

Clerk: Kate Rixson
Address: Great Easton Village Hall,
Great Easton, Dunmow, CM6 2HF
Telephone: 01371 404220
Email:
parish.clerk@greateastonparishcouncil.co.uk
Web: www.greateastonparishcouncil.co.uk

MINUTES

Minutes of the Great Easton and Tilty Annual Parish Council meeting and Annual Assembly held at 7.00pm on Thursday 15 May 2025 in Great Easton Village Hall, Great Easton.

Present:

Councillors

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

Clerk: Kate Rixson

One member of the public attended.

	The Retiring Chairman opened the meeting at 7.00 pm
05.25.01	Election of Chairman Cllr Martens was nominated (proposed by Cllr England, seconded by Cllr Benterman). He was elected unanimously and signed the declaration of acceptance of office.
05.25.02	Election of Vice-Chairman Cllr Stevens was nominated (proposed by Cllr Martens, seconded by Cllr Hurst). He was elected unanimously.
05.25.03	Consideration of a further grant to the Five Parishes Baby and Toddler Group The chair proposed a motion to withdraw this item from the agenda and this was carried unanimously.
05.25.04	Apologies for absence None.
05.25.05	Declarations of Interest Cllr Stevens, Cllr England, Cllr Hahn and Cllr Benterman declared pecuniary interests in the planning application UTT/25/1086/FUL at item 19.
05.25.06	Minutes of the last Parish Council meeting It was resolved unanimously to approve the draft minutes of the meetings on 20 February and 27 March 2025 as an accurate record. The approved minutes were signed by the chairman. Note: An error had been noted in item 01.25.13 of the approved minutes of the 23 January 2025 meeting, which includes the phrase "Marshes in Cherry Green". This should read "Marshes in Cherry Street" and is hereby corrected.
05.25.07	Public Participation In accordance with the council's Standing Orders 3 e and 3 f, time was designated for public participation. This did not give rise to any questions, evidence or representations in relation to business on the agenda.

05.25.08	District and County Councillors' reports Reports received by email would be forwarded to councillors and Cllr Haynes and Cllr Foley were thanked for their support.
05.25.09	Chair's report and receiving reports on progress for items not listed separately on the agenda Parking next to Tilty church –the chair reported that as yet he had not contacted the Archdeacon but would ask her to attend a council meeting and/or visit the church herself. Action: Chair
05.25.10	Clerk's report on items not listed separately on the agenda, and correspondence Progress on current council projects was considered. The clerk was asked to add items to the agenda so that the council could allocate tasks appropriately. Action: Clerk
Agenda Item 10	Note: deferred and minuted under 05.25.14 below.
05.25.11	Playgrounds working group The council decided to name this advisory committee (created using LGA 1972 s102(4)) "the Park Working Group". The group was almost ready to meet for the first time. When the membership of the committee was complete the clerk should be given the names of the founding members. Action: Chairs of Park Working Group
05.25.12	Proposals to prevent damage to the Great Easton Village Green from passing traffic Cllr Neale reported on arrangements in Ickleton (south Cambridgeshire) to protect verges, consisting of lengths of wooden bars fixed about 9-11" from the kerb, alongside the road. Ickleton faced similar issues to Great Easton, from farm traffic, buses, parked cars, and narrow roads with tight bends. He would be speaking further to the clerk to Ickleton Parish Council. Action: Cllr Neale Councillors noted that the Local Highways Panels of Essex County Council, through which parish councils could apply for traffic schemes and highways improvements, had been dissolved in May 2025 in anticipation of the abolition of the county council.
05.25.13	The Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2024/25 13.1 Annual Internal Audit Report The council received and noted the internal auditor's report dated 7 May 2025 indicating that the council had complied with requirements. 13.2 section 1 Annual Governance Statement The council considered the questions in the Governance Statement and agreed that all questions should be answered with "Yes". It approved the Statement and authorised the Clerk and Chair of the meeting to sign and date it. 13.3 section 2 Annual Accounting Statements The Accounting Statements which had been signed by the Responsible Financial Officer on 9 May 2025 were presented to the council. The Statements were approved by the council which authorised the Chair of the meeting to sign them. 13.4 Statement of Variance and Register of Assets These were noted by the council. 13.5 Period for exercising public rights relating to the annual accounts The period from Tuesday 17 June to Monday 28 July 2025 was noted for the period of 30 working days during which public rights could be exercised. 13.6 Notice of Public Rights The council noted that a Notice giving the dates of the period of public rights would be added to the noticeboards (Great Easton and Tilty) and website by the day before the start of the period. The Notice would be dated the day before the start of the period of public rights. Action: Clerk 13.7 Limited Assurance Review by external auditor The council noted that the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, with an explanation of variance and other required supporting documents, would be sent to the external auditor by 30 June 2025. Action: Clerk
05.25.14	Neighbourhood Plan Report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Item 10 on the agenda was dealt with at this point in the meeting. The chair of the steering group and Cllr Stevens reported a very successful open afternoon in Great Easton on 10 May, which had been well-attended, with 93 visitors and about 12% of all households in the parishes represented. It had increased awareness of the Neighbourhood Plan purpose and process and many comments and suggestions for planning had been offered by residents. People had been encouraged to complete the forthcoming surveys of housing need and residents' views. Another open session was

planned in Duton Hill on 31 May at the Three Horseshoes.

