

# **Toppesfield and Gainsford End Parish Council**

## **Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> August 2011 At The Village Hall, Toppesfield at 8.00pm**

### **1. Attendance and Apologies for Absence:**

#### **The following Councillors were in attendance:**

Peter Moore - Chairman  
Andrew Bull – Vice Chairman  
Fran Laskowski  
Shaun Sheldrake  
Clare Condie  
Alan Collard  
John Levick

#### **Also in attendance:**

Kaaren Berry – Clerk to the Parish Council  
7 Members of the public

#### **Apologies were received from:**

None Received

### **2. Open Session for members of the Parish to address the Parish Council, including Village Plan update:**

Dave Dyson questioned what was happening with regard to the Doctors Car Service – Peter reported that the mobile phone has been purchased but he has not been in to receive it so it will be delivered to his work place on Monday and he shall pass the phone onto Margaret/Dave on Tuesday next week.

Dave stated that he recently had an accident in his camper van when he met an articulated lorry on the Toppesfield Road. Parts of Toppesfield Road are not wide enough for white lines to be painted on it and so when meeting large Lorries passing is nigh on impossible in places. Dave asked whether or not it is possible to stop articulated Lorries using Toppesfield Road. Peter will speak to Highways with regard to what their policies are and the options available to help resolve this.

Ray Papworth acknowledged the updates on the website and thanked John for these. Ray then queried the position of the accounts for 2010/2011 and when they would be on the website. Peter explained that we have now received copies of the bank statements and so we can move forward on this.

Steve Amerio reported that the gate to the recreational ground now has a combination lock on it, rather than a key padlock. Braintree District Council is aware of the combination and Steve will let Dennis Mortlock know the combination as well as the shop in case quick access is required. The gate can still be lifted off its hinges so a way to secure it needs to be found.

Steve also reported the roof of the pavilion now has several holes in it and asked if the parish council are willing to pay some of the material costs to fix it. The labour will be provided by the football team itself. Peter would like to know costs first and asked what is going to happen with the building longer term. Steve acknowledged that the pavilion needs to be looked at as to further uses and what facilities it offers and agrees that costs could run away if not careful but the roof needs doing to make the building water tight.

The football team will be playing again this season – starting in September with a Veterans V's the present football team on the 10<sup>th</sup> September for the Dick Ruggles Memorial Fund.

Anne has been having discussions with Mrs Clarke and Braintree District Council with regards to the footpath by the new road. The original footpath has now been changed at a cost of £3000 to the landowners. Peter thanked Anne for her work with Mr and Mrs Clarke to sort this out and asked Clare if Paul Thompson could draw up a new map to show the change in the footpath. Peter suggested that it would be a good idea for this to be available in the shop so people can use the new path as soon as possible and establish it.

Anne stated that she is not responsible for the shop sign outside 'Doghouse' which has been placed on the roadside. The owners of 'Doghouse' have previously been instructed to move the hedge and fence back at the front of the property but no one is acknowledging this. Highways have now written to the owners requesting that the hedge and fence are move back a metre onto their land and not the county councils. The parish council's objection to the fence/hedge being where they are is that it obscures the signage which should be in full view.

**Village Plan** update: - the steering group met on 19 July 2011 and extended the deadline for the questionnaires to be returned by. Alan Collard felt he had a conflict of interest as he is on the steering group as well as parish councillor and so has come off the steering group. However Malcolm stated that it would be a good idea if a councillor were to attend the meetings. 156 questionnaires were sent off on the 27<sup>th</sup> July 2011 out of the 202 that were delivered which equates to a 78% return rate. The results are expected by 15 September 2011. The results has been requested to be analysed in several different ways – those in central Toppesfield and those not in walking distance of the The Green Man and an overall view, as well as the youth questionnaire results. There have been discussions with the RCCE and they have sent £2000 towards the costs. Malcolm will be holding several informal meetings and is meeting with Nick Rowe of Ridgewell in early September. The next steering group meeting will be on 29<sup>th</sup> September and is open to all, this will be to look at how to present the result to a formal meeting to the villagers on 13<sup>th</sup> October 2011 – refreshments will be available at this meeting. Malcolm is also in discussions to see how the additional comments made on the questionnaires can be used.

Anne Read asked if the newsletter would be out prior to the Village Show on the 10<sup>th</sup> September – Andrew stated that it should be out on the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2011.

