

HOWE GREEN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION AGM

**MONDAY 21ST APRIL 2008 AT 8 PM
IN HOWE GREEN CHAPEL**

Minutes

1. Apologies for Absence

2. Approval of Minutes of last AGM

Proposed Judy Bynom Seconded Richard Spooner Approved.

3. Cllr. Whitehead

Cllr. Whitehead gave a short talk on the functions of the borough council.

Highways: Although Essex CC is responsible for highways, they have allocated a sum of money to Chelmsford BC for use as they see fit on highways. Hence, there is a little scope for improvements to be implemented by the BC.

Speed limits: The authorities would like to know what residents would like the authorities to do with available funds.

There have been a lot of changes in the borough of late. Interventions by the Environment Agency and English Heritage have meant a lot of changes. At last, the Area Action Plan for the centre of Chelmsford has been produced and is currently under review by the Inspector.

We are required to provide 16000 new homes in Chelmsford in the period to 2021, roughly 850 per year. The majority built so far has been in the town centre – flats etc. Most future development will be to the north of Chelmsford – along with a new railway station. A new tax on new homes will be used to provide infrastructure – schools etc.

Concessionary bus passes: Busses are run by Essex CC. Bills come to the BC. Last year the budget was £M1.47 plus a £k413 grant - total £M1.82, which was fully funded by the government. Actual cost is set by the bus company according to usage. The estimated cost for this year is £M2.5 and £M3.5. This leads to a shortfall of £k700 - £M1.6 which goes straight onto the Council Tax. (All figures are approximate.) The tax rate has increased by 4.71% but there is still a shortfall of 3.3%, which means that cuts will have to be made somewhere. (Increases are capped at 5% by the government.) 1% in Council Tax raises £k100 per year. Councillors have been to see the transport minister, to no avail. The problem has been caused by miscalculation by the government: some councils are over-funded and others are under-funded. The government have been asked to replace the current system with an Essex-wide scheme. Bus passes are now valid from 9.30 am instead of the previous 9 am. Government funding is from 9.30 am. The period from 9 am was previously funded by the council who cannot now afford it. (Note: The time of the No. 1 bus from Howe Green to Chelmsford has been changed from 9.24 to 9.30 am.)

Chelmsford museum is being rebuilt to house the Marconi exhibition at a cost of £M5.

Reports of poor design of the bus station have been exaggerated as there have been no problems.

Question: Why, when there is a cap of 5%, has our rate increased by more than 5%.

Answer: Because of redistribution of parish council costs according to benefits obtained in a particular area. Parish council costs are not capped.

Cllr. Ian Wright pointed out that the councillor responsible for finance will be at the Sandon PC Annual Assembly next week.

Question: How is the cost of the Park & Ride allocated.

Answer: The P&R is operated by the BC on behalf of the CC. The current system of payment means that the facilities are effectively being subsidised by the BC through the bus passes. Also people from outside the area are monopolising the park to reduce the fares they pay into London. The P&R was intended for use by Chelmsford business users, not London commuters or shoppers. Under consideration are options to charge for parking or for both parking and bus fare. There are plans to further extend the car park.

Question: If a charge were made for parking, would any concessions be available.

Answer: Unlikely.

Question: The original pamphlet said that the P&R was for shoppers.

Answer: The pamphlet was written by ECC not CBC.

Question: Are there still plans for P&Rs on the other side of Chelmsford.

Answer: Yes. Most likely around A130/A131 junction to pick up Broomfield traffic – possibly a guided bus down Essex Regiment Way.

Question: The rates bill features large in the budget of the many pensioners
Howe Green.

1. What staffing reductions have you implemented since you took over the council?

2. What steps have you taken to limit salaries and resultant pensions?

3. How do you justify the cost of distributing publications such as the Life magazine when it could be done through the Internet?

Answer: 3. Taking the last question first, many people appreciate the magazine, which contains much useful information. There have been problems with distribution. Future copies will be delivered by the Post Office at a cost of £6000. Not everyone has Internet access and many have expressed the desire for hard copy. It is not a glossy magazine and is not expensive to produce. There are sometimes special editions. The last one explained the functions of the BC and included the fact that the BC receives around £150 per annum per household from the rates. Most of the rates income goes to ECC and other services.

1. The number of senior management have been reduced from around 22 to 8. We have stripped out huge layers of management. Were it not for the bus passes we could actually reduce the rates. We are being vetted by the Audit Commission and expect to be among the most efficient councils in the country.

