



ALDHAM PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes	Action
<p>Minutes of Aldham Annual Parish Assembly meeting held on Saturday 27th April 2024 at 11am in the Village Hall at Aldham</p> <p>Present: Cllrs Mike Lambert (Chair), Brenda Brown, Andrew D'Angibau, Tony Gearey, Jean Jennings, Roger Walker, CCC Sara Naylor, CCC D. Willetts and Kevin B. Money (Parish Clerk). There were also present 61 members of the public.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Welcome by Chair. Cllr Mike Lambert welcomed everyone to the meeting2. Apologies for absence None were received.<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cllr A. Scott made a presentation to Chris Hall (6 years as Vice-Chair) and Jackie Daines (24 years as Chair) for all their help and support in serving the village and the Parish Council.3. Minutes of last year's Annual Parish Meeting held in 2023. All Agreed4. Chairman's Report <p>Thank you all for coming today and we hope you feel the experiment of holding the Annual Meeting on a Saturday is a worthwhile one. And a big thank you to Brenda, Jean, Anne and others for organising the refreshments, especially the homemade cakes! I was slightly taken aback by the response from them all when I suggested we could buy them in from the new Blackberry Bakery – 'we always have home-made cakes in this village!' they said – who knew?</p> <p>This has been an eventful year for the Parish Council. There has been a change in Chairman for the first time in 25 years and we have also welcomed three new Councillors; Tony Gearey, Jean Jennings and Roger Walker: and a new Clerk, Kevin Money. A year of continuity in many respects but also one of transition that reflects the ever-changing environment in which we have to operate.</p> <p>The Parish year can be divided into two halves, with the first half under Jackie's continuing stewardship having to contend with the potential loss of the Millennium Playing Field, the vexed issue of the Speed Watch signage to be shared with Fordham and Wormingford and the emergence of some proposals for small scale housing in the village for the first time in many years.</p> <p>I am pleased to report that on the Playing Field we were able to agree with the Holmes family, who own the Field, that the Parish can continue under licence whilst the family consider their options for the future of the land. They have subsequently put the site forward for possible housing development in response to the City Council's Call for Sites exercise. This is an early stage in the Local Plan Review and the City have yet to consider this and other sites that have been put forward across the Parish. It will be an ongoing issue for the next year or so, which I will refer to again later, but we have bought some time to consider the future need for a playing field.</p> <p>I can also tell you, with some relief, that at long last the licence for the speed watch sign was finally agreed with Essex County Council at the end of the year. We have two locations agreed for it – to the south of Hines Close on Brook Road and at Ford Street just north of the junction with New Road. We share it with the other two parishes and hope it will be operational very soon, albeit the latest information we have suggests it has been damaged and is awaiting repair?</p> <p>The Parish have also identified a list of suitable community projects that could be eligible for funding from any small scale development in the village, that the City Council secure as part of a planning permission. The first of these has been a grant of £1800 arising from the recent permission at Ashington Lodge towards the cost of the new porch at the Village Hall.</p>	

We will be posting the list on the web site. It is kept under review and any suggestions will be considered.

Traffic speeds and volume, rat-running and the condition of the roads have all been an ongoing challenge and we know is a concern to everyone in the village, especially following the exceptional wet winter and the works to the A12.

I would like to thank our County Councillor, Lewis Barber, for his efforts to follow up quickly whenever we raise issues on highway matters and in securing funding for much needed repairs to Brook Road over the summer. With the help and support of Lewis, Councillors Sara Naylor, Dennis Willetts and our MP Bernard Jenkin, we have also established a good working relationship with the Project Team at Highways England who are managing the current A12 works. The signage discouraging traffic on the side roads and the occasional appearance of a speed camera in the village are a direct result of these discussions and these will continue to the end of the project and I hope will form a model for when the major improvement on the Marks Tey to Boreham section begins in the next year or so.

There are clearly wider issues with queuing on the A120, which is also the responsibility of Highways England. These are encouraging rat-running through Gt Tey and Aldham and we will continue to press both the Agency and the County Council for some action on this.

The second half of the year has been one of transition with the changes I have already mentioned. I would like to pay particular thanks to Adam, Andrew and Brenda for their encouragement, time and support at the end of last year. More recently, with the help of Roger and Tony in particular, we have completely refreshed the Parish web site with a new dot gov domain, including new parish email addresses for Councillors and the Clerk. The aim is not only to ensure legal compliance but also provide relevant up to date information on the Council's activities and also links to other sites and events that affect the village. The intention is to complement, but not compete with, the excellent work already carried out by Tony and Claire on the Grapevine Facebook and with the Magazine, to which the Council continues to make a small annual financial contribution.

Kevin will shortly give his Financial Report, but before he does, I would like to thank him for his work in January at very short notice to ensure we were able to submit a Budget and Precept to the City Council. Whilst not quite as dramatic as the problems with Birmingham City Council perhaps we were left in a potentially embarrassing position with the sudden departure of our former Clerk after Christmas.

