

STANFORD RIVERS PARISH COUNCIL

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Adriana Jones
Clerk to the Council

TO: ALL COUNCILLORS

You are hereby summoned to attend a Meeting of the **Parish Council** which will be held on **Thursday 6th March 2025** in the **Toot Hill Village Hall**, Toot Hill at **5.30pm** to transact the business shown in the agenda below.



Adriana Jones, Clerk to the Council
 1st March 2025

AGENDA

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

To **RECEIVE** questions from members of the public at **5.30pm**.

In accordance with an agreed procedure, the time allocated for public questions shall be limited to 10 minutes or such other period determined by the Chairman of the Meeting.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To **RECEIVE** any apologies for absence.

2. OTHER ABSENCES

To **NOTE** any absences for which no apology has been received.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To **RECEIVE** any Declarations of Interest by Members.

Any Member with a personal interest in a matter must consider whether it is a Disclosable Pecuniary, Non Pecuniary or Other Pecuniary Interest, and declare it accordingly. A Member who is unsure as to how to declare their interest should seek independent advice.

4. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

To **APPROVE**, as a correct record, the Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 9th January 2025.

5. MEMBERS REPORTS

To receive brief reports from Members and to **RECEIVE** any questions emanating from those reports:

- Chairman's Report
- Vice Chairman's Report
- District and County Councillor Reports
- Parish Councillors Reports

6. TOOT HILL VILLAGE HALL HIRE FEES

Councillors are asked to **REVIEW** the Toot Hill Village Hall hire fees for 2025/2026, and to consider if any increase is necessary. In March 2024, the fees for residents were increase by £1 per hour after the fees had remained the same since 2022. Attached to the agenda is a copy of the current hall hire fees for Councillors information.

7. VE DAY 80 - A SHARED MOMENT OF CELEBRATION

Following on from the success of D-Day 80 in 2024, the country is focusing efforts on the celebration of the 80th Anniversary of VE Day which marked the end of the war in Europe and WWII as a whole on 8th May 1945, in a similar way. On Thursday 8th May 2025 communities are being encouraged to light beacons at 9.30pm, and where possible hold parties or celebrations throughout the day in the streets, gardens at home, churches, villages, town halls, pubs, clubs, hotels and all manner of locations throughout the UK. Councillors are asked to **CONSIDER** if they wish to hold an event over this weekend, and if so what day and what type of event. Councillors are asked to note that if an event is to be held, help and support will be needed.

8. CLERKS REPORT

To **RECEIVE** the oral report of the Clerk on matters which may be of current interest to Members and which require a formal update, and to **RECEIVE** such correspondence and communication as the Clerk may place before the Council, which at the time of printing the agenda includes the following:

- Request sent to EFDC to replace the damaged notice board in Toot Hill – EFDC asking for proof or evidence it is theirs.
- Defibrillator at Toot Hill Village Hall – Self test failed, battery depleted, now replaced.
- EFDC Chief Executive stood down due to ill health
- EFDC Local Council Liaison Committee meeting taking place 20th March 2025
- Clerk has purchased 3 new CCTV signs to erect at the Village Hall.
- Advised of pothole on Shonks Mill Road by Navestock Parish Council – reported Ref: 2965295
- Correspondence received from Anglo Renewables confirming intention to provide £25,000 Community Benefit fund reference the Nickerlands Farm Solar Panel Project.
- Large Fly Tip on Banks Lane – reported to EFDC Ref: FLYT688077550.

9. FIRST AID COURSE

To receive feedback on the success of the first aid course held on 18th January, and if necessary consider pencilling in a date for the next session.

10. NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

To **RECEIVE** an update on the Stanford Rivers Neighbourhood Watch Scheme.

11. GIGACLEAR

In February, many subscribers to Gigaclear received notification of a price increase of £3. Councillors will recall that Essex County Council holds a contract with Gigaclear to bring ultrafast broadband to homes and businesses in Braintree, Colchester, Epping Forest, and Uttlesford. Since 2015, Gigaclear has been working with ECC Superfast Essex programme to connect rural Essex to full fibre broadband, and ECC had awarded Gigaclear four contracts that presented the best value for taxpayers, aiming to bring ultrafast broadband to over 10,000 addresses. A number of complaints have been received with regard to the recent increase in cost, and the apparent monopoly that Gigaclear have in the rural areas. As such, the Clerk has raised a query with Digital Essex to establish if there are any agreements or controls in place with regard to this service. It is hoped an update will be available in time to be reported at the meeting.

