

Little Easton Parish Council

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Minutes of the **ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING OF LITTLE EASTON PARISH COUNCIL** held at the **Memorial Hall** on **WEDNESDAY 22 MAY 2024 AT 7:15PM**

Councillor	Attendance
VACANT	
Cllr Jacqui English	YES
Cllr Ian Sussams	YES
Cllr Emma Wells	YES
Cllr Simon Benstead	YES
Cllr Peter Bright	YES
Dist Cllr Richard Haynes	NO
Cnty Cllr Martin Foley	NO - meetings

8 member(s) of the public
 Clerk – Mr Ian Brown

24/001	<p>RECEIVE NOMINATIONS FOR CHAIRMAN, VOTE & APPOINT CHAIRMAN FOR THE YEAR 2024-2025 Councillor Peter Bright was duly nominated for another year RESOLUTION - Cllr Peter Brigher appointed Chairman for 2024-2025: Proposed Cllr Simon Benstead; Seconded Cllr Emma Wells – unanimous approval</p> <p>24/001(i) – RECEIVE NOMINATIONS FOR VICE CHAIRMAN, VOTE & APPOINT VICE CHAIRMAN FOR THE YEAR 2024-2025 Councillor Simon Benstead was duly nominated RESOLUTION - Cllr Simon Benstead appointed Vice Chairman for 2024-2025: Proposed Cllr Ian Sussams; Seconded Cllr Emma Wells – unanimous approval</p> <p>APPOINTED MEMBERS TO SIGN ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE Duly completed, signed and handed to the CLERK</p>
24/002	<p>CONFIRM OR AMEND THE FOLLOWING REPRESENTATIVES / RESPONSIBILITIES FOR YEAR 24-25 PLAY AREA – Cllr Simon Benstead GARDENS OF EASTON LODGE – Cllr Peter Bright PARISH MAINTENANCE INCLUDING WAR MEMORIAL– Cllr Simon Benstead</p>
24/003	<p>NOTE AND APPROVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Cnty Cllr Martin Foley offered his apologies due to other meeting(s) commitments</p>
24/004	<p>WITH REFERENCE TO THIS AGENDA MEMBERS ARE INVITED TO DECLARE ANY DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS, NON-REGISTRABLE INTERESTS AND OTHER REGISTRABLE INTERESTS Cllrs Simon Benstead and Peter Bright declared an interest in Item 24/011(xiii) – Proposed kerbing along Playingfield boundary with Manor Road</p> <p>24/004(i) - MEMBERS ARE INVITED TO REVIEW THEIR REGISTER OF INTERESTS AND UPDATE WHERE NECESSARY VIA UDC Members duly noted, Cllr Simon Benstead to review his Register of Interests</p>

