacted regarding the possibility of 2 bees nests in situ in Churchyard
- All invitees to be advised that parking is in Parish Council Cemetery
- All invitees to be advised there are no toilet facilities on Site

The Clerk also read out a letter she had received from the St Andrews Church Warden. She also advised that it was agreed at the meeting refreshments were not required, nor was it a religious service but a commemorative event. Nobody would be presiding, but it would simply be wreath laying. The Clerk confirmed she would go back to the Church Warden. The Clerk also confirmed that a bugler had been sourced for the event, at a cost of £60, which was **AGREED**.

#### **C25.073 MEDIA SERVICES – PHOTOS ON REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY**

At the Meeting regarding the Remembrance Sunday Event, Members present were concerned at the lack of attendance at the Remembrance Sunday Events by our media representative. Members present at that meeting asked for this to be placed on the Parish Council Agenda as a specific item to be discussed. As the Councils media representatives was not present, it was agreed to defer this item to the September meeting.

#### **C25.074 FLAG**

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

Meeting closed 9pm

Signed .....

Date .....