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MINUTES

Minutes of the Great Easton and Tilty Parish Council meeting held at 7.00pm on Thursday 27 March 2025 in Great Easton Village Hall, Great Easton.

Present:

Councillors

Cllr T Martens (Chairman), Cllr J Stevens (Vice-chair), Cllr M Benterman, Cllr J Heath, Cllr C Hurst and Cllr P Neale.

Clerk: Kate Rixson

Eight members of the public attended including District Councillors Richard Haynes and Martin Foley (who also attended as County Councillor).

	The Chairman opened the meeting at 7.00 pm
03.25.01	Apologies for absence Cllr England and Cllr Hahn were unable to attend due to work commitments. The reasons for absence were accepted by resolution.
03.25.02	Declarations of interest None
03.25.03	Minutes of the last Parish Council meeting It was resolved unanimously to approve the draft minutes of the meeting on 23 January 2025 as an accurate record. The approved minutes were signed by the chairman.
03.25.04	Public participation session The Great Easton Playground Committee raised questions concerning items 10 and 12 on the agenda. In relation to Item 10 the council was asked to specify the aims and objectives of the proposed playground group and whether the council or someone else would organise it and drive it forward. The chair responded that it would be led and driven forward by the councillors on the group and by the council. Its purpose would be to connect to the community and tell the council the community's views, requests and preferences in relation to each playground. The group would consist of two councillors, two members of the Community Association, and two other members of the public. The group would decide how often it would meet as it would be responding to what was needed. In relation to Item 12 concerning the approval of the purchase of new play equipment for the Great Easton playground and the amount to be spent, the council was asked to confirm that the decision reflected previous decisions and agreements to donate £5,000 and the ward member's grant towards play equipment. The chair responded that a item was on the agenda because a council decision at a meeting was needed if the council were to make the purchase, rather than donating the funds, and this would save 20% VAT as the council could reclaim this.

03.25.05	<p>District and County Councillors' reports</p> <p>Cllr Haynes reported on the budget decision at Uttlesford District Council, noting a reduction in business rates relief, a deficit of £854,000 which would be covered from reserves, a pending pay policy which was being negotiated, and an increase of 2.99% in council tax for Uttlesford District Council for 2025-26. The increases imposed by the county council and police and fire service were both higher.</p> <p>The district council had also approved the leader adding his signature to a joint letter confirming interest in discussions with other councils about local government re-organisation in Essex.</p> <p>Cllr Foley also commented on the re-organisation and devolution plans affecting Essex. He had not agreed with the delay in county council elections, which had been due to take place in May 2025. Mayoral elections would take place for a Greater Essex authority covering the whole geographic county.</p> <p>Cllr Foley said it seemed certain that the district councils would be combined into unitaries, the process would take two or three years. It was not clear whether Essex would have three or five unitary authorities. If only three, it was possible that Uttlesford would join Harlow, Epping and Brentwood to form a West Essex unitary authority. It was possible that town and parish councils would take over some assets and services from the districts, but this was more likely for larger local councils.</p> <p>Cllr Foley continued to raise complaints with Essex Highways and potholes were still a major problem, as was damage to rural lanes from construction vehicles and increased traffic.</p> <p>The chair thanked Cllr Haynes and Cllr Foley for attending and for their reports, which were much appreciated.</p>
03.25.06	<p>Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group</p> <p>Item 8 on the agenda was dealt with at this point.</p> <p>The NPSG chair reported that there were now about 20 active members of the WhatsApp group and 15 had attended the last meeting. The group was focusing on increasing community knowledge of the nature and importance of a Neighbourhood Plan. Two articles had appeared in the Five Parishes magazine and banners – for display in prominent places in the parishes – and adverts had been prepared. About half the initial grant (£1,150) from Groundworks/Locality had been allocated.</p> <p>There would be an open afternoon in the village hall on 10 May and this would be publicised widely and by a house-to-house flyer drop. The NP page on the parish council website had been commissioned and information posted on the Great Easton Village Facebook page. The group would be contacting the Great Easton and Duton Hill community associations. Councillors and members of the public were encouraged to spread information about the NP in the community and encourage people to get involved.</p> <p>Cllr Hurst invited the NPSG to attend the DutonFest music event on 4 May. The chair suggested speaking to Cllr Hahn about using video for the website.</p>
03.25.07	<p>Chair's report and receiving reports on progress for items not listed separately on the agenda</p> <p>Parking next to Tilty church –the chair reported that there had still been no response from the archdeacon, but he would send a reminder. Cllr Stevens asked if she could attend a parish council meeting. He noted that the church had agreed to make it possible for visitors to have the gate opened but arrangements had not been put in place and there was no signage. Action: Chair</p> <p>Metal slide repairs – Cllr Neale asked for confirmation that he should now ask Southon Engineering to dispose of the slide bed, which they had been holding pending a decision on repairs. This was confirmed and Cllr Neale was asked to convey the council's thanks for their help with this. Action: Cllr Neale</p>
03.25.08	<p>Clerk's report on items not listed separately on the agenda, and correspondence</p> <p>A written report (annexed to the hard copy of these minutes) had been made available and was taken as read.</p>
03.25.09	<p>Parish Council Financial Reports and Decisions</p> <p>A summary and note of the bank balance at 2 March 2025 had been circulated to councillors and was tabled. Bank statements for January and February 2025 had been circulated to councillors and were available in the meeting. The bank account had been reconciled with the cashbook.</p> <p>Income and payments for the year to date (1 April 2024 to 2 March 2025)</p> <p>Total income to 2 March 2025: £64,195.70 (precept, VAT refund, contribution to printer toner, rent for Laundry Lane, grants). It was noted that the grant of £10,000 was an earmarked reserve which must be used for its intended purpose by 31 March 2025 or returned.</p> <p>Total outgoings to 2 March 2025: £44,041.72 including VAT</p> <p>Payments and receipts to note</p> <p>A list of payments and amounts received between 2 January and 20 March 2025 had been circulated and was tabled. The amounts paid or received before 3 March 2025 had been included in the total income and spending figures above.</p>

