



Broomfield Parish Council

Minutes of a meeting of Broomfield Parish Council held in Broomfield Village Hall on Wednesday 8th January 2025 at 7.30 p.m.

24/170	Members attending. Chair: Cllr Bleet, Cllrs Thomson, Faulds, Howell, Perera-Morris, Blake, Bowman, Boreham, and Travis Also present, Clerk, Mark Hembury and County/City Councillor Mike Steel. Resolved. Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Odelana, Scott, Taylor and Barnes. Proposed by Cllr. Faulds and seconded by Cllr. Perera-Morris. All in agreement.
24/172	Declarations of interests None
24/173	To approve the minutes of the Council Meeting held on 11th Decmber 2024. Resolved. The minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 11th December 2024 are accepted as a true record. Proposed by Cllr.Faulds and seconded by Cllr.Thomson. One abstention and all others in agreement.
24/174	Public Question Time. No members of the public present.
24/175	To receive a report from the County Council for items not on agenda. The following written report was submitted by Clr. Steel. Keep Essex Car Tax for Essex Roads The most number of complaints, by far, are in relation to highway defects. Whilst highways (roads, pavements, overgrown verges and hedges, flooding, PROW maintenance, etc), affect everyone, it is allocated around 5% of the gross ECC budget. Over three quarters of ECC budget goes on the mandatory Adult Social Care, Children's services and Education. Not everyone currently benefits from those services, but people need to be reassured that when they do need them, they will be able to access them! As the demand for Adult Social Care, Children's services and Education services grow at a significant rate, the funds left for other services becomes less. It should be noted that the demand for SEN assessments has nearly doubled in the last 5 years, outstripping the availability of child psychologists to carry out the assessments. It is not generally understood that Vehicle Excise Duty goes to Central Govt, whilst County Councils have responsibility for highways maintenance and the County Councils do not see the income. We often hear people saying "<i>I pay my road tax and expect the roads to be fixed</i>". Well, it doesn't work like that! Vehicle Excise Duty collects £7.3Bn pa in the UK, which equates to about £300M from Essex vehicle owners, none of this gets returned to Essex. So, we have to do the best we can with the limited funds, which means prioritising according to safety, etc. The ECC Conservative Group proposed a motion at County council meeting 10th Dec 24, to Keep Essex Car Tax for Essex Roads and calling on the Govt to add the amount paid by Essex residents to ECC's budget settlement for 2025/26 onwards and for it to be ringfenced for road maintenance. The motion was successfully passed and the request will be sent to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretary of State for Transport and all Essex MPs. In addition, a petition has been initiated to support this:

<https://www.essexconservatives.uk/campaigns/petition-keep-essex-car-tax-essex-roads?fbclid=IwY2xjawHJUlhleHRuA2FlbQlxMAABHS2t8QLwxs3a6LC1fioyDnc5K4FWzZjBzPgEYT6KTVQE MwlJ2X0m L Q aem 8Fv0wd7eZkRTy5RIYSBV2Q>

Bus Transport

We want more people to use public transport, and we need to improve the services. ECC aren't in charge of the bus franchises (although this could change as a result of "devolution"). But ECC supplement services where bus companies don't serve, usually because the number of passengers make it unviable. ECC try to fill these gaps, and Digigo has been very successful as an on demand service. Many people use the on-line app, but for those that are not able to do so, they can phone up. The phone lines have now been extended and are available from 9.00am - 5.00pm, Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays). Our new phone line number is: 0345 603 7633 www.digigo.uk

Devolution and Unitary Councils

The White Paper for Devolution (and Unitary Councils) has now been published.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/676028c9cfbf84c3b2bcfa57/English_Devolution_White_Paper_Web_Accessible.pdf

It offers a range of Local Govt reforms which ties into the amount of devolved powers from Central Govt. it would be fair to say that it encourages the mayoral approach to a unitary council. For Essex, that would mean splitting it into 3 or 4 unitary councils that then encompass the County level and District level.

The leader of ECC is keen to bring decision making and power closer to the people therefore Essex will be a front runner for devolution. County Councils have until 10th Jan 25 to submit a proposal which in our case, needs to reach agreement with Southend and Thurrock as well. I am attending a full briefing of ECC's intention on the 7th Jan, and an extra-ordinary meeting on the 10th Jan, to agree the submission.

Highway defect reporting

Residents and road users have more options when reporting road defects following a major update by Essex Highways.

The update comes as users will no longer be able to raise issues via third-party sites, such as Fix My Street, from 1 January 2025 due to the lack of detail they provide inspectors.

The '[Report It](#)' webpage by Essex Highways has been tailored to capture all necessary information. This now includes different types of emergencies and if issues have worsened over time.

The '[Track It](#)' webpage lets users see the progress of reports, from inspection to repair, and whether similar issues have already been raised.

