

Chignal Parish Council

C/O 45 Cherry Garden Road, Great Waltham, Chelmsford, Essex, CM3 1DH

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Clerk: Will Adshead-Grant

Chair: Lynn Ballard.

Website: e-voice.org.uk/Chignal-Parish

Website: chignalparish.org.uk

Vice Chair: Linda Nelson.

Minutes of the Bi-Monthly Meeting of the Chignal Parish Council held on Monday 10th March 2025 at 7.00pm.

2024/816 Chair's Welcome.

Chair: Ballard.

Councillors: Elwick, Lewis, Nelson, Polley, Towns and Stainton.

Three important members of the community have passed recently. Chris Mills, Gordon Hillyear, and Beth Williams.

2024/817 Apologies for Absence.

There were no apologies required.

2024/818 Confirmation of the minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council held on 13th January 2025.

Resolution: The Minutes were confirmed.

2024/819 Note the minutes of the Orchard subcommittee held on 3rd March 2025.

Resolution: The Minutes were noted.

2024/820 Declarations of Interests of members and any requests for dispensation.

No declarations were made.

2024/821 Public Open Session for any matters that need to be drawn to the Parish Council's attention.

(The items do not need to be on the current agenda).

Seven members of the public.

- The new village gates. They have been installed as single gates. This will be checked with the Local Highways Panel by Cllr Steel.
- Website – Bowls club – the page needs updating.
- Water flowing down the road from the grounds of Hardoak again. Mud along the roadside.
- Water coming out from Gardening Express car parking area. The levels of mud and rubbish around the area is unacceptable.

2024/822 County and City Councillors' Reports.

- i. Essex County Councillor Report – Cllr Mike Steel.

ECC Report.

Devolution and Unitary Councils – an update and overview

Devolution and LGR stated off as two separate initiatives. The point of devolution was a simplistic devolution of powers (such as bus franchising) from Central Govt to the County Council, which would bring decision making closer to the electorate. Whereas, Local Govt Reform (LGR)/Unitary Councils is about replacing Essex County Council (ECC), 2 existing Unitaries (Southend and Thurrock) and 15 District Councils (such as Chelmsford City Council CCC) with 3, 4, or 5 Unitary Councils – which cover all the responsibilities of ECC and the District Councils. So, instead of there being one County Council responsible for Roads, Social Care, Education, Children's services, etc) with 15 District Councils (Planning, Waste Collection, Housing etc), Essex would be split into a small number of Unitary Councils, each having responsibility for all these services. So, CCC will need to merge with some of its neighbouring towns, yet to be determined). The number of Unitaries

has not been determined yet – it is aimed at around 500,000 people per unitary. The other change will be that there will be a directly elected Mayor, not for each Unitary, but a single one across all of Essex. The mayor will also take on the role of the Police Commissioner. In order to do this, the May 2025 County Council elections have to be postponed by a year. The reality is that a year is not enough, and further legislation will be required to postpone further. So, the best prediction at the moment is that:

May 2025 – ECC elections postponed by at least a year. Further extensions will be required, and Cllrs will serve another 3 years until March 2028

May 2026 – elections for cross-Essex Mayor

May 2027 – CCC elections postponed for a year.

May 2027 - Unitary Councils “shadow” elections, ready to take control in March 2028. They will spend their first year setting up the organisation and budgets,

March 2028 - ECC, Southend & Thurrock Unitaries and all the 15 District Councils abolished and replaced by TBD Unitary Councils

For me, this means that I was expecting to have to stand again for ECC in May 2025, but I will not, and I have a 3-year extension. As a City Cllr for Broomfield and the Waltham’s, I would have also had to stand for election in May 2027, but I will get a year extension on that. I know many people feel that this is a suspension of democracy, but the overriding factor seems to be that if we do not sign up to this approach, we will have it done to us!

I reserve judgement on the whole concept! Chelmsford City Council, whether under the Conservatives, or Lib-Dems, is one of the better managed authorities, with good services and low debt. Many of the other councils carry a large debt and this is likely to be shared out. However, I can see the benefit of Unitaries, after all as an ECC, CCC, and PC Cllr, I personally operate as one. But this is all going to be a big upheaval, and you might have detected that I am not a big fan of the direction we are going in!

