

FINCHINGFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

REPRESENTING FINCHINGFIELD AND CORNISH HALL END



Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held at Cornish Hall End Village Hall on Tuesday 26th. March 2024 at 7.30pm

Present: Cllrs Strange (Chairman) Cllr Martin-Smith, Cllr Braithwaite, Cllr Duffin, Cllr Hammond, Cllr A. Stanger, Cllr R. Stanger, ECC Cllr G. Butland, Cllr Staines (BDC) and Kevin B Money (Parish Clerk & RFO) There were also 30 members of the public present.

055/2024 Chairman to welcome The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting

056/2024 Apologies for absence were received from BDC Cllr M. Ault, Cllr Heirs and Cllr J. Warner

057/2024 To receive member's declarations of interest and dispensations in items on the agenda. None received

058/2024 Minutes

To confirm and sign the Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 27th. February 2024. Cllr R. Duffin asked for various amendments in the minutes to be altered **All Agreed**

059/2024 Public participation session A maximum of 15 minutes shall be allowed for public question time, and it is requested each member of the public speak for a maximum of 3 minutes. CREAMA Fund supplied boxes following any knife crime in the area. The boxes could be sited in Finchingfield and CHE.

Regarding the BMX idea. Has the working party considered it being near the "County Lines". New development in Brent Hall Road – exit and entrance on the brow of the hill. Can the speed limit signs be moved. Over 700 routes have signed up and Finchingfield signed up over 2 years ago. Listed buildings should be protected. Litter pick has happened with over 30 bags of rubbish collected. Has the BMX track got planning permission?

060/2024 Essex County Councillor. Cllr G. Butland

Spoke with Cllr Cunningham regarding Finchingfield bridge and will attend a FPC meeting. LHP being revamped and to go back to the original purpose to look after smaller projects from Councils. Next LHP meeting is now in April.

Central government have confirmed its ongoing plans for their continued use of the Wethersfield Airfield site, for both the Home Office asylum accommodation centre and Ministry of Justice (MoJ) prison proposals.

This week the Home Office confirmed with Braintree District Council that it has laid a Special Development Order (SDO) which gives planning permission for the Secretary of State at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to extend the use of the asylum accommodation centre at Wethersfield Airfield for a further three years, with up to six months decommissioning following.

This comes as their emergency permitted development rights (known as Class Q) expire in April. The Council was given the opportunity to provide its comments on the SDO process where it raised various concerns, including the lack of information initially provided to us and the failure to ensure meaningful engagement with stakeholders and the local community. However, this is the first time the Council has seen the detail of the SDO.

A letter has also been received from the MoJ by Braintree District Council stating they are not looking to use the Wethersfield airfield site to progress two new prisons whilst the Home Office are on site, but still maintain an interest in Wethersfield as part of their long-term prison strategy.

This comes after they held a public consultation in 2021 asking for resident's views on their plans to develop two new prisons on the site and the district council requesting for updates on their position over the past three years.

Braintree District Council still believes the MoJ would need to submit a planning application to Braintree District Council, as the local planning authority, if they wanted to pursue any potential prison plans in the future. This would give the council, residents, businesses and stakeholders the opportunity to submit

Signed

J. Martin-Smith
Vice Chairman

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their views and comments through the planning process.

Councillor Graham Butland, Leader of Braintree District Council, said: "Having direction on the government's ongoing plans for its use of the Wethersfield airfield site will finally give our communities clarity, especially for the MoJ prison proposals since they announced the plans over three years ago. "As we've said since day one, the Home Office have bypassed us as the local planning authority and applied directly to the Secretary of State as a way of getting around planning permission for asylum accommodation which we don't think is appropriate, and therefore the opportunity for the communities' voices to be heard was lost. Braintree District Council did not have sight of the SDO prior to it being laid and will be reviewing its content and considering any implications arising from it.

"We still oppose the use of the site for the purposes of asylum accommodation, for the many reasons we have outlined before including its isolated location, scale of development and lack of capacity in local services. With the site in operation, we continue to share and raise feedback from the community with the Home Office and work alongside partner agencies to ensure that the needs of residents, both local people and those living at the site, are met."

Following a review of occupancy capacity at Wethersfield site, the Home Office confirmed they have decided to cap the regular occupancy to a maximum of 800 service users from the original 1,700 to reduce impact on the local community.

A monthly newsletter is published on the GOV website which provides updated accurate and factual information about the asylum accommodation

centre: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/asylum-accommodation-wethersfield/wethersfield-community-update-newsletter>

The latest update on the prison proposals can be found on the council website www.braintree.gov.uk/mojproposals including the recent letter from the MoJ.

