

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held at The Pavilion on 13th May 2025 at 8pm

Present:

Councillor R Collins (Chairman), Councillor C Knapman (Vice Chairman), Councillor L Holt
Councillor E Miles and the Clerk. 1 member of the public was present.

25/1 Election of Chairman

It was proposed and agreed that Councillor Collins be appointed as Chairman for the civic year 2025/26.

Resolved: that Councillor Collins be appointed Chairman of Great Braxted Parish Council.

25/2 Chairman's Declaration of Acceptance of Office

Resolved: That the Chairman's Declaration of Acceptance of Office was signed by Councillor Collins and the Clerk.

25/3 Appointment of Vice Chairman

It was proposed and agreed that Councillor Knapman be appointed as Vice-Chairman.

Resolved: that Councillor Knapman be appointed as Vice-Chairman of Great Braxted Parish Council.

25/4 Apologies for Absence

No apologies were received.

25/5 Minutes of the Extraordinary Parish Council Meeting

Resolved: that the minutes of the Extraordinary Parish Council meeting, held on the 3rd April 2025, were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

25/6 Declarations of Interest

Members were reminded that they are required to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, Other Pecuniary Interests or Non-Pecuniary Interests which they know they might have in terms of business on the agenda. They were also reminded that they will need to repeat their declarations at the appropriate point in the meeting and leave the room if required under the Code of Conduct which took effect in July 2022. Further they were reminded that unforeseen interests must be declared similarly at the appropriate time.

No interests were declared.

25/7 Maldon District Councillor Update

The Chairman thanked Councillor Siddall for attending the meeting.

Councillor Siddall provided the council with an update on District matters including:-

- The District Council's finances are healthy with reserves of over £16m, £7m of which are general reserves with the rest earmarked for projects.
- Officers are being encouraged to allocate funds to asset improvements across the district before 2028 when all reserves will be combined with other councils within the same Unitary Authority. Such projects include the dredging of the Hythe Quay in Maldon. £100k on new play equipment in West Maldon and a new visitor information centre in the Promenade Park.
- The District Council recently signed a leisure contract which will realise a guaranteed, index-linked return of £500k for the next 20 years.
- The Council continues to focus on efficiency savings. Commencing with the appointment of a CEO and utilising a flat management structure with focus on improving services to residents.
- The Council has agreed to match fund the UKSPF funding from the Government thereby creating a community fund, without time limits. The scheme will be launched later in the year.
- The Council continues to revise its Corporate Plan and is drafting a cultural and heritage strategy.
- The Council continues working with partners at the NHS and Essex Police.
- Cllr Siddall is a member of the St Peter's Hospital Working Group and the council has agreed to borrow the money required to build a new facility on the site of the existing hospital.
- With the change in central government housing targets the Council does not currently have, nor is it likely to have, a 5-year housing supply. However, the council is keen to open dialogue with developers to ensure affordable houses are built.
- The local government landscape has changed immeasurably with the government's announcement on devolution and reorganisation. Maldon supports a model of 5 unitary authorities. The decision will be announced by government in September.
- Maldon District Council will exist up to 2028. In 2027 the shadow council will be elected which will reduce current councillor numbers by 3 to 1.

The Chairman asked about the Local Plan from a commercial property perspective, specifically regarding sites such as gravel extraction areas. Cllr Siddall advised that there are areas within the district with greater potential for development. He also confirmed that an Economic Plan is in place and currently awaiting approval.

The Chairman requested an update on the proposed widening of the A12. Cllr Siddall reported that Maldon District Council has part-funded a feasibility study to explore the construction of a bypass around Hatfield Peverel.

The Chairman enquired whether Maldon District Council was aware of a proposal by Connexions to install additional posts on roadside verges. Cllr Siddall explained that this matter is being managed by Essex County Council who were required to consult on the proposal. This consultation should now take place. The posts are intended to hold receivers that collect data from smart meters but should, where possible, use existing infrastructure.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Siddall for his efforts over the past 12 months and expressed Great Braxted Parish Council's appreciation for his continued work to support and improve Maldon District Council.

Cllr Siddall left the meeting at 20:38.

25/8 Public Participation Session

A member of the public thanked the Council for their support of the Easter Egg Hunt, which she organised for the second consecutive year. The event was once again a great success and was well attended by 32 local children. Given the strong interest, she expressed a desire to make it an annual event.

