

Annual Parish Meeting  
for the Parish of Sturmer  
held on Tuesday, 17th May 2016  
at Sturmer Village Hall, 7:30pm

Present:- Essex County Cllr. David Finch, Mr. James Cleverly, M.P. Braintree Constituency, Cllr. David Porth (Chair Sturmer Parish Council) Cllr. Barbara Collar (Vice-chair Sturmer Parish Council), Cllr. Diana Garrod (Sturmer Parish Council), Acting Parish Clerk Jo Porth, Linda Bevan, Terrie Jones, Paul Sadler, Pam Sadler, Maggy Chapman, Sylvia Allworthy, Sara Horncastle, Bill Tickner, Ian Garrod, John Collar.  
Essex Police, Acting Sargeant Caroline Marsay, PCSO Warren

Cllr. David Porth welcomed everyone to the meeting and opened by telling the meeting of the untimely death, on 2nd April 2016, of Sturmer Parish Council Clerk of 23 years, Rachel Mitson.

Notes of the 2015 Annual Parish Meeting were read, approved by Barbara Collar, seconded by Diana Garrod and signed.

Report from Essex Police

Acting Sargeant Caroline Marsay and PCSO Warren part of the Braintree and Uttlesford Community Policing Team addressed the meeting stating that many PCSO's had been laid off. Vulnerability was their high risk issue, problems were wide ranging including child abuse, hate crime and domestic violence. The team covers a wide area of Essex and liaises with Cambridgeshire and Suffolk forces. Recently they have been involved in arrests for drugs offences and burglaries. PCSO's job description has altered, they are now more involved in and with the policing team.

Questions to the officers:-

Q: Which number to use when contacting the police?

A: 101 which will transfer you to Essex police.

Q: Who to contact if drugs are being used and residents gardens are being used for late night football?

A: If resident is vulnerable and being threatened dial 999. If it is just youths having a "joint" because of lack of officers that does not have high priority.

Q: Suspicious persons in neighbours property, what number to call?

A: 999 police will be there as soon as possible.

Q: Where is the nearest Essex Police station, now that Great Yeldham and Hedingham have closed?

A: Halstead police station is to close. Braintree will be the nearest, the door is locked there at 5:00pm.

Q: I had occasion to contact the police last year as I had seen free jumpers using the towers at the Sturmer cement works and was told that the police would be back in contact with me, I did not hear anything else, the incident has not occurred again to my knowledge.

A: Were the they (free jumpers) vulnerable?

There are only 12 PCSO's across the area. Resources are sent to incidents on a day to day basis, vulnerability is priority. Braintree, Witham have the higher populations.

How to contact:- Call 101 will put you through to Chelmsford control. Contact via internet.

Suspected burglary call 999. Police carry out drugs and drink roadside checks.

For Local Community Meetings at Local Police stations look online.

## County Councillor's Report

Cllr. David Finch briefly spoke about the closure of Halstead Police station and stated that he had offered Essex Police the daytime use of Halstead Library and has so far had no response. David stated that the newly elected Police and Crime Commissioner, Roger Hirst, has been to Helions Bumpstead, and that he would invite Roger Hirst to Sturmer via the Sturmer Parish council.

### County Councillor's report contd.

County Council Finances:- Total expenses for a year are £1.8 billion, 50% spent on schools and facilities, no libraries have been closed and some mobile library services have continued.

Usage of libraries has changes they are becoming community hubs housing borough and county benefits provision and usage of internet service has increased.

Essex continue to provide Meals on Wheels currently 690 meals per day.

Essex Highways are among the top 25% on the state road conditions.

County Council invests £365 million on schools.

£418 million on care for the elderly and vulnerable.

National average per population for elderly is 16% in Essex it is £22%. Graham Butland has been appointed Cabinet Member for health. Essex are investing £200 million on economic growth encouraging amongst others, apprenticeships and enterprise zones.

Devolution:- Essex had a population of 1.4.million, the mandate for devolution is to directly elect a Mayor. The standard is £30 million over 30 years, will give greater powers to the County bringing prosperity to live and work in Essex. Second phase of devolution application shortly.

### Questions to David Finch:-

Q: I have reported a pot hole and after one month it drops of the system and nothing is done what can I do?

A: David, email me.

Q: There is a development of 2,500 homes across the border in Suffolk, some 50 metres from the county boundary, St Edmundsbury District Council, Suffolk, and Braintree District Council, Essex the communication between them is poor what can we do?

A: David email me.

Q: Speeding traffic through village the average speed through the village is 36.3 miles per hour, Essex police do not seem to be able to enforce speed limit, we need traffic calming.

