

News & Views

April 2025

Issue No. 120

VE Day Celebration 8th May 7-9.30pm Toot Hill

On 8th May 2025, the country will mark the historic 80th anniversary of VE Day, with the people, families and communities of our great nation coming together to unite and celebrate 80 years of peace since the end of World War II in Europe – a time where so many millions paid the ultimate sacrifice to achieve freedom. Members of the Stanford Rivers Community are asked to join together on **Thursday 8th May on Toot Hill Village Green triangle** to mark this occasion, where we will have some light refreshments and cakes, some background 1940s music, ending with the lighting of the beacon at around 9.30pm. Residents are asked to bring along their own chairs, drinks, picnic tables / blankets, to make the most of this occasion. We will have some colouring activities for the children, but the evening is about being together as part of a wider community event taking place countrywide. At 9am, Town Criers across the country will undertake the VE Day Proclamation as the VE Day 80 flags are raised, and at 12noon, Pipers will play a unique tune especially written for the occasion entitled 'Celebratum' from the top of the UK's four highest Peaks. At 6.30pm, Cathedrals and Churches will ring out in united celebration throughout the nation, and at 9.30pm over one thousand Beacons and hundreds of Lamp Lights of Peace will shine throughout the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and the Isle of Man with the flames from both representing the 'light of peace' that emerged from the dreadful darkness of war. Along with the nation coming together in city and town squares to village greens and all other manner of locations at this special and unique one moment in time, communities are asked to collectively sing the great British Hymn 'I Vow To Thee My Country', standing side by side in gratitude, honouring the many sacrifices that secured our freedom (don't worry... we'll have the words for everyone!). **Together, we honour the past and celebrate a future built on unity, hope, love and peace.**



Toot Hill Village Show – 2 August 12pm

The Show Must Go On! The Toot Hill Show returns on **2nd August 2025**. After several pleas for new committee members, four people from across the district joined the organisers to ensure the show can continue this year. As several members were leaving the committee, the Show, which has its origins in the nineteenth century and is now in its consecutive 72nd year, looked in danger of having to end. Fortunately, the existing committee are staying on to hand over the reins gradually and the show this year again looks set to be a traditional fun filled country show. With a fresh new look and website, the Show will still have all the usual fun activities, main arena acts, dog show, craft fair and of course the marquee horticulture, crafts and children's competitions which everyone is encouraged to enter - no need to be local. However, more committee members are invited to join - there are lots of tasks to lead on and meetings are an enjoyable social event. And there's no need to commit to any more than you can manage. As well as the committee, volunteers are needed for the run up and event itself for a range of practical tasks, so if you can help out, even if only for a couple of hours, please do get in touch. **To find out more visit www.toothillshow.co.uk**



Devolution & Local Government Reform

Many of you may have already seen in the press (both local and national) information about the changes to local government in the form of both Devolution and Local Government Reform (LGR). Earlier this year, Essex County Council, alongside Southend-on-Sea City Council and Thurrock Council wrote to the UK government to request inclusion in the government's Priority Programme for Devolution. The government accepted this proposal, and in March the above three Councils submitted their joint initial proposals setting out how they believe devolution for Essex would work, however only 10 of the 15 Councils in Essex fully supported the proposals submitted, with 5 wanting further information and data before committing. But what does this mean for local residents in our villages? Who will look after our roads? Who will repair the potholes? Although intrinsically linked, Devolution and LGR are two separate processes. Devolution is effectively the transfer of powers and funding from UK government to local government, and LGR is about how local government powers and funding are organised between councils. So let's look at what both they are, so we can try and work out what this means for us:

Devolution

Devolution is the transfer of powers and funding from UK government to local authority level, meaning decisions are made closer to the local people, communities and businesses they affect. Devolution is said to provide greater freedoms and flexibilities for councils to work more effectively to improve public services and outcomes for residents and businesses. A devolution deal would create a new single body (known as a Strategic Authority) for Essex. It would initially take the form of a Combined County Authority (the combined area represented by Essex County Council, Southend-on-Sea City Council, and Thurrock Council). These arrangements would be agreed prior to the first Mayoral election, which will take place in May 2026. The key functions of the strategic authority would include strategic transport functions, such as support for buses, trains and concessionary fares, skills and driving economic growth. As part of their priority programme, the UK government is looking to create a Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA) for Greater Essex by May 2026. This Strategic Authority is a legal body set up using national legislation, with its own board and governance arrangements. The MCCA would have a directly elected Mayor, who chairs the combined authority, and who would be directly elected by the people of Essex. The elected Mayor would have the ability to speak directly to government ministers and secure funding for local projects. They would also be able to make strategic decisions, help attract investment and improve infrastructure, having significant powers over strategic functions such as economic development, housing, infrastructure, and transport.

What does this mean for us as residents?

All we can safely say at present is that it is expected that by May 2028, neither Epping Forest District Council, nor Essex County Council will exist. All of their statutory functions will be managed by either the new unitary authority, or potentially the new Mayoral Combined County Authority for Greater Essex. The timetable for the Devolution and LGR process is as follows:

13th April 2025 - Consultation Period ended on the Greater Essex devolution plans, after which the government will review feedback and decide whether to proceed with the necessary legislation.

September 2025 – Final Proposals - Essex County Council, Southend on Sea and Thurrock to submit final proposals to government.

May 2026 - Mayoral Election for Greater Essex - Implementation of the Mayoral Combined County Authority which will begin operations following the election.

May 2027 (tbc) – New Unitary Authority created, running alongside Epping Forest District Council and Essex County Council for a period of 1 year.

May 2028 (tbc) – Essex County Council and Epping Forest District Council are abolished, with the new Unitary authority taking full control and responsibility.

Local Government Reform

The Government wants simpler council structures making it clear who is responsible for services. At present, in the Essex County Council area, services are split between the County Council, and one of 12 city, borough or district councils in what is called a 'two-tier' arrangement. The government believes reorganising and simplifying councils can drive economic growth while delivering better public services. Reorganisation would see all 15 councils in Essex replaced with a number of all-purpose 'unitary' authorities which would be responsible for all local authority services in their area. The government has said that the optimum size for new unitary councils should include at least 500,000 people, and with Essex having a population of around 1.9 million residents, the most likely number is 3 or 4 new unitary authorities.

The interim proposals submitted on 21st March to government suggest that the right model for the future of Essex is that there should be five new unitaries, which would retain a sense of local place and communities, whilst acknowledging that the minority of other leaders do not yet have a settled preference - that minority including Epping Forest District Council. Further work will now take place, until the September deadline when final proposals will be submitted to government, and when the 15 authorities will either advance one single consensus proposal or a small number of alternative options for government to choose between. In essence, there are no firm plans at this stage as the 15 Councils have been unable to collectively agree on a structure.



Successful First Aid & Defibrillator Training

On 18th January 2025, the Parish Council hosted first aid and defibrillator training free of charge for 12 members of the Stanford Rivers community, with all attendees receiving an accredited certificate for their efforts. We now have two defibrillators located in the Parish – one at the Toot Hill Village Hall, and one at the Woodman Public House – and although training is not needed to operate them, the whole community can benefit from people who in the area being trained in first aid and defibrillator use. Feedback received was that the training was excellent, and the Parish Council hopes to put on further training for our community in the coming 12 months. Please do contact the Clerk if you would like to be placed on the waiting list – clerk@stanforddrivers-pc.gov.uk.



Toot Hill Village Hall Goes Green

Following the successful receipt of £35,000 of grant funding (£20,000 from the National Lottery, and £15,000 from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund), solar panels have now been placed onto the roof of the Toot Hill Village Hall. The Parish Council has a duty to consider biodiversity which is essential for maintaining the balance of ecosystems when human activities such as climate change are putting biodiversity at risk. As part of their duty, and commitment to do what they can in terms of contributing towards reducing their carbon footprint, the solar panels will supply the Toot Hill Village Hall with clean, green electricity - and in sunny periods some will also be exported back to the grid. Overall we'll be making a big contribution to reducing CO₂, not just by lowering the carbon intensity of our own electricity, but by putting low-carbon electricity back in the grid for others to use too. It will also ensure our hall hire fees are kept low, directly benefitting our residents.