The Council thanked the resident for her efforts in organising such an inclusive and well-received community activity.

Resolved: that the Council will allocate a budget of £150 for next year's Easter Egg Hunt and extend an invitation to include residents of Little Braxted.

A member of the public left the meeting at 20.44.

25/9 Bank Account

The Council confirmed they will continue their banking arrangements with Unity Trust Bank.

Resolved: that the Council will continue banking with Unity Trust for the coming year.

25/10 Appointment of Signatories to the Unity Trust Bank Account.

The Clerk confirmed the signatories on the Unity Trust Bank account were Councillors Collins, Davis and Knapman and payments were authorised promptly.

Resolved: that Councillors Collins, Davis and Knapman will continue to act as signatories on the Unity Trust Bank Account.

25/11 Appointment of Member to Review the Quarterly Bank Reconciliations.

The Council's Financial Regulations (2.6) require the council to appoint a member, other than the Chair, to verify the bank reconciliation, once each quarter and at the end of the financial year.

Resolved: that the Council reappointed Councillor Holt to verify the bank reconciliation on a quarterly basis.

25/12 To Appoint an Auditor for the 2025/26 Financial Year.

Resolved: that the Council agreed to retain the services of Jan Stobbart as the Internal Auditor for the 2025/26 financial year at a cost of £190.

25/13 Parish Council Policy Documents

25/13/1 Standing Orders

Members reviewed updated Standing Orders and Financial regulations which are based on the NALC model documents.

Resolved: that the Council adopted the 2025 version of the NALC model Standing Orders

25/13/2 Financial Regulations

Resolved: that the Council adopted the 2025 version of the NALC model Financial Regulations.

25/13/3 Other Policies

Members reviewed and agreed to re-adopt the following policies without amendment.

- A) Biodiversity Policy
- B) Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures
- C) Complaints Procedure
- D) Equal Opportunities Statement
- E) Data Protection Policy
- F) Data Retention Policy
- G) Grievance Procedure
- H) Procurement Policy
- I) Publication Scheme
- J) Reserves Policy
- K) Social Media and Electronic Communication Policy
- L) Training Policy

25/14 Review of the Council's Memberships and Subscriptions

The Council considered their current memberships and subscriptions and agreed to continue these for the 2025/26 financial year.

Resolved: that the Council will continue its/the Clerks membership of the following organisations:

- A) Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC)
- B) National Association of Local Councils (NALC)
- C) Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE)
- D) Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC)

25/15 Financial Risk Assessment

The Council reviewed the Financial Risk Assessment for 2025/26.

Resolved: that the Council adopt the Financial Risk Assessment for 2025/26.

25/16 Fixed Asset Register

The Council reviewed the Fixed Asset Register and discussed whether to include the village phone box on the register.

The Council agreed they would add the phone box to the Fixed Asset Register provided it was moved to a new location within the village, accessible to residents.

The Council also agreed to consult with residents over its new location and how it could be re-purposed.

Resolved: that the Council would consult with residents regarding a new use for the phone box and where, within the village boundary, the phone box should be moved. Once the phone box was moved, the Council would add it to the Fixed Asset Register.

The council also noted the Council's BBQ was not included on the Fixed Asset Register and agreed to add this with an insurance value of £1,000.

25/17 Parish Council Insurance

The Council received three quotes and a summary of the cover for their insurance for 2022/26 and agreed to continue their policy with Clear Councils at a cost of £596.84.

Resolved: that the Council agreed the quote from Clear Councils for their insurance commencing on the 1st June 2025, at a cost of £596.84.

25/18 Annual Return for the Year Ending 2024/25

25/18/1 Internal Audit Report

Members received the internal audit report 2024/25 and the report from the Internal Auditor which was conducted on the 23rd April 2025.

Resolved: that the Council receive the Internal Audit report for 2024/25 and the report from the Internal Auditor.

25/18/2 Recommendations from the Internal Auditor

Members received the internal auditor's recommendations and reviewed the corrective actions proposed by the Clerk.

Resolved: that the Council approve the implementation of the corrective actions as recommended by the Clerk in response to the internal auditor's findings.

25/18/3 Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2024/25

The Chairman read to the Council the statements contained in Section 1 of the Annual Return and the Council agreed that each statement has been complied with. The Council approved the signing of the Annual Governance Statement for the year ended 31st March 2025, by the Chairman and the Clerk.

