

Annual Ugley Parish Meeting

Minutes of the Annual Ugley Parish Meeting held on 27 April 2015

Present: Cllr. Nick Shutes (Chairman), Cllr. David Cross (Vice-Chairman), Cllr. Betty Francis, Cllr. David Hilton, Cllr. T Turner, Cllr. Jean Reay and Mrs. L Johnson (Parish Clerk).

Members of the Public: Cllr. R Gooding, Cllr. J Salmon, Cllr. J Laughlin and Mrs A Beeching.

The meeting opened at 800pm

1. Welcome
2. Apologies for Absence: District Cllr. J Riche, Cllr. R Pryor.
3. Declarations of Interest – None.
4. The minutes of the meeting held on 14 April 2014 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.
5. **Essex County Councillor's Ray Gooding Report.**

Potholes

Essex County Council are on track to reduce potholes on our local roads, having started a specific programme to do so last October, and good progress has been made since then. Figures released for April 2015 show there are currently under 500 outstanding defects on Priority 1 and 2 roads in Essex. Outstanding defects on local roads have reduced over the past three months from 5,833 to 5,212, while 11,983 potholes were repaired on local roads during the same period. A total of 41,149 potholes and other defects have been repaired over the past twelve months.

Health & Social Care Bill

The Care Bill was implemented from 1 April 2015; it introduces a new national minimum eligibility threshold to access services. The Care Bill introduced a cap £72,000 for over 65's from April 2016 on the costs that people will have to pay for care and set out a universal deferred payment scheme so that people will not have to sell their homes in their lifetime to pay for residential care. The Bill will provide free life time care for people with eligible needs that arose before their 18th birthday and increase the asset threshold for financial support from the local authority with residential care costs from the current £23,250 to £118,000.

Schools

Essex County Council have been liaising with planning authorities regarding proposed new housing developments and negotiating contributions towards meeting the cost of providing additional school places and financing of new schools in the area.

The Schools Commissioner for England has called for more schools to consider academy status to further boost the standard of education in Essex. Figures show how Essex County Council and schools in the county have embraced the government's academy programme – to the benefit of their pupils. In Essex there are 137 academies the highest proportion in England. 77% of academies are rated good or outstanding by Ofsted. Forested Hall School in Stansted is now part of Burt Mill Academy in Harlow which has been rated outstanding by Ofsted.

6. Chairman's Report – Cllr. Nick Shutes Planning and Development

There have been no significant Planning Applications within the Parish in the last year. However, as a result of previous permissions we have seen more building work than in recent years, notably the re-development at Sundown and the commencement of new properties adjacent to West View, both in Cambridge Road.

Recently the Parish Council has incurred the displeasure of both applicants and objectors when our comments to Uttlesford on applications have differed from their views. I would urge all applicants or neighbours who object to applications to attend a Parish Council Meeting or contact a Parish Councillor before our comments are submitted to Uttlesford.

On a wider perspective, we were all relieved in December when the Planning Inspector rejected the Uttlesford Local Plan and in particular the major development between Henham and Elsenham. However, we still await the Planning Inspector's decision on 800 houses proposed by Fairfield, and Uttlesford's decision on their re-submission of that application.

Highways

Lack of action by Essex County Council on issues raised to them continues to be of concern. Despite the relatively mild winter there are still ongoing issues with potholes on minor roads in the Parish.

The VAS speed advisory signs on the B1383 are fully operational and hopefully reducing average speeds.

Expenditure

The main items of exceptional expenditure during the year were the clearing of the ponds on Ugley Green and reducing the crown of the oak tree there. Also supporting the Village Hall in vital improvements to comply with Fire Regulations.

District Boundary review

During the year it was finally decided that Ugley would move from Stansted North Ward to Stort Valley Ward with Farnham, Berden and Manuden. From 8th May our District Councillor will be the one elected for Stort Valley. We wait with anticipation to see how that works for the Parish. Hopefully we become an equal with these other parishes rather than ‘the little brother’ in Stansted North.

Events

Members of the Parish Council have been involved in another successful Village Fete last summer, carol singing on Christmas Eve, the popular monthly farmer’s market and the litter pick on 22 March.

People

I would like to express my thanks on behalf of the whole Parish Council to Jean Reay who stood down in June after many years as Chairman. Also to Maria Warry who we were very sorry to lose as our Clerk in the autumn.

I was very pleased that Louise Johnson agreed to be our new Clerk with effect from 1 January, bringing a wealth of experience with her from Elsenham.

7. District Cllr. John Salmon’s report

Uttlesford District Council has had a challenging but rewarding year. The budget is in good shape, reserves are at the right level allowing for important investments, services are being improved and ratepayers received a 3% cut in their District Council tax.

28 new Council homes are being built in Stansted (at Mead Court) and others are being upgraded. New Council homes are being built for the first time in 20 years and this is a key feature of the Council’s social housing strategy.

The Local Plan is now managed by a new, cross party Working Group and I am pleased to be part of that Group. Our meetings are in public and we encourage comments from the public, any decision will be objectively taken after detailed consultation. The Group are currently assessing the number of new homes to be recommended to go into the Plan, have called for potential sites and after the election will consider the strategy for the Plan.

The new Plan will include provision for sports facilities and cycle paths (we have recently published strategies for both) as well as economic development, social housing, schools, infrastructure and health facilities. I am delighted the new Stansted Health Centre has the go ahead and will provide a first class facility. I am working with the Parish Council on the use of the adjoining car park so that it addresses the needs of our community and as we all know people keep complaining of the parking along Cambridge Road.

I am also pleased that positive discussions with UDC has resulted in support for our local youth services as well as new toilets in the proposed New Hub including a larger modern Library and support for a customer information point. We are also in discussion about extending the car park. I have been a part of the dialogue between the Council Leader and members of Stansted Parish Council and it is refreshing to have robust and supportive discussions that benefit our community.

8. **Finance Report**

The finance figures for 2014/15 were circulated. A precept of £5,000 had been set for the year but for the fourth year running expenditure had exceeded income; with total payments for the year of £6,607.48.

There were no questions regarding the finance.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 8.35pm

Signed

Chairman