	<p>Comparison of budget with actual spending and receipts</p> <p>It was noted that the financial year had nearly ended and that by 20 March 2025 the council had underspent by about £4,800 (about 9%) compared with its budget.</p> <p>Balances</p> <p>The TSB current account held £40,307.20 at 2 March 2025. This included the balance of the grant/earmarked reserves for the Rivershed (Burns playing field building) amounting to £6,880. If not spent by 31 March 2025 on the Rivershed refurbishment the remaining funds would have to be returned.</p> <p>Annual accounts and audit arrangements</p> <p>The Clerk confirmed that the internal auditor would be reviewing the accounts and governance documents during April. This should be available for consideration at the May meeting of the council. After approval, the documents would be reviewed by the external auditors P K F Littlejohn.</p>
03.25.10	<p>To set up a working/advisory group for the playgrounds in the parish and appoint members</p> <p>The chair formally proposed approval of a playground advisory committee to the council and the appointment of Cllrs Benterman and Hurst as joint chairs. This was agreed. The council agreed also that the group would decide on its membership - it was noted that the group membership was currently oversubscribed - and how it would operate (its Terms of Reference). Cllrs Benterman and Hurst were invited to bring proposals to the council. Councillor members planned to organise the group in collaboration with the community.</p> <p>Action: Cllr Benterman and Cllr Hurst.</p>
03.25.11	<p>To consider risks affecting the council and approve the revised risk register</p> <p>An updated register and assessment of risks had been prepared and circulated. This was unanimously approved.</p>
03.25.12	<p>Financial Decisions</p> <p>To approve the purchase of playground equipment for the Great Easton playground to the value of £6,400 including installation</p> <p>Cllr Neale took no part in the discussion and did not vote.</p> <p>The council having decided at a previous meeting to spend £5,000 on play equipment, it was unanimously agreed that this should be used to enable the council to buy an item from the equipment list chosen by the GECA playground committee for Great Easton playground. The ward member's grant of £1,400 (now received) would be added to the £5,000 to allow for a total of £6,400. The GECA kindly agreed to ask the supplier HAGS to invoice the parish council for the item "Symphony no. 5 Musical equipment". Action: Clerk</p> <p>To ratify the acceptance of the estimate of £1,873 plus VAT for a steel door and frame for the Rivershed (former changing rooms on Burns playing field, Duton Hill).</p> <p>It was noted that this would be paid from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund up to the amount remaining from the grant of £10,000, and any balance would be covered by the council as match-funding. Acceptance of the estimate and placing an order was approved unanimously.</p> <p>To consider grants to charities including Marie Curie and Buffy Bus play bus in response to their requests</p> <p>The chair proposed a grant of £100 to each charity and this was unanimously approved. Action: Clerk</p>
03.25.13	<p>To appoint a councillor representative to liaise over twinning arrangements with Cosuenda, Spain.</p> <p>After consideration of the request, the council reluctantly concluded that as councillors were already overcommitted it was not realistic to go ahead with twinning arrangements at this point. It was agreed that the Clerk would phone Cosuenda's representative to explain this. Action: Clerk</p>
03.25.14	<p>Planning applications, decisions, and progress on planning matters.</p> <p>A list of recent decisions on planning applications had been circulated and was taken as read.</p> <p>The following new applications had been received:</p> <p>UTT/25/0475 and 0476 – The Dairy, Tilty Grange – solar panels. Comments by 9 April.</p> <p>UTT/25/0441 – Kiffards, Dunmow Rd -- convert garage to annex and other changes. Comments by 31 March</p> <p>UTT/25/0569/LB – Blamsters Hall - add secondary glazing. Comments by 3 April</p> <p>After discussion it was agreed that the council would not submit comments on the above.</p> <p>To consider whether to apply for a Certificate of Lawful (prospective) Use for the Rivershed (former changing rooms).</p> <p>The clerk reported that the planning department had advised this was not essential as there was no change of use class in using the building as a community venue when it had previously been used as changing rooms. However they had also advised that such a certificate would protect the council from any doubts about</p>