### **3. Minutes of the last meeting:**

The minutes of the meetings held on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2011 were approved and signed by the chairman as being an accurate record of the meetings.

### **4. Matters Arising from the Minutes:**

**Recreational Equipment** – Peter has met with Elvin and they have had someone to quote for the upgrades but this has not yet been received. Elvin stated he felt the area should not be closed but does need sorting out and the improvements do need to be carried out. (The swings were put up in 1976 and the slide and new matting in 1995/96, the wooden area was put up in 1989 and normally lasts 10 years). It was recommended that this comes out when the refurbishments are carried out. Andrew stated that guidelines recommend there should only be 2 swings per bay and slides need to face north. Andrew has received quotes and drawings from Wicksteed, costs come in around £90,000 for Toppesfield and £40,000 for Gainsford End. Plans would be provided by Wicksteed and they would help us look for funding. It was agreed that alternative quotes would be needed due to the large sums involved. Alan stated the wooden structures cost around £3000 when they were put in and the monies were half funded by fundraising and Sainsbury's Trust donated the other half. Shaun has previously looked at Bulmer's play area (they had a whole field approach) – it was generally felt this was a good play

area. Kaaren to contact Bulmer parish council to ask how much it cost and who designed/did the work. Andrew will follow up a couple of other quotes for the play areas.

There followed a discussion on the village plan and who draws the plan up after the results are in from the questionnaires. Alan felt this would be done by the village plan group and they would then discuss it with the parish council together with the objectives for the future. There seems to be a feeling that people believe the objective list is what the parish council will then do. Alan also seems to think that the village plan group would disperse after the plan was published. Peter will look at other villages to see how parish councils have taken their objective lists and what the parish council have done. Peter will also speak to Malcolm regarding the expectations and the timetable for the village plan group.

***Cust Hall Bridge Update*** – Alan reported that following a site visit, Highways ascertained that the land on which the hedge had been planted was in fact County Council owned. Consequently, their legal department has requested from Land Registry the exact location of the boundaries to the piece of land. This will then be pursued by Highways but they believe that it will not be resolved quickly.

## **5. Actions from Previous Meeting:**

- Fran Laskowski to set up meeting for allotment committee – A meeting was held on the 15<sup>th</sup> July and an allotment committee set up Chair – Paul Thompson, Vice chair – Fran Laskowski, Secretary – Rob Stafford Baker and Treasurer – Clare Condie. Meeting went well and they may now be able to get funding from NASLG – it was suggested at the meeting that the whole allotment area is fenced off which would help with the rabbit problem but boundaries would need to be found out. Peter thought there were no boundaries as the land was given. The question of insurance for the allotments were raised and asked if they were covered under the parish council's public liability insurance – Kaaren to find out. Clare is meeting with Edible Essex on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and may be able to get funding up to £1000 towards projects. Ridgewell Parish Council pays for the water supply for their allotments but the holders do pay rent. Clare will contact Ridgewell to see how many plots they have. It was also questioned who can hold plots in Toppesfield and it was confirmed that they are for villagers only. Fran asked if the Parish Council would purchase a 'no fly tipping' sign for the allotments – Peter asked for prices before a decision on this is made. It was also suggested a sign for the footpath / allotments would possibly be needed.
- Kaaren Berry to contact RCCE re Oyster magazine – magazine should have already been sent out to us as we are members. However not yet received so will need to chase up.
- Kaaren Berry to contact Foxearth PC re Community Broadband Project – spoke to Ridgewell and they passed on the contact details of Lloyd Felton at Community Broadband based in Coggeshall. John Levick will follow this up.
- Peter Moore to speak to Elvin re recreational area – dealt with earlier in the meeting.
- John Levick to update the website – updates have been completed by John and Kaaren.
- All councillors – position of flagpole – it was decided not to progress this at present.
- Peter Moore to purchase mobile phone for Doctors Car Service – this was dealt with earlier in the meeting.
- Kaaren Berry to write to Ridgewell and Stambourne Clerks – response from Ridgewell received. Will write again to set up meeting for community issues.
- Andrew Bull to revisit the agenda format – Andrew has looked at other councils agendas and feels that our format is fit for purpose. No further action required.
- Peter Moore to contact Barclays regarding the change of address and signatures – copy statements have been received but Kaaren to contact to ensure change of address has been implemented.
- Kaaren Berry to enquire about the display of insurance certificate – yes it should be on display in the office.

