

Little Easton Parish Council Minutes

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Minutes of the **MEETING OF LITTLE EASTON PARISH COUNCIL** held at the **MEMORIAL HALL** on **WEDNESDAY 28 JANUARY 2026 AT 7:00PM**

Councillor	Attendance
Cllr Liam Phillips	NO - WORK
Cllr Jacqui English	NO - HEALTH
Cllr Ian Sussams	YES - chairman
Cllr Emma Wells	YES
Cllr Chris Brooks	YES
VACANCY	
Dist Cllr Richard Haynes	YES
Cnty Cllr Martin Foley	NO - recuperating

3 member(s) of the public
 Clerk – Mr Ian Brown

25/065	NOTE AND APPROVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Noted And approved, Cllr Jacqui English and Cllr Liam Phillips
25/066	WITH REFERENCE TO THIS AGENDA MEMBERS ARE INVITED TO DECLARE ANY DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS, NON-REGISTRABLE INTERESTS AND OTHER REGISTRABLE INTERESTS None declared
25/067	APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING 12 NOVEMBER 2025 RESOLUTION – Approve the minutes; Proposed Cllr Emma Wells, Seconded Cllr Chris Brooks
25/068	PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION Members of the public may raise questions about and comment on items on the Agenda OR of import. Session is limited to 15 minutes (3 minutes per person with no repetition of a previous question) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Park road speed limit suggested at 30mph in 2025 minutes but not enforced by Highways, Clerk to pursue and seek clarification from Highways on speed limit ➤ Pathway from Stag to Fallows Watch renewed but Mill End pathway remains non existent and dangerous to use. Cnty Cllr Foley to be approached for an update ➤ Suggested precept could have been increased for 2026-2027 due to ongoing development ➤ Concerns over proposal to pay for the leaf collection on the playingfield, suggestions posed as to how to deal with them in future.
25/069 Cllr Haynes left @ 19:37	RECEIVE THE DISTRICT & COUNTY COUNCILLORS REPORTS Dist Cllr Richard Haynes:- Full report Report circulated to members and attached at APPENDIX A

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Local Plan, Inspector reported, draft plan is sound subject to modifications which will be adopted at the March UDC meeting ➤ Stansted Airport planning considered, objections raised including traffic and highways issues plus increasing passenger numbers which suggested larger aircraft which are noisier. Application approved to 51 Million passengers per annum ➤ Local Government reform progressing, pending report submission to HMG; a merger with Harlow and Epping Forest is the preferred option. Although new housing development could come to Uttlesford if preferred option is adopted ➤ Cnty council elections are set to proceed in May this year ➤ Climate emergency, UDC decarbonisation plans were asked to be reconsidered but that consideration arrived at same decision, so plans are going ahead at huge cost ➤ Economic development, one major item is the “pubs initiative” with funding to support ➤ Housing maintenance, contract put out to tender, contract awarded to new company, however, that arrangement is failing and decision made to move works back in house to UDC
25/070	<p>NOTE CLERKS REPORT AND CORRESPONDENCE Four Planters delivered OK and final invoice needs paying – members authorised release of funds</p> <p>Memorial Hall Management Committee raised concerns that despite repeated requests the car park sign with associated pole has not been reinstated after Manor Road path works and could this be corrected as a matter of urgency. Council agreed this must be rectified, Cllr Ian Sussams confirmed the pole and sign is in safe keeping at a residents property and should be retrieved for installation asap</p>
25/071	<p>FINANCE – RECEIVE STATEMENT & AGREE PAYMENTS – REVIEWED BY TWO MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL PRIOR TO THIS MEETING COMMENCING</p> <p>RESOLUTION – Finances approved; Proposed Cllr Emma Wells, Seconded Cllr Chris Brooks</p> <p>Finance position at APPENDIX B</p> <p>25/071(i) - APPOINT AUTHORISERS Cllr Jacqui English appointed as Authoriser as the only Cllr at present who has access to the Bank; Cllr Ian Sussams to telephone the bank to reinstate his access</p> <p>25/071(ii) – COUNCILLORS TO NOTE RECONCILED BANK STATEMENT & BUDGET PERFORMANCE Duly noted, attached at APPENDIX B</p> <p>25/071(iii) – CLLR LIAM PHILLIPS TO CONFIRM ACCESS TO BANK ACCOUNT Not present at the meeting</p> <p>25/071(iv) – AUTHORISE & SIGN PRECEPT APPLICATION Presiding Chairman and Clerk duly authorised the Precept request; CLERK to ACTION</p> <p>25/071(v) – RECEIVE UPDATE ON CURRENT OUTSTANDING PROJECTS</p> <p>A) SIX SELF WATERING PLANTERS – Correction only four ordered, all delivered in good condition. Approval to release final payment</p>

