



GREAT HORKESLEY PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE ORDINARY PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY 21ST JANUARY 2025
IN GREAT HORKESLEY NEW VILLAGE HALL AT 7.30PM

Those present:

Cllr Arnold (Chairman)	Cllr Baker
Cllr Banks	Cllr Jarvis
Cllr Sudbury	Cllr Tempest
Cllr Wescomb-Cross	+ County Cllr Lewis Barber in attendance

24/094 Chairman's Welcome

24/095 Apologies and Reasons for Absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Mead.

Apologies were received and noted from Cllr Burns-Langton.

24/096 Declaration of Interests

No member declared an interest with respect to any item on the agenda.

24/097 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 19th November 2024 were approved and signed as a true and accurate record.

24/098 Have Your Say – Public Open Forum

No members of the public were present.

24/099 Reports from Members and Officers of Other Authorities

Cllr Barber updated members on Essex CC's currently-draft response to the Government's requirement that local government in Essex should be delivered by an Executive Mayor and a small number of unitary authorities to replace the existing County, City and District Councils. To bring this change about, local elections due in May 2025 (Essex CC) and May 2026 (Colchester CC) would not take place. Elections for the new Mayoralty and unitaries would take place in May 2027. They would exist as shadow authorities until May 2028, when Essex and Colchester councils will be formally dissolved.

Cllr Barber also reported that:

- Although it is not their responsibility, to help resolve flooding issues Anglian Water has indicated that in March, while working to prevent storm-water entering sewers in the village, its staff may be able to use their equipment to clear ditch blockages that are causing other problems for the public.
- He continues to chase Essex County Cllr Cunningham regarding the speed change on the A134, who has apologised for the delay. Cllr Tempest advised that parents in the parish are getting very frustrated and may write to Cllr Cunningham themselves.
- The resurfacing of the footway along the A134 between Coach Road and Tile House Lane has been put into the Highways Asset Maintenance Scheme; he is waiting to be told when the work will be done.

Cllr Mead reported by email that he attended the most recent CALC meeting, where the main subject discussed was the “20’s Plenty” campaign.

Colchester City Cllr Darius Laws reported by email that following inspection by that Council’s Tree Officer, an oak on the Blackbrook Road green was to be removed and other trees trimmed to prevent further subsidence in the area.

Cllr Arnold reported that the previous week he had written to the Colchester Chief Executive Pamela Donnelly expressing the frustration of GHPC members that despite numerous reminders since an initial approach in summer 2023, it had proved impossible to engage with her officers to discuss transferring ownership of the Jubilee Green to the parish.

24/100 Budget & Precept

- (a) Members reviewed the 2025/26 Draft Budget as recommended by the Finance Committee.

It was agreed (proposed Cllr Tempest, Cllr Sudbery abstained) to raise the budget for account code 4520 (Village Christmas Tree) to £1,000, with the additional £650 not to be released until a detailed proposal for its use had been approved by the Council.

It was unanimously agreed (proposed Cllr Arnold, seconded Cllr Baker) to approve the Budget for 2025/26 subject to the minor amendment above.

- (b) Based on the budget approved in 24/100 (a), members discussed the precept requirement for the 2025/26 financial year, and the use of reserves to support this.

It was unanimously agreed (proposed Cllr Arnold, seconded Cllr Baker) that £20,000 of reserves be used to support the budget for the next financial year, and that the precept be set at £48,949. The amount per Band D property will therefore be £45.15 per house, per annum, an increase of 7.7% (£3.21 over ten months) on the previous year.

