

MINUTES of the ANNUAL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
HELD in Essendon Village Hall on Monday 19th April 2018

PRESENT:

Councillors: Ian Screech (Chair), Mike Brown, Ian Venables, Keith Venables, Fran Christensen, Rex Jones, Stephen Boulton, Jonathan Boulton Clerk Dee Daniell and approximately 40 members of the public

- 1 Apologies for absence were received from Rev Pauline Higham who will be leaving at the end of the month and Martin Reith.
- 2 The Chair welcomed Borough Councillors Stephen and Jonathan Boulton.
- 3 Annual Reports were presented as follows:

a. Chairman's report

At the clerk's suggestion a Christmas Tree event was successfully organised by Ian Venables, Belinda Kent-Lemon and Graham Williams. The Chair was unable to attend but it was a great success and will continue and hope the scope of the evening could be extended this year. The field hedges fronting the High Road have been cut back dramatically and will be a future saving. There is some money left from the Tesco Bags of Help fund that is to fund the purchase of a "picnic bench" for the children's playground. Funds have been received from the locality budget of Councillor Stephen Boulton to purchase grass cutting equipment for use in the allotments and the children's playground. Parking continues to be a problem, particularly around the Church. A parking consultation is due to take place at some time within the next year. The SID (Speed Identification Device) is still awaited but due to be installed shortly. There have been no offers as yet to take part of the Drivesafe initiative that is advertised on the website. The half bell bollard to protect the wall surrounding the war memorial has finally been purchased and installed. Thanks extended to Derek Statham for work on the flower beds surrounding the war memorial. The LED lighting in the village has been inspected and considered adequate and will be extended to the High Road. Finally, thanks extended to Reverend Pauline Higham and Rod Higham for all their work and wished them all success in Suffolk.

b. Unaudited accounts for the year ended 31/3/2018

The clerk distributed copies of the balance of accounts. The precept had increased to £15,000. Fairly healthy fund but a new contingency fund account has been set up with the bank for future upkeep expenditure of the village hall.

c. Essendon Country Club

Jonny Harvey's report was pushed up the Agenda owing to the fact it was his birthday and he had to leave to attend a family gathering. The country club attempts to reinvest profits into the area. There are 12-15 employees on NVQ training green keeper courses amongst others. There are Golf Academy courses with approximately 30-40 members. There is a non-members bar and restaurant with a 2-course lunch time menu offer. In 2019 there are plans to develop some profits into a small selection of eco pods for residential training courses in golf and conferences but this is in the very early stages of planning. All residents are welcome to the bar and restaurant to enjoy the facilities. There was one question from the floor as to whether there are any plans for a gym and there are none at

present. The Chair thanked Jonny Harvey for his report and wished him a happy birthday.

d. Joan Thompson for St Mary's Church

Thanks were extended to Reverend Pauline Higham and Rod Higham who have been highly valued for their services to the community and will never be forgotten here in Essendon. Leaving service on 29th April followed by a lunch in Ponsbourne Park Hotel. All welcome. The chair thanked Joan for her report.

e. Essendon School

The report will be posted on the website for all to read. Basically, the results are fantastic with a stable staff now who all work well together. It is the School's 70th birthday in September and on Friday 14th December a 1940's event will be held to celebrate. The chair thanked Charlotte Tudway for her report.

f. Village Hall Committee

Paul Plail and Rupert Priestnall reported and thanks were extended to Angela Venables, Mick Davenport, Rex Jones and Martin Reith and the sad passing of Alan Steele and his "little red book" was noted. Thanks to Ian Venables for help. There has been increased membership of the 200 Club who paid out a prize draw of £200. There is now an online presence both in Facebook and on the parish council website where a calendar showing up to date bookings can be viewed. To date there is £4,300 hall revenue and only half way through the annual accounting year. There are plans to change the name of the 200 club. The chair thanked the members of the committee.

g. Essendon Playing Field Association

Keith Venables read the short report from Martin Reith.

