

(Draft Minutes)
Birchanger Annual Parish Meeting
Held on Wednesday 21st March, 2018
At 8pm in Birchanger Village Hall

Present:

Angie Driscoll, Chair (AD)
Elizabeth Godwin (EG)
Sandy Dowle (SD)
Ken Wheatley (KW)
Maria Davy (MD)
Linda Pocklington (LP)
George Taylor (GT)

Keith Williams (Parish Clerk)

14 residents of Birchanger

Ray Gooding (RG) (county councillor)

1. Chairman's Welcome

AD welcomed residents to the annual parish meeting and introduced councillors to those present.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

On a proposal from Maria Davy the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd March 2017 were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting and were signed by the Chairman.

3. Chairman's Report

Thank you all for coming along this evening. It's gratifying to Parish Councillors that you've found the time to join us at this Annual Parish Meeting. So this year I'm going to start by thanking the councillors for all the time they freely devote to their roles.

This is my fifth yearly report and it seems that every year I report on Highways issues and unfortunately this year is no different. However, I'd firstly like to mention a success – during last year the entrance to Birchanger Lane from the roundabout on the A120 was narrowed, or at least it's been redesigned to give the impression that it is narrower. Also new signage was installed indicating that the lane is not suitable for HGVs. I hope this has been a success and personally I think it has helped.

Now the not so good news. The footpath around Churton bend hasn't been installed yet, likewise the 4 new streetlights. Various reasons have been given for this but we now have the word of the programme manager that the work will go ahead in the first quarter of the new financial year but no exact date has been given yet.

About 6 months ago the council were asked to comment on plans to install a new exit for HGVs from the Welcome Break onto Dunmow Road, near to the entrance to the golf club.

Unfortunately, despite our objections and those of many others, the plan has been approved. This could mean that instead of our being able to exit Birchanger Lane, drive round the roundabout and into Dunmow Road and onward to Bishops Stortford, the roundabout will be removed and we will have to turn left and drive round the junction 8 roundabout, back onto the A120 and then left into Dunmow Road. Ray Gooding, our County Councillor will be speaking more about this later.

At the September 2017 Parish Council meeting Duncan Smith, the Flight Performance Manager from Stansted Airport, gave a presentation of the proposed new flight path for helicopters. We were hoping that he would be coming along to this meeting to update us but unfortunately he is unable to attend.

At the September meeting Duncan explained they had a new radar feed and are able to see where helicopters are flying. There is a proposed new route for helicopters from the airport towards Hazel End Wood then on to Puckeridge. He had spoken to a number of helicopter operators where they have deviated from the existing route and all have been extremely co-operative and all support the initiative to introduce the additional navigation point.

Had Duncan come along this evening he may have been able to tell us if this new path had been formally adopted. However, Councillors have noticed far less overflying and we hope you agree. Unfortunately we are again under threat of airport expansion and Brian Ross will be speaking about this later this evening.

The Parish Council are financing the resurfacing of the hall car park which will be undertaken between 3rd to 10th April, during the school Easter holiday which, of course, will have less impact on those who regularly use the car park.

Councillors have recently completed an initial footpath survey. This is ongoing and we are looking at reinstating fingerposts where necessary.

Councillors intend to do a litter pick around the village on the morning of Sunday, April 29 meeting outside the village hall where equipment will be handed out and would be very grateful if any residents would come along and help.

There will be no increase in the Parish Council precept, which is the money collected with the council tax and passed onto the Parish Council. Unfortunately, the same can't be said for the council tax which has increased by 4.9%

And finally, the dog bin saga! We now have 6 and have no plans to increase this number.

However, if anyone feels there is a need for another bin somewhere, then we would be happy to consider it. We are also aware that there has been a problem with bins not being emptied in recent weeks, although they were emptied last Monday. We are in touch with the contractor and will be reviewing their future use.

Once again, thank you for coming this evening and please speak to any of us at the end of the meeting if there's anything you'd like to discuss.

4. Essex County Council Update from County Councillor Ray Gooding

- a) The council tax has increased by 3%, plus a further 2% in the Adult Social Care budget which is the single biggest item of expenditure.
- b) The 3% rise is the first increase for five years and is needed to maintain services.
- c) Essex Highways is aware of the number of potholes in the county's roads.
- d) RG is trying to get Anglia Water to deal with the water leakage problem at the junction of Bradley Common and Birchanger Lane.
- e) The intention of the cycle track improvement scheme is to encourage more cyclists to commute to Stansted Airport. If the roundabout at the top of Birchanger Lane is removed, and there is no right turn onto the Dunmow Road, then it seems that cyclists will have to negotiate the J8 M11 roundabout. This is being investigated.
- f) In education in Essex, 98% of schools are rated good or outstanding. The county will require an additional 14000 school places over the next five years. The majority will be in the Colchester area although some will be in Uttlesford. The authority had lost £9 million in government grant. £115 million is to be spent on special schools.

- g) 85% of bus services are commercially operated which means that a service can be withdrawn if it is not profitable. The budget for school bus services is £25 million plus £8 million for rural buses and £1 ½ million for community services. A further £18 million finances bus passes. The total budget is £60 million, which is 10% of the total Essex budget, for the relatively few people who use the service.
- h) The county supports 80000 adults in the Adult Social Care programme, whilst 35000 are adults with learning difficulties.

There were then questions and comments from the floor.

- a. *What is the work about to be carried out at Churton Bend?*

AD advised that this is in respect of the planned footway.

- b. *A representative from the Bradley Common Resident Associations wished to draw RG's attention to the serious condition of the manhole cover on Birchanger Lane at the junction with Bradley Common. The manhole cover regularly rises from its position after heavy rain which is a hazard to pedestrians and car drivers. There had been promises previously that this would be repaired but nothing had been done.*

AD advised that the situation had been reported to the Flood Management Team. A response is awaited.

- c. *There is also a problem with parking between Bradley Common and High View. The yellow lines have faded, and motorists are often not aware of the lines. The lines need reinstating.*

- d. *When so few people are using the buses why do the operators insist on using such large buses through the village?*

RG advised that it is not only the size of the buses that is an issue but also the quality of the buses, which is very poor. But larger buses are needed, particularly for school transport purposes.

- e. *Is the library bus under threat?*

RG advised that there is an ongoing review but he hoped the service would continue.

The Chairman thanked RG for his report.

5. Airport Update by Brian Ross

Brian gave an in-depth review of the current position of the airport and the status of the MAG application for airport expansion. Rather than detail his comments here Brian suggested that for full details of both MAG's application and SSE's response, enquirers should visit the SSE website on <http://stopstanstedexpansion.com/>.

6. Resolutions

1) This meeting rejects any expansion to Stansted Airport and proposals in any form relating to a second runway.

The resolution above was passed unanimously.

2) This meeting rejects any further coalescence with neighbouring towns and villages and will endeavour to protect the remaining Green Belt surrounding the village.

The resolution above was passed unanimously.

7. Any Other Business

Questions and comments from the floor:

a. *The dog bins are full. Are they being emptied?*

AD explained that the Parish Council is aware of the problem and is taking steps to address the issue.

b. *The path behind High View is very overgrown.*

KW has walked the path and is aware of the situation.

c. *The new cycle track signs do not mention walkers. This could cause some confusion.*

AD advised that this would be brought up at the next Parish Council monthly meeting.

d. *The footway past Hillside Cottages has narrowed as has the road due to incursion of the bank so that it is difficult for two cars to pass.*

AD advised that this would be brought up at the next Parish Council monthly meeting.

8. Closure of Meeting

There being no further matters to discuss the meeting was declared closed at 21.09.