24/101 Finance

- (a) The Statement of Accounts as at 31st December 2024 was noted, and Cllr Banks checked and signed that balances reconcile with those on the bank statements.
- (b) The November/December payments list were approved in accordance with 2024/25 Budget.
- (c) The draft minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held 16th January 2025 were noted.
- (d) The list of Direct Debit payments to be made in the 2025/26 financial year were approved.
- (e) A letter received from Dedham Vale Society was discussed. Although members were sympathetic to the cause, none could justify spending council funds to support it.
- (f) **It was unanimously agreed** (proposed Cllr Arnold, seconded Cllr Sudbery) to accept a quote for £50 from VCS Websites, to add a new page to the Parish Council website where pdf copies of the Village News can be uploaded.
- (g) **It was unanimously agreed** (proposed Cllr Arnold, seconded Cllr Baker) to delegate authority to the Clerk to:
 - i. Purchase a laptop for the Village Hall Booking Manager, up to a cost of £850, with the cost being taken from reserves.
 - ii. Upgrade the Booking Manager’s phone and renew the contract if necessary.

24/102 Planning & Highways

- (a) The following Planning Applications were discussed, and it was agreed to make the following representation to the Planning Authority:

241853 Laburnums, Ivy Lodge Road (revised plans)

Revised plans – demolition of bungalow and erection of two dwellings

It was unanimously agreed that the City Council be recommended to reject the proposal on the grounds that, being much smaller than the others in Ivy Lodge Road, the plot was neither wide enough nor deep enough to accommodate two dwellings. Members were also concerned that the additional dwelling would result in additional vehicle movements through a new entrance onto a busy road.

250043 Maulete, 37 Coach Road (expires 31/01/2025)

Replacement porch and proposed rear extension

It was agreed to notify the Planning Authority that the Council does not wish to comment on the proposals.

250037 Water Treatment Works, Tog Lane (expires 31/01/2025)

Erection of disinfectant infrastructure and ancillary equipment

It was agreed to notify the Planning Authority that the Council does not wish to comment on the proposals.

- (b) Cllr Arnold reported that he had attended a briefing regarding Colchester's Local Plan. The Government had increased Colchester's house-building target from 920 to 1300 per year. To meet this target, in February CCC's Local Plan Committee would receive a report on all the sites considered for development following the "Search for Sites" exercise that took place a year ago. Those selected for development would be included in the draft of a new Plan which would be released for six weeks public consultation after that meeting. Consultation on the amended draft would take place in the late summer with a view to the new Plan being submitted to a Government Inspector in late October and adopted by the City Council in February 2026. This was an ambitious timetable but necessary to keep speculative applications from developers to a minimum.
- (c) Cllr Baker explained to members that there was an opportunity to enter into a local council footpath scheme which would depend on a team of local volunteers being established. Given the absence of willing volunteers and evidence that existing arrangements operated by the County Council appeared to be meeting local needs, he recommended that GHPC should not take up the opportunity.
- (d) **It was unanimously agreed** (proposed Cllr Arnold) to refer the overhanging hedge on the north side of Ivy Lodge Road to Essex County Council, GHPC's informal approach to the owners having been ignored.
- (e) The Clerk reported that the traffic survey paid for by the Council is now in place on Ivy Lodge Road.

It was requested that the following items be put on the next meeting agenda:

- A new traffic island on the A134 near to The Crescent.
- Traffic surveys on the A134 and Coach Road.

24/103 Village Hall

The Clerk provided three quotes for electricity tariffs for the Village Hall.

It was unanimously agreed (proposed Cllr Sudbery, seconded Cllr Baker) to switch the Village Hall electricity supply to Octopus Energy.

24/104 Staffing & Personnel

The draft minutes from the Personnel Committee meeting held on 6th January 2025 were noted.

24/105 Clerk's Report

The Clerk's report to date, including a list of resolutions agreed at earlier Parish Council meetings and any progress to date, was noted.

24/106 Village Warden

The Village Warden's report to date was noted.

24/107 Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Council was scheduled to take place on Tuesday 11th February at 7.30pm. Two members indicated they would be unable to attend. There may not be enough business to justify the scheduled meeting but an additional meeting might need to be held later in order to agree the Council's response to the consultation on the draft Local Plan.