061/2024 District County Councillors. Update from Cllrs Staines / Ault from last meeting

County

Local Highways Panel - The Local Highways Panel process may be changing - while we are yet to see the detail we fear it will further reduce local community input into this key topic.

The LHP meeting scheduled 20 Mar did not take place and as a result we do not have an update on the Finchingfield Bridge weight restriction.

Minerals & Waste - new Quarry Proposals - It would be good to get some responses in which question why there is currently no community contribution proposed from ECC or BDC for these multi-million tonne, multi-year extraction developments - and of course no guarantee that the land will be restored - one only has to look at Rivenhall becoming the UK's 3rd largest waste incinerator to see this risk.

There is no Community contribution for the 2.5 million tonne sand and gravel extraction at Rayne ESS/19/17/BTE. With an average retail price between £40-70 tonne we think communities should get a min of £1 per tonne.

9/9A bus - The service will stop in 28th July '24 and be replaced by an on-demand service - while it is possible to talk to an operator and book a collection - it does not seem possible to do this at the weekend or on a bank holiday (unacceptable) - we have many questions on this topic but DigiGo have not responded to our emails. We hope to get DigiGo to Parish Council meetings to answer questions directly. The service from the outgoing supplier is getting worse and we are not sure whether they should be allowed to run their notice. We are concerned about tourists not being able to find us without a scheduled bus.

District

On Monday last week, Mark and I attended the BDC Full Council meeting. You can see us on the Councils YouTube channel.

We questioned if we should really congratulate ourselves on our ability to secure s106 and Community Infrastructure Levy developer contributions and if these are really funding those things Communities need in the amounts Communities require - especially in light of funding cuts.

Example the permitted Towerlands development has an s106 contribution for £1m over 5 years into Public Transport - so far so good. However, the service is only required to operate between Towerlands and Braintree Town centre and while it says its every 30mins there is no space for a designated bus route and so it will use the same highly traffic congested streets and junctions which are a concern to Essex Highways.

The Towerlands developer is currently looking to vary its development conditions and we are pushing for the reopening of the s106 to push the £1m money into the real Public Transport service (currently very poor 9/9A DigiGo) we attended the Member Planning Forum on Tue last week to discuss some options and raised this issue - which was not opposed by the developer).

We also spoke at the 2 day Public hearing opposing the Agent promoting Towerlands II and to add

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another 150 houses - on this occasion like Deer Park in Gt Bardfield we were on the same side as BDC officers - although we are not satisfied that they allowed the Appeal to be brought due to their failure to determine the Application in time.

Asylum centre - Shalford PC mentioned a meeting with Home Office on Monday 15th. April are you aware / attending?

Finchingfield - On behalf of Shalford and Panfield PC - we want to wish Finchingfield and CHE well in their development of vehicle activated sign(s). At Shalford PC last night, Cllr Welsh showed us the traffic count, speed front and speed aft retrieved from their device which will be used to positively nudge residents to abide by the speed limits and invite uniform police with TRUCAM devices to nick others. We hope to use multiple machines together in the Parishes with the biggest issues to track vehicle volumes quickly and cheaply and also to enforce more effectively.

We suggest that Blackmore End and Beazley End have seen an uptick in traffic volumes and speeding since GATE 7 of the Asylum centre was opened for staff use. We will raise this issue on behalf of Wethersfield and ask that Home Office and Clear Springs implement *and enforce* a Traffic Management Plan to prevent inappropriate rural lanes becoming race tracks at 6.30am each morning and again after shifts change later.

062/2024 Finance

- 1) To receive the Bank reconciliations as at 29th. February 2024
Councillors noted the Bank reconciliations as at 29th. February 2024
- 2) To receive the comparison of Actual against Budget 2023/24
Councillors noted the comparison of Actual against Budget 2023/24
- 3) To approve the payment of Accounts for March 2024 and to agree a transfer of funds to meet the Parish Council financial requirements. **All Agreed**

063/2024 Finchingfield Parish Council Facebook page – update from Cllrs A. Heirs / J.

Braithwaite. Struggled to get control over the Facebook page. Cllr A. Heirs is in the process of getting out a newsletter. This item should not be on the agenda stated by Cllr R. Duffin as the Council has already made the decision. Remove from future agendas

064/2024 Wethersfield Asylum Centre - update from Cllr R. Duffin from last meeting

Cllr R. Duffin spoke about

- Official forecasts of an additional 3,000 daily car journeys to the site once it is fully operational
- Traffic timings would coincide with local travel to work peaks and school opening and closing hours:
- The forecast traffic routes show that a huge number of people will be affected and several local heritage assets put at risk

This is a very good read and I hope gives parish councillors and residents some idea of what WASC gets up to. Time is passed on and we don't have an immediate threat of a prison hanging over us, and the asylum centre is not running at 1700 residents as forecast, currently less than 600, with a claim it won't rise above 800.