	planning consent for the new use. After discussion it was decided that a Certificate of Lawful Use should be applied for at a cost of £147. Action: Clerk
03.25.15	<p>. To receive representatives' reports (for items not shown separately on the agenda or discussed above)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open spaces including playing fields, play areas and trees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ See above. ○ The clerk advised that the council's insurers had confirmed that the new play equipment would be included in the council's policy but that the amount of cover would need to be increased to more than the current £75,000. The playing field site was covered for public liability and occupier. The policy was due for renewal on 31 May 2025. Action: Clerk ○ A request for the wood from the coppiced crack willow trees at the Burns Playing Field had been received. The tree surgeon had quoted on the basis of removing all wood but using it to construct habitat piles had also been considered. It was agreed that the site should be inspected before a decision was made. Action: Chair, councillors as available to accompany. • Footpaths, road safety and highways –. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Uttlesford District Council had cleared vegetation across public footpaths near the lakes at Tilty. However the hedge along the B184 near Duton Hill was again overhanging the pavement. ○ It was noted that some footpaths had not been reinstated. This should be reported to Essex Highways on the interactive map. Action: councillors ○ The edges of the village green, and verges along The Endway continued to be damaged by large vehicles passing parked cars or oncoming vehicles. It was noted that various options had been discussed in the past but none had been chosen for implementation. It was agreed that the matter should be added to the agenda of the next meeting so that proposals could be considered. Action: Cllr Neale • River interests – Nothing new to report. • Airport – the express set-down barrierless exit was working well with the residents' discount scheme. The PC website refers to the new arrangements. It was noted that the airport was getting busier. • Community activities and events — The 80th anniversary of VE day would arise on 8 May 2025. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The GECA would be holding a celebration in the village hall and lighting the beacon. ○ The Duton Hill Community Association had arranged a quiz night fundraiser on 25 April for the DutonFest music event. The pub was holding a VE Day event. • Easton AFC (formerly Dunmow United Football Club) — the new clubhouse was nearly finished. • IT, website, social media, and communications – Both a webpage for the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and a new website for the hall had been commissioned. Material was being supplied. Photos were needed for the NPSG page. Action: all
03.25.16	<p>Motion to close the meeting to the public as a sensitive matter would be raised</p> <p>The motion was proposed and seconded and passed unanimously.</p>
03.25.17	<p>Matter to note</p> <p>A Councillor raised a conduct issue regarding another Councillor and was asked to raise this directly with the Monitoring Officer at Uttlesford District Council.</p>
03.25.18	<p>The date and time of the next meeting</p> <p>This would be the annual parish council meeting combined with the Great Easton Parish Meeting of electors. It had been set for 29 May but as several councillors would be unable to attend the clerk would fix a new date in May. The venue would be the Great Easton village hall.</p>
	There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.05 pm.