24/005	<p>APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING 27 MARCH 2024 RESOLUTION – Approve the minutes of the meeting 27 March: Proposed Cllr Peter Bright; Seconded Cllr Simon Benstead</p>
24/006	<p>RECEIVE AND CONSIDER REPRESENTATION FROM THOSE WISHING TO STAND FOR CO-OPTION, ANY WHOMEVER ARE CO-OPTED TO SIGN ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE AND BE INVITED TO JOIN THE COUNCIL MEMBERS One candidate attended the meeting, Ms Jacqui English, after a brief presentation from Ms English the members invited her to join the council and was duly co-opted.</p> <p>Co-option paper duly completed and signed, Mrs English took her place with the members at the council table; the CLERK to ensure Cllr English receives a Register of Interest form.</p>
24/007	<p>CONFIRM MEETING DATES FOR 2024 24th July, Sept, Nov, Jan 2025, March 2025, unless stated otherwise council meets the last Wednesday of the month</p>
24/008	<p style="text-align: center;">PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION</p> <p>Members of the public may raise questions about and comment on items on the Agenda OR of import. Session is limited to 15 minutes (3 minutes per person with no repetition of a previous question)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Hall echoes, difficult to hear, MHMC are to seek advice for works to deaden the sound / echoing. ➤ Street party progressing well, thus far 104 registered on ticket site but expect more to attend. ➤ Lamps out at Mill End and by Stag PH, CLERK to ask A&J to inspect. ➤ Potholes a remaining problem on Duck Street by new development, been repaired once and soon deteriorated, others likewise deteriorating ➤ Footway from Stag PH towards new development needs reinstating to its former width
24/009	<p>RECEIVE THE DISTRICT & COUNTY COUNCILLORS REPORTS Cnty Cllr Martin Foley – report APPENDIX A</p>
24/010	<p>NOTE CLERKS REPORT AND CORRESPONDENCE Report - APPENDIX B</p>
24/011	<p>FINANCE – RECEIVE STATEMENT & AGREE PAYMENTS – REVIEWED BY TWO MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL PRIOR TO THIS MEETING COMMENCING RESOLUTION – Approve finance statements: Proposed Cllr Emma Wells; Seconded Cllr Ian Sussams – unanimous</p> <p>Finance statement(s) – APPENDIX C</p> <p>24/011(i) - APPOINT AUTHORISER Cllr Peter Bright appointed payments authoriser for this period</p> <p>24/011(ii) – COUNCILLORS TO NOTE RECONCILED BANK STATEMENT Cllrs noted</p> <p>24/011(iii) - RECEIVE UPDATE ON MOVE TO ALTERNATIVE LIGHTING ENERGY SUPPLIER Ongoing, council agreed to wait until July to allow alternative suppliers to quote before selecting one of the current options</p> <p>24/011(iv) – APPROVE INSURANCE RENEWAL WITH EXISTING SUPPLIER, CLEAR, £994.58; ALTERNATIVE SUPPLIERS PROVED MORE EXPENSIVE</p>

RESOLUTION – Approve 3 Year Long Term Agreement with CLEAR Insurance Management at £976.04 for 24-25: Proposed Cllr Peter Bright; Seconded Cllr Emma Wells
CLERK to ACTION

24/011(v) – MEMBERS TO CONFIRM REVIEW OF RISK REGISTER

RESOLUTION – Council approved review of Risk Register with no amendments, to be reviewed in 2025: Proposed Cllr Peter Bright; Seconded Cllr Simon Benstead

24/011(vi) – MEMBERS TO RECEIVE AND NOTE INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT COMMENTS

24/011(vii) – COMPLETE AND SIGN ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

24/011(viii) – COMPLETE AND SIGN ANNUAL ACCOUNTING STATEMENT

RESOLUTION – Having considered the above AGAR items the council noted and approved their content: Proposed Cllr Ian Sussams; Seconded Cllr Emma Wells - unanimous

24/011(ix) – AGREE CLERK/RFO TO SUBMIT ALL AGAR DOCUMENTATION TO EXTERNAL AUDITOR

RESOLUTION – Agree CLERK should submit the documents to PKF Littlejohn unaltered: Proposed Cllr Simon Benstead; Seconded Cllr Peter Bright
CLERK to ACTION

24/011(x) - APPROVE CLERK/RFO RAISING PAYMENTS DURING PERIODS COUNCIL DOES NOT MEET

RESOLUTION – Approve CLERK to raise payments during periods council does not meet but to provide members with electronic copies of invoices during those periods: Proposed Cllr Emma Wells; Seconded Cllr Peter Bright - unanimous

24/011(xi) – AGREE TO CONSIDER ALL SUBSCRIPTIONS WHEN THEY ARISE AND WHETHER THE PC WISHES TO RENEW THEM

RESOLUTION – Agreed that council would consider subscriptions as and when they arise: Proposed Cllr Emma Wells; Seconded Cllr Ian Sussams - unanimous

24/011(xii) – CONSIDER THE CURRENT SUBSCRIPTION REQUEST TO THE RCCE, NOTING THE MEMORIAL HALL ARE SUBSCRIBERS AS IT IS MORE SUITED TO THEIR NEEDS

Council not to renew and thus avoid a duplication with the MHMC

24/011(xiii) – CONSIDER CURRENT PROJECTS / EXPENDITURE AND *OVERFLOW FROM PREVIOUS YEAR:-

- A) VILLAGE GREEN VERGE PROTECTION c. £15,000** – Council debated and agreed to go with the quote including concrete gravel boards at £12,670 + £2,080 plus VAT
Cllr Peter Bright and Cllr Simon Benstead recused themselves from the vote due to a noted interest at Item 24/004