A: A.1017 is part of the strategic network, unlikely to be eligible for traffic calming. Through Local Highways Panels apply for flashing signs. Parish Council to approach panel, David will support any application, speak to Matthew Valentine, Essex County Highways. Add camera signs to 30 mph signs. Regarding heavy lorries, Trading Standards have a vehicle which can be used to measure weight of vehicles on structures such a bridges. Contact Police and Crime Commissioner, Roger Hirst, who wishes to encourage communities to work together.

Q: Overhanging trees in Coupals Road, Suffolk say they are in Essex.

A: They are in Suffolk.

Q: Community Governance Review:- Suffolk looking at moving town/county boundary concern in Sturmer, has anything been done, is there any assurance it will not be moved?

A: David has personally written to officer of Suffolk County Council contesting the moving of boundary. Counties would have to apply under at 2007 Act of Parliament to move boundary.

## District Councillor's Report

Braintree District Councillor, Cllr. Robert Bolton was absent.

## Parish Chairman's Report.

David Porth reported the death of Parish Clerk, Rachel Mitson. At the 2016 Parish Council AGM, David Porth was elected as chair, Barbara Collar as Vice-chair, council members Diana Garrod and Kate McLeod Jones. During the year both Mark Novels and Graham Coles have resigned and the process for replacement is now in train. Parish Council members have attended meetings of Braintree Association of Local Councils, Essex Association of Local Councils, Haverhill, St Edmundsbury and Suffolk Local Development Framework, Suffolk Preservation Society and meetings with representatives of the developer and PR company overseeing the construction of 2,500 new homes to the north-east of Haverhill.

Members have been consulted on Braintree District Council's Allocation of Development Sites, Open Space Designation and mineral extraction in Essex and Suffolk. The Council continues its' contact with Essex and Herts Campaign on developments at Stansted Airport. The Council has corporate membership of Braintree, Essex and National Associations of Local Councils, Campaign to Protect Rural England, Suffolk Preservation trust, River Stour Trust. The Council supports Sturmer Local History Group in it's membership of Recorders of Uttlesford History.

Financial Review:- Total sum requested by Parish Council 2016/17 was £6,648, localism grant £1,127, precept £5,521, in addition Parish Council received £63.50 from Braintree District Council's Council Tax Collection Fund. The Parish Council made a grant of £1,000 towards upkeep of Sturmer Village Hall, £150 towards maintenance of St. Mary's Churchyard. Administrative costs approximately £1,500, footway lighting £850. Maintenance of Sturmer Common £320 p.a. Children's Play Area approximately £350. The Parish Council set aside £1,000 for ditch cleaning along the length of the railway line walk. The Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, sets out new audit framework for parishes with an annual turnover of less than £25,000, Sturmer will no longer require an external audit but will have to apply the Transparency Code issued by Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government under section 2 of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980, which require the Parish Council to publish information on a publicly available, free of charge website. The Parish Council obtained a grant of £1,795.60 from NALC to cover the cost of implementing the code. The Parish Council website is hosted on Essex County Council at [essexinfo.net](http://essexinfo.net) The website will view items of expenditure, end of year accounts, annual governance statement, internal audit report, list of councillors and their responsibilities, details of public land and assets, minutes agenda and meeting papers of formal meetings.

Community Governance Review:- The Parish Council were most concerned to hear of proposals from St. Edmundsbury Borough Council to petition the Boundary Commission over changes to the Essex/Suffolk boundary between Sturmer and Haverhill. The Parish Council sought support for its opposition from Braintree District, Essex County Councils and M.P. James Cleverly.

Local Parish Council Network:- Sturmer has joined with Birdbrook, Helions Bumpstead and Steeple Bumpstead Parish Councils to form a local network of parishes meeting twice yearly. The inaugural meeting at Birdbrook discussed traffic speed and volume through the villages, housing development, boundary changes and devolution in East Anglian, the next meeting will be at Helions Bumpstead in the autumn.

Flooding and Local Plan:- The Parish Council continues to receive regular updates from the Sturmer Flood Action Group. The Village emergency plan has been submitted to the emergency planner at Braintree District Council and Mark Novels has agreed to keep the plan up to date.

### Parish Chairman's Report contd.

A.1017, Hill Lane, Water Lane and Coupals Road:- During the year the Parish Council has requested minor highway repairs and improvements, in particular roadside gullies and storm water drains have been cleaned, however, the matter of potholes looms large on our list of concerns. The Parish Council agreed with Essex County Council that the remaining £23,000 from the section 106 agreement with Carisbrook Development should be allocated to enlarging the lay-by at Riverside Bungalows. Some investigations have been carried out but to date no work has been completed. A scheme to improve pedestrian accommodation on the corner of Hill Lane at its junction with The Street but work on this has not yet begun.