Our previous electricity supply produced **Our yearly CO₂ reduction of 1,825 kg is equal to...**

1,274 kg CO₂
each year

36% will be supplied by solar, saving

459 kg CO₂
each year

6,434 kWh will be exported, saving

1,366 kg CO₂
each year

Total Saving

1,825 kg CO₂
each year



A car ride of 6,517
miles



CO₂ absorbed by 84
trees

Hire Toot Hill Village Hall

**The hall is available to
hire for Parties –
Weddings – Community
Events – Social Occasions**

To find out more, and view the
hall fees, visit

www.stanforddrivers-pc.gov.uk

Or contact clerk@stanforddrivers-pc.gov.uk

Or phone 077 377 36365



Stanford Rivers Neighbourhood Watch



Since the start of the year, there have been a couple of issues we want to make you aware of. In February there were two attempted break-in's on Berwick Lane. involving groups of 3/4

people. One group ran off when they realised someone was home, however it seems likely each occurrence was carried out by the same individual, although over a week apart. Early April saw the theft of gardening equipment from a shed around the Toot Hill area. We have had a few of these reports over the years, and if you have anything in sheds worth stealing it is suggested you look into setting up some kind of alarm if it is not already linked to a main system. A simple "shed alarm" can be found online for about £20, and will do wonders to scare off any potential thieves. On our roads, sadly 9 people tragically lost their lives in road traffic collisions in February, and this infographic is always a shocking reading. The Community Speedwatch Teams in both Stanford Rivers and Toothill are expected to be back in action in the coming weeks.

Your main NHW coordinator is John Adams:
srpcnw@gmail.com - Tel 01277 362194



Fly Tipping & Litter

The Parish was subject to a rather large fly tip at the start of the year spanning all the way from Banks Lane, right along Toot Hill Road, resulting in 20 or more small piles and 100 more individual items strewn over the roads.



This was swiftly reported to EFDC with the removal taking place a few days later. We are also aware that our rural roads can be subject to general littering, and many local residents take it upon themselves to clear the litter along their own streets near their homes. Inconsiderate drivers take advantage of the low public surveillance on these roads, throwing rubbish from their vehicles, including large nitrous oxide canisters. These canisters are classed as hazardous waste which can be harmful to the environment and must not be disposed of in your wheeled bin. If you happen to see some dumped, please call 345 743 0430, or email waste.management@essex.gov.uk.

Sat Navs Directing Lorries on our Rural Roads

The Parish Council has received a number of complaints regarding an increase in HGVs and larger lorries using some of the rural roads in the parish, specifically Berwick Lane, Church Road and School Road. Complaints have ranged from an increase in local business activities in the parish to a noticeable increase when the A113 is closed (normally due to flooding or accidents, the latest occurrence being on 10th April). There are specific guidelines to prevent lorries from being directed down unsuitable rural roads by sat navs, including the use of Commercial sat navs, driver training, and adequate route planning, however drivers will often simply take the quickest route offered to them by their sat nav. Whilst not illegal, it is entirely unsuitable, often resulting in vehicles becoming stuck as the roads are too narrow for two vehicles to pass. This increases tension, and can result in aggressive driving and frustration for everybody involved, nobody less so than the residents that live along these quiet lanes who are not only inconvenienced by the increased use, but are left disappointed at the stage of the verges that remain. When you take pride in the area in which you live it is frustrating when roads are used as rat runs, and all that is left is muddy roads, unsightly verges



and angry residents. Regrettably, there is very little that can be done as legally these roads (unless restricted) can be used by all vehicles, however the Parish Council will be looking to see if there is any additional signage that could be installed to try and deter such use, and will be contact Essex County Council in this regard. If you have any pictures or examples of dates when this has occurred, please do submit this to the Clerk as this will help in terms of providing evidence of the problem.

Email clerk@stanfordrivers-pc.gov.uk

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Damage to Toot Hill Village Green

It was once again disappointing to see the criminal behaviour of individuals driving vehicles over Toot Hill Village Green and causing damage. The police are fully aware of this issue which seems to occur sporadically each year, and do what they can to investigate any potential leads. The Parish Council has considered what action it can take (legally) to try and deter such behaviour, however it is not a simple case of placing barriers around the green. The area is open, attractive and marks a central focal point in Toot Hill. It also sits in the centre of three vehicular access points, meaning driver visibility is a key safety issue. This matter will be debated again, so please do contact the Parish Council if you have any suggestions (once again, legal options only please!).



Renovation of Stanford Rivers Sign

In October last year, works were undertaken to complete a much-needed renovation of the Stanford Rivers sign on Jubilee Green. You would be forgiven for perhaps previously not noticing the sign as it was fully black in colour. Back when the sign was installed over 20 years ago it was a deliberate decision for the sign to have a sombre feel, the reason being it was placed at this location to mark the site of the 'Old Congregational Church' which was destroyed by fire in 1927. It was at this location that David Livingstone, future missionary and explorer, tried to preach his first sermon after the parish minister fell ill. However, his well rehearsed sermon deserted him, and after apologising to the congregation for forgetting what he had prepared, he fled! Shortly after, he was found 'unsuitable to preach' by the London Missionary Society, however Livingstone went on to become famous for his passion for Christianity, commerce, and civilization, undertaking several expeditions to Africa, one of which is renowned for the famous phrase 'Dr Livingstone I presume' which was uttered by journalist and explorer Henry Morton Stanley who was sent to locate Livingstone. The decision was taken by the Parish Council to bring out the central imagery of the sign by painting it gold, and we hope you agree that it is much clearer to see, whilst still respecting the important historic significance of the sign.



Broadband Services – You Choose

Some years ago, Essex County Council rolled out its Superfast Essex broadband improvement programme aiming to make superfast and ultrafast broadband available to as many homes and businesses across Essex as possible. To achieve this, they rolled out a mix of fibre-to-the-cabinet (FTTC) and fibre-to-the-premises (FTTP) technology, working with two network operators, Openreach and Gigaclear, to improve connectivity across 12 districts. For both Toot Hill and Stanford Rivers, Gigaclear were the selected operator, and many residents were thrilled to finally have access to a broadband service that moved faster than a snail! However, following notification of a recent price increase, it is important residents are aware of their rights. There are no restrictions on how much a broadband operator can increase their prices once a contract has completed. If someone has completed their initial broadband contract period, Digital Essex (the newly rebranded Essex County Council scheme) recommend they get in touch with their operator directly to negotiate a better price, rather than automatically paying the increased cost once out of contract. Regarding in-contract price rises, last year Ofcom made an announcement (which is now in effect) that customers taking out new broadband contracts must be told the specific annual price increase, rather than the price increase track inflation. More information can be found on Ofcom's update here - <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/phones-and-broadband/bills-and-charges/ofcom-bans-mid-contract-price-rises-linked-to-inflation/>. Furthermore, when choosing a contract, residents are able to secure a broadband service from any provider who has access to the Gigaclear network. This is common for all broadband network operators. According to the Gigaclear website, the following are all 'partner providers'. For more information, visit www.gigaclear.com/our-partners.



