



MINUTES

Meeting: PARISH COUNCIL

Date: 3rd February 2025

Time: 7.30PM

Venue: PARISH HALL, THORNWOOD COMMON

PRESENT:

Councillors (6) Cllr Buckley (Chairman), Cllr Mrs Hawkins, Cllr Irvine, Cllr Blanks, Cllr Clegg
Cllr Tyler

Officers in Attendance (2)

Susan De Luca, Parish Clerk

Adriana Jones – Principal Finance Officer

** for part of meeting*

Members of the Public (6) – inc EFDC Cllr Burrows, Cllr Bromwich, and PC Cook*

Members of the Press (0)

C24.145 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (5)

Apologies from Cllrs Kinnear, Ms Wood, Mrs Jackman, Bedford and Spearman.

C24.146 OTHER ABSENCES (3)

Cllrs Stroud, Born and Mrs Etherington

C24.147 MINUTES

Councillors **AGREED** the Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 6th January 2025.

C24.148 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

C24.149 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

The Chairman welcomed the public present. PC Cook provided an update on crime statistics between now going back to 2nd December 2024, advising there had been one theft of motor vehicle from Weald Bridge Road, one theft from car in Emberson Way, one theft from HGV parked overnight which had its fuel stolen, three accounts of criminal damage – one in Beamish Close, one in Blenheim Square and one in the High Road. There had been one attempted burglary from the Co-op on 24th January. There had been 33 recorded incidents over the last two weeks. The Chairman stated that this seemed to be a bit of an increase. PC Cook advised there had not been any theft of motor vehicles in either November or December. Cllr Tyler reported that he often sees vehicles parked on Vicarage Last West looking suspicious and possibly taking drugs. PC Cook advised he does patrol this area regularly as it is one of his recorded hot spots, and that this issue had already been reported to him by a local resident. The Chairman thanked PC Cook for his report.

EFDC Cllr Burrows advised that issues around planning and the multistorey car park in Epping continue, with the possibility that the multistorey car park will be ‘called in’. The Chairman advised that the multistorey car park has a drainage issue on the roof somewhere. Cllr Blanks stated that he thought the Liberal Democrats had already called in the car park issue, to which Cllr Burrows stated that as of three days ago this had not taken place. Cllr Blanks asked how much the car park would cost residents stating that he thought it was about £10m, to which Cllr Burrows stated that Councillors would need to review the O&S meeting. Cllr Blanks also raised the issue of the houses behind the Civic Centre, asking if that

was going to be taken back too by EFDC, as the Section 151 Officer has recognised there is a problem and they need to do something about it. Is that protecting Qualis from other problems? Cllr Burrows advised he was not aware of the details of any losses on those houses.

Cllr Burrows advised that at present the Chairmans Charity Quiz night had five teams consisting of about 42 people in total, with the capacity for around another 3 teams, reminding Councillors that all money raised was going to the Air Ambulance.

Cllr Bromwich provided an update, but first commended Cllr Burrows on his efforts with the Charity Quiz night. He reported that there had been a dog attack in Oak Piece, and that he had been in contact with the victim and residents to offer as much advice and support as he could about how to proceed. He advised that both himself and Cllr Bedford were working closely on this matter, and were keeping the EFDC Safer Communities Team busy. He had also been assisting residents regarding property issues, including the matter of a faulty boiler in a property in Watermans Way which involved him being on the phone for around 2 hours to secure a 4 hour emergency call out. There were issues of mould in a couple of rooms at Norway House, and he had been pressuring EFDC to resolve this. Cllr Bromwich advised he had been working with St Andrews School to arrange for a small delegation of children to attend the new Epping Leisure Centre, as well as assisting Neil Hudson MP with organising a visit of the Thornwood Seniors to go to Parliament. He was organising litter pick groups for all three villages, and hoped to do one litter pick per month. He had reported a number of street sign issues, including one at Upland Road. He was addressing the matter of the poor state of the York Road garages with EFDC, who have recognised the issue and are exploring legal ownerships in order to move forward. He has also been invited to visit Shonks Brook, North Weald Brook, and Thornwood and Tylers Green sites of Cripsey Brook with some residents to assess the quality of water in regard to sewage discharge. Pending this, it is hoped to get some clarity from the County as to how they hope to minimise pollution by water companies.