2. We are a large business with 1000 staff, turning over £M75 per year. We have to pay good salaries to get good staff. We have had problems getting suitable staff and have had to increase salaries to get them. We are currently recruiting someone to run our waste collection and parks at around £k85. The chief executive gets more than £k100 a year but he is running a big business and running it efficiently. We have sold a lot of property that was not earning anything and intend to do more. We are improving all the time.

Question: P&R. To change the concession time from 9.30am to 9am would cost CBC £40000 – a small amount for the council. Maldon can afford it, why not us?

Answer: Half a percent on the council tax. Maldon and Brentwood can afford it because they do not have the funding problem that we have.

Question: I put a paint tin in my black bin, by mistake. The tin was subsequently left on the kerb. Does this mean that our bin contents are being checked?

Answer: No.

Question: Where do we put old paint tins?

Answer: Any tins can go in the green box. *(Editor: This was later corrected. Old paint containers are toxic and not recyclable. They must be taken back to the refuse depot at Drovers Way.)*

Question: Saturday standouts. Changed times and only recyclables.

Answer: They are expensive. Previously, all the rubbish, including recyclables, went to landfill. The proportion of recyclables is up to 37%. Brown bins are to be introduced year round. We are looking into collecting more plastics. We are looking into collecting cardboard every fortnight. Another way to reduce costs is to collect black bins every fortnight. We have always campaigned against that. I would like to know your views.

Comment from the floor: Kent have a good system: all recyclables go in one container and it is sorted on the van – much simpler. A brown bin takes garden refuse and all biodegradables, including food, and is collected weekly. The black bin is collected fortnightly and that's fine. It is not healthy to have a fortnightly collection of food residue, especially in the summer.

A vote was taken. A minority would be happy with a fortnightly black bin collection.

Answer: We are looking at various options. It is a complicated business.

Comment from floor: In Australia they have one recycle lorry divided into four compartments for different types of waste.

Answer: We have lorries divided into two. Our newly recruited executive will be looking at waste handling.

Question: What sort of response are you getting to the recyclable standout? Apart from computers that you do not throw away often, everything else gets collected from the doorstep.

Also, how come there is a lot of food waste? Should only cook what you want to eat. Peelings etc. can be composted. *(Comment from the back: Not if you have rats.)*

Answer: Younger people eat take-aways, throwing away half a pizza etc. While food waste goes into the black bin, they will have to be collected weekly.

Comment: Once upon a time there were pig bins on the streets for waste food, emptied daily.

Answer: Regrettably, Health and Safety forbid it today because food has all the wrong stuff in it.

Question: What about the standouts?

Answer: We changed standouts this year to avoid dumping recyclables. Will it last – maybe not.

The council will collect large items for recycling from outside your house, free of charge for the over-60s. Just ring up. The standout collection times have changed because we are covering more villages.

Question: ECC are having a consultation period over their Strategy for Waste. They propose to build two large plants to handle co-mingled waste. How are CBC going to link in with this if they are doing this large recycling thing because there will not be much co-mingled waste.

Answer: Our view is to recycle as much as possible. The large plants will handle the remainder after recycling. We need to get recycling up to 50%. We are targeting those that do not recycle. We try first to identify the culprits.

Question: We use plastic milk bottles, carefully wash and squash them and put them in a plastic bag!!

Answer: We thought of using paper bags but people put bleach bottles in and that can be dangerous. The plastic bags are compacted for disposal. Only some plastic bottles can be recycled.

Question: Tetrapack bags cannot be recycled?

Answer: Yes they can but they are not currently collected and have to be taken to a collection point. There are several around. Drovers Lane refuse depot will not accept them.

Question: The multi-storey car park is a mess. The stairs are smelly with urine etc.

Answer: Efforts are made to keep it clean but it is an out-of-date structure, which we hope to improve. We are working to improve the appearance of the town centre. The area of the Bond St car park is being rebuilt. I will take back your comment about the car park.

The chairman thanked Cllr.Whitehead for his valuable contribution.

4. Sandon Parish Council Report

Cllr.Ian Wright gave a short report on the activities of the parish council.

He urged members to attend the annual assembly taking place on Monday 21 April 2008.

18 months ago the parish council was in serious difficulty. We called an extraordinary meeting and told people we needed help. Now, with new members, including David here, we are driving forward and have been accepted as a Quality Parish Council. This is due, in the main, to the efforts of our clerk who badgered us until we came up to the required standard. David has been involved in Neighbourhood Watch, has been working on the web site and our lines of communication have improved a great deal. We are beginning to talk to each other almost on a daily basis. Anyone who has a moan can stick it on the net and we can answer. I think we are moving forward.