	<p>B) ADDITIONAL LITTER / DOG WASTE BIN SITES Clerk explained latest decision by Essex Highways no longer permits the PC to install the bins on the Highway, now awaiting quote and timescale from Highways</p> <p>C) AGREE FUTURE BUDGET ITEM FOR THE ANNUAL REMOVAL OF LEAF FALL FROM THE PLAYINGFIELD EAST HEDGE LINE AND THE PLAY AREA PLUS ANY ADDITIONAL MAINTENANCE TO WAR MEMORIAL AREA Clerk requested to invite parish grounds maintenance contractor to quote to collect up and remove the leaves and or blow onto the field and follow by mowing</p> <p>D) CONSIDER REQUEST TO PLACE THE CLERK IN THE LGPS WITH ECC AND ANY FUTURE CLERK Defer until next financial year</p> <p>25/071(vi) – APPOINT INTERNAL AUDITOR Council agreed to appoint internal auditor from previous year, Ann Wood</p> <p>25/071(vii) – APPROVE DONATION TO EHAAT, VALUE TO BE AGREED, SUGGESTED £120 RESOLUTION – Donation approved at £250; Proposed Cllr Ian Sussams, Seconded Cllr Emma Wells</p> <p>25/071(viii) – REVIEW RESERVES POLICY RESOLUTION – Updated Reserves Policy approved; Proposed Cllr Ian Sussams, Seconded Cllr Chris Brooks</p>
25/072	<p>PLANNING – REVIEW AND COMMENT ON ANY CURRENT PLANNING APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS AND OUTCOMES OR PREVIOUS DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS</p> <p>UTT/26/0075/FUL PROPOSAL: Change of use from garage to single self-build dwelling and front extension to form porch. LOCATION: The Old Club House Park Road Comment date – 17 February 2026 No objection</p> <p>AMENDMENT UTT/25/2300/FUL PROPOSAL: Proposed detached dwelling with associated access and landscaping. LOCATION: Land South Of Park Road Little Easton Comment date – 16 February 2026 No objection</p> <p>RECEIVE ANY UPDATE ON LITTLE BARNS SITE UTT/25/2599/FUL PROPOSAL: Section 73A Retrospective application for use of site for children's swimming lessons. Change of use and extension of former pool house to ancillary cafe. New parking area, access and associated development. LOCATION: Little Barn Park Road Awaiting further comment / clarification from Highways and UDC</p>
25/073	<p>REPRESENTATIVES REPORTS</p> <p>PLAY AREA – Representative absent but members confirmed the area seems OK</p> <p>25/073(i) – CONSIDER OUTDOOR GYM EQUIPMENT PROJECT PURCHASE / FUTURE BUDGET AND LOCATION Defer until next meeting; representative not present</p>

	<p>25/073(ii) – CONSIDER INSTALLATION OF DOG LEAD FIXING POINTS PLUS SIGNAGE OUTSIDE CHILDRENS PLAY AREA – RESOLUTION – Approve the purchase of dog fixing points and additional signage; Proposed Cllr Ian Sussams, Seconded Cllr Chris Brooks – CLERK to ACTION</p> <p>PARISH MAINTENANCE INCLUDING WAR MEMORIAL – No report</p> <p>SPEEDWATCH – Awaiting improvement in weather</p>
25/074	<p>CONSIDER PUBLIC SITE FOR ANNUAL CHRISTMAS TREE Discussion did not arrive at a conclusion due to various funding and logistic technicalities, deferred to a later date</p>
25/075	<p>CONSIDER YEAR ONE TREE MAINTENANCE APPOINTMENT AS ADVISED FROM TREE SURVEY Proposed Clerk now go out to tender to invite quotations to complete year one works</p>
25/076	<p>AGAR 2025-2026 ASSERTION 10 COMPLIANCE AND IT POLICY REQUIREMENTS, TO INCLUDE DATA PROTECTION, ANTIVIRUS PROTECTION, CLLR COMMUNICATIONS & EMAIL, WEBSITE ACCESSIBILITY TESTING & STATEMENT, BUDGET FOR BIENNIAL TESTING BY THIRD PARTY Clerk outlined main aspects of ASSERTION 10 compliance which the PC was achieving but some more work required on Policies and site accessibility - ongoing</p>
25/077	<p>COUNCIL TO ADOPT THE LATEST ICO MODEL PUBLICATION SCHEME RESOLUTION – Council approved the adoption of the ICO model publication scheme; Proposed Cllr Emma Wells, Seconded Cllr Ian Sussams</p>
25/078	<p>ITEMS OF REPORT OR FOR INCLUSION ON NEXT AGENDA To be advised 25/078(i) CONFIRM APPOINTED CONTRIBUTOR TO 5P MAGAZINE Cllr Ian Sussams to submit entry before 10th March</p>
25/079	<p>DATE OF NEXT MEETING(S) – Council agreed to return to monthly meetings with a full meeting month such as January followed by a month (February) with a condensed agenda CLOSE 20:37</p>