A member of the public addressed the Council with regard to North Weald Market which was also on the agenda, advising that she lived and worked in the area and has used North Weald Market since day one, stating that she thought it was an amazing facility for the local area. She stated that parking was obviously an issue which was frustrating people that live in the area, and that this does need to be addressed. She stated that there seemed to be a common-sense approach that was missing regarding the issue, and asked if the question had been posed to those that own the market as to why there was only one entrance in, but two out – could they look at opening a second entrance to alleviate the build up of traffic on local roads. The Chairman advised that members of this Council had met on a number of occasions with the Market Operator, Mr Saunders, to try and address this issue, and had also recently emailed him for an update following these meetings. The possibility of opening up another entrance was something that the Parish Council had suggested as an option, along with addressing other issues. The Chairman advised that it was his understanding that Mr Saunders would be speaking with the EFDC Market Manager, Mr Goodey, and the Parish Council was awaiting an update. The member of public stated that it would be awful if this matter was not resolved and the market ended up closing because of the problems it was causing, stating that local residents should be proud of the market, not fed up with it. The Chairman stated that he understood EFDC was thinking about relocating the market to another area as a result of the Google land sale.

Cllr Tyler stated that he generally supported the market, however there have been events on there previously with up to 50,000 people in attendance and it had not caused the issues that the market does. He also stated that this problem was not only impacting local residents, but also local businesses with people choosing not to visit these businesses on a Saturday as a result of the traffic problems. It was

confirmed that EFDC and ECC had responsibility for matters outside of the airfield entrance point, and it is only inside the perimeter that the Market Operator had any responsibility. Cllr Blanks stated that North Weald residents do not get any benefit from the Airfield, and just get all the problems without the necessary infrastructure. The Chairman thanked the member of the public, and advised that once a response had been received there would be an item on the agenda.

C24.150 REPORT OF THE CLERK

Current matters and issues being dealt with by the Clerk included Planning, Cemetery, Passenger Transport Grant Bid, Annual Report, Neighbourhood Planning, and the Office Move. Most were addressed within the agenda itself.

C24.151 REPORTS & MEMBERS REPORTS

- a) **Chairman's Report** – The Chairman advised that the nominations for the 2024 Civic Awards were now open, and encouraged Councillors to consider nominations.
- b) **Vice Chairman's Report** – No report
- c) **District & County Councillors Reports** – No written reports
- d) **Parish Councillors Reports** – Cllr Irvine advised he was still trying to address the issue of lack of suitable broadband in Hastingwood, and that a further meeting had been held with Gigaclear and there may be some light at the end of the tunnel.
- e) **Queens Hall Charity Report** – The Clerk read out a written report from Cllr Ms Wood which advised there were some repairs to carry out on the porch / inside the hall, and that the office had now been vacated by GEMS and they were in the process of getting the room ready for hire to NWBPC
- f) **Highways** – No report.

C24.152 FINANCIAL REPORTS

- a) Councillors **NOTED** that the monthly cheque lists for December and January had been emailed to Councillors. Cllr Blanks queried the high cost of the street lighting bill, and it was confirmed that this matter had been on the agenda for the past 6 months as well as being discussed at the Budget meeting in December, and was one of the primary reasons for the precept increase as we had to budget for this additional cost. This was an issue across the Country, and this Council continued to worth the NALC and Utility Aid to try and secure a better contract.
- b) Members noted the CCLA investment report for January.

C24.153 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Councillors noted that throughout January, the PFO and Clerk had been working on the update to the questionnaire in order to establish if residents' priorities and concerns are the same as those in 2019/2020. This questionnaire had now been completed and printed, and would be hand delivered to each home in the Parish w/c 3rd February 2025. Contained within the agenda pack was a full copy of what will be delivered. An advert had been placed in the next edition of North Weald Village Life to signpost the questionnaire to residents, along with the Parish Council website being fully updated on Neighbourhood Planning. The PFO worked in conjunction with the consultant on the questionnaire to ensure it would tick the required boxes expected by the Examiner. The results of this questionnaire will be fully analysed, and the feedback placed into the evidence base and considered when drafting the Draft Neighbourhood Plan which, it is hoped, will go out to public consultation before the Summer. The PFO

advised that there were two options as to how to complete the questionnaire – by hard copy or online. Councillors would be asked to assist the office staff with collection of the completed questionnaire in their roads.