12. HGVS USING SCHOOL ROAD

As detailed at the January meeting, a number of complaints have been received with regard to a significant increase in HGVs using School Road, and causing a disturbance to local residents. The Clerk raised this matter with enforcement, and since the meeting has received another verbal complaint and one written complaint (details of which the Clerk will provide at the meeting). The Clerk has been investigating this matter, and Councillors are asked to note that Stewarts Farm has permission from 2011 for B1 / B8 usage on the site (EPF/1951/11). From 1st September 2020 Class B1 merged into the new use Class E, meaning the site currently has Class E and B8 permission. B8 is storage and distribution, and Class E allows for many different uses and unless a planning restriction exists. Class E includes industrial processes, Commercial, Business and Service, plus numerous other uses too many to list. The Clerk will provide a more detailed update at the meeting, and Councillors will be asked if they wish to take any further action on this matter.

13. OPEN SPACES AND GROUNDS MAINTENANCE

- a) **Work on land the PC does not own** – A response has now been received from the Councils insurer, who advise that works would only be covered if permission is granted from the owner of the land, and that the Council cannot pay a premium to override this. In addition, the Clerk formally requested this permission once again directly from ECC, and has failed to receive a response. This has been chased, and if a response not received before the meeting, it will be escalated.

- b) **Tree Risk Assessment** - The Clerk will provide an update on the tree works.

14. INSURANCE RENEWAL

The Parish Council insurance is due for renewal on 31st March 2025. The Clerk is currently awaiting an updated schedule to include the new CCTV, Security Alarm, new roof, solar panels, and associated equipment. Full details will be provided at the meeting, and Council will be asked to **CONSIDER** the insurance for 25/26.

15. DEVOLUTION

Councillors may be aware that the Government have agreed that Essex County will be one of the pilot counties for its devolution programme. Essex currently has between 1.5 and 2 million residents. The government want the new Unitary authorities to have around 500,000 residents in each, meaning there is expected to be 3 or 4 unitary authorities in the whole of Essex. ECC have until 21st March this year to submit their initial draft proposals for unitary authorities in Essex. They then have until August to submit their firm proposals. What this will mean for this Council is a unitary authority consisting of EFDC and perhaps 2 or 3 other district councils in Essex. ECC will be responsible for deciding these and will only be consulting with the leaders of the district councils. The 2025 ECC elections have now been postponed which has been agreed by Government. Instead, in 2026 there will be mayoral elections for the mayor of Greater Essex. In 2027 there will be elections for the newly agreed unitary authorities, and these new unitary authorities will run alongside both ECC and EFDC for a period of 1 year. Therefore in 2028 the new strategic unitary authority will be the formal authority for the area, and both EFDC and ECC will no longer exist. It is understood that it is up to the Unitary Authority to decide what happens to parish and town councils, therefore we are not expected to know until 2027 what the potential future for this parish looks like. The government's white paper suggests that Parish Councils will have a role to play in devolution, but it is not clear in which form that will be, with many county councillors thinking they may be abolished or their structure changed.

In this regard, the Government is currently running a consultation seeking views on the proposal to form a Mayoral Combined County Authority for the local government areas of Essex County Council, Thurrock Council and Southend-on-Sea City Council (referred to as Greater Essex in this consultation). Councillors are asked to **CONSIDER** if they wish to respond to this consultation as a Parish Council, full details of which can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/devolution-priority-programme-consultations-launch>. The Closing date is 13th April 2025.

16. LOVE YOUR BUS GRANT FUND INITIATIVE

As agreed, the Clerk placed information onto the Parish Councils social media page to try and obtain evidence of community need for improved bus services to the Parish, including specifically the A113 between Ongar and Passingford Bridge. There were insufficient responses for the Clerk to progress submitting a grant request via this initiative.

17. PLANTERS FOR THE VILLAGE GATEWAY SIGNS, STANFORD RIVERS

The Clerk has met on site with the contractor regarding the installation of the planters in front of the Gateway Signs. Whilst there, it was noticed that the gateway sign on the left as you come from Ongar has not been fixed securely. As such, this has been reported to ECC Highways to resolve.

18. WEBSITE / EMAIL HOSTING

Works have now been completed to make the new website public, and it is hoped this will be available in time for the meeting. With regard to the Councillor emails, these have now been both newly created and migrated, and the Clerk will provide information for Councillors at the meeting.

19. REVIEW OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Councillors are asked to review the Council's policies and procedures, which includes updating the Financial Regulations to accord with the new NALC model, Financial and Operational Risk Assessment, Publication Scheme, Standing Order, and all other policies. The Clerk will send a separate email to Councillors prior to the meeting so they can review the policies.

