

MINUTES

GESTINGTHORPE PARISH COUNCIL



Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting

Held on: Wednesday 18 March 2026

Time: 7:00 pm

Location: Gestingthorpe Village Hall

Present

Cllrs P Bagby (Chair), K Brazier (Vice-Chair), G Carey, D Green, M Green, T Flower

BDC Cllr D Holland

ECC Cllr P Schwier

Shelley Rudling (Parish Clerk)

Public: 5 present

020/2026 – Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr A Cooper.

021/2026 – Declarations of Interest

No disclosable pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests were declared.

022/2026 – Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2026 were approved unanimously.

023/2026 – Essex County Councillor Report (Cllr P Schwier)

- Highways: Ongoing work to identify and report potholes across rural areas. A £6 million highways budget runs until 31 March 2026, with repair works currently underway.
- Rural transport challenges were acknowledged, with reliance on private vehicles due to limited public transport.
- “Metal Matters” campaign highlighted the importance of recycling metals; aluminium cans can be recycled in as little as 60 days.
- Braintree District Council budget approved (February 2026), including a 2% allocation to children’s services.
- May 2026 elections noted; a new administration is expected.

Public Questions & Discussion:

- Concerns raised regarding potholes and drainage issues, particularly on Church Street and Little Maplestead Road.
- Ongoing issues include blocked drains and long-standing potholes (2–3 years).
- Adverse weather has delayed repairs; improvement expected with better conditions.

Actions:

- Clerk to write to Highways regarding drainage and pothole concerns.

Cllr Schwier left the meeting at 7:22 pm.

024/2026 – District Councillor Report (Cllr D Holland)

Cllr Holland joined the meeting at 7:53 pm.

- **North End Road:** Under investigation by planning enforcement.
- **Pot Kiln Site:** Long-standing issue; awaiting update from Head of Planning.
- **Planning Enforcement:** Enforcement is discretionary and often resolved through negotiation.
- **Local Plan:** Consultation underway; residents encouraged to submit views. No major developments currently proposed within the ward.
- **Waste Collection Changes:** Introduction of red and blue bins expected to improve recycling rates and reduce costs (~£200k annually).

- **Devolution:** Local government restructuring expected within one year; mayoral system anticipated by 2028–29.

Cllr Holland left the meeting at 8:21 pm.

025/2026 – Public Participation

- Progress reported on playing field boundary works; expected completion within 2–3 weeks.
 - Replacement fencing proposals discussed. A sample made by the local blacksmith was shown.
 - Concerns raised regarding activities at Pound Farm, including:
 - Unauthorised access to North End Road
 - Potential breach of covenant
 - Possible unauthorised residential use
 - Broader concerns raised about lack of enforcement and precedent-setting within the village.
 - Additional sites highlighted for potential planning breaches across the parish.
 - Oak tree relocation confirmed to the eastern boundary of the playing field.
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026/2026 – Planning Applications

- **26/00157/AGR** – Land adjacent to North End Road
 - Agricultural machinery storage building (notification only; no comment required).
 - **26/0032/UBW3** – North End Road
 - Reported planning breach: new access and buildings under investigation.
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027/2026 – Planning Decisions

- **25/02214/FUL – Rectory Farm, Audley End**
 - Erection of replacement barn – **Approved**
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028/2026 – Website Update

Access to the website has now been restored. Village resident, Mr Andy Craig has offered to assist with updates.

Action: Clerk to provide website access to Mr Craig.

029/2026 – Representative Reports

Highways (Cllr M Green):

- North End Road deterioration noted.
- Signage repairs completed.
- Church Street pothole temporarily filled; drainage issues remain.
- “Slow” signage at Audley End near the Pheasant pub deferred due to budget constraints. The work could be undertaken via a self funding scheme organised through Essex Highways.
- Some road signs have been turned and require correction.

Action: Cllr M Green to contact Essex Highways about Self Funding scheme

Playing Field (Cllr A Cooper):

- Report noted.

Play Equipment (Cllr D Green):

- Contractor contacted regarding rubber matting.
- Work to fix outstanding safety issues to be scheduled once weather improves.
- Local fencing under consideration.

Action: Cllr D Green to provide photos of matting to contractor

Footpaths (Cllr T Flower):

- No issues reported; regular use maintaining access.

Trees (Cllr T Flower):

- Thanks expressed for lime trees planted on the playing field.

Village Hall (Cllr D Green):

- Coffee mornings and private bookings resumed.
- Fundraising underway (including marathon events).

- Kitchen roof leak under review; quotes received.
- Electrical works in progress.

Defibrillator (Cllr K Brazier):

- Now under Parish Council management.
- Maintenance contract renewal pending.
- VETs volunteer rota to be reviewed.

Pavilion (Cllr D Green):

- Cricket season preparations underway.
- Kitchen installation pending quotes.
- Temporary Event Notice received for GestupFest in September.
- Maintenance issues include ceiling damp and unresolved water leak.

030/2026 – EALC Training

Councillors encouraged to review available training via the EALC website.

031/2026 – Defibrillator Ownership

Transfer of funds from Nat West Bank to the Parish Council account completed. Clerk to allocate funds appropriately and Cllr P Bagby will now proceed with Nat West account closure.

032/2026 – Playing Field (Fencing & Trees)

Ongoing discussions led by Cllrs Bagby and Carey.

033/2026 – Verge Cutting

- Quote received and approved.
 - Two cuts scheduled: May and September (subject to need), The May cut to follow the litter pick.
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034/2026 – Finance

- Bank reconciliation (28 February 2026) – **Noted**
- Budget comparison 2025/26 – **Noted**

Payments:

- March payments approved, excluding one invoice pending review.

Actions:

- Clerk to review Neighbourhood Watch restricted funds.
 - Clerk to establish restricted fund for defibrillator.
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035/2026 – Items for Next Agenda

- Gestup Fest (standing item)
 - Littering in the Village
 - Speed Watch initiative
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036/2026 – Meeting Dates (2026)

- 20 May (Annual Village meeting & AGM)
 - 15 July
 - 16 September
 - 18 November
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037/2026 – Next Meeting

Wednesday 20 May 2026 at 6:30 pm.

038/2026 – Closure

The meeting closed at 9:00 pm.

Signed:

Cllr P Bagby (Chair)

Date: 18 March 2026

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