

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 29 APRIL 2026 AT 7:15PM**

Councillor	Attendance
Cllr Liam Phillips	YES
Cllr Jacqui English	YES
Cllr Ian Sussams	YES
Cllr Emma Wells	YES
Cllr Chris Brooks	YES
VACANCY	
Dist Cllr Richard Haynes	YES
Cnty Cllr Martin Foley	YES

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

26/001	NOTE AND APPROVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE NONE required
26/002	WITH REFERENCE TO THIS AGENDA MEMBERS ARE INVITED TO DECLARE ANY DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS, NON-REGISTRABLE INTERESTS AND OTHER REGISTRABLE INTERESTS None declared
26/003	APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING 25 MARCH 2026 RESOLUTION – Approve minutes: Proposed Cllr Ian Sussams; Seconded Cllr Jacqui English
26/004	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) Oak tree behind clubhouse and footpath overgrown, could it be reduced, Clerk to confirm it is already in sequence of works outlined by tree survey
26/005 Cllr Foley & Haynes left the meeting @ 7:32pm	RECEIVE THE DISTRICT & COUNTY COUNCILLORS REPORTS Cnty Cllr Martin Foley – Full report at APPENDIX A ➤ Local Plan now passed, thankfully after many failed plans ➤ Local Government Reorganisation – settled as West Essex (Uttlesford, Epping Forest and Harlow) Dist Cllr Richard Haynes - ➤ New Local Plan committee recently met, struggling to come to grips with the requirements of the new plan; Neighbourhood Plans are seemingly proving useful if a parish has one.

26/006	NOTE CLERKS REPORT AND CORRESPONDENCE I shall reintroduce the monthly budget performance table as a separate report to the minutes, it is included in the Finance statement at present. Concerns have been raised over the revised Memorial Hall car park gate operation hours as being undefined Concerns have also been raised over the proposals to introduce an Adult gym at some yet unspecified cost for an undeclared community interest or desire to have one I have been asked to confirm when the tree works are due to be started Request to reduce the hedge height behind the play area to allow more light into the area? <i>N.B. After nesting season due to legislation</i> 26/006(i) – CHAIRMAN AND CLERK TO AGREE DATE FOR ANNUAL APPRAISAL Date to be confirmed
26/007	FINANCE – RECEIVE STATEMENT & AGREE PAYMENTS – REVIEWED BY TWO MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL PRIOR TO THIS MEETING COMMENCING RESOLUTION: - Approve finance statement and payments: Proposed Cllr Jacqui English; Seconded Cllr Liam Phillips Finance statement & Budget performance – APPENDIX B 26/007(i) - APPOINT AUTHORISER Cllr Jacqui English to authorise whilst Cllr Ian Sussams and Emma Wells confirm their banking access 26/007(ii) – COUNCILLORS TO NOTE RECONCILED BANK STATEMENT & BUDGET PERFORMANCE Noted and advised of reintroduction of Budget performance sheet by the CLERK 26/007(iii) – CLLR IAN SUSSAMS TO CONFIRM ACCESS TO BANK ACCOUNT – To be confirmed 26/007(iv) – RECEIVE UPDATE ON CURRENT OUTSTANDING PROJECTS A) FOUR SELF WATERING PLANTERS – Installed but awaiting more planting B) ADDITIONAL LITTER / DOG WASTE BIN PURCHASE AND INSTALLATION To be installed this weekend 26/007(v) – CONSIDER REQUEST FROM LECC FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO RENEW CRICKET NETS LECC would prefer to have serviceable practice nets that could be used; in principle yes but more work required on costings. 26/007(vi) – CONSIDER SUBSCRIPTION TO PC SUPPORT ORGANISATION, COUNCILWISE, @ £150 RESOLUTION:- Council approved subscription; Proposed Cllr Emma Wells; Seconded Cllr Jacqui English
26/008	PLANNING – REVIEW AND COMMENT ON ANY CURRENT PLANNING APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS AND OUTCOMES OR PREVIOUS DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS RECEIVE ANY UPDATE ON LITTLE BARNS SITE UTT/26/2599/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