Issues logged through third-party platforms are often duplicates of reports already received via Report It, or unrelated to the roads managed by Essex Highways.

By moving exclusively to Report It, Essex Highways can ensure the 50,000 reports received annually are managed in one place, resulting in a faster and more transparent process.

There is also a major cleansing project under way – to clear out dated enquiries on the system. If you look at Track-It, you need to understand the difference between Enquiry References, and Defect Numbers. The former are the problems logged by the public, which when inspected, get converted to a Defect Number. In many cases there are several Enquiry References for one fault, and the process is that when the inspection occurs, several

Enquiries will be closed and one Defect Number raised. But it doesn't always work like that – so a data cleanse project is currently underway.

Highways' Highlights Nov/Dec 24

We have been hit with a couple of major storms over the last few weeks (Bert and Darragh). Highways responded to 301 emergency calls on 79 tree issues and 222 flooding issues. In November, we fixed 2,254 potholes, 942 pavement defects, cleared 9,994 drains and fixed 1,228 streetlights.

As you know, I have made extensive use of the Members' Highways Initiative which enables County Cllrs to identify road and pavement issues which matter most to residents. I have submitted 59 separate defects, which will keep the extra team busy until next year, so I have pretty much used up (over-used) my quota. However, a new "*Winter Damage*" Members' scheme has been introduced – it appears that not all Cllrs have been as proactive as me in using the Members' Initiative and there is spare capacity which is being offered for defects that have deteriorated due to winter conditions. I have already submitted some defects for this scheme. Let me know if you have any that might fit – existing track-It ref and photo please (if safe to take).

I say this often, but the problem is that more than three quarters the gross ECC budget goes on Adult Social Care and Children's services, so there is little left for all the other services, including Highways, but I do try to make the most of any initiatives!

Reminder on the gritters as we enter the season for icy roads - you can track the gritting trucks here <https://www.essexhighways.org/roads-and-pavements/winter-travel/track-the-gritting-lorries>

School Crossing Patrol (SCP) in School Lane:

I reported last month that we have now lost our SCP.

I am not aware of any applications for the vacancy, so please promote it as much as possible. All of our roles are permanent part time and term time only for approximately 7.5 hours per week and the current pay rate is £12.10 per hour.

Our roles suit people who are fit and active, friendly, and approachable with a good sense of road safety and excellent communication skills.

No previous experience is necessary and full training and uniform are provided.

City Council

Brown Bin Charges

At the 18th Dec 24 City council meeting, the Council presented a few measures to increase service charges to address the expected budget shortfall, next year, of £4M. Car park charges will increase, but the most controversial aspect is the introduction of garden waste collection charges (for brown bins), from March 2025.

- £60 for one brown bin – paid annually in advance – same collection frequency of every other week.
- £30 for a second bin
- For those receiving Council tax Support, the charge will be £45

The subscription runs for 12 months, and households need to sign up in January.

Subscriptions attach to the residence, and there is no rebate if you move.

	I did vote against it - it seems like a retrograde step when we are trying to recycle as much as possible and reduce black bin waste. Chelmsford is the last of the District Councils to charge for garden waste. Some DCs have been doing it for over 10 years. I tend to only fill a brown bin every few months but I will probably pay the charge. I discussed the collection process with the LD proposer and apparently, those that pay, will get a sticker for their bin. But you can make arrangements with your neighbours - they were encouraging that. For low users like myself, it would make sense for one of us to pay and a few neighbours use the same bin. My group questioned the wisdom of charging for garden waste and whether people would put such waste in the black bin. The administration responded that there was evidence from other districts that this was not the case, although it seems to me that there will be some of this – the responsible options for those that don't pay for collection is to compost, take it to the recycling centre or make an arrangement with a neighbour. I also discussed it with the ECC Cabinet Member for the waste strategy and he did say that all the other DCs had been charging for quite some time and there was no evidence of increased garden waste in the black bins! Kings Arms Licence When I first saw this application, I immediately forwarded it to Broomfield PC to make sure they were aware of it. I subsequently attended the licencing meeting of 17th Dec 24. I was unable to speak as I had not made a written representation. However, I have been in touch with local residents and I fully support their case. Being able to open until 1am is not appropriate for this location. The residents spoke well and made their case. At the point of writing this report, I am not aware of the decision, but I hope it does not support opening into the early hours of the morning.
24/175	To receive a report from City Council for items not on the agenda. See item 24/174 above.
24/176	Correspondence None
24/177	Consultations None
24/178	Reports from Councillors on outside bodies Local Highways Panel – Councillor Steel (County and City Councillor) see report at 24/174. Woollards Charity – Councillor Faulds reported that the Christmas vouchers has been distributed and that they were working around the closure of the Co-operative and hopefully the new village shop would take over. Broomfield Hospital liaison – Councilor Blake stated he would draft an email for the Clerk to send to the transport co-ordinator at the hospital to establish contact. Football Sports Clubs – Events and Fundraising Manager Donna Hance submitted a written report – a meeting is being arranged with the churches/pubs/care homes/football club and legion for the end of January to finalise our village calendar. The events calendar for the year for the Parish Council and Village Hall will be finalised and shared at the next meeting. Plans for VE Day on 8th May are underway and a full update will be provided at the next meeting. January 24th to 26th is the Big garden bird watch. 17th February is Fun@Broomfield - the arts and crafts topic is yet to be decided. Elderly Care Homes – Events and Fundraising Manager reports that Broomfield Village Care Home is now open and has welcomed the first residents. Donna will be attending their official opening on 31st January.