Signed.....Date.....

APPENDIX A

LITTLE EASTON PARISH COUNCIL –January 2026

District Councillor’s Report

January is normally a quiet time for the District Council with not a lot of great significance happening over the Christmas period. There are however a few major updates to give you.

Local Plan

The inspectors' report has now been received by the Council and, subject to their proposed 'Main Modifications' they consider it to be sound. It will therefore be put to an Extraordinary Full Council meeting for adoption on 25th March. The Main Modifications were consulted on and do not fundamentally change the bulk of the Plan. They relate to the inclusion of a provision for an early review of housing land supply and detail regarding some of the allocations. It is probably fair to say that there is nothing of significance as far as the Thaxted and Eastons ward is concerned but because of the vagueness of the Plan generally, Neighbourhood Plans will become increasingly important in the determination of specific applications, particularly in relation to heritage and landscape. Prior to adoption a certain amount of weight can now be given to it in the determination of current planning applications.

As a general comment I have to say that the Plan is not ideal. Policies have not always been based on sound evidence and protections for the local environment are vague or missing. Similarly, the consequences associated with some of the allocations are very poorly considered such as the employment allocation to the north of Taylors Farm in Takeley Street. It is undeniable however, that having a new Local Plan will assist considerably in the determination of planning applications, particularly the unwanted ones.

Stansted Airport

The Stansted application came to the December committee and was approved. Whilst it involved a small amount of physical development (the extension of taxiways) the principal issue was the increase in passenger numbers from 43m per annum to 51m. It is unlikely that these numbers will be reached until 2040 and will be based on the progressive introduction of larger (and supposedly quieter) aircraft. I voted for refusal on the basis of traffic generation and highways issues but also the fact that while the application was predicated on the basis that passenger numbers would only increase through the use of larger aircraft, no evidence was supplied to confirm what was being said but which seemed highly unlikely, that these larger jets would, in fact, be quieter.

Local Government Reform

Following meetings of Scrutiny, Council and Cabinet it was agreed, as you know, that Uttlesford would back the five unitary scheme for the future shape of Essex. This would see Uttlesford merge with Harlow and Epping Forest to create a West Essex authority. ECC were promoting an alternative arrangement essentially dividing the county horizontally whereby Uttlesford would merge with Braintree, Colchester and Tendring. Two further options were considered, one promoted by Rochford, the other by Thurrock both of which were (perhaps too readily) dismissed by UDC. The government has now consulted on the options and a final pronouncement is awaited. There are actually 'fors' and 'againsts' for both the five authority arrangement and ECC's three authority proposal. On the one hand we probably have a closer association with Harlow and Epping Forest as a result of road and rail links but the big concern is that a West Essex authority would have to find future housing development sites and both Harlow and Epping Forest are severely constrained by Green Belt so inevitably everything would end up in the north of the authority. The Leader assured us that this wouldn't be a problem because Harlow wanted to become a city and would therefore want lots of housing around its periphery to justify that status. I did point out that if Northampton and Reading couldn't achieve City status there wasn't really much hope for Harlow. The problem with the Essex 3 authority arrangement though, is simply distance. It's a long way from Clacton to Great Chesterford! It is however, anticipated that there would have to be a district office somewhere in the north west corner of the District.