- Andrew to speak to Paul Chinery re verge cutting – Andrew has spoken to Paul who will provide a formal map but this will not be until after harvest.
- Clare Condie to look into higher interest rate accounts – Clare reported that the interest rates are so poor at the moment that it was probably worth waiting until interest rates improve. All agreed to keep the accounts as they are at present.
- Kaaren Berry to contact RCCE regarding membership – memberships for the parish council, village hall and village plan all have to be separate as each group have specialised areas and so need to be kept separate.
- Andrew Bull to contact BDC / ECC re environmental information / give-aways for the village show – Andrew reported that there is not a huge amount of giveaways available but the councils will give us something – mainly ‘power save plugs’.
- Kaaren Berry to contact BDC re vulnerable persons list – Kaaren contacted BDC but the person concerned is not available until 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2011. Ongoing action.

## 6. Planning Issues:

A planning application for Orchard House, The Causeway has been received. No objections were made for this application.

## 7. Transport / Highways issues:

**Speed limit update** – The following was received from Olive Porter at Essex County Council: ‘I am not sure that you are aware of the new restructure, but all communication has to go through our Localism team which can be contacted on the Highway Enquiries Mid email address.

All the speed limits are being reviewed on A and B roads in phase 1,

All the speed limits are being reviewed on all other roads in phase 2,

All new speed limit requests are being reviewed in phase 3.

We have nearly completed phase 1, and obviously the Parishes/individual members of the public all want theirs to be done ASAP but if they are a phase 3 then we will do them in order unless the speed limit required abuts to another one in the area and it will be more efficient to do them together.

I appreciate that working in this phased approach is frustrating, especially as some have quite old requests be we are endeavouring to complete them as soon as possible’.

Olive is no longer our contact and all communication has to go through the Localism team regarding this matter.

**Puddle opposite 2 Church Lane** – Kaaren has spoken to Essex County Council regarding this. An inspector has been out to assess the problem and the drains are to be jetted to clear any blockage. ECC were unsure if this has been done but will confirm with Kaaren the progress so far.

**Footpaths / public rights of way** – Alan gave the following report:

As some of you may know, I do a fair bit of walking around the parish using the public rights of way. We have an excellent and surprisingly varied network of rights of way but they are, I think, quite underused. The reasons for this include a lack of knowledge and information about where the paths are and where they go to and in some instances the difficulty of gaining access to and using them. I think this is an area in which the PC can help make a difference. The need is for a readily available access map, a simple process for notifying the appropriate body of any problems and a general ‘audit’ of the path network. Some individual efforts are being made to produce guides for certain walks, which will be a great help. I feel we should consider establishing a sub-Committee, to include interested members of the public, to manage these processes.

It was suggested a working party be formed to help clear footpaths which have become overgrown. Peter has a map showing footpaths around the parish and it was suggested that

this could be available on the website as a PDF for use. Peter will speak to the farmer of Toppesfield Hall with regard to clearing pathways.

## **8. Financial Accounts:**

- ^ The clerks report indicating receipts and payments requiring approval was received and approved, (Appendix A). Questions were raised over the cost of the newsletter printing and how much revenue is brought in by those who advertise in it. Cost for advertising at present is £45 for quarter page and £90 for half page, however those businesses in the village are not charged. The newsletter is published on the website so potential for viewing is greater than the parish boundaries. It was suggested that some parishioners may prefer to receive the newsletter electronically. John and Andrew will look into raising £1500 towards costs from the advertising side and get competitive printing quotes.
- ^ Barclays - progression – Peter has spoken to Barclays and obtained copy statements and requested the change of address. Kaaren to call Barclays to confirm changes have been made.
- ^ Format of Annual Accounts – Alan said that now we have almost resolved the problems left by the previous Clerk in his role of RFO, he thinks we should review the way in which the accounts are presented. The format that has been inherited meets the legal requirements and is acceptable to the auditors. However, Alan does not believe that it provides either enough of a detailed breakdown (especially of expenditure) nor gives sufficient narrative explanation to parish council tax payers. Alan has looked at other account formats and sited Ridgewells account format is more reader friendly and suggests we develop (together with our auditor) an enhanced format for the accounts. This was agreed by those present.
- ^ Precept forms have not previously been received by Braintree District Council – forms completed and signed now and will be forwarded to BDC.

