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**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD AT 7.30PM ON WEDNESDAY 13TH MARCH 2024 IN THE MOUNTFITCHET EXCHANGE, CRAFTON GREEN, 72 CHAPEL HILL, STANSTED MOUNTFITCHET, ESSEX**

**PRESENT**

Cllr Maureen Caton (Chair of Parish Council) and 10 members of the Parish Council

County Councillor Ray Gooding

District Councillor Alan Dean

Ruth Clifford – Parish Clerk

Emma Philbrick – Deputy Parish Clerk

Dan Schlanker – Parish Communications Officer

Press – Hollie Ryder

2 Youth Councillors

Tim Atkinson and members of the Youth Club

Deborah Gilder – HomeStart Essex

13 members of the public

Cllr Caton welcomed everyone to the meeting – the first to be held in the Mountfitchet Exchange. She asked everyone to make sure they had signed the attendance register and covered housekeeping points. She stated that the 2 officers of Essex Police who had been in the building to attend the meeting had just been called out for an emergency.

**1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Parish Councillors Alan Barnes, George Braeckman, Peter Jones and Jo Kavanagh. Apologies were also received from Jonathon Fox, Janet & John Hollis and Dot & John Salmon.

**2 TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15TH MARCH 2023**

The minutes of the meeting were received and approved.

**3 TO WELCOME REPRESENTATIVES OF STANSTED YOUTH COUNCIL**

Two members of the Youth Council attended the meeting and gave a presentation on why they joined, what they have achieved so far and what their plans are for the future.

**4 TO RECEIVE A REPORT FROM THE PARISH COUNCIL CHAIR, CLLR MAUREEN CATON**

A report from the Chair, Cllr Maureen Caton, had been published in the village magazine and was available at the meeting. She gave further updates which are attached to these minutes. Cllr Caton completed her report by thanking current and former parish councillors for their work on behalf of the community.

 Cllr Khan thanked the Chair for all her work especially towards the second dispensing pharmacy and thanked both frontline and the office staff for all their hard work.

**5 PARISH COUNCIL FINANCIAL REPORT – CLLR JOHN O’BRIEN**

A report from the Chair of Finance, Cllr John O’Brien, had been published in the village magazine and was available at the meeting. He gave further updates which are attached to these minutes.

 A resident raised the issue of the new LED lights which have been installed in Foresthall Park and how bright they are in his road. These are the responsibility of

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 Essex Highways, so Cty Cllr Ray Gooding responded. He advised that they can be dimmed and he would speak to Essex Highways to put this forward for the road that the resident mentioned.

 Another resident suggested that officers at Essex Highways need to visit the areas where they are planning/installing schemes to ensure that they are appropriate to the location.

**6 TO WELCOME TIM ATKINSON FROM FAIRYCROFT CIC REGARDING THE YOUTH CLUB**

Tim Atkinson, Managing Director of Fairycroft House CIC attended the meeting along with 10+ members. Tim reported on activities at the Youth Club since he took over in February and plans for the future. He said that the number of attendees had increased to 25 per session compared to the 4 that were attending when they first started. One of the attendees spoke and said that the variety of activities, like cooking, sport and art were really good. Attending and mixing with other kids has really helped her confidence and she gave thanks to those who support the Youth Club and provide this valuable service for them. Cllr Sell commented that it was good to receive feedback from those using the service and to see the positive impact it was having on them as it is something that the Parish Council has supported for a number of years. Tim gave thanks also to Touchpoint for providing food to them.

It was noted that all District and County Councillors had donated funds to Touchpoint in the current financial year.

**7 TO WELCOME RECIPIENTS OF PARISH GRANTS IN 2023**

A representative from Home-Start Essex attended the meeting and gave a presentation on how they help the community and what the grant money was used for.

Touchpoint and She’s Ready Stansted were unable to attend in person but sent over written reports which were read to the meeting.

**8 OPEN FORUM**

Christine Hope

Asked for an explanation on the partnership with Touchpoint particularly with regard to the financial agreement. Is the Parish Council still paying for the running costs, cleaning etc?

