



ALDHAM PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of Aldham Annual Parish Assembly meeting held on Tuesday 7th. April 2026 at 7pm in the Village Hall

Present: Cllrs Mike Lambert (Chair), Brenda Brown, Andrew D'Angibau, Jean Jennings, Adam Scott, Roger Walker, CCC Sara Naylor, CCC Dennis Willets and Kevin B. Money (Parish Clerk).
There were also present 8 members of the public.

- 1. Welcome by Chair**, Cllr Mike Lambert
- 2. Apologies for absence** were received from Cllr T. Gearey
- 3. Minutes of last year's Annual Parish Meeting** held on 1st. April 2025 **All Agreed**
- 4. Chair's Report**

Good evening and welcome to this year's Annual Parish Meeting, which is an opportunity for you to question us on the work and finances of Aldham Parish Council. Thanks for attending and before opening the meeting up to any questions or comment I would just like to say a few words about our work over the last twelve months. After which I will ask County and City Councillors to report

Firstly, I am pleased to report that we have enjoyed a year of stability in the day to day working and finances of the Parish Council, thanks to my fellow Councillors and the valuable assistance of our Clerk, Kevin Money. My thanks go to all of you for your continued support, and also Claire and Tony Gearey for the invaluable work on Grapevine magazine and FB page. All this has enabled us to focus on what will probably be the most significant changes in the village since the advent of the railway line in the 19th century and the building of Hardings Close and Hines Close in the last.

The long running saga of National Grid's ill-considered proposals for the upgrade that will affect our village so badly, has advanced over the last twelve months and we are now in the middle of the Examination into the Development Consent Order for the pylons. We took the decision that the interests of the village would be best served by offering financial support of £5000 to the work of the Essex Suffolk Norfolk Pylons campaign, split over two financial years. With support from affected residents and Penny Lang in particular, together with Councillor Adam Scott, we have also continued to make representations as a Parish and appear at the Hearings to draw attention to the impact on residents, landscape, heritage and the natural environment. We have lodged formal requests for accompanied site visits to key locations in the village where the Inspectors can view the impact. The strength of opposition along the whole route has prompted the Inspectors to issue a 72 page letter to National Grid requesting further information and raising searching questions on the scheme. There is no doubt that ESNP and their advisors are doing a great job in challenging National Grid to justify their decisions all the way through this process.

Running in parallel with this is the Review of the City Council's Local Plan which will take the Plan forward to 2041 and probably 2043. New Government Housing targets mean that the City has to demonstrate it has housing land available to build 1300 homes a year over that period. This has resulted in the need to find sites for some 20,000 new homes. We have already seen the Council grant planning permission at Foxes Corner on Halstead Road for 250 homes and there are plans for 3500 in total across the seven parishes that surround us, including some 2500 at Marks Tey, with a significant proportion in our Parish, south of the Roman River. Furthermore, there are proposals across the boundary at Kelvedon/Feering and Halstead for many thousands more. We are working closely with this group of Parishes to ensure the City Council addresses the considerable concerns we have over the delivery and funding of supporting infrastructure, including roads, public transport, schools and medical provision, as well as supporting social infrastructure and open space. This has included lodging extensive representations at the consultation stage over Christmas and repeated appearances at Council Committees since to argue our case.

The final version of the Plan will be published over the summer and will go to an Examination before an independent Inspector in early 2027. In the meantime, because the Council is not able to demonstrate an adequate supply of housing land the Parishes will remain vulnerable to speculative applications, such as that at Foxes Corner.

The future of Millennium Playing Field has been on hold pending the outcome of the Local Plan and one positive outcome is that the Consultation Plan has not identified the Field for housing but shown it as informal

open space. We have therefore sort to reopen discussions with the owners regarding a new long lease to provide enough certainty to invest in replacement equipment and enhance its attraction as a safe space for children and families to enjoy.

We continue to explore ways of improving the nature conservation and bio-diversity of Gallows Green. Over the last year we have taken advice from RSPB, EWT and FWAG with a view to seeking grant funding for clearing the pond and some of the undergrowth. Unfortunately, an invasive species of NZ pondweed has been identified recently that has halted progress and we are currently investigating how best to deal with this before taking forward any plans.

Roads and traffic continue to be the major day to day issue and we were disappointed that proposals we had put forward last year for funding traffic calming measures and speed limits have been put on hold whilst Local Government reorganisation is being considered. However, we have now got two Speed Indicator Devices working at Brook Street and Ford Street and we are able to collect data on a monthly basis, to provide further evidence of speeds and volumes. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Lewis Barber, as our outgoing County Councillor, for his hard work over the last four years in responding to issues we have raised regarding potholes and the general condition of our roads.

Many of you will be aware of the poor service we now get through the main village from the 88a bus service, which means the first bus on a weekday into Colchester is 9.35am. In response to the matter being raised by a resident last year and following work with Stanway Parish Council and Konect buses I am very pleased to confirm that ECC have approved grants totalling £100k towards providing two additional early morning services into Colchester on weekday mornings. We hope to have more information on this available in the next month or so, but would encourage you all to support this new initiative so that it remains viable into the future.

Finally, you will no doubt have seen the Government have confirmed that Essex County Council, the City Council and Braintree and Tendring District Council will be replaced by a single Unitary Authority for the whole of North Essex, taking full responsibility from May 2028. We await more information on how this might affect Aldham and the Parish Council.

5. Essex County Councillors report – Cllr L. Barber. No report was submitted

6. County Councillors report – Cllrs S. Naylor / D. Willetts

Cllr S. Naylor reiterated the Chair's report.

Local Government reorganisation Essex to have 5 unitary authorities. Colchester will be with Braintree and Tendring. There are more questions than answers to understand how this authority is better than Essex County Council for local residents. Disproportionate burden on villages in the emerging Local Plan.

Mayoral elections to take place in May 2027. Essex County and Colchester City Council elections will take place on 7th. May 2026.

Cllr D. Willetts is perplexed that the tax and business rates raised will not be sufficient to cover the cost of the new authority This could result in the authority going bankrupt within 6 months. Cllr D. Willetts serves on the scrutiny committee and summarized the various key functions of the City Council. He drew attention to the town centre being under pressure with the town centre shops losing out to off centre shopping areas, such as Tollgate.

7. Open Forum discussion (matters raised by residents)

Penny Lang thanked the Parish Council for all their support and funding in the fight against the pylons.

Photographs to support Day of Action for Nature (18th April) about how the villages and rural areas are being affected by housing development and infrastructure projects

Can additional bus services after 9.35am and lunch-time be looked into going into Colchester and Earls Colne?

The Councillors thanked Cllr M. Lambert for all his hard work throughout the year

The Chair then closed the meeting at 7.35pm and thanked everyone for attending.

Signed

Mike Lambert – Chair