WASC wouldn't claim the credit for this, there are many things involved, but the work of SWAP and WASC I believe play a part in the cumulative effect of those many things.

As this has now become an Asylum as well as a prison issue, can I suggest that the heading on the page is changed to Wethersfield Airfield Prison and Asylum Centre Proposals and that the header tab is changed from Prison Proposals to Prison/Asylum.

065/2024 Future of Airfield Museum – Cllr R. Duffin from last meeting

Nothing further to update.

066/2024 Pump Track - update from Cllr A. Stanger and J. Braithwaite

Waiting for planning application to be processed. The pump track has been on the open plan spaces for 15 years. Another 70 homes being built which results in children coming to the villages. It is important that children ride their bikes in safety. This facility is needed in the village.

067/2024 Finchingfield Pond, Sluice Gates and working group – update from Cllr J. M. Smith

Pond working group has met with 3 Parish Councillors with 5 residents.

Three phases of action:

1. Get three quotes to fix the Sluice Gates to be voted and approved by FPC on 23 April for immediate implementation
2. Get the dredging organised in July or August 2024

Signed

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3. Start the process of obtaining enough information on the water flow in the village to make an assessment about the pond for the next fifty years.
4. Make recommendations to the FPC when report complete.
5. To get survey to understand the environment over the next 10 – 50 years with the planet change to keep the feature of the village.
6. The group to gather information over the next few months to see how the pond is constituted and to make recommendations to BDC and FPC.
7. Who owns the Sluice gates?

068/2024 Finchingfield Bridge – update from Cllr J. Strange

A meeting with LHP meeting in April has been set. Environmental weight restriction of 7.5 tonnes. Cllr Cunningham to attend a FPC meeting.

069/2024 CHE - Update from Cllr A. Heirs

Cllr J. Strange informed the meeting that the gate is completed with minor adjustments. Trees being delivered soon.

070/2024 Neighbourhood Plan update from Cllr R. Duffin / J. Strange

Draft plan and circulated to NP team. More work to be undertaken. Further meetings to happen. Draft plan to be submitted in May '24. Concluded by end of '24 or early '25. A further 2 small meetings to take place.

071/2024 Finchingfield New Community Centre & Village Hall

a) Update from the working group - **Cllr J. Strange**

The Parish Council are aware of a number of concerns residents have over the bridge, asylum centre, and sluice gate/pond. These are all being worked on however issues arise that need long-term planning, the village hall is one of these issues. Finchingfield Village Hall is not fit for purpose, it has a large number of issues most serious of which are its very poor structural foundations and a roof that will last approximately 10 years before needing to be fully replaced.

In 2023 Finchingfield and Wethersfield residents were surveyed for a 'Neighbourhood Plan'. These plans are a new way for communities to have a say in the future of the places where they live and work. A number of questions for this survey are relevant to any proposed work on a village hall. Finchingfield residents (centre and outskirts) indicated that (by a majority of 72 and 80%) that a village hall is an important community asset. A large number of responses indicated the importance of improving or maintaining sports / playing fields as well as having a meeting space available. The survey also indicates that development (in general) as well as housing and affordable housing are all issues of concerns of residents. In regards to future development 42% support a few 'medium scale developments' in the future with 75% stating that smaller homes to allow people onto the housing ladder and residents to downsize should be the priority, 82% desire a matching style of housing for any future development. The Parish Council would like to look at the options of a replacement to the village hall that expands its capacity and provides a long term, sustainable village hall that residents pro-actively use and are proud of.

A working group has been set up to assess the feasibility of a new village hall that has looked at:
Suitable location

Reviewing current use and possible future use

Building material that is environmentally friendly

Production of a building that is aesthetically pleasing and economic to run

Preliminary discussions indicate the most logical place for the village hall would be where the pavilion currently stands on the sports field.

The concerns around the village hall are previously noted, similar concerns also exist in regards to the Scouts hut which is in a worse condition. Preliminary discussions further indicate it is likely best to look at options of combining the Scout Hut with any proposed new village hall, ideas have also been proposed in regard to expanding the tennis court, children's play area and football pitches.

Such a project requires a number of steps and input from residents. The Parish Council do not have the funds to make this happen and consideration needs to be given to selling off some land to progress. It is important to note that no decisions have been made but preliminary enquiries into the feasibility of this work have been undertaken, the Parish Council would now like to further discuss the options with residents. We would stress that if additional funds were to be offered in the form of a donation to the

Signed

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New Community Centre War Chess this would mean less of the Trust Land would need to be sold for affordable housing.

Finchingfield Parish Council is the sole trustee of the village hall and village sports field trust. In turn the beneficiaries of the trusts are the residents of Finchingfield (those over 18). To make any changes to this land the residents have to be consulted via an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) or via the Annual General Meeting at a time and date to be advised.

As part of the preliminary enquiries that are logical to make regarding the feasibility of such a project a 'pre-app' is made to Braintree District Council, furthermore Sport England will be consulted to ensure any plans protect and improve the provision for sports.

"What is a pre-application?"

A pre-application involves an informal meeting with local planning officers. It's a chance to discuss the feasibility of your ideas, alongside any problems you might be faced with. It is not a planning application. *planning to be added by John McLarty*

We welcome input from residents as to the proposal for the village hall as we progress the plans.

072/2024 War Memorial & Structural works – Update from Cllr R. Stanger

A grant has been obtained but a metal interior rod is rusting away. A survey quote of £575.00p to come and inspect the memorial. The War Memorial trust will not increase the 50% grant obtained.

Cllr R. Stanger proposed to just clean the war memorial and return at a later date to have the rusting rod repaired. Cllr J. Strange seconded. The Clerk to contact ECC Cllr G. Butland and BDC Councillors for any funding to repair the rusting rod. **All Agreed**

073/2024 Village Hall lighting – Update from Cllr R. Stanger

1 quote has been accepted and will progress with the new lighting

074/2024 Communication Officer Role – Cllr A. Heirs

Cllr J. Strange informed the meeting about a new role of Communications Officer

075/2024 FPC Councillors Roles for 2023/2024 – Cllr J. Strange

Cllr J. Strange informed Councillors of their roles for 2024

076/2024 The Millenium Oak Tree replacement on the heath by the Causeway

The tree is dead. Remove the tree and replace it with a shrub

077/2024 Planning applications

24/00402/FUL - Spains Hall Spains Hall Road Finchingfield

Change of use from agricultural use to mixed use class C3 storage and B8 commercial storage. Remove asbestos wall/roof cladding and replace with black corrugated metal.

RESOLVED: No Objections to this planning application

24/00461/TPOCON - The Manse The Green Finchingfield

Notice of intent to carry out works to trees in a Conservation Area:

Limes - L1 & L2 - Re-pollard to previous pollarding points.

Conifers - Fell 28 Conifers on boundary as they have outgrown their situation and over shadow properties on both sides of the river.

RESOLVED: No Objections to this planning application

24/00547/TPOCON - 5 Coachmans Mead Finchingfield Essex

Notice of intent to carry out works to trees in a Conservation Area - Sycamore (T1) and Ash (T2) - Cut all overhanging branches back to boundary

RESOLVED: No Objections to this planning application

24/00554/HH - Petches Farm Lombard Street Finchingfield

Proposed conversion and extension of the existing outbuilding to form an ancillary annexe.

RESOLVED: No Objections to this planning application

24/00555/LBC - Petches Farm Lombard Street Finchingfield

Proposed conversion and extension of the existing outbuilding to form an ancillary annexe.

RESOLVED: No Objections to this planning application

24/00638/TPOCON - Willetts Duck End Finchingfield

Notice of intent to carry out works to trees in a Conservation Area:

Removal of a partly split branch to large Conifer

Signed

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RESOLVED: No Objections to this planning application

INFORMATION ONLY

24/00430/PLD - Parsonage Farm Vicarage Road Finchingfield Essex CM7 4LD

Application for Certificate of Lawfulness for a proposed development - 2 No. fixed pane ground floor windows to south east elevation to replace existing windows. Replace French doors to north west elevation with a window.

078/2024 **Items for next agenda**

079/2024 The Clerk to recommend moving future meeting dates to the 4th. Tuesday in the month excluding August and December. The NEW 2024 meeting dates are now – 23.04.24: 28.05.24: 25.06.24: 23.07.24: 24.09.24: 22.10.24: 26.11.24. Cllr J. Strange proposed and Cllr R. Stanger seconded.

All Agreed

Date of next Full Council meeting – NEW DATE 23rd. April 2024 at Finchingfield Village Hall at 7.30pm

080/2024 **Closure of the meeting.**

To close the meeting having considered and determined all items of business.

The Chairman then closed the meeting having considered and determined all items of business at 9pm.

Signed

J. Martin-Smith
Vice Chairman

23rd. April 2024