RESOLUTION – Council approved the project proceed: Proposed Cllr Emma Wells;
Seconded Cllr Ian Sussams
CLERK to ACTION

- B) VEHICLE ACTIVATED SPEED SIGNS AT c. £10,000** – Council debated location and whether to proceed with the project, proposed to invite contractor to firstly complete site survey at an estimated cost of £500 with a view to maybe consider one unit installed and another after future experience.

RESOLUTION – Proceed with the site survey in the first instance: Proposed Cllr Ian Sussams, Seconded Cllr Peter Bright
CLERK to ACTION

- C) UPGRADE TO A FULLY PC OPERATED WEBSITE c. £2,000+**

RESOLUTION – Approve spend to create new website: Proposed Cllr Peter Benstead;
Seconded Cllr Emma Wells

- D) SUMMER STREET PARTY c. £1,500**

RESOLUTION – Agree street party budget: Proposed Cllr Emma Wells; Seconded Cllr Ian Sussams

- E) CCTV MEM HALL CAR PARK PLUS PLAYGROUND AREA c. £3,000** – Item deferred

	<p>F) *PATH TO PLAY AREA c. £2,000 – Item deferred</p> <p>G) *CHRISTMAS TREE PLUS CABLING c.£5,000 PLUS £750 RECURRING – Item deferred</p> <p>H) *REPAIR ORIGINAL GOAL MOUTH AREA £1,000 – RESOLUTION – Agree repair to proceed, understanding this will cost significantly less: Proposed Cllr Ian Sussams; Cllr Emma Wells</p> <p>I) *BENCH REFURBISHMENT COMPLETION £1,000 – RESOLUTION – Approve bench refurbishment completion: Proposed Cllr Ian Sussams; Seconded Cllr Emma Wells</p> <p>N.B. - Residents were invited to suggest project items; ideas included such as Planters, small to medium height Xmas tree, Play Area equipment, Youth Council, Youth activities (table tennis).</p>
24/012	<p>PLANNING – REVIEW AND COMMENT ON ANY CURRENT PLANNING APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS AND OUTCOMES OR PREVIOUS DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS</p> <p>None to consider</p>
24/013	<p>TO AGREE AND NOTE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN IS NOT CURRENTLY PROCEEDING, CLERK TO ADVISE SUPPORTING AGENCIES OF THAT STATUS</p> <p>CLERK to notify Agencies</p>
24/014	<p>RECEIVE UPDATE ON THE FOLLOWING MAINTENANCE SCHEDULES:</p> <p>24/014(i) - THE OILING OF THE REMAINING NEWLY PURCHASED BENCHES AND THE REFURBISHMENT OF THE REMAINING ORIGINAL PICNIC BENCHES</p> <p>24/014(ii) – CLEANING OF BASKETBALL HOOP BACKBOARD</p> <p>24/014(iii) – REPAIR TO FOOTBALL GOAL MOUTH</p> <p>Contractor has advised works will be completed by end of May 2024</p>
24/015	<p>REPRESENTATIVES REPORTS</p> <p>PLAY AREA – Cllr Simon Benstead All OK</p> <p>GARDENS OF EASTON LODGE – Cllr Peter Bright - Remove item from future agenda and invite GoEL to keep the council updated on open days, developments and any other items of interest Tudor Day - 23 June</p> <p>PARISH MAINTENANCE INCLUDING WAR MEMORIAL– Cllr Simon Benstead Works completed, rain washed cement markings away</p>
24/016	<p>RECEIVE UPDATE ON MEETING REQUEST WITH THE LEMHMC – PB</p> <p>MHMC agreed to a meeting, date to be fixed</p>
24/017	<p>RECEIVE UPDATE ON AGREEMENT WITH LECC – EW</p> <p>PC agree to approve continuation of agreement with the LECC, noting firm tenure proposals to be drafted, brought to the PC for review and agreement and ultimately submitted to the LECC.</p> <p>24/017(i) – CONSIDER REQUEST FROM LECC TO ERECT A BANNER FOR THE MOAT HOUSE CARE HOME DURING THE AUGUST BANK HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES IN RECOGNITION OF THEIR FUNDING</p> <p>RESOLUTION – Agree Moat House Banner be erected for the August bank holiday Fun Day: Proposed Cllr Peter Bright; Seconded Cllr Emma Wells</p>
24/018	<p>RECEIVE FEEDBACK ON STATUS OF SPEEDWATCH (CSW) APPLICATION</p> <p>Seven residents agreed to complete training, additional five residents agreed to partake online training but not completed yet. Hopefully CSW will start end of June.</p>
24/019	<p>AGREE DRILLING OF HOLES IN WAR MEMORIAL FRONT WALL TO ASSIST DRAINAGE, APPROVE FUNDING £50 to £100</p> <p>RESOLUTION – Approve contractor to complete drilling: Proposed Cllr Peter Bright; Seconded Cllr Simon Benstead CLERK to ACTION</p>