Village Footpaths, Bridleways and Open Spaces:- The Parish Council renewed its contract with Haverhill Golf Club for maintenance of Sturmer Common. ROSPA inspected the Play Area in May 2015. New play bark has been placed under the new play equipment.

Stephen Pledger continues to cut and tidy the play area and has been contracted to make two cuts twice yearly along the whole length of the railway line walk. The Parish council decided not to replace the windows in the play area shelter which were vandalised.

Footpath no. 15 from Lion Meadow to the water gauging station has been cleared by Essex County Council and a new bridge constructed at Lion Meadow, which in the view of the Parish Council is too low to allow for crossing when the ditch is running high.

Street Scene Partnership:- This has been recently renewed with Braintree District Council, the Parish Council receives just over £70 per year for reporting littering, blocked gullies, graffiti and fly-posting. Thanks go to Kate Mcleod-Jones for her vigilance and swift action in keeping the village largely free of illegal fly-posting and fly-tipping, thanks also to Barbara and Kate for undertaking occasional litter picks in the village.

Planning:- The Parish Council has been consulted on 10 planning applications affecting the Parish during this year. Earlier government relaxation in the planning system has meant that minor developments may not require full planning consent and may not be referred to parishes for comment. The Parish Council remains a consultee of Braintree District Council in connection with the development of the new Local Plan and of St. Edmundsbury B.C. over future developments in Haverhill, especially those which adjoin the Parish. As part of the Braintree Local Plan development a "call for sites" for future housing allocation was put out by the District Council. Three sites were proposed for Sturmer. No sites were recommended by planning officers and the Parish is yet to hear the decision of the planning sub-committee. The new developers of the Spinning Wheel site approached the Parish Council for a suggestion on the naming of the development. The Parish Council forwarded 'Wheel Chase as a possibility, however, it is for the developer to decide upon a name.

Speed watch and indicator signs:- Regrettably, with his departure from the Parish Council, Graham Coles has resigned from the Speed watch Group in the village. However, it is hoped the group will be able to attract more new members and continue their essential work of deterring speeding through the village. Barbara Collar will update on indicator signs later this meeting.

Sturmer Eleemosynary Charity:- The Charity has approximately £1,500 to disperse in a manner to be decided by the Trustees, Barbara Collar, Mary Jackson and David Porth in accordance with the aims and objectives of the Charity.

Village Sign:- Barbara will update the meeting.

### Parish Chairman's Report contd.

Conclusion:- It is a matter of public record and also regrettable the Parish Council has received very little councillor support throughout the year from Braintree District Council.. Finally, I should like to express my thanks to my colleagues on the Parish Council and to our acting clerk, Jo Porth for their help and support through the year. My thanks go to David Finch who so ably representing our interests with Essex County Council.

Questions to David Porth:-

Q: Why were the Parish Council maintaining the Sturmer Common if it is not used.

A: The Parish Council has a legal duty to care for the common.

### Address by James Cleverly M.P.

James Cleverly stated it was just over a year since the General Election and that he was in no mood to give away any part of his constituency and he will give his full support against any boundary changes and will discuss with his long standing friend Matthew Hancock M.P for the neighbouring constituency of West Suffolk. James spoke about the practicalities of government, the difficulties of passing legislation through the Lords and about work at Westminster. He has done extensive work on the Police and Crime Bill, requiring Police and Fire to collaborate, for example moving Police from Chelmsford to Kelvedon to match the Fire Service, which at the moment both are using similar functions at different venues, money saved could put more Police on the ground. He is well aware that people like the re-assurance of a local Police station but there is a move to have more special constables and unpaid volunteers into local areas.

Government policy that books balance by 2020 there is increased pressure on public services, Essex County Council are foremost in innovation to reduce costs and save money. Braintree District Council are to reserves to invest to make Braintree Town Centre viable and vibrant to encourage commerce with a the view of encouraging shoppers and businesses accruing more in business rates with a knock on effect of lowering the increase in domestic Council Tax.

James' priorities are getting High Speed Broadband to all of Braintree District and improving the mobile phone signal.

Questions to James Cleverly M.P.:-

Q: If Braintree is to become a hub its' district as Bury St Edmunds seems to be a hub for its' district where does that leave the future of towns like Halstead and Haverhill?

A:- These towns require a clear business plan, and I would not like to see the loss of economic growth and vibrancy to Braintree.

There is a change at Westminster in Local Government finance allocation to local councils allowing this council's to retain business rates to encourage enterprise.

Q: On new large developments there is a costly, built in, maintenance plan which purchasers have to sign up to on new build, the government does not seem to be aware of.

A: I will look into it.

### Village Sign

Barbara Collar reported that she is still looking into ways of improving the look of the sign base, and that summer bedding would be planted around the sign

### Speed Signs

Barbara Collar reported that the current speed signs have been in place some nine years, and were installed using 106 agreement monies by Essex County Highways who took out a five year contract, which when finished Highways would not renew. Sturmer Parish Council may have to fund two repeater signs through the village.

Having approached Little Abington, Barbara was in receipt of information and now will determine running costs and when figures are collated apply for funding for purchase and running costs as these cannot be covered on the precept.

Questions to Barbara Collar:-

Q: Information from signs goes where?

A: To the installing company and they inform me.

Q: Can they send to Speedwatch.

A: this information could enable Speedwatch to pin down the times of maximum speeding in village

### Reports from Village Organizations

#### Sturmer Flood Action Group

Linda Bevan reported blocked ditch at Water Lane near Hansons site Fire Brigade Volunteers arriving Friday May 20<sup>th</sup> 10:30am to start clearance on ditch, volunteers from the village welcomed. Water Lane culvert and ditch along track clearing.

SFAG have asked the Parish Council to consider applying from the LFM grant for this.

Tyres in Stour Brook at Pope Mill 44 tyres and a shopping trolley have been removed.

Modelling of Stour Brook this is to be carried out in May and will include downstream of Water Lane to assess the effect of removal of concrete blockage in bridge.

Hill Lane this blocked gully was reported again in January having dropped of the system after 28 days and no action. We have been told it has been inspected and nothing is wrong. It as been reported again when it was flooding, checked recently, still flooding have sent a complaint to ECC Customer Services.

#### Sturmer Local History Group

Linda Bevan reported that they are continuing to replenish leaflets near the heritage boards. We have a visit in July from the Wickhambrook Local History Group. We have started a new website on essexinfo.net which will eventually replace the one set up for the Heritage Trail. We have continued the Victorian Schoolroom Re-enactments with the schools paying a fee to cover the costs. There were 3 in 2015 and we have just held one for students at Stanley Drapkin School. We visited the Munnings Art Museum in October and a visit to Hill Farm, Gestingthorpe is planned for May. We have completed the house history for Sturmer Hall, an exhibition of it will be on display at our annual meeting in July. Training has included a talk on aerial photography for archaeology and two photographs have been purchased showing crop marks near Mere Cottage and on the golf course. Looking forward we plan to continue with house histories on Maltings Cottages and Suffolk Edge.

#### Sturmer Fayre

Sylvia Allworthy gave a update on the Sturmer Fayre, stands include games, crafts, jewellery, food, refreshments, ice cream and teas, tombola- donated prizes welcomed, and a raffle-tickets will be sold door to door, we would like to attract more craft stalls, there will be a dog show with 17 different classes, date of the Fayre, Sunday September 18<sup>th</sup> 2016, noon till 5:00pm, venue Sturmer Hall, Church Walk, Sturmer. Helpers welcomed. A celebrity to open still required, any ideas to the Fayre committee

### Sturmer Village Hall Charity

Jo Porth reported on the general maintenance of the hall, advice has been sought over past 6 months regarding plasterwork/brickwork to the interior, a quotation received from Rentokill to tank main/hall kitchen wall and apply plastic plaster to the remaining walls costed almost £6,000, the trustees are seeking alternative treatments and quotations. A review of the infra-red heaters has taken place.

Regular users of the hall include, Parish Council, Carpet Bowls Club, W.I., St. Mary's Church, Local History Group, ongoing booking from Yoga group and the Silver Swans and Old Tappers dance class.

Trustees are members of Rural Community Council of Essex and Community Action Suffolk and regularly attend village hall meetings with these groups which prove to be most valuable.

There are a total of seven trustees, representatives from the Parish Council, Carpet Bowls Club, W.I. and 4 elected members. The trustees have purchased New Age Kurling equipment for use in the village hall and it is hoped that private bookings will result in the hiring of the hall to use the Kurling equipment as has been the case with the fun casino games. The Trustees would like to record their gratitude to Sturmer Parish Council for their generous grant and ongoing support.

### Sturmer Tree Warden

Jo Porth reported comment had been submitted on trees covered by Tree Preservation Orders on the Spinning Wheel site, including the felling of a diseased Sycamore, work to the crown of a group of Lime tree and the removal of a leaning Ash tree. Recently an application to fell two Sycamore covered by T.P.O's at the Old Orchard has been received. A visit to view newly planted trees at Wethersfield Air Base was cancelled on security grounds. A visit to Shrubs Farm Lamarsh was planned for 25<sup>th</sup> May.

### Any Other Business raised by Electors

Paul Sadler raised the clearing of the gully in Water Lane almost opposite Tinmar which is blocked. Chair and Vice-chair of Parish Council to meet on site with Paul on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2016

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9:55pm