

(Draft Minutes)
Birchanger Annual Parish Meeting
Held on Wednesday 22nd March, 2017
At 8pm in Birchanger Village Hall

Present:

Angie Driscoll, Chair (AD)
Elizabeth Godwin (EG)
Alex Stewart (AS)
Sandy Dowle (SD)
Ken Wheatley (KW)
Maria Davy (MD)
Linda Pocklington (LP)
George Taylor (GT)
John Revell (JR)

Keith Williams (Parish Clerk)

28 residents of Birchanger

Ray Gooding (RG) (county councillor)

1. Chairman's Welcome

AD welcomed residents to the annual parish meeting and introduced councillors to those present.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

On a proposal from Sandy Dowle the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd March 2016 were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting and were signed by the Chairman.

3. Chairman's Report

5. Essex County Council Update from County Councillor Ray Gooding

[N.B. Councillor Gooding needed to leave early for another meeting, and therefore presented his report in advance of the Police Update).

Ray advised that over the years he had attended 319 parish meetings. A frequent concern from villagers related to Highway matters. Essex has 5500 miles of roads to maintain and there is a shortage of labour. However, currently we have (at 421) the lowest level of reported potholes for many years.

The issue of economic development is of great importance. The population of Essex is predicted to grow from 1.7m to 2.3m within the next ten years. A further 180,000 houses will be needed across Essex to accommodate these extra residents. With the M11 and A20 corridors meeting in our area it is expected that there will be business growth. If the county is to encourage companies to invest in the areas, it is important to provide facilities for the potential employees.

In education Ray was pleased to advise that 97.6% of schools are considered to be outstanding. Additionally, dedicated schools are being built to accommodate children with special needs.

Social care in the county has a budget of £600m, which happens to be the total amount raised by the council tax. Parishes like Birchanger play an important role in looking after the elderly and others in need, by letting social services know if there are any problems.

Ray closed by thanking the meeting for its attention. AD thanked Ray for his contribution which, as always, was very informative.

4. Police Update from Parish Councillor Alex Stewart

AS had attempted to obtain relevant crime statistics for Birchanger from the Essex Police website but the data available covers the whole of the South Stansted area. He was therefore unable to give the crime statistics specifically for Birchanger. There had been a considerable number of crimes reported for the whole area but it would appear that very little is from Birchanger, which is still fairly crime-free. AS wished to encourage residents that in addition to reporting an incident to the police they should also report to him which will enable him to go some way to assessing the level of crime in Birchanger..

7. Airport Update by Brian Ross

The big issue for many years has been the siting of the new runway for the South East. At one time Stansted had been favourite but the Airports Commission report published in July 2015 recommended that a third runway be built at Heathrow. Finally, in October 2016 the government chose Heathrow as the designated airport. So for the time being Stansted is "off the hook". Gatwick Airport still hopes to be chosen for a new runway and as the largest single-runway airport in the world it is likely to be chosen if another runway is approved.

There has been a planning application for a new arrivals building, which is very likely to be approved. SSE has not objected in principle but has made certain recommendations.

Regarding night noise, which is one of the greatest concerns amongst residents, the Department of Transport reviews the allocation limits every five years. There are actually more night flights from Stansted than from Heathrow. SSE want night flights reduced, but the airlines and industry would like to see an increase.

MAG (the owners of the airport) have finally been persuaded to introduce a compensation scheme, but not until they were threatened with legal action by SSE. SSE has been pressing MAG to sell the 270 houses which had been purchased when Stansted was in line for expansion. MAG initially refused the request but have since had a change of mind. Indeed, they commenced issuing eviction orders for occupiers but following representations from SSE they have agreed to take a more sympathetic attitude.

An application is being prepared by MAG to increase the passenger cap from 35m ppy (passengers per year) to 43m. It is not likely that the airport will even reach the existing cap for several years. However, if the increased cap is agreed and passenger movements increase considerably, it will not just be a noise issue but there will also be impact on road usage and traffic. SSE is to commission a report into the likely impact of an increased passenger cap.

There was a question from the floor regarding freight planes which are particularly noisy. Could anything be done about this? Brian advised that freight flights had not yet reached their permitted limit of 12000 night flights. Only 6% of *total* flights are cargo, but 40% of *night* flights are cargo. Cargo companies tend to use older and noisier aircraft. However SSE will continue to try to get this number reduced.

This concluded Brian's presentation which received thanks from AD and a warm round of applause.

8. Resolutions

1) This meeting rejects any expansion to Stansted Airport and proposals in any form relating to a second runway.

The resolution above was passed with 28 votes for and none against.

2) This meeting rejects any further coalescence with neighbouring towns and villages and will endeavour to protect the remaining Green Belt surrounding the village.

The resolution above was passed with 27 votes for and one against

9. Any Other Business

Questions from the floor:

Are NO_x levels recorded?

Brian Ross advised that levels at Duck End had been measured but had been found not to be excessive.

Had the district councillors been attending village meetings?

AD advised that neither councillor had attended recent meetings, although the parish clerk did advise that Councillor Thom Goddard had sent his apologies for not being able to attend the last parish council meeting.

What is happening about the area where several cars are parked at the top of the lane, near the A120 junction?

This has previously been taken up with Uttlesford District Council (UDC) but no action has been taken to date.

What is the situation with the signs on the fence adjacent to the roundabout at the top of the lane?

This was responsibility of UDC. The parish cannot therefore take any affirmative action.

Are there any plans for the road markings, which are starting to fade, to be repainted?

This could possibly form part of Highways plans for the area.

10. Closure of Meeting

There being no further matters to discuss the meeting was declared closed at 20.55 pm.