24/020	CONSIDER REQUEST FROM RINGCRAFT (DOG TRAINING) TO USE THE PLAYINGFIELD RESOLUTION – Approve Ringcraft use of playingfield with the understand it is clean and clear after use and not damaged: Proposed Cllr Emma Wells; Seconded Cllr Ian Sussams CLERK to ACTION
24/021	CONSIDER QUOTATION TO REPLANT VILLAGE PLANTERS AT £80 PER PLANTER RESOLUTION – Approve expenditure of up to £600 for the replanting, repair and cleaning of the four planters: Proposed Cllr SB and EW - unanimous 24/021(i) – CONSIDER OPTIONS FOR ADDING SEMI AUTOMATIC WATERING TO THE PLANTERS Council agreed not to proceed 24/021(ii) – RECOGNISING ROTTED PLANKS TO PLANTERS CONSIDER REMEDIAL WORKS RESOLUTION – Approve replacement of rotted planks within replanting item above at a total combined replanting and repair expense of £600: Proposed Cllr Emma Wells; Seconded Cllr Peter Bright – unanimous CLERK to ACTION 24/021(iii) – CONSIDER SELF WATERING PLANTERS MADE FROM RECYCLED MATERIALS FOR PARK ROAD – New Forest Planter is one such example – Council agreed to not proceed
24/022	TO NOTE MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING None to note
24/023	ITEMS OF REPORT OR FOR INCLUSION ON NEXT AGENDA CSW and estimate for bodycams, any request upon the PC to contribute financially would require grant request from CSW organisation. Question of data storage on bodycams to be pursued further by CSW and the PC 24/023(i) APPOINT CONTRIBUTOR TO 5P MAGAZINE Contributor appointed – Cllr Simon Benstead
24/024	DATE OF NEXT MEETING(S) – 24 JULY 2024 – CLOSE 9:15pm

Signed.....Date.....

APPENDIX A

My apologies for tonight (at two other meetings already) As always, let me know of any ECC issues and I will be happy to do a daytime meeting with you if that helps.

Over the last year by far the biggest complaint to ECC is the state of Highways Maintenance (or lack of it).The situation is clearly getting worse in all corners of Uttlesford.

I delivered this petition and motion at last week’s ECC Full council meeting on behalf of Thaxted PC....I am sure it speaks for most PC’s.

ACTION NEEDED TO BRING OUR RURAL ROADS UP TO STANDARD

Despite strenuous efforts by our Parish Council, District Councillors and County Councillor, reporting to and communicating with staff in ECC Highways Department, we are now deeply concerned about the state of

maintenance and delays in getting highway repairs particularly on our rural roads and pavements in this area.

Many of our roads and pavements are now in a desperate state despite Essex County Council going for the maximum increase in council tax. Rural roads rarely have street lighting and the dangers to cyclists and drivers are growing as the roads descend into third world standards of maintenance in many cases.

We have noted that when potholes are repaired, often the repair is not lasting more than a few months. When contractors are sent out to do a job, they often leave potholes a couple of metres away.