h. Cricket Committee

John Spragg reported on the cricket and thanked Barry Pallett for his work in organising the fixtures run on both a Saturday and Sunday and Ian Venables for 27 years as captain. Many clubs only run a Saturday league. Sundays proves a popular venue for teams coming out of London and the teas provided are always enjoyed, greeted by a smiling Shaun Childs, the barman. The chair thanked John for his uplifting report.

i. Fete Committee

Ian Venables chair for the last 10 years during which approximately £80,000 has been raised and distributed to the various charities and committees. This is a very active committee meeting 9-10 times a year to organise what has been a very successful event. This year it has been decided to change the event title to Essendon Village Day and 3 to 4 new members have joined the committee following the annual meeting when it was announced the event is seeking new ideas. Essendon was the first village in Hertfordshire to have parachute landings and this year some very different events are planned and which cannot be divulged at this stage. The chair thanked Ian Venables.

j. Tennis Committee

Vanessa Spragg reported 32 family members and 14 single members. £25 per family and £15 per single member. One can play at any time and a coded padlocked entry system is in operation to access the court. The parish council has agreed to pay to cut the hedges and thanks were extended as this will assist the club to remain solvent. A tennis tournament was held on various courts around the village, a club dinner and there was also a tennis day for children where picnic lunches were provided as well as a tennis coach. On a sad note,

the loss of one member in Ditty Screech who was a stalwart member of the club. The chair thanked Vanessa Spragg.

k. Women's Institute

Kelly Morton reported on the many and varied speakers and outings run by the WI. It holds meetings on the third Wednesday of every month except August. She thanked Angela Venables, the president, and Rita Pallett for organising events. The chair thanked Mrs Morton.

l. Essendon Society

Jane Oram reported on the work of the society, previously chaired by Alan Steele, in organising ventures similar to "clean for the Queen" and concerns over any planning applications such as the new Local Plan containing details for Birchall Garden Suburb part of which will be within our parish boundary. There is a book about Essendon that was produced by Alan Steele and it is proposed that copies of this book be delivered to any new residents of Essendon. The chair thanked Jane.

m. Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

Jonathan Boulton reported on the necessary cuts in council funding of £11m and the introduction of the charge for brown compost recycling bins that has covered the cost of this service. There is an ever-increasing demand for housing and concern for the need to protect the green belt. The leader of the council is standing down in May and there will be a period of change. The chair thanked Jonathan.

n. Police Neighbourhood Watch (OWL)

Sgt Stephen Hynes reported he has a team of only 4 police officers owing to cuts covering a large area. Crime is up and resources are down. Hatfield House reported pheasants have been shot and just left and reports of hare coursing. The Community Officers are on duty from 7am until 2am. A selection of "freebies" such as purse bells and marker pens were left for residents. The chair thanked the team.

o. Police Commissioner's Office

PCC Stuart Nagler reported particularly on only using 999 in an emergency. All other calls to the police should be using 101. This is a low crime area and the barrier between London and Hertfordshire has not been breached but residents should still remain vigilant. Fly tipping is a problem and there have been 100 fixed penalty notices. Walking police officers will never come back now and police station closures are necessary since they are not used. There are grants available for community projects of up to £5,000. The chair thanked Stuart.

4 AOB

a. Councillor Mike Brown raised the subject of affordable housing and stated that affordable housing rent is set at 80% of market rents which is completely unaffordable and requested a definition of affordability from the Borough's Councillors. Jonathan Boulton stated that 250,000 homes are required per year and only 100,000 are being built per year and thus the resulting shortage. Stephen Boulton stated that social housing is 60% of market rent and 35% of the homes in the Birchall Garden Suburb planned development is affordable or social housing. Land owners are not giving up sites on which to build. A question was raised on moving the boundary and if this was proposed, a referendum would be necessary and costly.

- b. A question was raised on the development at Essendonbury Farm and whether housing was being built. The clerk responded that it is a refurbishment by a company called Nicholas Mee who restore classic Aston Martin cars.
- 5 There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.00 pm and asked the attendees to stay and share a glass of wine with the Councillors..