The government consultation closed on 11th January and whilst an announcement should not be too long in coming there is still considerable uncertainty about the future arrangement and the process. We were told that the Mayoral elections would be on 1st May but that has already been put back a year. Shadow elections were then due to take place on 6th May (but no one seems to know what that might entail) with a transition period from May 2027 to March 2028 (again no one quite knows how this will work). 1st April 2028 is set as vesting day for the new authorities. Whilst County Council elections are planned to go ahead this year there is still the possibility of central government intervention in this regard.

Climate Emergency

As everyone will know Uttlesford, along with most local authorities, declared a 'climate emergency' back in 2019 which was all a bit meaningless given that the UK is responsible for less than 1% of global greenhouse gas emissions while China and India go on destroying the planet. A target was set for UDC to achieve net zero carbon status by 2030. This was reviewed at Scrutiny Committee recently and there seems to be a view now that this is just not achievable. The cost of necessary works to the housing stock is too great and an electric bin lorry was trialled but ran out of charge in Great Chesterford and had to be towed home. It is worth noting though, that there is still £216,000 available for Zero Carbon Community grants.

There has been a significant recent development which you will no doubt have read about in the local paper. One of the key pillars of UDC's green agenda was the decarbonisation of the London Road offices (heat pumps and a few solar panels). A government grant of £626,000 was secured and UDC were to contribute £90,000. When tenders were received however, the project cost had risen dramatically to £1.343 million and the cost to UDC, including interest on the 15 year loan required, was in the order of £950,000. It appeared from the Cabinet papers that this was about to be waved through which was clearly just a mad waste of council tax payers' money given that UDC would no longer exist in a couple of years' time and the building would most likely be sold for residential conversion. I therefore requested that it be called in to Scrutiny Committee where it was considered on the 6th January). Scrutiny is a bit like the House of Lords, it cannot make or change decisions but it can send things back to Cabinet. After much debate, Scrutiny voted to remit the decision back to Cabinet but it seems that the intention is to still go ahead. Clearly, it is madness and a complete waste of council tax-payers money – a financial nonsense emanating from an evangelical green agenda.

Economic Development Mid-Year Review

An interim review has recently been undertaken of Uttlesford's economic development initiatives. The emphasis has been very much on tourism with a particular focus on supporting pubs. Grants have also been distributed based on funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the Rural England Prosperity Fund.

The Uttlesford Business Awards will take place at Saffron Hall in February. Nominations are being sought now.

Operational Resilience Report

A report was commissioned following the 'Bingate' fiasco and was presented to Scrutiny Committee. The aim was to consider what went wrong and how to ensure that nothing similar occurs again. So much was kept confidential however, that it provided no clear understanding of what did go wrong.

Housing Maintenance

There had been considerable concern over the efficiency of the Council's housing maintenance provision with a significant number of complaints from tenants. A new contract was agreed a few months ago with a company called Axis. It seems however that the new arrangement has not worked well and the decision has been taken to terminate the Axis contract and bring the service back in-house. We await the outcome.

Richard Haynes

APPENDIX B

Outline Budget 2025-2026			
		Net	
	2025/26	2025/26	2025/26
	Budget	Actual	Diff +/-
	27,800	28,916	1,116
Cost Code	Amount	Amount	Amount
Salary	6,000	5,641.50	358.50
HMRC	1,500	854.22	645.78
Clerk Expenses	600	0.00	600.00
Training	100	45.00	55.00
Chairmans Allowance	0	0.00	0.00
Subscriptions	400	178.00	222.00
Insurance	1,200	1,072.95	127.05
Admin, Bank	200	408.00	-208.00
Audit, Legal	500	340.00	160.00
Printing & Stationery	0	32.82	-32.82
Lighting & Utilities	3,000	1,647.94	1,352.06
Play Area	750	985.00	-235.00
Parish maintenance	1,200	530.45	669.55
War Memorial	0	0.00	0.00
Grass & Trees	0	5,790.48	-5,790.48
S137 & Grants	250	271.95	-21.95
Hall Hire	150	50.00	100.00
Capital projects	11,000	9,490.00	1,510.00
Website	950	1,414.99	-464.99
Events & Parties	0	162.34	-162.34
Professional Fees	0	0.00	0.00
Contingency	0	0.00	0.00
Local & Neighbourhood Plan	0	0.00	0.00
Reserves			
<i>Legal costs</i>			1,000
<i>Elections</i>			1,500
<i>General Reserves</i>			0
<i>Earmarked - Play Area</i>			5,000
Total	27,800	28,916	-1,116