Please can Essex County Council produce a realistic plan to start to bring our rural roads up to standard and end the era of "Managed Decline"?

ECC Highways (including footways) Motion to Essex County Council – By Cllr Martin Foley

The Motion...

"Council expresses disapproval of the questionable value for money afforded the taxpayers of Essex over the last decade by the current "strategic partnership" model on highway work. Council notes the managed (or unmanaged) decline of the network over that time.

For the future, Council calls upon Cabinet to ensure a contractor or strategic partner be not allowed to mark their own homework."

UDC Chairman

Last Night I was made Chairman of Uttlesford District Council for the coming year....largely ceremonial but I am grateful and delighted to be elected unanimously.

UDC FINANCES

I have mentioned before the extent to which UDC has purchased freehold investment properties in the commercial sector in order to generate rental income necessary to bolster its revenues, this being required given the decrease in support provided from Central Government to all Local Authorities in recent years. Acquisitions have been undertaken by use of borrowed funds (mainly from Phoenix Life – see below – and from other Local Authorities/PWLB)

One of those investments is an equal share held in a 50/50 Joint Venture together with Aviva Insurance which owns the large estate at Chesterford Research Park, incorporating state of the art research laboratories and facilities in the life sciences sector.

For those members and resident interested in the financial aspects of those investments, we draw the attention to the work of a working group appointed by Cabinet, namely the UDC Investment Board It meets periodically and reviews on a quarterly basis the

performance of the portfolio. The last meeting was on 15th February and the relevant property portfolio/valuation papers for that are here:

<https://uttlesford.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s34390/UDC%20Property%20Portfolio%20Q3%20202324%20Report.pdf>

As the 50% interest in Chesterford Research Park shows a considerable profit on paper since acquisition, consideration was given by Council to its disposal on suitable terms, if offered and achievable. This would not be a fire sale nor is there a commitment to sell on any terms. A disposal is not required for budgetary

purposes but if the right terms are available, then by use of sale proceeds, that would lead to repayment of a substantial portion of the borrowing, which would also meet Government's preferences for lower.

local authority borrowing/gearing.

Further and separately, the Council has been approached by Phoenix Life, from whom a long-term loan was taken out in 2017 in the sum of £37 m at a fixed rate of 2.86% to part fund the acquisition of the 50%.

share in Chesterford Research Park. They enquired whether UDC would consider an early redemption of the loan in return for a reverse premium/discount on the amount to be repaid.

The current loan outstanding is some £35.47 m and a very substantial discount of some £10.20m is now offered. meaning that the Council would only need to repay some £25.27 m. (these are c./round figures), which would need to be refinanced at current rates. There were two identifiable benefits for the Council, the first being after borrowing the refinanced sum over the medium term at current interest rates (circa 4.93%) the transaction would have a positive impact on the revenue position by around £700,000 per

annum. The second benefit is that the Council would be reducing its total sum borrowed by some £10.2m which will meet with Government's philosophy, arising out of concerns about local authority levels of borrowing.

These arrangements with Phoenix Life do not depend on whether or not the disposal of the Chesterford Research Park interests proceeds or not.

Martin

Cllr Martin Foley

Member for Thaxted Division- Essex County Council

Covering the Parishes of

Ashdon, Broxted, Debden, Felsted, Flitch Green,

Great Easton, The Sampfords, Hadstock, Hempstead,

Lindsell, Little Bardfield, Little Dunmow, Little Easton,

Radwinter, Swards End, Stebbing, Thaxted, Wimbish

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Chairman - Uttlesford District Council

Thaxted and The Eastons Ward Councillor

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APPENDIX B

CLERKS REPORT AND CORRESPONDENCE – LITTLE EASTON PC - 22 MAY 2024

A resident has raised a concern over the developing Tree House and Toilet at the bottom of the field adjacent to the Memorial Hall, members have been advised of that concern.

The Kings portrait has been delivered to the MHMC.

A concern raised over dogs inside the play area fencing but I believe this will be covered under the play area item.

