

Stow Maries Parish Council

MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

HELD ON MONDAY 24th February 2025

in The Smythe Hall, Church Lane, Stow Maries at 7.30 p.m.

Cllr Matt Cooper welcomed all those present.

COUNCILLOR ATTENDEES AND OTHER ATTENDEES

Councillors:- Matt Cooper, Neil Gilmore, David Hopping & Debbie Driver.

District: No one in attendance

Essex CC Cllr Jane Fleming

In attendance: Parish Clerk

Historic Railway Estate - Mr. Alistair Dore

Members of Public: 1

24-5/125 APOLOGIES

- a) Cllr Adam Brown.

24-5/126 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- a) No declaration were made at this point in the meeting.

24-5/127 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

- a) The minutes of the meeting of 20th January 2025 were approved and signed by the Chairman Cllr Matt Cooper as a true and accurate record.

24-5/128 REPORT FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

- a) No report was available.

24-5/129 REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR

- a) County Councillor Jane Fleming stated that the Essex County Council pre-budget was to rise by 2.0% ringfenced for social services and 1.75% general precept.
- b) Information pertaining to the Devolution was given which is detailed in her comprehensive monthly report that is available on the Parish Council website and includes information on:- Foster Carers in Essex/Additional Funding for Highways in 25/26 Budget/Budget 25/26/Countrywide Campaign launched to reduce incidents and impact of fly tipping/Active travel funding secured/Mid Essex Rough Sleeper Initiative Partnership/Buy with confidence advice from Essex Trading Standards/Essex Air Quality Strategy/National Bus Fare Cap and Free Paint.

24-5/130 QUESTIONS FROM THE PRESS AND PUBLIC -An opportunity for members of the public to speak and raise issues.

The Chairman welcomed Mr. Alistair Dore from Historical Railway Estate (on behalf of Department of Transport) National Highways, who is the Engineer overseeing the project to repair/refurbish Halt Bridge in Church Lane. Mr Dore mentioned that their records indicate that there are 27000 disused railway bridges around the UK of which National Highways manage 3100. The remainder are managed by other authorities or are on private land with not public access. With respect to biodiversity net gain, this is a requirement of planning now but may be challenging for HRE as the land either side of most of these

Signed by the Chairman.....

Dated 17th March 2025

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bridges is owned by other landowners. There are active campaign groups against this sort of work and there are sometimes ecology issues, also problems can arise as when the branch lines were closed, the land was sold back to the land owner. Mr Dore went onto explain the process involved that has/would need to take place in order to be able to start the work on the bridge which involves:-

1 - Discussions have already taken place at a Stakeholder Advisory Forum (SAF) Meeting including members of the forum such as Department of Transport, Active Travel England, Historic Scotland and England, Natural England, Railway Heritage trust, Railways Paths Ltd and the Historical Railway Estate.

2 - Following on from SAF meeting and after consideration by the Secretary of State for Transport the Historical Railway Estate (HRE) intend to seek planning permission for the work to be carried from Maldon District Council as the local planning authority. The timescale is currently that they will probably not be able to get on site until April 2026, as there are a number of hurdles to get through - detailed design, planning permission and licencing for ecology works. Essentially HRE only have a window of availability for site works from April to October due to the presence of protected species, eg Great Crested Newts and Bats. Church Lane will be closed for the whole period that this process is going on due to the bridge not being safe for vehicles.

Mr Dore showed drawings of the current and potential finish to the bridge which are not the final drawings as all is subject to further design and planning approval. The cost is estimated to be approximately £500,000. A link will be placed on the Village website so that further information can be viewed.

Questions were raised as follows:-

1 Does the Victorian Brick work have to be hidden by the infill? - Mr. Dore said it is likely that it will, but will ask the question and get back with an answer.

2 It was mentioned that there are badgers and bats in the proximity - wildlife in the vicinity would all be covered by the very detailed ecology report which is part of the planning process.