	Madelayne Court has made an approach for Donna to be the guest speaker regarding her role at the Village Hall and Parish Council, this will take place in February. Transport – Councillor Thomson reported that the routes 170 and 370 had undergone minor changes with an extra service to Chelmsford. The X10 and X30 again have some changes to their routes rather than times. The Skerry Rise timetable still has not been changed. Schools – Councillor Bowman. No update Police – Councillor Scott. No update North West Parishes – Councillor Blake had no update since the last meeting.
24/179	To note financial reports for December 2024 To approve the bank statement and reconciliation report for December 2024 To note cashbook, income and expenditure for December 2024. To note salary payments for December 2024. Resolved: The Council approves the financial records for December 2024 noting the current account reconciliation figure of £12,086.05. Proposed by Cllr. Faulds and seconded by Cllr. Blake. All in agreement.
24/180	The Chairman will provide an update on the PIIP process with a view to making this a standing agenda item for each Council meeting. Councillor Bleet reminded members of the reason for the PIIP and its importance in determining projects within the parish that might be taken forward. It was agreed that the grid would be brought back to a future meeting for additional work, including prioritisation. Any Committee priorities need to be added to the grid. Cllr. Blake reminded members that the date for the Neighbourhood Plan referendum was likely to be 27th February. On 15th January an open day would be held around the coffee morning. On Saturday 18th there would be a display in the hall from 12 noon to 7pm. The referendum is likely to be called on 25th or 26th January and after that time there would be a limit on what can be said – the Parish Council must remain impartial. Anyone who is able to assist at either of the open days please let Cllr. Blake know.
24/181	The Chairman of the Planning Committee will provide an explanation of the work of the Rural Community Council for Essex with specific reference to Community Land Trusts. Cllr. Blake encouraged members to view the video he had circulated to them previously which explained how a Community Land Trust works. Members should note the definition of 'affordable' is based upon local housing costs, not the usual definition of below 80% of market value. Members should pass any feedback or questions on the video to him.
24/182	The following Planning Applications have been received, but due to the Christmas and New Year break, the Planning Committee will not be able to consider the application in time to meet the deadline for a response. 1. Ref. 24/01679/FUL 5 Jubilee Avenue Proposal - Raising of existing pitched roof and eaves to create first floor with new rooflights and new pitched front canopy. Resolved: No comment would be made, proposed by Cllr. Thomson and seconded by Cllr. Faulds. All in agreement. 2 Ref. 24/05276/TPO Proposal – TPO/2005/066 T2 Field Maple Prune back by 1m to suitable growth point – Reason: to achieve a clearance from the roof of 1-2m. TPO/2001/059 T1 Horse Chestnut – Crown lift by 1m – Reason: To provide suitable clearance and visual sight line T4 & T5 Sycamore (T2 and T3 on TPO site plan) – Fell to ground level – Reason: T4 as recommended on tree report. T5 dying/in decline.

	Resolved: No objection would be made, proposed by Cllr.Thomson and seconded by Cllr.Faulds. All in agreement. The Parish Council also wished it to be noted that they request that two new trees are planted to replace those lost.
24/183	Clerk's Update The Clerk reported that the precept request for the next financial year had been received by the City Council.
24/184	To note minutes from the following Committees:
24/184.1	Finance and Personnel Committee – no new meeting to note. These were noted.
24/184.2	Environment Committee – draft minutes from 18 th December. These were unavailable at the time of the meeting.
24/184.3	Planning Committee – there was no Planning Meeting for January because of the New Year holiday.
24/184.4	Communications Committee – No recent meeting
24/184.5	School Lane Working Group – Cllr.Bleet reported that there was a need for an update to the School Lane Travel plans. The Clerk was waiting for a reply from Highways Engineer, Steve Aman, to confirm when his report on possible highway and travel improvements would be ready. There was a need to link together the School Lane Home Zone/School Zone and Cycling routes. A potential cycle route through school land had been identified – a discussion will need to be had with the school.
24/184.6	Health and Wellbeing Group – Cllr. Bowman reported that a meeting was to be arranged.
24/185	Matters for the next meeting The meeting concluded at 9.06 p.m.