- The initial grant of £1,150 from central government sources had been spent before 31 March 2025 as required. The group had provided a breakdown of spending:

Note: amounts exclude VAT which is recoverable	£	£
Total covered by grant 24-25	1,150.00	
Total covered by Parish council 24-25	128.36	
Total available 24-25		1,278.36
Spending by category 24-25	Meetings	345.86
	Banner	510.00
	Misc	422.50
Spending 25-26		
Paid by PC from the NP 25-26 budget	Banner	48.78
	Banner	23.82
	Leaflets	190.00
	2025-26 total:	262.60

- The Group was preparing an application to Locality (central government funding) for around £17,000 to pay for surveys and professional advice which would provide the evidence needed for the Plan. Current spending would be covered by the £5,000 grant from Uttlesford District Council. UDC required the invoices (whether paid or unpaid) to be sent to it and the parish council would then receive funds to pay the invoices or to reimburse the council's expenditure. The council confirmed that the clerk was authorised to meet invoices from parish council funds, pending reimbursement from Uttlesford, provided these were reported to the council. It was noted that the parish council budget for Neighbourhood Plan expenditure was £520 in the current financial year of which £262.60 had been spent since 1 April 2025. This was in addition to the grant available from Uttlesford District Council which had not yet been called on. From now on the UDC funding would be called on. **Action: Clerk**
- The Group wanted to expand its website page, possibly starting a separate site for NP work. See below.

05.25.15

Parish Council Financial Reports

A summary and note of the bank balance at 30 April 2025 had been circulated to councillors and was tabled. Bank statements for March and April 2025 had been made available to councillors and had been reconciled with the cashbooks.

Income and payments for the year to date (1 April to 12 May 2025)

Total income to 12 May 2025: £31,920.00 (precept, rent, grant for advice on Burns PF).

Total outgoings to 12 May 2025: £13,692.06 including VAT

Payments and receipts to note

A list of payments and amounts received between 1 April and 12 May 2025 had been circulated and was tabled.

Comparison of budget with actual spending and receipts

Cllr Stevens requested a comparison of the 2024-25 budget with actual spending and receipts, to inform the budget-setting process in 2025. **Action: Clerk.**

Balances and bank reconciliation

The TSB current account held £62,871.61 at 30 April 2025. This included earmarked reserves (grant from UDC) for £6,300 for ecology work at Burns playing field. If not spent by 31 March 2026 any remaining funds would have to be returned.

05.25.16	Financial Decisions <ul style="list-style-type: none">The council approved regular, contractual and statutory payments as a group and approved direct debits under Financial Regulations 5.6 and 5.7 for the financial year 2025-26 as follows:																																																																																																																																						
	Item	Payee	Direct debit?	C/ S*	Amount £	Salary	K Rixson		C	Variable dependent on approved payrate	Contributions to pension scheme	Essex Local Government Pension	yes	C	Variable according to salary	PAYE (Tax and National insurance payments)	HMRC	yes	S	Variable according to salary	Clerk's training/development costs	Provider or reimbursement to K Rixson		C	Variable according to annual budget, subject to prior approval of training/development	Clerk's mobile phone	EE		C	£4.50 inc VAT. No paperwork (paid on continuing authority on debit card)	Council's VOIP phone	Andrews and Arnold	DD	C	Variable, usually £3-£6 per month incl VAT	Parish Online mapping software	Geosphere Ltd		C	60 annual sub (current rate)	Website/domain/e-mail hosting	Microsoft, Astley Digital		C	Variable dependent on storage requirements	Accounts software	Scribe (Starboard Systems Ltd)		C	Approx £450	Payroll service	L D Stapleton		C	Approx £400 (includes work mid-year if pay changes)	Internal auditor's fee	none currently		C+	Current internal auditor does not charge. If this changes the council would be asked to approve choice of auditor and their fee/hourly rate.	External auditor's fee	PKF Littlejohn		S	Approx £350-£400 plus VAT	Information Commissioner's Office	ICO	yes	S	47 pa billed by DD April	Garden Waste skip supplied by Uttlesford DC	Uttlesford District Council		C	Approx £1,850 pa	Election costs incurred by district council	Uttlesford District Council		S	Four-yearly, or when a poll takes place, calculated by District Council	Grass -cutting	Steve's Gardening Services		C	665 per cut	Defibrillator pads and batteries	Community Heartbeat Trust		C	pads £70 2-yearly, batteries £250 as needed.	Burns Rivershed electricity supply	EDF	in process	C	variable according to use. Currently £19 p mth	Burns Rivershed water supply	Castle Water	in process	C	Not known - new account. Likely very low currently	Internet connection	Gigaclear	yes	C	56 plus VAT per month	Clerk's SLCC membership	Soc of Local Council Clerks		C	approx 150 for 2024. Variable according to salary	RCCE dual hall and PC membership	RCCE		R	150 approx for 2025	EALC and NALC combined sub	EALC		R	370 for 2025. Pro rata to electorate	Uttlesford Assocn of Local Councils	UALC		R	5 pa	Donation	Essex Wildlife Trust	yes	R	50 per month	Membership	Friends of Historic Essex (Essex Records Office support group)		R	12 pa. Recognises free archiving by Essex Records Office
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	<div>*Key: C = contractual S = statutory R=</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none">The payment of £150 for cutting the hedge bordering the Village Hall car park in May 2025 was approved. (Note: the car park is owned by the parish council and is not part of the Village Hall charity. There is a covenant to maintain a hedge between the car park and the adjacent field.)The council authorised the clerk to obtain insurance on the best available terms, in consultation with the chair and another councillor, before 31 May 2025.Cllr Stevens asked if membership of the 100 Parishes Society could be included in the list of regular payments approved. This will be added to the agenda of the next council meeting. Action: Clerk																																																																																																																																						
05.25.17	To consider a grant to the Five Parishes Baby and Toddler Group <p>The Chairman proposed a motion to defer this item which was unanimously carried.</p>																																																																																																																																						
05.25.18	To consider action in respect of a car apparently abandoned in Duton Hill <p>The registration number and position of the car was provided. The clerk was asked to report it to the District Council. Action: Clerk</p>																																																																																																																																						
05.25.19	Ecological survey of Burns Playing Field and professional advice to improve biodiversity <p>It was noted that the council had been awarded a grant of £6,300 to fulfil its legal obligations to promote biodiversity and this must be used by 31 March 2026. The council considered two quotes for the same work and selected MKA Ecology as the consultant. The clerk was asked to engage the firm and take initial steps in the project. Action: Clerk</p>																																																																																																																																						
05.25.20	Planning applications, decisions, and progress on planning matters. <p>A list of recent decisions on planning applications had been circulated and was taken as read. The following new applications had been received:</p>																																																																																																																																						

