

FINCHINGFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

REPRESENTING FINCHINGFIELD AND CORNISH HALL END



MINUTES of the Annual Parish Assembly held at Finchingfield Hall Village Hall, on Tuesday 9th May 2023 commencing at 6.30pm

Present:

Cllr Martin Smith (Chairman)
Cllr Strange
Cllr R Stanger
Cllr A Stanger
Cllr Gordon
Cllr Hammond
Cllr Butland (ECC)
Kate Raymond (Clerk)

In Attendance: Members of the Public: 6

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
Apologies received from Cllr Duffin

2. **CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME & ANNUAL PARISH COUNCIL
STATEMENT 2022/2023**

Welcome everyone to the Finchingfield Parish Council (FPC) Meeting 2023
This statement includes a great deal of gratitude to all those on the council and the residents too on the efforts of everyone in handling the issues large and small that affect our community. Claire Collins had to resign as Chairman and from the Parish Council during this year for personal reasons. She had worked incredibly hard through Covid and beyond as the Chairman of the FPC and she deserves our unstinting gratitude for turning around the Council from being seen as a hindrance to the local community into a great benefit. Thank you, Claire.

I have been encouraged over the last few months by residents telling me how much they appreciate the Parish council working with them on local issues. If Parish Councils years are seen in terms of Eras, then 2022 would be the start of a new Era. In the recent past there was a feeling in the village that the Parish Council, residents, and business leaders in the village were on separate agendas. In fact, even some senior councillors of higher office had described our PC as toxic. That is all now consigned to the past.

You will remember that the Parish Council was for over a year well under staffed down to around six people as recruitment had become difficult. The

story is very different today with two places being filled on the Cornish Hall End ward as soon as there were vacancies.

In the Finchingfield ward two councillors are standing down. David Coverdale with what the army calls long service and good conduct distinction. Thank you, David, for all your wise counsel over the past fifteen years. The other is Sam Denman who has been a great force for getting things done in the village with his initiatives on parking and all things regarding vehicle behaviour in the village. He has an important job in the Civil Service and does not have the time to dedicate to the FPC. Thank you, Sam, for all your hard work, sensible advice, and good company over the last two years. Both of you will be much missed. However, recruitment is not a problem for the FPC and two excellent candidates have come forward to be Parish Councillors.

At this stage I would like to thank those residents in the village who really care about the affairs of the village. The Guild is a massive part of that initiative and Jane Welsh, Mary Tulley and Jacqui Braithwaite have put in an enormous amount of time and effort in representing business and residents in the issues which affect us.

And what a year it has been for issues. And the fact is they are all live today and form part of the agenda which we will discuss in the meeting to follow. However, I will outline where we are.

Our Bridge.

Our stance to Essex Highways is that we need proof that the bridge needs rebuilding. I am calling a meeting for the ECC team to explain why the bridge is needs refurbishing. If that is conclusive, we will go for the best course of action. To be debated but any closure should be for the shortest time possible, start in January, have a hump and use heritage bricks.

Interestingly the mood towards a temporary bridge has changed dramatically as the disruption is enormous. I get it that no one in the village wants a new bridge unless ours is proven to be unsafe. If that happens, we must work for the best solution for the next two hundred years.

Wethersfield Air Base:

Oh gosh those airmen who fought bravely in the war would not believe the nonsense going on now. What I can say is that the FPC has fought its corner hard firstly by Deputy Chairman Roger Duffin and David Coverdale attending all the Wethersfield Airbase Scrutiny Committee (WASC) meetings to stop the ridiculous idea of a massive prison. Secondly all the PCs of both Wethersfield and Finchingfield led by our MP the Foreign Secretary James Cleverly and the Braintree District Council in trying to stop the Home Office place a processing centre for up to 1700 Asylum Seekers.

There is now an appeal to the over turning of the BDC injunction.