20. NEW CCTV POLICY

As this Council now has CCTV, and as such is processing personal data via CCTV. The following measures have been implemented:

- Privacy Impact Assessment (completed February 2025 by the Clerk)
- CCTV Policy created (to be included on website)
- CCTV Subject Access Request form created (to be included on website)
- CCTV Log created

There are very strict rules as to the use of CCTV, and as such Councillors are asked to review, consider and approve the above documents. These will be sent via separate email.

21. EPPING FOREST DISTRICT ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

Council is asked to **CONSIDER** if it wishes to become a member of the newly formed Epping Forest Association of Local Councils. The Clerk will provide a brief update at the meeting.

22. VEHICULAR SPEEDING AND SAFETY MATTERS IN THE PARISH

To **CONSIDER** the following matters:

a) Community Speedwatch

To receive an update on matters concerning the Community Speedwatch Programme, which may include ANPR.

b) Road Signs - Road Sign down near White Bear Lane – Reported by Cllr Jackson – Clerk chased, and advised by ECC that not urgent and would form part of their regular programme of maintenance.**23. HOUSING NEEDS SURVEY**

The Clerk has received an email from a local farmer enquiring as to if this Council has completed a housing needs survey recently, specifically enquiring about the field opposite the golf course. The Clerk will provide an update.

24. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Councillors are asked to **CONSIDER** the following matters:

1. To CONSIDER any planning applications submitted to the Parish Council for comment as detailed below			
NIL			
2. To NOTE any planning applications that have been responded to via the Clerks delegated powers			
EPF/2580/24	Land Opposite High Mead, Toot Hill Road, Ongar, CM5 9LJ	New Build 2-Bed self-build Bungalow to provide accessible living.	
<p><i>The Parish Council OBJECTS to this application.</i> <i>The application is for a new self build bungalow to provide accessible living, however the applicant has failed to provide any information with regard to why the building has been designed (and will be managed) to support the proposed occupier to ensure it adequately caters for not only their needs, but also the needs of any support staff. There are also no details with regard to who the proposed occupier is. As such, this application fails to comply with Policy H1 Housing Mix and Accommodation Types Part C(ii).</i> <i>In addition, Policy H1 Housing Mix and Accommodation Types Part C(i) identifies that self build properties will only be supported where the location is appropriate in terms of access to facilities, services and public transport. Toot Hill is not a sustainable location, has no public transport, and has very limited facilities.</i> <i>Having looked at the site and assessed it against the Grey Belt policies in the NPPF, the site fails to fulfil the criteria within paragraph 155 as it the applicant has not demonstrated an unmet need for the type of development proposed, and the site is not in a sustainable location. As such, this application should be viewed against the Green Belt policies contained within the EFDC Local Plan. The applicant has failed to demonstrate any very special circumstances, and as such this application is contrary to EFDC Local Plan Policy DM4 Green Belt (Part B).</i> <i>The applicant states that there are stables located on this site, however the Parish Council believes this to be a small WWII bomb shelter (commonly known as Anderson shelters) not large enough to house horses, thus these should not be classified as stables.</i> <i>The Parish Council also has concerns with regard to Highways. Even though the current access will be used, the site is located on a notoriously dangerous Z bend, where part of the road has actually collapsed (see image 1 below). There are also frequent accidents at this location (please see Image 2 below).</i></p>			
3. To NOTE any planning applications upon which EFDC do not accept comments			
NIL			
4. To NOTE any other planning matters			
EPF/1546/24	Land at Nickerlands, Berwick Lane, Stanford Rivers, Ongar, CM5 9PX	Proposed Installation, operation and decommissioning of renewable energy generating station comprising ground-mounted photovoltaic solar arrays together with transformer/inverter stations, site accesses, internal access tracks, security measures, access gates, other ancillary infrastructure and landscaping and biodiversity enhancements.	Permission Granted Planning Committee A 19 th February 2025, subject to conditions inc: Landscaping to shield 42 & 43 Berick Lane PC liaising with applicant to secure £25,000 Community Benefit Fund.