	<p>UTT/25/1086/FUL – Woodlands, Grange Green Tilty – to demolish the existing house and replace with a self-build dwelling. Comments from the council were required by 30 May. Councillors Benterman, Stevens, Hahn and England declared non-pecuniary interests in this application and took no part in the discussion or vote. After discussion the council decided not to support the application and to ask the district councillor(s) to call in the application if the planning officer was recommending approval, on the grounds that the development would harm the heritage setting around Tilty church and listed houses adjacent to it. Action: Clerk</p> <p>UTT/25/0898/OP- land adjacent to Six Acres, Duton Hill – to build two self-build/custom dwellings. Comments by 15 May. The council had no comments to make.</p> <p>UTT/25/0917/FUL – Tudor Cottage, Mill End Green Rd, Great Easton – convert garage to house. Comments by 8 May. The council had no comments to make.</p>
05.25.21	<p>Representatives reported as follows on items not shown separately on the agenda:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open spaces including playing fields/play areas and trees – see above. The chairman reported that the giant hogweed on the parish council's land had all been treated. It appeared that the plants on neighbouring land had also been cut back. • Footpaths, road safety and highways – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The landowner was considering installing two wooden footbridges to create a permissive footpath along the river from Great Easton playground to Burns playing field. The chairman was meeting him to discuss this, having obtained costings. Action: Chairman ○ Young riders had been seen riding electric bikes without helmets, on local roads. The law on the use of such bikes should be mentioned in the parish magazine, including the risk of having the bike confiscated if it was being ridden illegally. Action: Clerk ○ Overgrown verges were affecting site-lines on narrow lanes in particular. The chairman offered to speak to local landowners about this. Action: Chairman • River interests – Nothing new to report. • Airport – Cllr Hahn would discuss the representative role with a suitable resident. Action: Cllr Hahn • Community activities and events <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The VE Day event in Great Easton had attracted about 70 people. The landowner had asked that the beacon be moved as the land has now been rented out. Discussion of a new site should be added to a forthcoming agenda. In the meantime Cllr Neale would ask that the beacon be lowered and placed near the fence between the field and the village hall car park. Action: Cllr Neale ○ The Duton Hill Community Association DutonFest had been well-attended despite the cold weather on the day. • Easton AFC -Cllr Stevens had been approached informally with concerns about increased traffic. He would respond. Action: Cllr Stevens • IT, website, social media, and communications – Astley Digital which hosted the website had advised creating a separate website for the Neighbourhood Plan and Cllr Hahn was discussing the next steps with the Steering Group.
05.25.22	<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>
05.25.23	<p>Matter to note</p> <p>A councillor's complaint regarding an alleged breach of the Code of Conduct by another councillor had been investigated by the Monitoring Officer at Uttlesford District Council and adjudicated by an independent panel. The Monitoring Officer had not upheld the complaint and would be taking no further action. The reasons for the decision had been given to both parties in confidence.</p>
05.25.24	<p>The date and time of the next meeting</p> <p>Thursday 31 July 2025 at 7pm. The venue would be decided closer to the date.</p>
	<p>There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.15 pm.</p>