C24.154 NPPF GREEN BELT – PREVIOUSLY DEVELOPED LAND

Councillors were advised that the Clerk and RFO attended a training session run by EFDC relating to the above which also included development of Grey Belt land. The Clerk circulated links to the training session for all councillors who were unable to attend on the day. The green belt changes are the largest and most significant changes to planning over the last 25 years. The Clerk explained that the previous green belt protections could no longer be relied upon to stop development, and urged all Councillors to review the training. There was concern that the Government were giving powers to officers to decide applications when it should be democratically elected Councillors. The Clerk advised that this would only get worse in the future with the Government set to make further sweeping changes. Cllr Blanks stated that it was wrong that officers who probably don't even live in the area were making decisions about places they do not know, and this will only get worse when the new Unitary Authorities come in. Councillors **AGREED** that a very short presentation on this should be given at the Annual Assembly, so residents are aware of what these changes mean.

C24.155 ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

Members noted that the Annual Meeting of the Parish (also known as the Annual Assembly) will be held on Monday 10th March at 7.00pm in the Parish Hall at Thornwood Common. The Parish Council had received feedback from local residents that they felt the Annual Meeting was quite lengthy, and they would prefer perhaps a shorter meeting with presentation of 'current issues' rather than a review of the past year. As such, the staff will look at ways to do this in the meeting. Obviously, there are certain procedures that have to be carried out, but the staff will meet with the Chairman and Vice Chairman to discuss this. Most of what has happened over the last year is covered in the Annual Report, so it was agreed that the Chairman could just run through a short three or four highlights such as Lamp of Peace, Remembrance Sunday and Sensory Garden, and then direct the residents to the Annual Report for the remainder. This would then give time for a short information presentation about changes to Green Belt and Grey Belt, devolution and the Neighbourhood Plan to be given. This was **AGREED**.

C24.156 CIVIC AWARDS

Members noted that the Annual Civic Awards would be held during the Annual Assembly on Monday 10th March. In line with the prior agenda item, the number of awards have been reduced, with there being four categories to choose from:

- Citizen of the Year
- Community/Charity Group of the Year
- Youth Community/Group of the Year (18 and under)
- Best Community Contribution from a local Business

By reducing the number of recipients, the evening will be run through efficiently and be on the lines of what the residents have asked for, especially as over the last few years very few nominations have come via the residents themselves. The Clerk advised that details would be placed on the website and also on social media.

C24.157 ANNUAL REPORT

Members noted that the Annual Report was almost ready for printing, and should be ready for distribution in early March. Members **AGREED** they wanted this to be distributed to all homes in the Parish, as per last year which was a very effective means of communicating with all residents within the Parish. Last

year the printing and folding was carried out ‘in house’ at an approximate cost of £1350. This year we have sourced a cost from an external printing company of £1400 to include the folding, and this obviously frees up staff time. The distribution costs will remain the same. The Annual Report will be ready for distribution at the Annual Assembly and will then be distributed to residents during the fortnight following that. It was **AGREED** to pay for the professional printing.

C24.158 ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL – LOVE YOUR BUS

Councillors noted that the Clerk was in the process of submitting a bid for the ECC Love Your Bus Grant Fund (deadline having been extended to 6th February), and were reminded that this initiative provides Parish and Town Councils with the opportunity to secure grants of up to £50,000 for projects aimed at increasing bus patronage and enhancing local services. The objective of the fund would be to enable Parish and Town Councils to invest in measures which would increase patronage on the bus service or services which serve their communities, projects that:

- Increase passenger numbers.
- Improve service frequency and coverage.
- Attract new users through community engagement and marketing.

The Clerk has been liaising with EFDC Passenger Transport Officer Stephen Lloyd-Wright and local secondary schools, albeit at this time only one had responded. A SurveyMonkey Survey had been completed to obtain residents views. Central Connect Bus Services had also been contacted however no response received at this time, however Mr Lloyd-Wright advised that this was not overly concerning as there was additional backing. A site-specific area at Wilhelm Mohr Court/Rayley Lane and Hastingwood had been targeted to ask for comments. Cllr Chris Whitbread was also supporting the proposal. The Clerk would provide an update at the next meeting.

