

Little Bardfield Parish Council
PARISH COUNCIL MEETING



Minutes of the Meeting on 4th December 2024 at 7.30pm
at Little Bardfield Cricket Club Pavilion

Present: Andrew Davies (Chairman), Colin Simpson (Vice-Chairman), Juliet O'Brien, Jessica Ashbridge (Clerk). Also present District Cllr Mike Tayler, and 1 Parishioner in part.

www.littlebardfield-pc.gov.uk

- 1. Chairman's Welcome** – The Chairman welcomed those present.
- 2. Apologies for absence** – Apologies were received from County Cllr Martin Foley.
- 3. Declarations of Interest in any matters on the agenda** – None.
- 4. Minutes** – The minutes for the meeting on 10th September were approved **P: Cllr Davies, S: Cllr Simpson, All in fav.**
- 5. Public forum** – A Parishioner advised that there was a Village Design Statement on the website, and asked that County and District Council reports were sent to him, so they could be added to the website. He also expressed disappointment that there had been no reports added to the Bardfield Times from the PC, and that the details listed were still for the former Clerk. The Clerk apologised for the omissions.
- 6. County Councillor and District Councillor Reports** – Reports appended from Cllr Foley. Cllr Tayler reported that Local Plan progress was going well. It was hoped that the Local Plan would be passed to the Inspector at the end of January, for a decision in the summer, and for it to be in place in 2026. He also advised that Pam's Place provided hot meals twice a week, and was hoping to offer 6-7 places each week to residents of Little Bardfield with the use of community transport. He hoped he could use his ward grant to pay for the bus. Cllr Tayler reported that landline phones would be changing from analogue to digital signals, but the analogue signal would be retained until 2030 for those that needed it, under BT Digital Voice. He would be attending an RCCE Meeting, and would be able to provide information about completing a Parish Plan, which may be of use in the Parish.

7. Planning

7.1 Applications with Uttlesford District Council

Planning Reference	Proposal	Address	Decision
UTT/23/3230/FUL	Planning details here	Pauls Farm Little Bardfield Road Little Bardfield CM7 4TN	Awaiting decision

UTT/24/2786/FUL	Planning details here	Frenches Farm Oxen End Little Bardfield	Awaiting decision
UTT/24/2536/FUL UTT/21/3574/FUL	Planning details here	Frenches Farm Oxen End Little Bardfield Essex	Awaiting decision

8.1 Highways Issues – Potholes had been repaired at each end of Hawkspur Green Lane, however the surface in the middle has deteriorated further, to dangerous levels. The faults have been reported, and contact had been made about retrospective faults, dating back to Summer 2023. Works had not been carried out, despite reporting that they had. All the information would be forwarded to Cllr Foley for him to pursue.

8.2 Community Fund – Payments had not been made, it was determined to make a repeat of the payments to local charitable groups, that were made in 2023. The Clerk apologised that this had not been completed earlier, but she had no access to the Community Fund Account. Cllrs Davies and Simpson would complete the payments. **P: Cllr Simpson, S: Cllr O'Brien, All in fav.**

8.3 Protected Lane – No update.

8.4 Parish Council Emails – Cllr Davies had access, Cllrs O'Brien and Simpson required assistance, the Clerk advised that Force36 would facilitate them.

9 Finance

9.1 Payments – A payment was required for verge cutting from David Low. Cllr Davies would chase the invoice. **P: Cllr Davies, S: Cllr Simpson, All in fav.**

9.2 Quarterly Accounts – The accounts were received.

9.3 Budget – The budget for 2025-26 was approved **P: Cllr Davies, S: Cllr O'Brien, All in fav.**

9.4 Precept – The precept for 2025-26 was determined at £3,750 **P: Cllr O'Brien, S: Cllr Simpson, All in fav.**

9.5 Parish Council Treasurer's account balance - £5,443.99 25th November 2024.

Community Fund account (as trustee) balance - £8,485.53 4th December 2024.

10 Items for the next agenda – None.

11 Date of next meeting – Wednesday 29th January 7.30pm

12 Employment - Under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 and in accordance with 3d pursuant to Standing Order 11, it was resolved that the Public are excluded from any discussion on this item as it concerns employment **P: Cllr Davies, S: Cllr Simpson, All in fav.** The Chairman had received a number of applicants for the role of Clerk, interviews would take place in early January.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.52pm.

Report from County Cllr Foley

LOCAL GOVERNMENT STRUCTURES

Residents may have seen some speculative articles in the press arising out of the recent Budget, suggesting that councils in Essex might be under consideration for merger into new unitary councils.

The Chancellor did indicate that in general terms, the government thinks unitary councils are a more sensible structure to provide for local government to be provided rather than by way of separate district and county councils. The Government is going to publish later in the year a White Paper about Local Government and the degree of possible devolution of powers from central government and it will not be until then that we shall get any better idea as to what the Government actually has in mind. Meanwhile, along with the other 12 district and 2 unitary (Southend and Thurrock) councils in Essex, UDC will undertake research and data gathering to be better prepared to respond to that White Paper. It is the case meanwhile however, that active conversations are going on between Essex councils and the Government as to whether there would be a benefit to the County would from having a Mayoral System put in place, as has occurred elsewhere in the country. This is not a remote possibility (either with or without a directly elected Mayor) but the powers and duties of such a new Combined Authority would sit on top of the current two-tier set-up and not instead of the District Council structures that presently exist. If therefore, a new Combined Authority of this type were created, it would take powers and draw money "down" (i.e. devolution in the proper sense of the word) from central Government in Whitehall, such as for skills and transport funding, but it would not take existing powers or monies away from district councils. Accordingly, we thought it important to dispel any misapprehensions that might have come into residents' minds arising out of recent press comment. I shall report in detail in coming months if, how and when these possible concepts progress.

ECC HIGHWAYS MOTION

You may read in the local papers...

Frustrated at the time taken to repair and maintain our rural roads and the outrages costs being asked by contractors I proposed that a full independent review take place to look at overcharging and to secure better value for money....I am keeping up the pressure for a better service.

MOTION ...Value for money delivered by Contractors – Review Needed

Moved by Cllr Martin Foley and seconded by Independent Cllr Wendy Stamp:

"This Council calls on the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Sustainable Transport to urgently commission a review into the value for money delivered by Contractors Ringway Jacobs when undertaking work for Essex Highways (for example we are aware of items such as salt bins being charged at £7,500 against a purchase price of just hundreds of pounds). The evidence that we have seen suggests that some charges levied are much more than the actual list price."

Note... eventually actual cost was £5k ...still an awful lot for a salt bin.

(Only councillors representing the current administration @ ECC voted against a review.)

Incidentally, since doing recent motions and petitions there has been a flurry of work done on roads in my division.