Resolved: that the Council approve Section 1 of the Annual Governance Statement of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for 2024/25 and the Chairman and Clerk duly signed.

25/18/4 Section 2 Accounting Statements of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return

The Council noted and agreed the financial data in Section 2 of the Annual Return and approved the signing of the Accounting Statement for the year ended 31st March 2025.

Resolved: that the Council approve Section 2, the Accounting Statements, of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for 2024/25 and the Chairman duly signed.

25/18/05 Dates of the Period of Public Rights and Publication of Annual Return

The Confirmation of the Dates of the Period for the Exercise of Public Rights was provided to the Council.

Resolved: that the Period of Public Rights was noted as being from the 3rd June to the 14th July 2025.

25/19 Payment of Tax and National Insurance

The Council received a report recommending the Council pay national insurance and taxation costs to HMRC by direct debit, which will be deducted from the Council's bank account on a quarterly basis.

Resolved: that the Council agreed to set up a direct debit to pay NI and tax costs to HMRC.

25/20 Regular Payments

The Council received a list of regular direct debits and BACS payments to be authorised, in advance, in line with Financial Regulation 6.6.

Resolved: that the Council approved the following payments which will be made, outside of the meeting schedule, if required:

- A) Clerks salary and expenses
- B) Damon Wallace (Wallace Arboriculture & Groundcare) – grass cutting
- C) HMRC payments
- D) ID Mobile – mobile phone bill
- E) Information Commissioners Office
- F) Maldon District Council – Trucam patrol costs
- G) Unity Trust Bank – service charge

25/21 Finance

25/21/1 Accounts for Payment

The Council approved the following payments:-

<i>Date</i>	<i>Supplier</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Total</i>
07/04/2025	Maldon District Council	Q4 2024-25 Trucam costs	£ 305.78
07/04/2025	Defib World	Defibrillator battery	£ 254.59
08/04/2025	EALC	Affiliation costs	£ 133.80
08/04/2025	Howies & Sons (Wicks Manor)	BBQ food for VE Day	£ 62.93
08/04/2025	Island Inflatables	Bouncy castle for VE Day	£ 185.00
09/04/2025	Cllr Knapman	VD Day 80 Disposables	£ 41.97
10/04/2025	Wallace Arboriculture	March grounds maintenance	£ 470.00
11/04/2025	RCCE	Membership fee 2025/26	£ 61.80
23/04/2025	Cllr Knapman	Easter Egg hunt reimbursement	£ 60.00
23/04/2025	Cllr Knapman	VE Day charcoal	£ 33.90
24/04/2025	ID Mobile	April phone costs	£ 6.00
24/04/2025	Jan Stobbart	Internal audit fee	£ 170.00
28/04/2025	L Townend	April salary	£ 262.00
28/04/2025	HMRC	April PAYE costs	£ 65.40
31/04/2025	Unity Trust Bank	March fees	£ 6.00
03/05/2025	Cllr Knapman	VE Day expenses	£ 36.14
04/05/2025	Cllr Knapman	VE Day food/drink expenses	£ 332.19
04/05/2025	Wallace Arboriculture	April grounds maintenance	£ 380.00
TOTAL:			£2,867.50

Resolved: that the accounts for payment listed above by approved for payment.

25/21/2 Funding CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund

The Council received a report recommending a sum of £15,000 is deposited in the CCLA Investment Fund to receive a return on the investment.

Resolved: that the Council agreed to deposit £15,000 with the CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund.

25/22 Planning

25/22/1 To Consider Planning Applications submitted and published on the MDC

No planning applications were received.

25/22/22 To Note the Council's Response to Planning Applications Considered Outside of a Meeting

25/00258/FUL Storage building required for the storage of machinery and equipment. Lea Lane Wood, Lea Lane Great Braxted. **APPROVED.**

25/00114/FUL Construction of general-purpose agricultural building. Old House Farm, Braxted Road Kelvedon. **APPROVED.**

25/23 Environment

25/23/1 Rabbit Proof Fencing

The Council considered quotes for the repair of the wire fencing intended to prevent rabbit access to the field, as ongoing damage has been noted.

Members also discussed other possible entry points and explored alternative methods to deter rabbit intrusion, including pest control as a solution.

Resolved: that the Council will seek advice and quotes from reputable pest control companies and consider at the next meeting.