APPEAL APP/J1535/W/2 5/3358497	6, Lilac House, London Road, Stanford Rivers, Ongar, CM5 9PH	New Dwelling within residential curtilage of Lilac House and associated car parking	Written Reps Deadline for responses 14/3 EPF/0523/24 PC Objected
Informal Consultation Applicant	Ongar Radio Station, High Road, North Weald CM16 6BU	Proposed upgrade to existing radio base station installation at CS_136972_62, Cellnet	No Concerns raised by Councillors
5. To <i>NOTE</i> any planning decisions by EFDC			
EPF/2377/24	Surrywood, 12 London Road, Stanford Rivers, Ongar, CM5 9PH	To erect a new carport on the adjacent land of 12 London Road.	Refused 6/1/25 for reasons of impact on Green Blet, and scale and position in the open frontage setting being overly dominant.
EPF/2378/24	Surrywood, 12 London Road, Stanford Rivers, Ongar, CM5 9PH	To install a 1.6m high vehicle gate.	Approved
EPF/2414/24	Blackberry House, Toot Hill Road, Ongar, CM5 9QP	Removal of conditions 3 and 5 on planning permission EPF/1742/24 (A detached stable building and use of land for horse keeping for personal use (Revised scheme to EPF/143/17).	Refused 24/1/25 for reasons that both conditions are deemed justifiable and required. PC had no objection to removing condition 3, but objected to removal of condition 5.

25. TOOT HILL VILLAGE HALL

- a) Solar Panels for Roof – On 3rd February 2025, EFDC granted Stanford Rivers Parish Council planning permission numbered EPF/2270/24 for the Installation of solar panels onto roof of Toot Hill Village Hall. In addition, confirmation has been received following a structural assessment that the roof of the village hall is able to take the weight of the solar panels. An updated cost for the works to remove the asbestos roof panels, replace with a suitable alternative roof, and install 44 solar panels on to the roof with storage batter has now been received, the final cost expected to be £53,012.89. Councillors are reminded that this Council was successful in sourcing £15,000 of funding via the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, and £20,000 via the National Lottery funding scheme towards these costs. A further agenda item with regard to the contract for works is to be considered later in the meeting. The Clerk will provide a further update at the meeting following a number of queries regarding the works, however Councillors are asked to note that works are expected to begin w/c 10th March 2025.
- b) The Chairman to provide an update on works to renew the contact wooden block located at the entrance to the Toot Hill Village Hall. Councillors are also asked to **CONSIDER** if they would like to fully refurbish the remainder of the sign, the quoted cost being £176.00
- c) To **NOTE** that the CCTV and Security Alarm have now been installed and are fully operational.

26. NEWS AND VIEWS

The next copy of N&V will be published as soon as possible. Councillors are asked to advise the Clerk of any articles they would like placed into the next edition.

27. FINANCIAL REPORTS

a. To Approve payments, and to note the current status of accounts:

Reference	To	For	Amount
BACS	Adriana Jones	Clerks Salary Feb and Mar 2025	£1,109.46
BACS	HMRC	PAYE Dec Feb and Mar 2025	£277.20
BACS	Calor	Gas supply THVH 4/2/25	£805.98 (VAT £38.38)

BACS	D Wickham	THVH Cleaning and phone box tidy January 2025	£112.50
D/D	EDF	Toot Hill Electricity	£42.12 (£2.01 VAT)
D/D	EDF	Toot Hill Electricity	£55.17 (£2.63 VAT)
BACS	EALC	Public Rights of Way Course A Jones	£96.00 (£16.00 VAT)
BACS	T Saridja	Purchase artificial flowers for 4 x gateway planters	£320.00
BACS	The Defib Shop	Defib Battery Toot Hill (already paid)	£286.20 (VAT £47.70)
BACS	Cloudnext (reimb A Jones)	Email Subscription 1 yr	£59.98 (VAT £9.99)
BACS	A Jones	Expense Reim: Office 365, CCTV Signs, Ink, and Mileage	£123.90 (VAT TBC)
BACS	Gillard Building Contractors	10% deposit THVH Solar Panels Works	£4,461.80 (VAT £743.63)

Bank Balances as at 28th February 2025

Unity Current Account 4775	£ 9,112.77
Unity Deposit Account 4788	£ 87,392.91

INCOME: £ 79.20 – High Country Ladies hire Sep-Dec Chq#60
 £ 78.00 – Pilates Hire Nov – Dec BACS

b. To review the bank reconciliation up to 28th February 2025 alongside the bank statements.

28. DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS/EVENTS

Councillors are asked to **NOTE** the date of the next meetings:

- 8th May 2025
- 17th July 2025 (note third Thursday, not second)
- 11th September 2025
- 13th November 2025

29. ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

To put forward any items for the next meeting, including:

30. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

In the event that the Agenda contains Exempt (pink) pages, or an item needs to be discussed confidentially, to **CONSIDER** the following motion to be proposed by the Chairman:

“That the public and the press be excluded from the meeting, the Council believing that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business about to be discussed. However an item may be placed in the Confidential part of the meeting so long as it is accordance with the Statutory Guidance,

1. Toot Hill Village Hall Solar Panel Project – contracts