This rolls on but we appear to be in the hands of the Home office. We will do everything possible to find a sensible use for the Wethersfield Air Base. If the worst happens and we get 1700 asylum seekers as our neighbours, we will fight to get funding into the area as compensation which will include all aspects of protecting our community.

The role of the PC is to represent and support our parishioners – one of the criticisms which was made against us was that we did not listen. We are very much in listening mode and we pass on the views as high as we can.

However, the might of ECC and Government Departments is insuperable. Even the Foreign Secretary said he lost the argument with the Home Office. On less huge things but nevertheless very important. I would like to thank all the work that went on for the Jubilee last year, the Queen's funeral and now the Coronation. Quite a Royal extravaganza and I must thank all those who contributed so heartily into all the different celebrations (and I think the Queen's funeral was a celebration of her life). The Guild was prominent, and Cllr Ally Stanger must get special mention. She does so much good in the village – enthusiastically supported by her husband Bob, a lot of which flies under the radar such as opening the Church, School meals and winding the sluice gates, clearing the drains and so much more. Thank you Ally
The Christmas Tree and Christmas was once again a fantastic success. Jane Welsh particularly found herself spending five hours in or around the pond on one occasion. The Collins family were involved all efforts much appreciated. Ally of course too.

The Responsible Financial Officer was a role which has been vacant for a while, and I would like to thank Bob Stanger and his Finance Committee for sorting our finances in the interim. We have moved Banks and he and David Coverdale guided us through. We now have a new RFO starting shortly. Thank you, Bob and the Finance Committee,

You will all remember the Queen bequeathed a National Canopy to the country at her Jubilee. The FPC had 30 trees donated by the Queen's Canopy and Sam Denman and I gave them to the class 5 at Finchingfield Village School to plant. I believe they had quite a day and those children will be able to watch their trees grow over the next few generations.

Cornish Hall End ward has been active and Cllrs Strange and Gordon have been attending their meetings. The CHE village Hall is a hive of activity, and I would like to thank Peter Dacey and his team for all his hard work. The CHE village Hall might be getting gate access to the playing fields after quite a deliberation which would be fantastic.

Traffic calming, Twenty is plenty, yellow lines disabled parking – even noise control. All these things are being addressed. One very senior resident told me last year that for 40 years Finchingfield had grappled with traffic issues and nothing happened. Well things are happening albeit slowly. Cllr Sam Denman lead the initiative and did a fantastic job in getting things going. Cllr Strange is leading successfully in CHE.

I have mentioned the Deputy Chairman Cllr Roger Duffin and he has been banned from attending today by his wife, his daughters, the FPC and his specialist – he very nearly still came. Passion is his second name, and nothing will stop him from fighting for this village. He leads on WASC and the wrong use of the Airbase. He is meant to be resting from a major operation but finds that impossible.

We wish you well Roger but thank you for all your efforts so far and as Chairman a special thanks for all the support and leadership you have given me.

Lastly our clerk Kate Raymond. Donna Roding was doing an excellent job as our clerk but caught Covid and was forced to give up looking after the FPC. In came Kate and without any preparation or experience has rescued us. Thank you, Kate.

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Being the FPC Chairman is one of the most rewarding positions to take up.
I have thoroughly enjoyed my several months.
Thank you.
Johnny Martin Smith
Chairman Finchingfield Parish Council

3. **DISTRICT & COUNTY COUNCILLORS REPORTS**

None received.

4. **PUBLIC FORUM: AN OPPORTUNITY TO RAISE ANY OTHER ISSUES RELEVANT TO THE PARISH**

None received.

5. **REPORTS WELCOME FROM VILLAGE GROUPS & ORGANISATIONS**

None received.

6. **CHAIRMAN'S CLOSING REMARKS**

Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closes the Annual Parish Assembly.at 18.45pm.

NEXT MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL: The next meeting of Finchingfield Parish Council will take place at Finchingfield Village Hall on Tuesday, 27TH June 2023 commencing at 7.30pm. The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 18.45pm.

Signed:Chairman

Date: