

FINCHINGFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

REPRESENTING FINCHINGFIELD AND CORNISH HALL END



Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held at Finchingfield Village Hall on Tuesday 23rd. April 2024 at 7.30pm

Present: Cllr J. Martin-Smith, Cllr Braithwaite, Cllr R. Duffin, Cllr A. Stanger, Cllr R. Stanger, ECC Cllr G. Butland, Cllr Staines (BDC), Cllr Ault and Kevin B Money (Parish Clerk & RFO).

There were also 14 members of the public present.

081/2024 Vice-Chairman welcome the Vice-Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting Cllr J. Martin-Smith announced he will be resigning immediately after this meeting and thanked all the residents for supporting him during his term as a Councillor, Chairman and Vice-Chairman.

082/2024 Apologies for absence were received from Cllr J. Strange, Cllr E. Hammond and Cllr J. Warner

083/2024 To receive member's declarations of interest and dispensations in items on the agenda. None Declared

084/2024 Minutes

To confirm and sign the Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 26th. March 2024. **All Agreed**

085/2024 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. A resident spoke of praise to JMS for his hard work on the Council. Dog mess is becoming more prolific than usual. He asked if more notices be erected and if dog bags can be affixed to a post. More dog bins are required which are accessible for the removal of the filled bags by BDC. Large lorries causing damage to verges around the centre of the village. A resident spoke about having agenda items added to the next FPC meeting. A resident spoke about the "Bleed kit".

086/2024 Essex County Councillor. Cllr G. Butland & Cllr T. Cunningham

Informed ECC LHP being revamped. Monday 29.04.24 next meeting. A meeting with FPC Chairman to address LHP.

Cllr T. Cunningham reflected on a previous meeting with FPC Councillors. Not a definite solution

- Cllr t. Cunningham made the point that he'd been in post since October 2023 and that Engineers seemed to be "clinical and focussed".
- Was a new bridge the solution to the problem. It is not the case. Secure definitive assessment has been obtained. A new bridge will require engineering expertise. More opportunities need exploring.
- 3t weight limit. The bridge to protect the rural part of the village. ECC are looking at transport impact assessment on a 3.5t limit. When the Impact assessment is produced, he will relay this to Councillors.
- No feat a comply is being perused for a new bridge
- At time a viability against cost will prevail.
- Enforcement issues will need to be explored.
- There is an application for a 7.5 ton weight limit going before the Local Highways Panel. A Councillor asked whether it would be better for the Engineers assessment to be for 3 tons and 7.5 times concurrently, this would save time and money though minimising duplication of effort. He understood why that had been raised but suggested it was too late to alter the existing process.

Signed

JStrange
John Strange - Chairman

28th. May 2024

087/2024 District County Councillors. Update from Cllrs Staines / Ault from last meeting**County Level****Waste & Minerals**

The ECC waste and minerals consultation closed 9th. April 2024

All of the sites identified and assessed were entirely road dependent (no rail links) - Rayne opposed the extension of its quarry A90 due its increased proximity to the Village, RED Public Health and Amenity issues, severing community PROW links with Sailing etc.

Residents in Stanway are facing smelly HGV tailbacks to reach the landfill site there - a former quarry. Residents in Coggeshall, Silver End, Bradwell etc are facing a double whammy of multiple new potential quarry sites plus up to 400 new HGVs a day importing waste to the district for incineration at Rivenhall - also the site of a former quarry.

We have seen, especially at the former Rivenhall quarry site, how easily Essex County Council allow former quarry restoration conditions to be discarded to enable massive development to take place - in this case the UK's 3rd largest incinerator.

We raise this point because we need more folks at ECC to think and speak-up more about their communities and a little less about their party's friends.

Local Highways Panel

We watch with interest to see how the revised 3 way **Local Highways Panel** (formerly a joint ECC / BDC and BALC process) will improve public engagement in highways issues and improve highways outcomes for resident taxpayers.

Cllr M. Staines has received permission to attend the Highways Panel on **24th. April** - but is not sure if Finchingfield Bridge Weight restriction is on this agenda.

9 and 9A Bus Replacement

We have also received confirmation from DigiGo that they will NOT start their on-demand bus service before the end of July (despite the 9 and 9A scheduled service being a very poor and unreliable service today). We are hoping to bring in DigiGo to give residents an overview of the new service and interface methods into Parish Councils soon and are in email contact with them.

District Level**Wethersfield**

9th. April, we saw the delegated decision to spend £50K of the money received by BDC from the Home Office on 4 areas for service users on site - but question why Home Office (HO) are not funding this stuff directly?

When will the Communities "hosting" the asylum centre be able to apply for some or any of the £1.5m already received?

And if not should BDC just return the money to the HO to spend - not sure of the value BDC is playing here (other than the Treasury benefit of interest avoidance on £1.5m of external interest payments while BDC has the money in its coffers - but to be honest we are not even sure whether this covers the costs of additional BDC staff and officers time of being sucked into the administration of this "non-statutory" thing on behalf of the HO).

Home Office meeting MON 15th. April

We're not able to get into the HO Teams calls on Monday 15th. April and have questions about how the use of Gate 7 for staff access has led to incidents of speeding through our wards villages and asking the HO to establish and manage a Transport Plan for the site including appropriate routes to and from site - so villages do not remain rat runs at shift changeover time.

While we welcome the Home Office update that Service User numbers at Wethersfield will be restricted to about 800.

We fear the cost of using this remote site has mushroomed for the taxpayer to now substantially exceed the previous hotel costs – plus the £3500 x ~700 = £2.4m

The Public Accounts Committee (Parliament) also met on Monday 15th. April 2024

At 17mins in the Video <https://parliamentlive.tv/event/index/5a73328b-cebe-4853-8cfb-18c3b3960a3b> this Committee discussed large Asylum centre sites including Wethersfield and noted that the "at pace" £5m estimated set-up fee for Wethersfield has now exceeded £49m (and it's still going) - especially if you discount the sunk-costs.

It is vital that Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan teams develop and secure Community acceptable plans to manage appropriate development in this rural location with the results being formally incorporated into the Braintree District Local Plan as soon as possible.

While it seems like yesterday - well July '22 - we are already looking at the Braintree Local Plan beyond 2033 - less than 9 years away. Over the last year, we have developed experience and understanding of

Signed

JStrange

John Strange - Chairman

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planning matters and how the current Local Plan is frequently tested at appeal and we will use this knowledge to help shape the development of improved RURAL policies including business activities. We will be watching closely to see that rural communities on green field are not targeted to receive the bulk of any new District / National target

Braintree District Council

All of us are facing Shrinkflation - this is when a product changes to weigh less but costs the same. This year we have seen our Council Taxes rise while services are reduced or even removed or stay but with a new "optional charge". There are many examples including the Green Bins - not so stealth tax. Oh, and as of 1st. April 2024 BDC will no longer take black bags next to full bins - they'll leave them.

Why mention this?

We look forward to the 90min virtual briefing on "Fit or the Future" on 24th. April and how the significant funding allocated to this item in the District's budget will be spent and the positive effects it will have for our communities.

We are also engaging with a range of folks to better understand the role and resources of the North Essex Economic Board to assess how it can support our rural communities and enterprise.

Cllr M. Staines also mentioned that he is happy to attend the Local Highways Panel on behalf of Finchingfield Parish Council now to be held on Monday 29th. April - subject to their agreement – he already has the permission of the Chair, County Cllr Siddal to attend, in which case I'll attend in my District Cllr capacity. I am liaising with Alison Webb at BDC.

I am keen to ask the following [in my 3 minutes].

Is Finchingfield bridge on LHP Meeting agenda MON 29 April 2024 and if so in what capacity?

- When will the 7.5 tonne weight restriction start?

[A 3.5 tonne potential restriction which could potentially affect Public Transport, Agri and Local Traffic and was news to me tonight and needs to be clarified / rejected very quickly].

- Where will the weight restriction signs be placed please to dissuade HGV through traffic from tackling the Finchingfield Bridge?

Will they be as far away as the (A131 / A120) or too close to be a deterrent?

- When will ECC / Jacobs Ringway quit the Greedy Duck so it can be restored to meaningful economic activity?

What will ECC do with the Finchingfield land they acquired to "swap" with the Parish Council to enable a straighter road to access the bridge across the green to be achieved?

- *Will Essex Police be funded to buy a roll-out axle weight scale to assist communities enforce the multiple weight restrictions along the B1053 and B1057 - can the £2.8m HO grant for Wethersfield fund this?*

088/2024 Finance

- 1) To receive the Bank reconciliations as at 31st. March 2024

Councillors noted the Bank reconciliations as at 31st. March 2024

- 2) To receive the comparison of Actual against Budget 2024/25

Councillors noted the comparison of Actual against Budget 2024/25

- 3) To approve the payment of Accounts for April 2024 and to agree a transfer of funds to meet the Parish Council financial requirements. **All Agreed**

Cllr T. Cunningham left the meeting

089/2024 Wethersfield Asylum Centre – any update from Cllr R. Duffin from last meeting Wethersfield Airbase Scrutiny Committee

The prison is temporarily on hold as the immigration issues in the country have encouraged the government to create an illegal immigrants asylum centre. This was going to hold 1700 residents, we are now told this is reduced to 800. A Special Development Order has been used by the Home Office to avoid the need for planning permission to create a centre for the next 3 years. Hard to see immigration change dramatically and we should not be surprised if government makes this permanent.

The airbase and countryside it's located within is totally inappropriate for a prison or an asylum centre, huge amounts of work are being done by a number of very well qualified volunteers and planning, environment, pollution, heritage and traffic consultants have been employed. For more information visit www.finchingfield-pc.gov.uk

Below is a summary of the Home Office catch up meeting on April 15th. This was on Zoom but we're told the next one will be F2F.

Signed

JStrange
John Strange - Chairman

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- Calmer period past 6 weeks. Classes and activities are being expanded to counter the problems arising through boredom of the inmates.
- 700 users had been on site and will ramp up to 800.
- Currently reduced to 580 currently on site due conditions of the SDO.
- Some challenges during Ramadan around meal times
- National Audit Office report review of costings £5M V £49M actual due to unforeseen issues
- Asked if the £15M MOJ spend with Kier Group are included in the £49M.
 - Kiron Lyons of the Home Office unable to confirm and asked me to send them info as had no clue about it.
- Asked if all the contamination surveys had been completed and when they will be published.
 - Kiron Lyons advised most had been done and all clear.
- Asked what ones hasn't been completed and why?
 - Kiron Lyons advised the most expensive, lengthy and intrusive one on ground conditions. Should be completed next 3-4 months. Reason why SDO cap currently at 580 service users. Thinks they will be made public once all completed. 10K pages currently being redacted.
- RAF Museum hosting on site ongoing – SDO team need to look at it and obtain specialist advise.
- 1700 users is legal cap under SDO. 800 is operational cap currently which will increase to 1245 users where required. 580 currently due to surveys not all completed under SDO conditions.
- No of portacabins will stay and users will be spread out more ie less users sharing per room
- Next meeting will be F2F in May – date tba.

Below is the link to the house of commons accounts committee meeting with the HO on 15th April. As tax payers it is excruciating to see that the Home Office are not supplying information to the committee and when they do it is very late. 9 months was mentioned with just preamble as excuses.

https://parliamentlive.tv/event/index/5a73328b-cebe-4853-8cfb-18c3b3960a3b?in=15%3A42%3A26&fbclid=IwAR3q2hAPsnFJpTB-DgVu9-97SojZCOVpoSExWAU9rKxF9uFbY8SE0Pyr2uM_aem_Afy46OdXDG4QI82F3QriuP7UqbtjalPbKwm-Q1UwFq80_fYvJJQYHhUhwEzYr2aL5SU

090/2024 Finchingfield Pond, Sluice Gates and working group – update from Cllr J. M. Smith
Cllr J-Martin-Smith thanked a resident for donating money towards the repair of the gates. A donation of £5000 is being put into the FPC Ear Marked Reserve account to repair the sluice gates. The pond group is meeting on 15th. May to discuss the option on the pond and sluice gates going forward.

091/2024 Finchingfield Bridge – Cllr J. M. Smith
As discussed above by Cllr T. Cunningham

092/2024 CHE - Update from Cllr A. Heirs

- Confirmed that Luke will mow and cut the ditch to CHE playing field
- CHE Orchard, planted with the help of the community and Parish Councillors

In the absence of Cllr A. Heirs this item is being deferred to another meeting

093/2024 Neighbourhood Plan - any update from Cllr R. Duffin
Currently we are in 3rd draft stage with our consultant preparing the lengthy document for Braintree District council planning department with much comment from members of the NP team. We had a meeting last week and the next one is next week. The feedback from the questionnaire and the results have formed the draft document and policies that will be the make up of our Neighbourhood plan. Hopefully to be finalised early 2025, it becomes part of the district's local plan. As there was some debate on deprivation data and we agreed that the background section was a useful platform for the remainder of the NP document, Richard did some checking. Further research on health and housing. There may be more to add on the natural environment, especially as this relates to health.

Point of interest, Research around Finchingfield
In 1086, Finchingfield was a settlement recorded in the Domesday Book, a fact denoted by a plaque at the entrance to the Guildhall. Wethersfield was similarly recorded. At that time of the Domesday Book, Finchingfield had a population of 124 households and Wethersfield 68 households, putting them both in the largest 20% of settlements in the country, so they were of some significance. Googled to find that in 1088 the 'national' population was only 1-2 million. Anglo-Saxon towns were on average 75-150 people strong and that Finchingfield was the largest in the local area - Braintree did not

Signed

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exist.

094/2024 Finchingfield New Community Centre & Village Hall – any update from last meeting

Some concern over the plans being discussed. At future date a village meeting will take place

095/2024 Communication Officer Role – Cllr A. Heirs

FPC Facebook page has been resurrected. The only issue is the pond activity. Cllr A. Heirs is putting together a newsletter. The Facebook page is a “work in progress”

096/2024 Councillors to discuss the position/where bleed kits can be installed

A concern from residents and Councillors for having a “bleed kit” in the village. There has never been a knife crime in the village. Cllr J. Martin-Smith proposed the bleed kit is placed in the village on the Health Centre wall. Cllr R. Duffin seconded. **All Agreed**

097/2024 VAS – Cllr A. Heirs – forms pending

No update report was given

098/2024 Planning applications

24/00639/VAR - New Place Bardfield Road Finchingfield Essex CM7 4LS

Variation of Condition 2 (Approved Plans) of approved application 22/01276/HH granted 11.07.2022 for: Erection of two-storey side/rear extension and single-storey rear extension. Erection of single-storey side extension to form integral garage. Variation would allow:- Alterations to the porch, the internal layout and alterations to the fenestration.

RESOLVED: No objection to this planning application

24/00615/HH - Prospect House The Green Finchingfield

Demolition of conservatory and rear canopy and erection of single storey rear extension. Solar panels to the outbuilding roof. Conversion of utility and replacement of the window with a door. Reinstatement of the ceiling within the living room. Reinstatement of the fireplace in the sitting room and master bedroom. Internal alterations to the first floor layout including to form a new door between the master bedroom and the back stair landing and reinstatement of the door between the ensuite 2 and bedroom 2.

RESOLVED: No objection to this planning application

24/00616/LBC - Prospect House The Green Finchingfield

Demolition of conservatory and rear canopy and erection of single storey rear extension. Solar panels to the outbuilding roof. Conversion of utility and replacement of the window with a door. Reinstatement of the ceiling within the living room. Reinstatement of the fireplace in the sitting room and master bedroom. Internal alterations to the first floor layout including to form a new door between the master bedroom and the back stair landing and reinstatement of the door between the ensuite 2 and bedroom 2.

RESOLVED: No objection to this planning application

24/00668/DAC - Dairyley Farmhouse Spains Hall Road Finchingfield Essex CM7 4NL

Application for approval of details reserved by conditions 3 and 4 of approval 19/02268/LBC

RESOLVED: No objection to this planning application

099/2024 Items for next agenda

Parking in the village including Yellow lines – NEEPP

Enforcement for parking issues

Noise issues in the village

Date of next Full Council meeting – 28th. May 2024 at Finchingfield Village Hall at 6.30pm

100/2024 Closure of the meeting.

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

The Vice-Chairman then closed the meeting having considered and determined all items of business at 8.50pm.

Signed

JStrange
John Strange - Chairman

28th. May 2024