I believe there is a consultation - <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/greater-essex-devolution>

Love Your Bus

Two of my Parish Councils have applied to this initiative – Good Easter and Chignal, jointly. I have provided my written support. Deadline for submission was 21st Feb – I do not know the outcome yet, but I have also given my verbal support to the Head of IPTU.

Member Highways Initiative

I have continued to make use of the additional “Winter Maintenance” Members’ Highways Initiative. This scheme was added because, unlike me, not all Cllrs used their MHI allowance, so there was spare capacity. Some holes in Highwood and Broomfield (at the crossing) have already been fixed. Also, on the list now are the road to Pleshey, Writtle (St Johns Green and Bridge Street), Chignal (outside Gardening Express) and the A131 near Gt Leighs.

Local Highways Panel

LCHE212007 – Chignal Smealey – implementation of gateways and 40mph marking.

The work has been started but I am informed that they are awaiting materials for completion. I have asked for an update.

Pylons – targeted consultation

The targeted consultation has now opened for the Essex (and Thurrock) region and will run until 27th March 2025.

Feedback can be provided at www.nationalgrid.com/norwich-to-tilbury

Most of these changes have been identified from feedback from the last consultation and NGET have stated that before they make any decisions, they want to consult with those people living near these proposed changes.

The changes can be found here - [Norwich to Tilbury | Document library | National Grid ET](#)

There are also a series of Webinars and events that can be accessed from the website.

I had a call with NGET 26th Feb (for the City Cllrs – affects around 6 Cllrs, but only two of us attended – myself and Cllr Whitehead). On the call NGET made it clear that this consultation is purely about the changes, and is not about offshore, or underground options, although I suspect that people will still comment on this. I did ask about these and was told that NGET are operating within the framework of Central Govt, and options such as underground, would only be considered if Central Govt changed the rules – e.g., moved away from the requirement of providing the cheapest solution.

The latest proposal includes just three areas around Chelmsford:

- Essex 7 – around Gt Leighs – this is about timing and synchronising with the ECC new Minerals Plan
- Essex 8 – the Waltham Gap – lower height pylons (37m rather than 50m), but wider. From what I can see, this would reduce visibility of the pylons from a distance but brings one closer to the road (and a house) and so be more intrusive close up.
- Essex 9 – around Margaretting – temporary construction laydown area repositioned north of Ivy Barnes Lane

All other areas have not experienced sufficient change to warrant comment.

NGET assured me that the proposals were subject to feedback and if, for example, the Waltham residents would rather have the previous proposal, it would be considered. It is the Waltham Gap which is the major change in this consultation and is a trade-off between lower height pylons, but they are more intrusive (being nearer the road and housing). I will comment that we would like the lower height pylons, but in the old positions, in the middle of the fields. I do not know if that is possible, as the lower height pylons may have less span.

Pylons – Central Govt

As stated above, NGET are operating within the rules set down by Central Govt which pushes totally towards an overhead pylon solution. Alternatives such as offshore, or underground, would need a change of approach from Govt. Hence, our MP Kemi, and I, continue to push on this. At ECC and CCC level I have pushed both organisations to resist pylons, and ECC has joined forces with not only Suffolk and Norfolk, but also Lincolnshire.

If you are keeping up with it on the press, you will know that the Labour Govt, and Ed Miliband in particular, is not only pushing the Development Consent Order (DCO), but also clearing the path in front of it, to make National Infrastructure projects get a smoother run through. The DCO is likely to be mid/late 2025.

Kemi has continued to join forces with other Conservative MPs - Bernard Jenkins, James Cartlidge, Alex Burghart, Jerome Mayhew, James Wilde, Priti Patel, Victoria Atkins, Steve Barclay, James McMurdock, to oppose this blight on the countryside. We even seem to have Nigel Farage aligning with us “*Farage called the proposed 114-mile pylon network from Norwich to Tilbury an "absolute disaster and aesthetic blight on landscapes and seascapes*” – what strange bedfellows such controversy makes!