## **9. Date and Time of the next meeting:**

The next parish council meeting will be held on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> August 2011 at 8.00pm, at the Village Hall

## **10. Any Other Business:**

Welcome Packs – Alan suggested that welcome packs could be given to arrivals in the village. These could comprise of a map of the village, a footpath map and a list of useful phone numbers and general information. Alan said that in the past, in Toppesfield, the shop committee has delivered a note about the shop, including an invitation to become a volunteer to new residents. All of us have been new arrivals in the village at some time and Alan believes a Welcome Pack would be great for introducing newcomers more speedily to the village. It was also suggested that an electronic version could be given to estate agents for potential newcomers. Alan is happy to look at putting something together for this and will draft something for the next meeting.

Peter has received a complaint letter regarding a situation in the Green Man and will be writing back to the complainant.

Shaun has reported a leaking fire hydrant in Stambourne Road. Essex County Council are waiting for an order from the fire brigade in order to replace it.

Mark Ramsay from Paul Clark printing has mentioned that we may have perspective buyers of 7 Park Lane asking if the parish council would be prepared to sell the car park land for development. It was agreed that this would not be sold for development.

Declaration of Acceptance and Personal and Prejudicial Interest forms have all been completed and made available to the appropriate bodies.

Correspondence and decisions as follows:

*Braintree District Voluntary Support Agency* – AGM invitation – no interest.

*Browicks Carpentry & Building Services Flyer* – file for future reference.

*Parish Contact newsletter- Free Poo bags* – Kaaren to order some and ask about dog bin for the allotments.

Braintree District Council Polling Review – Kaaren to speak to Dave Dyson.

Braintree District Council Democracy Counts – meeting 22 September – no interest in initial meeting but may be interest later on.

Mike Henson – website updates regarding Freedom of Information Act – John to follow up.

Precept form – signed and will be posted.

Caloo Brochure for outdoor fitness range – passed to Andrew for prices.

Jubilee Oak Scheme – Location need to be confirmed by 30<sup>th</sup> September 2011 – it was suggested that the oak be placed in the churchyard as the Victoria oak is placed there. Clare will speak to Brain Moody regarding this.

## 11. Close:

The meeting was closed at 10.15pm.

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Chairman

.....  
Date

## Action Summary:

**Peter Moore to pass mobile phone to Dave or Margaret Dyson**

**Peter Moore to speak to Highways regarding articulated Lorries using Toppesfield Road.**

**Clare Condie to ask Paul Thompson to do a new map showing the revised footpath.**

**Kaaren Berry to contact Bulmer re play area costing and design.**

**Peter Moore to speak to other villages re their village plan objectives and how the parish councils have acted following publications. Also speak to Malcolm re expectations and how the V.P. group goes on after the publication of results.**

**Kaaren Berry to check with the insurance company if the allotments are covered under the existing policy.**

**Kaaren Berry to chase up RCCE for Oyster magazine – summer edition.**

**John Levick to follow up County Broadband information.**

**Clare Condie to contact Ridgewell regarding number of allotment plots.**

**Fran Laskowski to get quotes for signs for allotments.**

**Kaaren Berry to write to Ridgewell and Stambourne Clerks re Community Issues meeting dates.**

**Kaaren Berry to contact Barclays re change of address.**

**John Levick and Andrew Bull to look at raising income from adverts in the newsletter and seek competitive printing quotes.**

**Alan Collard to draft welcome pack information.**

**Kaaren Berry to contact BDC re 'poo' bags and bin for the allotments.**

**Kaaren Berry to speak to Dave Dyson re Polling Review.**

**John Levick to follow up on the Information of Freedom Act for website.**

**Clare Condie to speak to Val Moody re Jubilee Oak tree being placed in the churchyard.**

## Appendix A

Accounts - 07 July 2011

National Savings Deposit Account:	£	£
Balance as at 12 July 2010	2498.26	
Community Account Balance as at 28 April 2011		11808.33
Subtotal:		----- 11808.33
If all previously issued cheques cashed balance should be		
Total		8986.96
Credits:		0.00
Payments to be approved:		
Toppesfield Village Hall Committee April – June 2011		283.50
Paul Clark Printing – newsletter July / August		488.00
Mike Henson – Web Updates		108.00
Balance	----- 2498.26 =====	----- 8107.46 =====

Last bank statements received - 30<sup>th</sup> June 2011.