



Little Braxted Parish Council

Minutes of the Meeting of Little Braxted Parish Council held in The Braxted Bakery, Witham Road, Little Braxted on Tuesday 26th March 2019 at 7.00pm.

Present: Councillors: Barke, Bendall, Chapman, Dobie and Speakman

Also Present: District Councillor Henry Bass and twenty-eight members of the public

1. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of Interest

No Members declared any interests in matters on the agenda.

3. To Consider any requests from Members for Dispensations

There were no requests from Members with pecuniary interests for dispensations to enable them to participate on the item in which they have a pecuniary interest.

4. To Agree and Approve the Minutes of the Meeting held 27th February 2019

The Council agreed and approved the signing of the minutes of the meeting held on 27th February 2019 as a true record.

5. To Invite Members of the Public to speak on Matters Regarding and Affecting the Parish

Members of the public questioned the Parish Council over the potential affordable housing project, querying how the project came about, how the need was assessed, and how the sites were selected.

The Chairman and Clerk provided the following by way of explanation, adding that the matter was already scheduled for discussion at the meeting to be held on 23rd April when representatives from the Rural Community Council of Essex, who had assisted with the Parish Plan and subsequently undertaken the Housing Needs Survey, Hastoe Housing, and Maldon District Council's Rural Housing Officer would be present:-

During 2016 the Parish Council, with the assistance of the Rural Community Council for Essex, undertook a Parish Plan consultation exercise. Of 51 questionnaires issued 38 were returned – a remarkably high response rate.

Some of the questions asked were about future housing growth, and in particular:-

| | None | 1-5 | 6-10 | 10-15 | More than 15 |
|--|------|-----|------|-------|--------------|
| How many new homes would you like to see in Little Braxted in the next 5 years ? | 14 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 2 |

and

| | Very Strongly Agree | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Very Strongly Disagree |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|------------------------|
| There is a lack of affordable housing | 6 | 5 | 12 | 9 | 4 | 2 |

Although not all respondents answered, the percentages (and numbers) of those indicating that some small growth was acceptable, and that there was a lack of affordable housing in the Parish, provided a mandate to the Parish Council to explore the matter further.

The Parish Council, on 10th January 2017, held a public launch of the results of the Parish Plan. During this well-attended meeting – attended by Little Braxted residents and others – those present were asked to identify their preference for preferred development sites, with the proviso that any such sites should demonstrate “sustainability” in line with the National Planning Policy Framework definition.

At the Parish Council meeting held 28th February 2017 members considered the identified sites, and agreed to work with the Rural Community Council of Essex to undertake a Housing Needs Survey which would identify the real need for affordable housing from amongst our residents.

The Housing Needs Survey Outcome, and recommendations, were:-

The response rate was 34% which is well above average.

The respondents were fairly evenly divided on whether they would be in favour of a small scheme of affordable homes for local people, with 50% stating YES and 46% stating NO. One person declined to answer this question. The Rural Community Council of Essex would recommend further consultation and engagement with the community as this might help to explore this hesitancy further.

Out of a total of 26 completed or partially completed surveys, 6 respondents indicated a need for some form of housing in the future. Only 5 of these then went on to give us enough information to assess this need, two of whom provided us with data around their children’s projected need which would be too far into the future to take into consideration at this stage.

The Rural Community Council therefore calculated the need based on 3 respondents and following general planning guidance, the recommendation as discussed further in this report, would be for 1 or 2 affordable units for rent with 1 or 2 bedrooms each. The exact number of units and bedrooms would need to be discussed further and agreed once the scheme and scope has been decided on. The Housing Needs Survey was discussed at the Parish Council meeting held 28th November 2017 and the Council agreed to contact two Housing Associations, experienced in delivering small-scale affordable housing schemes, to take the matter further.

How Were Potential Sites Identified for Further Investigation ?

Hastoe Housing were provided with a copy of the composite map produced following the 10th January 2017 meeting (and included in the agenda papers for the meeting on 28th February 2017). Some sites were ruled out because they did not comply with the Maldon District Council Policy H5 (see below) by virtue of being not being available (as far as we knew), or not meeting the “sustainability” test.

The remaining five sites were the subject of a “drive-by” visit by Hastoe Housing, accompanied by the Parish Clerk to confirm the site locations, and the Parish Council Chairman to identify ownership. Hastoe Housing subsequently undertook a desk-top exercise into potential planning considerations, and wrote to the two landowners identified asking if they were interested in selling part of their land.

Only one landowner has replied to Hastoe, so only three potential sites are currently being pursued.

District Councillor Bass confirmed that Rural Exception Sites such as this were precisely that, exceptions from the overarching District Council Planning Policy that there should be no development in Little Braxted, and this scheme would not open the floodgates for further, largescale, developments. He also confirmed that land acquired for the scheme would be acquired at its current market value (e.g. agricultural) and there was no “profit” to be made to any landowner involved in such a scheme.

The next stage is for the Parish Council, with advice from Hastoe after their discussions with Maldon District Council regarding planning considerations on the remaining three sites, to agree a site for Hastoe to develop.

The Clerk agreed to circulate the above, together with an invitation to any landowners willing to offer their land for such a scheme, to all homeowners in the Parish in order that any offers of land could be considered at the April meeting.

6. To Review the Council’s Corporate and Governance Risks

The Council reviewed the Council’s corporate and governance risks and agreed no changes were required to the procedures and practices.

7. To Comment on the Following Planning Application:-

a) 19/00193/HOUSE PP-07633208 - Single storey rear/side extension and changes to fenestration and external materials - Highfield House, Green Man Lane

The Council had no objection to this application.

8. To receive a financial statement as of 28th February 2019

The Council received a detailed financial statement as of 28th February including income and expenditure to date, a comparison against budget, and a bank reconciliation which showed £4,945.33 as the Council's balances.

9. To Approve the following payments:-

The Council approved the following payments:-

| Document Reference | Payable To | In Respect of | £ |
|---------------------------|--------------------|--|----------|
| 549 | The Braxted Bakery | Hire of Meeting Room for Parish Council meetings | £250.00 |
| 550 | The Braxted Bakery | Neighbourhood Watch Community Coffee Mornings | £284.69 |
| 551 | G N Mussett | Clerk's Salary | £125.15 |
| 552 | H Bendall | Litterpicking | £48.20 |
| 553 | HMRC | Tax/Ni Jan-Mar | £107.40 |

10. Clerk's Report – for Information Only

a. Pedestrians in Road signs

The Clerk reported that although being included in the Local Highways Panel works for 2018/19 they had not yet seemingly been erected and that he had chased the Highways Department accordingly.

b. Repairs to Bridge

The Clerk reported that the sum of £23,507 had been received from the Essex Community Foundation towards the refurbishment of the bridge and that he was awaiting confirmation from Essex County Council that the cost of the essential repairs was to be met from their budget, enabling the full works to proceed.

c. Broadband

The Chairman advised that, subject to confirmation of a funding award, a 15m post was to be erected on his land. Once that connection had been made then the possibility of extending ultrafast broadband to part of the village not connected by fibre optic cable would be explored.

d. Wickham Bishops Library

Wickham Bishops Parish Council had asked for a letter of support for the retention of their library and its building and the Clerk advised that, in accord with the Council's previous decision, he would write such a letter of support.

11. Closure

The meeting was closed at 8.08 p.m.