We are your parish council and are there to represent you. We don't have a lot of powers but we can keep badgering away at people who can make a difference.

We need to know what you want. If we don't, we will follow our own agenda and that is not always what the electorate want. Give us your support.

If there are any questions..... None were forthcoming. The chairman thanked Cllr.Ian Wright for his contribution.

5. Neighbourhood Watch

I am NW coordinator for Sandon. I am running it through the email forums for Howe Green and Sandon. Most Howe Green residents who have email are already members of the HG forum and you will have seen various NW bulletins. If you have email and are not a forum member, please see me afterwards if you wish to join. There have been a few burglaries in the village, reported via the email forum.

I am your representative on the Neighbourhood Action Panel or NAP which meets every few months to discuss law and order matters. The object of this

panel is to highlight those aspects of law enforcement that are of most concern to the community. If you have any particular concerns relating to law and order, please get in touch.

I am organising a Resident's Speed Watch. A volunteer group will be trained and supplied with a speed gun so that we can monitor traffic speeds in the village. Any offenders will be contacted by the police with a warning. This has apparently proved very effective in reducing traffic speeds in other locations. We are on a waiting list of 60 odd for the training course.

There is a new NW page on the Sandon web site www.sandon.info which carries a lot of information about personal and property security.

Any questions?

Question: Are there separate email forums for Sandon and Howe Green.
Answer: They are separate. I had considered combining them but there are topics that are specific to Howe Green that residents of Sandon Village would not be interested in. You can always join the Sandon one as well. You will get some duplicates.

Question: Do you get your PCSO to visit your meetings.

Answer: We have in the past. The PCSOs are on the email forums so that they can keep in touch and report any relevant events.

Comment from Cllr.Whitehead: Our PCSO comes to our monthly meetings. We also have a mobile police station visiting once a month.

Answer: We were thinking of asking our PCSO to the meeting next week. We used to have a PCSO who was very keen and would attend in her own time but she has been sick.

Question: I have serious misgivings about the risks to residents operating a speed trap.

Answer: There have not been any reports of difficulties. It is required that at least four people at a time be involved in operating the speed trap. This significantly reduces any risks involved.

6. Sandon Village Design Statement – Neville Jessop

Neville Jessop, vice-chairman of the VDS committee, give a short talk on the purpose, importance and progress of the Village Design Statement (VDS) currently being produced for Sandon.

I expect you are all sick of hearing about the Village Design Statement, but in all honesty it is so important to the future of our parish we must see this through.

We have had number of false starts, but, we are almost through to the end of the first phase. To enable your VDS Committee to prepare a draft document for the Borough Council, we need to obtain a consensus of what you, the residents of the Parish, feel about the future. With this in mind and assistance by the Rural Community Council of Essex and the Borough Council Planning Department, we have prepared a questionnaire. This is now being distributed to all households in the Parish.

We now request you to complete this questionnaire, usually one per household, but, if there is a difference of opinion within your household, please don't be afraid to voice your differences. Ask your distributor to provide you with additional copies. We have set a deadline of 19th May for its return, giving you plenty of time to prepare your response, but it would be nice if you could see your way clear to returning at least some of the answers before that date so that we can start an input of the data you return in a database. We will be using this database to analyse the information you provide.

We hope to have a good return of these questionnaires. A majority (something like 350 or more from the parish) would provide your committee with the right to proceed to your requirements as being the wishes of the community, a very important aspect of this procedure.

For phase two, the committee will then prepare a draft Village Design Statement, based on your input. The Borough Council will then decide if this document can become part of its planning guidance for the Parish. For the final phase three, if adopted, it will certainly be taken into account when future planning applications for the parish are determined by the Council.

How would you like to be part of that preparation procedure? Talk to the Chairman, David Pearson, after the meeting if you are interested

Question: Are you registered under the Data Protection Act.

Answer: Yes and anyway the data published will only be composite data derived from the database.

We have spare copies of the Questionnaire in case anyone wants extra copies.

A show of hands showed that all attendees had received their copies.

7. Chairman's Report

It has been a fairly quiet year.

Environment:

Last spring, the Weeding Party did a good job weeding and tidying the verges and pinch points. We might do it again this year.

We looked into putting up a village sign but it was pretty expensive and we could not find a suitable coat of arms.

Social Events:

Summer Garden Party: We did not have a garden party last year because we could not find a venue. As it turned out, the weather was pretty bad so perhaps it was as well we didn't.