3 Concerns were raised about the length of time Church Lane would be closed and the impact on Honey Pot Lane, as if there is an accident on the Lower Burnham Road, which is a frequent occurrence, the problems arising from the extra traffic on Honey Pot Lane, which is basically a single lane with various passing bays, would be more dangerous than usual as the traffic is usually split between Church Lane and Honey Pot Lane. Mr. Dore stated that he would investigate Honey Pot Lane and review the situation. It was stated due to this problem could the process be hurried up, but unfortunately the process can not be shortened due to the various statutory lead times involved, and the process that has to be adhered to.

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24-5/131 PLANNING MATTERS

Planning Applications:-

- a) Discussion took place regarding the Chelmsford Council review of the final draft local plan. Responses to be in by 18th March 2025. Members decided to review the online questionnaire and reiterate previous responses such as build up on traffic due to too many round-a-bouts and zebra crossings on the South Woodham Ring Road, causing pollution of the queuing traffic.
- b) **Planning correspondence** received over the course of the month and circulated via e-mail:
 - i) Planning application listings were noted
 - ii) Planning decisions and appeals were noted
 - iii) Planning Decisions:- none at the time of writing.
- c) **MALDON DISTRICT COUNCIL - LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING**
 - i) No information at this time.
- d) **BRADWELL B**
 - i) No information at this time.
- e) **STOW MARIES GREAT WAR AERODROME**
 - i) No information at this time.

24-5/132 HIGHWAY & PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY ISSUES

- a) The vegetation from Honeypot Lane to the Three Rivers Golf Club, is still on the list to be done by ECC through the member led scheme that Cllr Fleming has been dealing with. Clerk to chase.
- b) Clerk stated that there are no overlaps with the land owned by ECC and the land that is maintained currently by the Parish Council.
Clerk has requested a quote for refurbishing the Village Sign from Bakers of Danbury but no news received Clerk to explore other sign painters.
- c) Members had no actions to take at this point regarding Halt Bridge and would be able to make any representations when the planning application is sent for consultation.

24-5/133 FINANCE

- a) Members approved the payments and receipts for the February 2025 meeting.
- b) Members did not review the bank reconciliation and it was decided that a quarterly review would be preferred. However as it was the end of year, a review and approval would take place at the March meeting and then June/Sept/Dec/Mar during 25/26.

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Feb-25	DATE	CHEQUE NO	PAYEE	DESCRIPTION	NET	VAT	TOTAL
43/24-25	24/02/2025	100679	Sarah Sayer	Salary Month 11	£302.39		£302.39
44/24-25	24/02/2025	100679	Sarah Sayer	Exp Month 11	£43.88		£43.88
45/24-25	24/02/2025	100680	HMRC	Tax for Month 11	£10.60		£10.60
46/24-25	24/02/2025	100681	Sue Lees	Diary Maintenance Fee	£40.00		£40.00
47/24-25	24/02/2024	100682	ICO	Data Protection Payment	£40.00		£40.00
					£436.87		£436.87

24-5/134 WEBSITE

- a) Invoice for the update of the annual parish meetings to be paid and Clerk to supply Sue Lees Consultancy with list of dates.

24-5/135 BUS GRANT INITIATIVE

- a) No further action to be taken at this point in time. It was ascertained that Stow Maries Village have four buses a day and details of timetable are on the Village website. There is a possibility that this type of funding may crop up again in the future with a better consultation time frame.

24-5/136 VE DAY 8TH MAY 2025 CELEBRATIONS

Members discussed and feelers had been put out to see if any groups in the village were planning anything, but it seemed not. It was suggested that as Church Lane is closed that a street party would be a possibility.

24-5/137 Greater Essex Mayoral County Combined Authority

Members decided not to make a response to this consultation.

24-5/138 INFORMATION EXCHANGE AND ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

Meetings List and Approval of Auditor.

24-5/139 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING – Monday 17th March 2025 at 7.30 p.m.

24-5/140 ALL BUSINESS HAVING BEEN TRANSACTED THE CHAIR THANKS EVERYONE FOR ATTENDING & CLOSES THE MEETING at 8.45pm.

Signed by the Chairman.....
Cllr Matthew Cooper

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