We hope the work we have been doing with the new team will stand us in good stead to support and defend the village in the face of some serious challenges over the next twelve months and beyond.

Clearly the proposals for the National Grid's Norwich to Tilbury Project would have a profound effect on the village and parish as a whole, with some thirteen giant pylons stretching across the Colne and Roman River Valleys and wrapping around the village itself. I am very pleased that we have the formidable Community Campaigner, Rosie Pearson, born and bred in the village of course, to talk to us today about how we can best respond to this.

I have also mentioned the Local Plan Review the City Council are undertaking. Whilst we would not expect to see any large scale development in the village or at Ford Street, sites have been put forward in the Call for Sites that include land within the Parish adjoining Eight Ash Green, opposite Bullbanks Farm and adjoining Marks Tey, to the south of the Roman River. The Parish will be meeting officers from the Council shortly to understand the process and potential implications for Aldham.

As I am sure you are well aware as a Parish Council we have little in the way of direct control or power over many of the matters that affect the village but remember we do have a voice and we are able to lobby and influence decisions and actions to benefit the village. We are entitled to be heard and we want to ensure we represent the village as effectively as we can, especially at a time of potential change. We hope that you will use the Grapevine and our website to keep informed of what is going on and to let us know what is important to you. Hopefully there will be time at the end today under the Open Forum to explore a few of the other issues with you.

Thank you and I will now hand over to Kevin for his Financial Report.

5. Financial Report

The accounts for 2023/2024 have been submitted to the Internal Auditor. The accounts will be approved at the next Parish Council meeting on Tuesday 7th. May 2024. The accounts are exempt from an external audit due to the fact that the income and expenditure does not exceed £25,000. Therefore, the council Certifies itself after the internal audit.

The balance held by Aldham Parish Council as at 31st. March 2024 was £9420.74p. This was a slight increase of £1907.45p from the opening balance as at 1st. April 2024.

Aldham Parish Council must hold at least 50% of its Precept in reserve. This equates to approximately £8250. I am also reclaiming £1090.71p from HMRC in VAT paid out in 2023/2024.

6. Update on National Grid's Proposals and how best to respond by Rosie Pearson, Co-Ordinator for Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk Pylons Team (ESNP)

- Aldham most affected by the pylons
- Upbeat about hearing from national sources that Aldham is the most vociferous villages on the route
- National Grid has come back with its third proposal but continues to advocate pylons
- This latest statutory consultation will lead to a formal application (Development Consent Order/DCO) that has to be examined by the Planning Inspectorate and then sent to the Secretary of State for decision
- Landscape consultants have been appointed by ESNP who have submitted a 60-page document
- The 3km visual effect has been ignored
- Soil expert also appointed by ESNP
- Drop in consultations taking place at various locations during day and early evening. Not always not convenient for working residents but everyone urged to attend
- Hedgerows will be removed to create access, haul roads and visibility splays at junctions with the highway
- Offshore Grid is cheaper and better for connecting the infrastructure to off shore windfarms and Tilbury
- All local reports will be published by 10th June 2024
- As a National Infrastructure Project any examination starts with the premise "there is a need for the project". Therefore, residents must submit response to list all the "Harms" in the village
- Listed buildings (heritage assets) have not been taken into consideration
- Local knowledge must swamp National Grid project with detailed analysis of 'harm'
- A model to run a new underground design called High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) went really well and was under-budget and is far less damaging than conventional undergrounding that takes a much wider swathe of land (120m).

Rosie Pearson then took questions from residents

- Possible change of Government this year. Will this impact on the project?
- Has the Woodland Trust been consulted?
- What is National Grid argument for not changing their plans?
- Can OFGEM get involved?
- Would every Individual email registering the residents' objections be looked at and considered?
- 7,000 submissions were registered last year but this is not a high number
- Is construction on a rolling programme - village by village (Aldham will be affected over a 2-year period)
- Any financial compensation being offered to residents? - CEO of National Grid stated that residents should just accept this project!
- All comments must be made during the consultation time period (18th June)
- (APC has already sent in 2 comments to National Grid)
Please join the Grapevine and Facebook page for up-to-date information

7. Open Forum discussion (matters raised by residents)

16 Residents completed a questionnaire which was circulated to those attended.

- ❖—Traffic speed and volume and the state of the roads was main issue but APC will

keep lobbying Essex Highways via Cllr Lewis Barber to get the roads in a better condition

- ❖ Signage needed at the crossroads as it is a dangerous junction.
- ❖ A Speed watch team could be set up again with appropriate training

The Chair then closed the meeting at 12.15 and thanked everyone for attending.

Residents and Councillors stayed behind to ask further questions and look at the maps supplied by National Grid

Signed

7th. May 2024

Mike Lambert – Chair

DRAFT