Resident raised concerns over a rising number of water leaks in Duck Street, they have reported them to the water company. I queried whether they are in fact mains water leaks or natural springs or maybe field run-off; plus the lamp in Mill End with no known owner remains inoperative, would the council like to ask their contractor to investigate what the problem might be and or fix it?

Therefore it remains for me to advise that members have received various communications throughout the month from those bodies and organisations that support this sector and all other matters are indeed covered by the agenda.

APPENDIX C

LEPC APRIL 2024 Finance Statement												
Precept		30,000							Budget	Net Exp	Diff +/-	
									40,100	1,548.67		
Date	Supplier	Description	Invoice	FPO/DD	Min Ref	Rec	Credit	Debit	VAT	Net		
Opening balance 1/4/24								53,829.62				
02/04/2024	A&J Lighting	Lighting maintenance	38181	DD		Y		28.80	4.80	24.00	Lighting	
04/04/2024	UCT	Donation	N/A	FPO		Y		50.00		50.00	Grant	
04/04/2024	LE Cricket Club	Grass cutting contribute	Inv 0008	BGC		Y	420.00				Income	
05/04/2024	DRAX	Utility		DD		Y		27.92	1.33	26.59	Utility	
10/04/2024	HMRC	Tax/NI	PAYE	FPO		Y		417.55		417.55	HMRC	
11/04/2024	HMRC	VAT reclaim	N/A	BGC		Y	3,177.94				Income	
11/04/2024	Activ Web	Web/IT services	11707	DD		Y		42.00	7.00	35.00	Web	
18/04/2024	DRAX	Utility	88915/91980	DD		Y		138.68	6.60	132.08	Utility	
26/04/2024	MD Landscapes	Grass cutting	Inv 1389	FPO		Y		84.00	14.00	70.00	Grass	
26/04/2024	EALC	Subs EALC & NALC	17698	FPO		Y		146.99		146.99	Subs	
26/04/2024	Steves Gardening Serv	Parish maintenance	80424	FPO		Y		160.00		160.00	PM	
26/04/2024	Amazon - IB	Ring binder	Inv 57171	FPO		Y		4.75	0.79	3.96	Stationery	
29/04/2024	Employee	WFH Allowance	N/A	SO		Y		26.00		26.00	Admin	
26/04/2024	Employee	Salary	PAYE	FPO		Y					Clerk	
25/04/2024	UDC	Precept Pt1	N/A	BGC		Y	15,000.00				Precept	
Apr							72,427.56	1,583.19	34.52	1,548.67		
Opening Balance							70,844.37	0.00		0.00		

LEPC MAY 2024 Finance Statement												
Precept		30,000							Budget	Net Exp	Diff +/-	
									40,100	2,858.82	-37,241	
Date	Supplier	Description	Invoice	FPO/DD	Min Ref	Rec	Credit	Debit	VAT	Net		
Opening Balance								70,844.37				
01/05/2024	A&J Lighting	Lighting maintenance	Inv 38273	DD		Y		28.80	4.80	24.00	Lighting	
10/05/2024	ActivWeb	Website / IT services	Inv 11909	DD		Y		42.00	7.00	35.00	Web	
20/05/2024	DRAX	Utility	73530/73501	DD		Y		278.28	34.67	243.61	Utility	
	HP Instant Ink - IB	Ink cartridges / 4	220093	FPO				4.62	0.77	3.85	Stationery	
	MD Landscapes	Grass cutting	Inv1411	FPO				168.00	28.00	140.00	Grass	
	Steves Gardening Serv	Parish maintenance	60524	FPO				160.00		160.00	PM	
	Cloud Next	Hosting services	Inv 220641	FPO				59.98	9.99	49.99	Web	
	Employee	Expenses	May claim	FPO				11.40		11.40	Admin	
	Employee	WFH Allowance	N/A	SO				26.00		26.00	Admin	
	Employee	Salary	PAYE	FPO							Clerk	
	CLEAR	Insurance		FPO				976.04		976.04	Insurance	
	Steves Gardening Serv	Parish maintenance	Inv No 5	FPO				160.00		160.00	PM	
May							70,844.37	2,371.42	85.23	2,286.19		
Opening Balance							68,472.95	0.00		0.00		