Jointly, Kemi and I, have:

- *Expressed concerns about the ‘Pylon Presumption’ and sought constructive solutions for transmission infrastructure.*
- *The group of MPs have requested that NESO include a national strategic option in the CSNP for an onshore grid that prioritized underground HVDC (U-DC), mirroring the East Anglia approach but on a nationwide scale.*
- *Promoted underground HVDC on the basis that it is cheaper if the target date of 2034 is accepted.*
- *Promoted shorter sections of HVAC underground past areas such as the Waltham Gap and West of Chelmsford where the conversion to AC short runs, is less onerous.*

We accept that the push to net zero is necessary, but we need to take the people with along with us and look at technologies that are acceptable, even if they cost more in the short term!

ii. Chelmsford City Councillor Report - Cllr Nicolette Chambers

No update. Follow up Chairman's email to Cllr Chambers requesting a site meeting with CCC regarding management of The Green.

- Council Tax questions – Why are we showing an increase? The precept was sent to CCC as a £0 increase.

Resolution: **Clerk to ask Cllr Chambers for clarification.**

2024/823 Planning.

- Note the decisions by Chelmsford City Council Planning:

24/01545/CLEUD	Westleas Mashbury Road Chignal St James Chelmsford Essex CM1 4TW	Application	Split Decision
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- **Norwich to Tilbury:**

Proposed changes by NG-ET to the routeing of pylons in Essex.

No changes in route for Chignal.

The NW/SW Chelmsford Parishes Group is in discussion on next steps. This includes a landscape survey by a consultant.

- **Chelmsford Local Plan, Regulation 19 consultation:**

Consider draft response.

No substantive comments to be made at this stage. New Growth allocations are not being proposed in the Chignal area. The Hammonds Farm allocation will take up a lot of the housing targets.

2024/824 Community Communications Working Group:

Report of meeting with graphic designer on 3rd March re: Canva and using the Chignal parish branding.

Councillors and the Clerk now have access to Microsoft 365 Office / SharePoint with an asset library to store Chignal brand templates. The Council does not have the time or skill set to create templates, leaflets, posters. Proposed to use the graphic designer to design and arrange printing.

Promotional items, welcome booklet, orchard leaflet, information board in the playing field car park.

Quote to design and produce 500 copies of a community orchard booklet and a roller banner to display at the Fete and other events: £350 + £190 = £540. Use the Cll Money to cover.

Resolution: **Suspend financial regulations due to the graphic design elements and branding.**

Resolution: **The Parish Council approves this expenditure.**

2024/825 Essex Love Your Bus Grant:

Chignal PC is a partner in an application submitted by High Easter PC on 21st February to extend and promote increased use of the Lodge bus service 17/18.

Finance

2024/826 Finance:

Note that the account now has a debit card for purchasing off the internet.

Cheque Account

£ 2,012.21

• Orchard sponsorship	£685
• Interest received	£163.55
<u>Saving Account</u>	£ 47,163.55 1.41% Interest

• General Reserve	£10,900
• Earmarked Reserves	£10,000
• Cil	£12,341.57
• Operating cash	£13,194.62
• Orchard Account	£1,152.91

Total **£ 49,175.76**

2024/827 Payments for approval.

To approve the following payments:

Payment to	Description	Budget Column	Cost
Recoded Solutions	Website hosting	It& Web	£10.00
parish clerk	expenses - amazon - bird houses	Reserves	£53.98
parish clerk	expenses-amazon - trail cameras	Reserves	£184.68
X2 Connect	K6 Paint Kit and Defib sign	Reserves	£188.76
HMRC	PAYE - Feb	Paye	£49.00
Essex Pension Fund	Pension - Feb	Pension	£178.96
Clerk	Salary - Feb	Salary	£195.99
HMRC	Paye- March	Paye	£49.00
Essex Pension Fund	Pension - March	Pension	£178.96
Clerk	Salary - March	Salary	£202.29
Clerk	Expenses – X2 - Polycarbonate	Reserves	£64.68
Village Hall	Hall Hire	Hall Hire	£ 110
Cllr Lewis	Batteries	Reserves	£ 27.25
Recycled Furniture	Brown Octagonal Picnic Table	CIL	£834.00
Rock Awnings	4 x Pop up Gazebos	CIL	£2010.99

Total **£ 4,338.54**

2024/828 Review of the Bi-monthly bank reconciliation.