C24.159 NORTH WEALD MARKET TRAFFIC – MEETING WITH MARKET OPERATOR

Whilst this matter was discussed in the public participation section of the meeting, Councillors formally noted that the Clerk had chased Gary Saunders, the Market Operator, as requested by Councillors, however as yet no response had been received. However a response from Darren Goodey, EFDC had been received, as follows:

“Thanks for copying me into your email to Gary Saunders. I’d like to respond to the comments made at your recent meeting that it appeared that EFDC had washed their hands of the traffic problem. This is incorrect. As the Airfield Accountable Manager, I am the representative of EFDC and as such I have been working with Gary to try and alleviate the issues caused by the market’s huge popularity. This has involved meeting Essex Highways alongside Gary and investigating how we could help reduce the impact of the market traffic on local businesses and residents. This led to me agreeing to open up alternative access routes and I’m aware that the gymnastics club, Shooters and a number of Blenheim Square residents are amongst those who have benefitted from the opening of the emergency road between Hurricane Way and Merlin Way. I can assure you I will continue to work with Saunders Markets to do everything possible to help relieve the congestion that occurs when the market becomes particularly busy around Easter and the lead up to Christmas. “

It was **AGREED** the Clerk should continue to liaise with both parties, and should come back to Councillors with any progress.

C24.160 EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL CHAIRMANS CHARITY QUIZ – IN AID OF ESSEX AIR AMBULANCE

Members were reminded of the invitation to attend the Quiz Night, details of which had been circulated to Councillors on a couple of occasions. Parish & Town Councils, Local Community and other

organisations were invited to put in teams for this event which is to be held at Thornwood Common Parish Hall on Saturday 22nd February at 7.00pm. The Parish Council had also published this on its Facebook Page. Members were asked if they wished to enter a Parish Council Team, and it was **AGREED** that Councillors would let the Clerk know if they would like to formulate a team. Cllr Tyler had already registered his team.

C24.161 REQUEST FROM DEVELOPER FOR WAYLEAVE

Councillors noted that a request had been received from the Developers of the Tudor House development for a Wayleave across the Playing Field at Thornwood Common, for an Electricity Cable to be installed under the field. This would be installed by UK Power Networks. The Electricity Act 1989 allows for electricity companies to install and maintain electricity lines and associated equipment. Whilst they may initially ask permission of the landowner, they also have the right if the land owner refuses permission to apply to the Secretary of State for a compulsory wayleave, which allows the Secretary of State to grant the wayleave if it is deemed necessary for the installation and maintenance of electricity lines. Ideally, the works should not damage the green or interrupt its use for exercise and enjoyment, however in these circumstances it is expected that any disruption should be minimised, and the area should be restored to its original condition after the works are completed. This would all be agreed within the Wayleave.

With regard to the Wayleave, this would be a legal contract between the landowner (the parish council) and the service provider (the utility company). It is not an agreement between the developer and the Parish Council. This agreement grants the provider the right to install, access, and maintain the infrastructure on the land, and it is essential any wayleave clearly outlines the terms, including the duration, scope of work, and any compensation for the use of the land.

The Clerk explained the options to Councillors, after which it was **AGREED** to respond to the developer advising that the Parish Council was happy for the works, and to enter into a wayleave agreement, but that works could only be completed once a wayleave between UK Power Networks and the Parish Council is legally agreed. It was also **AGREED** that UK Power Networks would be responsible for covering all the Parish Council costs and Health and Safety Requirements associated with this matter. It was noted there should be some form of compensation for this.

C24.162 SCHOOL CROSSING PATROL

Councillors noted that the Clerk had received a request for support from the Local Parish Council to support St Andrews parents' requests for a School Crossing Patrol at School Green Lane. This was following a recent incident, full details of which were included within the agenda. Also attached to the agenda was a map showing the proposed location of the crossing patrol. Councillors noted that the Clerk had received an email from both a District & County Councillor supporting this. Cllr Irvine asked for clarification as to if the Parish Council was being asked to fund the patrol, to which the Clerk advised that it was a request to support the idea, not fund it. It was **AGREED** the Parish Council would support this idea.

Meeting closed 20.38

Signed

Date