Resolved: that the Council will purchase one tonne of topsoil and a quantity of grass seed to fill in the rabbit holes and help restore the affected areas.

25/23/2 Vehicle Activated Speed Signs

The Council considered a report outlining the costs and permissions required for the installation of vehicle activated signs (VAS) in the village. Members noted the high costs involved, the significant permissions needed, and the limited long-term effectiveness of VAS, particularly given the absence of enforceable penalties for speeding drivers.

As a more practical and enforceable alternative, the Council discussed increasing the hours allocated to TruCam speed enforcement patrols carried out by the Community Engagement Team.

Resolved: That the Council agreed to increase the TruCam patrol hours from 2 per month to 4 per month, subject to confirmation of availability and scheduling, from the 1st July 2025.

25/23/3 Bollard Repair

Cllr Knapman reported that one of the bollards near the water pump had rotted and was subsequently replaced by a local resident at no cost to the Council.

Resolved: That the Council formally thanked the resident for replacing the damaged bollard.

Cllr Knapman further advised that all three bollards located on the verge near the entrance to the playground have now deteriorated beyond repair.

Resolved: That the Council agreed to remove and dispose of the rotted bollards.

25/23/4 Bung Row Hedge Replacement

Cllr Miles reported a significant gap in the hedging along Bung Row.

Resolved: That the Clerk will deliver a number of small native hedge plants to Cllr Miles, with a reminder that they will require regular watering, as the planting season has now passed.

25/23/5 Wildlife Cameras as a Fly Tipping Deterrent

The Council received a report outlining the policies, procedures, regulations, and practical considerations required to install overt CCTV cameras in the village, with a focus on ensuring data protection and minimising legal risks.

Resolved: That the Council will:

- Purchase three signs, from Fairway Signage, as part of a trial, at a cost of £20/sign.
- Adopt the Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA),
- Adopt a Surveillance Camera System Policy, and
- Approve the wording for a public notice and signage to be installed in known fly-tipping hotspots.

25/23/6 Pedestrian Crossing on Tiptree Road

The Council agreed to consider this agenda item at the next council meeting.

Resolved: That the Council will defer this agenda item and consider it at the next council meeting.

25/23/7 Ditch Clearance on Tiptree Road

Cllr Holt brought the condition of the ditches along Tiptree Road to the Council's attention. The Chairman advised that responsibility for ditch clearance lies with the landowner.

Resolved: That the Council instruct the Clerk to write to the landowner requesting that the undergrowth along the ditches on Tiptree Road be cleared.

25/24 Official Pavilion Re-Opening Event

The Chairman advised that he will raise the matter at the next Pavilion Management Committee (PMC) meeting, scheduled for Tuesday, 20th May 2025, suggesting the Committee organise an event to thank those who contributed funding towards the Pavilion refurbishment.

Resolved that the Council note the Chairman will raise the proposal for an official re-opening event with the Pavilion Management Committee.

25/25 Sole Trustee Status of the Pavilion

The Chairman advised that the next meeting of the Pavilion Management Committee (PMC) will be the required 'open' meeting, as stipulated by the Charity Commission. This is a necessary step toward amending the charity's governing document and progressing the Parish Council's intention to become the Sole Managing Trustee.

Resolved that the Chairman's update was noted.

25/26 Items for the Next Agenda

The following items will be added to the next meeting agenda:

1. To consider quotes from pest control companies to manage the rabbits on the field.
2. Pedestrian Crossing on Tiptree Road
3. Ditch clearance on Tiptree Road

25/26 General Announcements

- The Clerk reported that Gigaclear had made contact to arrange a meeting to discuss potential funding to install Fibre to the Premises (FTTP) in 270 homes within the village.

Resolved: that the Clerk will organise a meeting, on a Monday or Friday with Gigaclear and invite the secretary of the Pavilion Management committee.

- Connexions, acting on behalf of Essex and Suffolk Water, has begun installing notices advising residents of plans to erect poles in Great Braxted and neighbouring villages to facilitate data collection from smart meters.

The Chairman has contacted the company to query why existing infrastructure cannot be used and will report back to the Council once a response is received.

Resolved: that the Council note the Chairman will update members once a response from Connexions is received.

25/27 Date of Next Meeting

The next council meeting will take place at 8pm on Tuesday the 8th July 2025.

25/28 Chairman Closed the Meeting

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 21.59.

Signed: _____

Dated: _____

Chairman