	No update to report but item to remain on the Agenda
26/009	REPRESENTATIVES REPORTS PLAY AREA – Nothing to report 26/009(i) – CONSIDER OUTDOOR GYM EQUIPMENT PROJECT PURCHASE / FUTURE BUDGET AND LOCATION Position discussed, further quotations to be sought, Cllr Liam Phillips to assist with the project PARISH MAINTENANCE INCLUDING WAR MEMORIAL – Gate to be maintained this summer SPEEDWATCH – Not operating at present
26/010	RECEIVE UPDATE ON INSTALLATION OF TWO POLES PLUS SIGNAGE Cllr Liam Phillips has it in hand, proposed completion this weekend
26/011	ITEMS OF REPORT OR FOR INCLUSION ON NEXT AGENDA 20s Plenty campaign Daffodil planting along new fencing 26/011 (i) CONFIRM APPOINTED CONTRIBUTOR TO 5P MAGAZINE Cllr Liam Phillips for May deadline and Cllr Emma Wells for June input
26/012	DATE OF NEXT MEETING(S) – 27 MAY 2026 ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING – CLOSE 20:20

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

APPENDIX A ECC Cllr Martin Foley

Please find below my monthly Report to the Parish Council, one which I consider, without exaggeration, describes two of the most significant political and planning policy changes for the past four decades to impact our residents both so far as democracy is concerned and regarding the “look” of Uttlesford’s towns and countryside. The Report is, in consequence, longer than usual.

Coincidentally, they were announced/came about on the same day, Wednesday 25 March!

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION (“LGR”)

The New Organisation and Shape – Unitary Councils in Essex – from April 2028

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has decided, after considering all representations made, to reorganise the existing 15 County, Districts and current Unitary Councils in Essex into five separate unitary bodies, as depicted above (**the “Five Model”**). The creation of three unitary councils (the “Three Model”) as advocated by Essex County Council and incidentally, Braintree District Council (whose leader has been a very strong and vocal supporter of devolution for many years) was rejected.

The letter explaining the decision of the Secretary of State is found here: Local government reorganisation: decision letter to Essex, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock council leaders. There were similar decisions made at the same as that for Essex in relation to several other “shire” Counties, reflecting what, soon after the 2024 Election, became the Government's non manifesto-ed policy in this area.

It will be seen that the decision recognised the preference of the majority of Councils in Essex for the Five Model and accepted that the economics of this arrangement were sustainable, although Central Government will bear of a proportion of the debt incurred by Thurrock Council amounting to £ 200 m. Each new unitary will be in receipt of central funding from Government of the order of some £ 900k to assist in early reorganisation costs. The actual costs of reorganisation will be very substantial, with estimates ranging being from £ 73m - £ 100m across the board. Equally, “pay back” periods and extent of financial savings obtained vary depending on assumptions made. There is no definitive answer to this but it is safe to say that other LGR examples elsewhere in the country have invariably not produced the level of costs savings first predicted.

Given that the costs of social services, highways and education, representing the lion’s share of the current ECC budget, will be disaggregated and borne by the unitary councils in the stead of ECC, it is not likely that these overall costs incurred will be greatly different post LGR. There will be salary savings resulting, through having a body of fewer executives employed in the unitary authorities than at present, but what these will prove to be cannot precisely be predicted. It is the case that salary scales at ECC, being a very large authority and commensurately large budgets, are significantly greater than those at district council level. It might not be surprising to learn that the cost of pension “top up” by reason of redundancy at LGR in respect of a senior officer earning some £ 100,000, and being relatively close to ordinary retirement, will be > £ 300,000. It is the aggregation of such costs that make savings through LGR not as obvious as might first appear.

In this context and by way of possible interest, there are 58 officers employed by ECC earning salaries (not including the cost of employer’s contributions for final salary defined benefit pensions) of more than £100,000 pa. As to pension liabilities, some readers will be interested to know that the Essex wide pensions scheme has an investment value at the date of the last actuarial valuation in 2025 of £ 9.5 bn with a surplus of £ 0.77 bn. It has some 54,000 active members, 77,000 deferred members and 48,000 pensioners.

The arguments in favour of having a greater (five) or fewer (three) number of unitary councils do not boil down to budgetary matters only. The appropriate population numbers to be served and “closeness” to their communities of those elected to the unitary councils is equally, if not more important. In our view, the Five Model will provide the means for better serving those communities than the Three Model.