Gigaclear



Merula



Squirrel

VILLAGENETWORKS

Village Networks



Wurzel

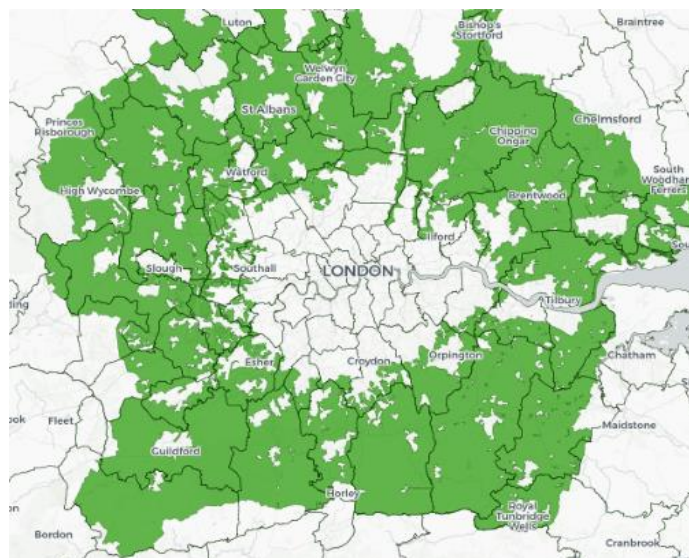


Gigabit IQ

Changes to the Planning System

The past 9 months have seen significant changes to the planning system - both nationally and locally - changes that some believe weaken the voice of both local people and statutory bodies. A major change nationally (albeit also applying locally) is the introduction of the new 'Grey Belt' classification in planning. The whole of the Parish of Stanford Rivers is designated Green Belt, meaning it has strong protection against development, the broad purpose of the Green Belt being to keep the countryside open and to stop neighbouring towns from merging. However, the introduction of Grey Belt will allow partial development or urban sprawl into previously protected areas, eroding the physical and visual boundaries that Green Belts are designed to preserve. The assessment of Grey Belt areas involves evaluating the lands current condition, its potential for development, and its impact on the surrounding Green Belt (even though the land itself may be within the Green Belt!). The process of evaluation is quite complex, and those involved in planning are still working through what these changes mean in practice, however what we do know is that the blanket protection against unwanted development no longer applies. Planners and consultees such as local residents and the Parish Council will now have to consider if a plot of land would be classified as Grey Belt as part of their deliberation. For more information, visit: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework> and read paragraphs 148-155. Changes at a local level include the number and type of planning applications that will go to a committee of the District Council to decide, and the inability of your ward representatives to vote on applications in your area. Whilst all planning applications will still be thoroughly reviewed against policy, the majority will now be decided by planning officers, with only a select few being decided by democratically elected individuals. When a planning

application does go to committee for a decision, your local district representative is prohibited from voting on the matter, albeit they are able to address the Councillors who will be making the decision. Your opinion on whether or not these changes are good or bad depends on who you are. For example, Epping Forest District Council believe the changes will make the council more efficient, saving money and Councillor time by allowing the suitably qualified planning officers more scope to fulfil their role. However if your intention is to try and influence the result of the planning application by lobbying your local District Councillor to represent your views, you may well be disappointed! For more information about these changes, visit <https://rds.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=638&Mid=12210&Ver=4&Info=1> and view items 14 and 26 in the constitution.



Map of Metropolitan Green Belt



EPPING FOREST COMMUNITY

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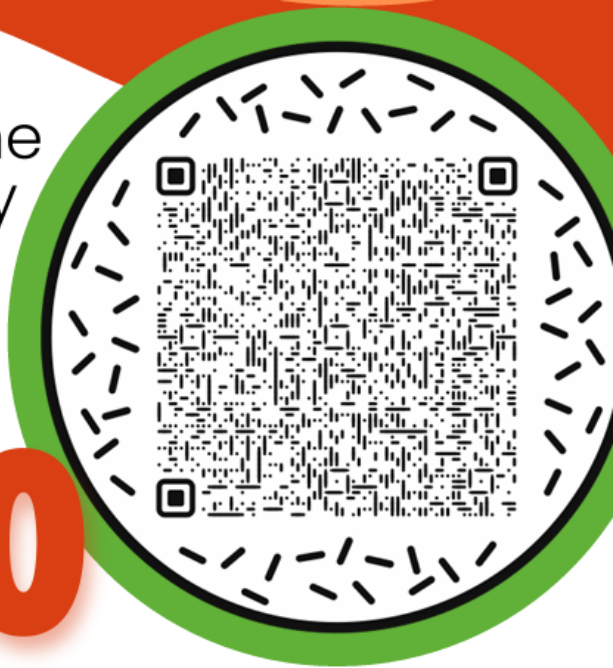
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LOTTERY

SUPPORTING GOOD CAUSES IN THE EPPING FOREST DISTRICT