 Cllr O’Brien explained that the Parish Council agreed it would support them initially and they are still a young charity. They saved the buildings and have provided a well needed and valued community hub. The Clerk added that regular review meetings are held regarding this, but a lot of Touchpoint’s funds are grants which have to be spent on specific projects and are not allowed to be used for utility costs. This is something that will be continually monitored. She also advised that since Touchpoint took on the Licence to Occupy, that the business rates for the buildings have decreased significantly saving the Parish Council money.

 Graeme Cattermole

 Re the verges on Walson Way after the Affinity Water closure of the B1383. The route was always going to be an issue and now the state of the verges is degrading the appearance of Foresthall Park.

Cty Cllr Gooding explained that ultimately it is the responsibility of Essex Highways but it was caused due to the works by Affinity Water so he is trying to get them to take some responsibility and pay towards repairs. He is doing what he can to hold them to account so that taxpayers do not end up paying for it. The problem with this

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is that it was not the official diversion route. An official diversion route has to be a similar designated road but locals who know the roads will always take the routes they know. Mr Cattermole pointed out that there were official diversion signs did direct traffic through Foresthall Park.

 Cllr Khan highlighted the fact that the verges are the responsibility of Essex Highways and at a recent meeting Cllr Gooding was shown pictures of the verges before the works took place and they were in a poor state then. He believes it is disingenuous to try and claim money from Affinity Water.

 Cllr Gooding said he is presenting a package to the Uttlesford Local Highways Panel to try and change the way the traffic runs along Walson Way. It would be better to divert traffic along Forest Hall Road and come out by the school. He is hoping to get the scheme through the panel next month. Cllr O’Brien understood that there had originally been a proposal for no waiting restrictions on Walson Way but these had never materialised.

 John Proctor

 Raised the issue of lack of maintenance of the footway as you leave Stansted heading along the B1383 towards Bishop’s Stortford. Much of this path is covered in mud and the earth bank has slipped narrowing its width. In patches it floods because the road level is almost the same as the kerb stones. He asked when Essex Highways would do something to address these issues as nobody can walk or cycle safely along. Cllr Gooding said that a jetting team had been out recently, but significant works are required in the centre of the road which will require a road closure. An application is currently in for this. Cllr O’Brien pointed out that he had been asking for 9 years for the path to be widened and put back to its 1m width. He urged for this work to be done when the road is closed.

 Graeme Cattermole

 Trees from a house are affecting the footpath behind Bayford Way. This is becoming dangerous. He is aware that the Parish Council has previously written to the owner but that they are ignoring all requests. Can anything else be done? A tree from this property has also damaged property belonging to a relative of Mr Cattermole and despite the owner promising to pay and to cut back the trees, it has been two years and they have done neither. The Clerk advised that legally there is nothing else the Parish Council can do. Essex Highways maintain the footpath so they could possibly cut back the branches overhanging it and charge it back to the resident or they can throw the off-cuts back onto the property. Mr Cattermole asked Cllr Gooding to urgently seek action and it was agreed that the Clerk would forward on all details to Cllr Gooding and he will take it from there.

 Cllr Maureen Caton

Queried some information contained in Essex County Council’s “Highways Highlights” newsletter. It appeared to indicate that the same amount of money had been set aside in the ECC budget for highways repairs for two years running. Cllr Caton sought clarification on the accuracy of this article from Cllr Gooding who confirmed he would look into this and report back.

 Chrstine Hope

 Any news on the light not working on Chapel Hill by the bus stop. The Clerk confirmed again that this was UKPN and they are being chased constantly.

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Bill Stiles

Enquired if there was any update on the handover of the open space at Elms Farm. The Clerk advised that she expects that UDC will issue the Certificate of Satisfactory Completion to enable the land transfer to start. The developer remains responsible for maintenance for the first 12 months after the certificate is issued and then it will become the responsibility of the Parish Council. A snagging list of tasks to be completed has been sent to UDC.

 Edmund Wilkinson

 Asked if the new road layout signs and the new development signs for Elms Farm will ever be removed. Cllr Gooding confirmed that they always struggle with getting developers to do this, but he will pass the details onto Highways and get them dealt with.

Meeting closed at 8.45pm