Resolution: **The reconciliation was approved.**

2024/829 To note Items approved for purchase but not yet actioned.

- (CIL) Gazebos x 4 – Pop up – for Community use - £1996 (incl vat) – Approved July 2024.
- (Reserves) Impact report for Pylon route payment 2- £344.94- Approved November 2024.
- (Cil) Picnic table for the Orchard- £690 – Approved November 2024.

2024/830 Discuss Devolution and potential impact on the Parish Council.

Note the ownership of the Orchard and the Green does not sit with the Parish Council. There is a three-year window before major changes in the devolution process complete. Some services may be withdrawn or reduced. There is no finance expected to be devolved.

2024/831 Discuss the 'Love your Parish' options.

Resolution: **Graffiti removal at the Playing Field Gazebo to be requested.**

REPORTS AND UPDATES.

2024/832 Representatives' Reports: to discuss and debate any items.

A) Little Hollows / Copperfield Place Liaison - Cllr Elwick

- Landscaping and highway visibility – update.

Items sitting with others to action.

Ref 2957113 – reported 14th Jan 2025. Still awaiting inspection.

B) Village Hall Liaison - Cllr Towns.

- A team of volunteers has redecorated the Village Hall.

C) Playing Field – Cllr Towns and Elwick.

- Noted that there have been trail bikes on the playing surface and made a mess.
- There is graffiti on the walls of the gazebo and paving.
- A large amount of litter was found.
- Potential to put a combination padlock on to the pedestrian gate.

D) Public Rights of Way – Cllr Towns.

- Brittons Hall Farm – obstruction.

E) Community Engagement - Cllr Nelson and Cllr Stainton

- Consider a quote by Recoded solutions for £350 to develop the website and improve user engagement.

Resolution: **Expenditure of £350 (Plus vat) approved.**

F) Community Safety – Cllr Lewis.

- Update on additional defibrillators:
 - i. St Nicholas Church.
 - Consider mounting a defib on the Parish Council Noticeboard by the Church.
 - Add a plate under the Parish Noticeboard and mount the defib.
 - No electricity required.
 - £2904 (incl vat)

Resolution: **The quote was approved from CHT.**

ii. Phone box by The Green.

- Contractor to re-paint and refurbish in Spring 2025.
- Defibrillator is to be installed in 2025.
- £2310 to purchase plus £210 electrician cost to install.

Resolution: **The expenditure was approved.**

- Date for parish litter pick is on Saturday 15th March.

G) Highways (include Hedges) - Cllr Towns.

- Update on installation of village entry gates, (see Item 822)
- No update on reinstalling the directional sign to Chignal Smealey at Hollow Lane/Chignal Road junction.
- Flooding reported on Mashbury Road by the entrance to the gardening express car park – update from Essex Highways, (see Item 822).

Concerns raised about the levels of litter, and it was noted that some litter was created during recent Highways works.

H) Countryside conservation. – Cllr Lewis.

- Essex Local Nature Recovery Strategy: response sent to the Essex Rural Community Council giving examples of nature recovery and climate change projects in Chignal.
- Bird and bat boxes: update on take-up by residents.
 - i. 16 Bird Boxes were purchased and given out.
 - ii. 7 Bat boxes to be arranged.

2024/833 Items for the next Agenda

In the interest of time – items to be e-mailed to the Clerk.

Next meetings:

Monday 12th May 2025

Annual General Meeting and Bi-Monthly Meeting at 7.30PM.

Meeting closed. 20.13
Will Adshead-Grant
Clerk to the Council.