Even so, the West Essex Council will have 83 elected Members, a considerable reduction compared to now. Incidentally, North East Essex (Braintree, Colchester and Tendring) will have 100 elected members who will represent their > 500,000 population. It might be appreciated in this respect, just what a monolith would it have been had Uttlesford been added to that unitary arrangement, which would bring its population up to close to 600,000 and represented by some 120 elected members!

This means that, with effect from 1 April 2028, Uttlesford District Council (and all the other existing Councils in Essex) will no longer exist and it will be “merged” with Epping Forest DC and Harlow BC to make up a new body to be called (for the present at least) “West Essex Council”. Thereafter, there will be five unitary authorities covering the historical county of Essex while a new Mayoral Combined covering its geographic area will be created which will have responsibility for “strategic/semi-regional” functions, including transport, major infrastructure and large scale new housing provision, such as New Towns/Garden Communities.

As to the Decision by the Secretary of State, the Cabinet of Essex County Council have expressed themselves dissatisfied with it and have threatened to challenge it by way of Judicial Review. We await further

developments on that score. There is no suggestion however that any of the other Councils (including Braintree DC and Epping Forest DC which had also supported Essex CC in promoting the Three Model rather than the Five Model) will be supportive of any such legal challenge by Essex CC.

Some readers might wish to keep abreast of this subject via a general web page created by ECC as follows:

<https://www.essexlgrhub.org/changes-coming-greater-essex>

Pending the LGR vesting date (1 April 2028), it will be “business as usual” for all the Councils and each of their current functions will continue to be maintained and discharged by them as currently. However, in the year preceding it, there will be a Shadow Authority for each new unitary in place whose membership will have been elected in May 2027 and inevitably, it will begin to take the major decisions which will then be required going forward for the future. “BAU” also continues to be the case for Parish Councils which too will have elections in May 2027.

We believe that the roles of Parish and Town Councils, while undiminished under LGR, might in fact be capable of enhancement. Since there will be fewer elected councillors in the Unitary Councils representing their electorate than is the case in the combined County and District Councils presently, Parish Councils and Town Councils might in future need to keep themselves aware of policy matters and their implementation at unitary level to a greater extent than presently. Securing members in these bodies who will have the time and necessary attributes to do so might in some instances prove to be challenging.

UTTLESFORD LOCAL PLAN 2021 – 2041

At last, I am glad to report that Uttlesford has a new Local Plan, replacing one which was grossly out of date, the last having been adopted in January 2005, 21 years ago! (btw the previous political administration at UDC failed twice to get a Local Plan passed by the last Government , despite being of the same political party as their Westminster Masters. At a total cost of over £8 Million pounds to us council taxpayers)

UDC met at an Extraordinary Council held on 25 March to determine whether to adopt the Local Plan 2021 – 2041 as examined, together with the Planning Inspectorate’s Major Modifications. We are glad to confirm that on a clear majority vote upon the resolution to adopt (which was proposed by John, as Planning Portfolio Holder) it was approved by Members. The vote was carried on an affirmative vote (including by John and Richard) of 26 Members. There was one vote cast in opposition (by the Member representing the Ward which includes Clavering) and six abstentions (including of two members representing Dunmow Wards and that representing the Rodings). None of the political parties were subject to “whipping” and all members thus had a free vote.

For ready reference this is the link to the Local Plan in pdf format, as it was put to Council for adoption:

<https://uttlesford.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s43086/Annexe%201%20-%20UDC%20Local%20Plan.pdf>.

Of the Wards most affected by the proposed housing and employment allocations, the Members for Saffron Walden cast affirmative votes as did one of the three members for Takeley, another recused himself because of a pecuniary interest with reference to his own home and the other was absent, being abroad.

I am of course very pleased that the Local Plan is now adopted ...indeed, it is already envied by many other councils who have tried and failed to do the same.– it has immediate effect.

.Heating oil – support for vulnerable households

You may have seen the government announcement of £53m of support for vulnerable households who rely on heating oil.

The support will be targeted to help low-income households in rural communities affected by the recent surge in costs.

The additional funding will be distributed by local authorities via the Crisis and Resilience Fund, which comes into effect on 1 April and replaces the temporary Household Support Fund.

Locally, the fund will be administered by Essex County Council. Please direct residents to them, not UDC.

If help is needed before the Crisis and Resilience Fund starts in April, people can apply to local councils (Essex County Council) for support, but any cash would need to be from existing pots of money.

The Cost-of-Living Support section on UDC website has been updated to make it clear who enquiries should be made to if residents need help with their heating costs.

More details to follow...

Martin

Cllr Martin Foley

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LEPC APRIL 2026 Finance Statement

Precept	34,000								Budget	Net Exp	Diff +/-
									29,802	1,214.66	28,587
Date	Supplier	Description	Invoice	FPO/DD	Min Ref	Rec	Credit	Debit	VAT	Net	
Opening balance								1,342.28	0.00	0.00	
01/04/2026	A&J Lighting	Lighting maintenance	Inv 40012	DD		Y	2,757.18	28.80	4.80	24.00	
10/04/2026	HMRC	VAT reclaim	XJV126000101474	BGC		Y					
10/04/2026	ActivWeb	Hosting support	Inv 16630	DD		Y		42.00	7.00	35.00	
17/04/2026	Start Safety	Sign poles and signs	O/N SO348160	FPO		Y		225.52	37.59	187.93	
22/04/2026	SSE Energy	Lighting Electricity	Inv 04314450	DD		Y		105.81	5.04	100.77	
23/04/2026	HMRC	Tax/NIC Q4 26	Ref 0000644240	DD		Y		229.51		229.51	
24/04/2026	UDC	Precept	Part 1	BGC		Y		17,000.00			
28/04/2026	Employee	WFH Allowance	N/A	SO		Y			26.00		26.00
28/04/2026	Employee	Salary	PAYE	FPO		Y			611.45		611.45
	Employee	Travel expenses	April claim	FPO					4.50		4.50
	SGS	Grass cuts & Planters	Inv No1 to No 5	FPO			1,440.00			1,440.00	
	CloudNext	Web Hosting	Inv 266737	FPO			59.98		9.99	49.99	
	IB - Amazon	Divider	Inv AEUD	FPO			1.60		0.27	1.33	
	IB - HP Inc (UK)	Printer Ink	Inv 1440	FPO			3.37		0.56	2.81	
	Unity Trust Bank	Service charge	No 040	DD			7.00			7.00	
April							21,099.46	2,785.54	65.25	2,720.29	
Opening Balance							18,313.92	0.00		0.00	
Current T1	£18,313.92										
Instant Access	£49,862.32										

Budget Performance to date			
Outline Budget 2026-2027	0	0	0
0	0	0	0
0	0	Net	0
0	2026/27	2026/27	2026/27
0	Budget	Actual	Diff +/-
0	29,802.00	1,214.66	-28,587.34
Cost Code	Amount	Amount	Amount
Salary	6,432.00	611.45	5,820.55
HMRC	1,608.00	229.51	1,378.49
Clerk Expenses	643.20	0.00	643.20
Training	107.20	0.00	107.20
Chairmans Allowance	0.00	0.00	0.00
Subscriptions	428.80	0.00	428.80
Insurance	1,286.40	0.00	1,286.40
Admin, Bank	214.40	26.00	188.40
Audit, Legal	536.00	0.00	536.00
Printing & Stationery	0.00	0.00	0.00
Lighting & Utilities	3,216.00	124.77	3,091.23
Play Area	804.00	0.00	804.00
Parish maintenance	1,286.40	187.93	1,098.47
War Memorial	0.00	0.00	0.00
Grass & Trees	0.00	0.00	0.00
S137 & Grants	268.00	0.00	268.00
Hall Hire	160.80	0.00	160.80
Capital projects	11,792.00	0.00	11,792.00
Website	1,018.40	35.00	983.40
Events & Parties	0.00	0.00	0.00
Professional Fees	0.00	0.00	0.00
Contingency	0.00	0.00	0.00
Local & Neighbourhood Plan	0.00	0.00	0.00
0	0.00	0.00	0.00
Reserves	0.00	0.00	0.00
Legal costs	0.00	0.00	1,000.00
Elections	0.00	0.00	1,500.00
General Reserves	0.00	0.00	0.00
Earmarked - Play Area	0.00	0.00	5,000.00
Total	29,801.60	1,214.66	28,586.94