The quiz night was judged a success and it was well attended – in fact it was a bit of a squeeze. If we did it again we would have to limit the numbers. Profit for the evening was over £200.

Sunday Lunch last month. 15 enjoyed a good gossip over a good lunch. We made a profit of 99p (rounded up to £1).

Question: Why was the lunch so far away.

Answer: It was a matter of finding somewhere new and getting a good deal. The costs were up some 25% on last year.

Question: There is a problem of litter at the bottom of Gingerbread Hill. What can be done about this?

Answer: It is cleared regularly. Just report it to CBC.

Question: There is a problem of parking at the end of Chalklands.

Answer: The answer could be a single yellow line with, say, no parking between 11 and 12 am to stop people parking there all day. Bring it up at the annual assembly next week.

To combat speeding in EH Road, we could park an old banger in the road.

Question: Why are the railings at the bottom of Southend Road at two levels.

Answer: Bring it up next week.

8. Treasurer's Report

Income is down and expenditure is up. The total in the accounts is up, however, at £4066.

9. Election of Officers.

The following were available for re-election:

Chairman: David Pearson
Vice-chairman: Ken Wedon
Treasurer: Wendy Spooner

We need to elect a Minutes Secretary – a volunteer please!

There were no further nominations.

Proposer: Vic Smith Second: Barbara
Motion passed with no opposition.

10. Election of Committee Members.

The following are available for re-election:

Martin Cross, Caroline Travis, Vic Morgan, Richard Spooner, Yvonne and Paul Bullock.

There were no further nominations.

Proposer: Barry Bynom Second: Pauline Hollingsworth
Motion passed with no opposition.

11. Environment

Did anyone find out what the thumping was? No-one was able to come up with an explanation.

Cllr. Wright announced that the auction rooms off the old A130 have been closed down. We must keep our eyes open for unauthorised developments and report to him.

Comment: The auction premises are being used as a depot for busses.
Answer: They have been given a period of time to clear the busses away (Supreme). It is Green Belt.

Comment from Martin: There is a green barn housing Essex Cars or some such.

Answer: Ian asked for more details.

Comment: Boot sales off the old A130.
Answer: The one at Rettenden is established and legitimate. Agricultural land can be used for any purpose for up to 28 days in any year.

12. Social Events

For the Sandon Fete, Wendy and Yvonne hope to run a Tombola stall again this year. Please contact Wendy or Yvonne or any other committee member if you can help. They will need your contributions. The fete will be held at the Sandon Village Hall field on Sunday 22nd June 2007.

Summer Garden Party. Vic is looking into the possibility of holding a garden party again this year. If you have any suggestions regarding venue, please get in touch.

Any suggestions for social events. Quiz night.

13. Any other business

Neville reported that Essex CC still list Sandon Quarry as one of three possible sites for waste disposal. The others are Rivenhall End and Coutauld Rd, Basildon. There is a lot of local opposition to the Basildon site. Sandon is next on the list. We may have a fight on our hands.

Ian commented that, although Neville is no longer on the parish council, he has remained on call to advise from his considerable expertise in this area. We are very grateful for his efforts and advice. Ian has spoken unofficially to members of ECC who assured him that they do not want Sandon Quarry to be used for any major waste installation. However, we cannot be complacent. We have a fighting fund so, if needs be, we can take steps to combat any untoward developments.

Ken pointed out that there is still no brown sign directing Hyde Hall visitors down the new A130. No work has been done regarding the Hyde Hall alterations. Ken made the point that there is a brown sign at the Rettenden exit from the new A130, why can't we have one here. Ian suggested raising it at the meeting next week.

Meeting ended at 10 pm.

Howe Green Community Association Income and Expenditure Account

<u>Year End</u>	<u>2006/2007</u>	<u>2007/2008</u>
Income	<u>£</u>	<u>£</u>
Subscriptions	322	233
Bank Interest	39	55
Surplus on functions:		
meal	60	1
garden party	230	
Sandon fete	149	
quiz night	199	
	800	488
 Expenditure		
Photocopies/Printers	15	163
Hire of Hall	60	awaiting invoice
HCCA.org.uk domain name		7
Others: bulbs	15	0
gift	23	0
Subsidy on functions	0	0
	113	170
 Totals (deposit and current account combined).		
Balances at end of	31/3/2007	31/3/2008
Cash in Bank	£3749	£4066

Figures have been rounded up to nearest pound.

Subs handed in after 31.3.08 to be included in 08/09 accounts.

Treasurer: Wendy Spooner.