

MORETON, BOBBINGWORTH AND THE LAVERS PARISH COUNCIL

DRAFT MINUTES

Meeting: Parish Council Meeting

Date: 11th November 2025

Time: 7.30 PM

Venue: Moreton Village Hall

PRESENT:

Councillors (7): Cllr Crosbie (Chairman), Cllr Padfield, Cllr Dawson, Cllr Collins, Cllr Darken, Cllr Carpenter, Cllr Stuart

Also in Attendance (1): Adriana Jones – Clerk

Members of the Public: (2)

Members of the Press (0)

PC.666 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllrs Day and Offord had given their apologies. EFDC Cllr Balcombe had also offered his apologies

PC.667 OTHER ABSENCES

None.

PC.668 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Crosbie declared an 'other registerable' interest in the agenda item regarding works to St Mary's Church, advising that he would not be voting on the matter.

PC.669 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 9th September 2025 were approved. **PROPOSED** Cllr Stuart and **SECONDED** Cllr Dawson. Unanimously agreed.

PC.670 PARISHIONERS' FORUM

The Chairman welcomed the two representatives from St Mary's Church to the meeting. One representative addressed the Council, advising that at the last Parish Council meeting it had been suggested the Church consider exactly what help they were asking of the Parish Council, and to return at this meeting with those details. They advised that attached to the agenda was a briefing note with those details, also setting out the progress made over the past 2-4 months. An update was provided on point 10 setting out that the estimated cost of works to dig a trench and divert the excess water was now expected to be around £5,000 as opposed to £15,000 which was a great saving. Part of this reduction is because a local builder had offered to provide the labour free of charge, with the only cost being materials and a fee for an archaeologist who must be on site when the trench is being dug due to the historical significance of the Church. They were waiting on the Diocese advisory committee at Chelmsford to sign off their plans, after which time final quotes will be obtained for the works.

The representative summarised that as per the briefing note, they were present tonight to ask the Council for specific funds to support the setting up of a 'Friends of St Mary's Moreton' fundraising society (FOSMM), which would enable them to efficiently source further funding, and covered three key areas:

- Contactless giving Donation machine - £347
- Digital Profile - £250-£300
- Legal Fees to set up FOSMM Charity – between £1,800 and £2,500

The representative advised that these startup costs would springboard the FOSMM Charity, to enable them to galvanise the community to support this project.

The Chairman thanked both representatives to attending.

PC.671 ST MARY'S CHURCH, MORETON

Linked to the prior agenda item, Councillors discussed the request from St Mary's Church for funds to support the works listed in the briefing note attached to the agenda.

Cllr Carpenter asked how this fitted in with the other 4 churches in the parish, stating that this Council needed to be mindful of the other churches. The Chairman advised it was his understanding that none of the other churches had approached the Council to request funding, but agreed we needed to be mindful of this. Cllr Padfield advised that the Lavers churches have historically received financial support from the Parish Council with maintaining the churchyard. Cllr Padfield declared an interest at this point, confirming she was a member of the Friends of The Lavers church group, but stated that she felt what was being requested was not under the remit of the Parish Council to provide. Cllr Padfield advised that the Lavers churches needed card readers, but she felt this was the responsibility of the church to provide, not the Parish council.

The Clerk advised other than the power to provide funds to churches for the maintenance of churchyards, there were two other powers that could be used to provide funding. These were:

- The Local Government (Religious etc, Observances) Act 2015 – which could include grants to support church buildings if those buildings served a community function
- Section 137 of Schedule 12B of the Local Government Act 1972 - £11.10 could be spent per elector, subject to the spend being commensurate with the benefit received.

Cllr Stuart stated that at present there had not been any other funding requests, and that he could see no reason why this Council should not support St Mary's and provide funding if the Council held sufficient funds to do so. Cllr Stuart advised this Council held reserves which were fairly high, and thus had the money. Cllr Padfield advised she was not against providing funding to churches, however what the funding was for needed to be clearly considered. Cllr Padfield stated that the Church was a charity, and as such she could not see why there was a need to set up the proposed FOSMM charity to complete fundraising when the church could do it. Cllr Padfield further stated that she did not feel the Parish Council should be funding the legal fees of any organisation associated with the church, including a fund raising group.

There was further detailed discussion regarding this item, and Councillors felt that if they would be using the S137 legislation to provide funding, they needed to be confident that it was for something tangible, so residents would be able to physically see some benefit from the grant. After further discussion, Cllr Stuart **PROPOSED** that Moreton PCC were granted £2,500 specifically for the works associated with the drainage which was required to address the damp that was threatening the historically significant paintings in the church. This was **SECONDED** by Cllr Carpenter, and ultimately unanimously agreed. It was agreed the Clerk would write to Moreton PCC advising that these funds should be placed into a restricted fund with the church specifically for these works, and if they were not used they should be returned to the Parish Council.

PC.672 REPORTS

- a) Chairmans report – All covered within the agenda
- b) Vice Chairmans report – No report
- c) District and County Councillor reports – No reports
- d) Parish Councillor reports – No reports
- e) Police Report – No report

PC.672 PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

There were no current issues to be addressed.

PC.673 SCHOOL PARKING / TRAFFIC

The Clerk confirmed she had not received any further information from the school, nor had she received any further complaints. Cllr Dawson confirmed he had spoken to a neighbouring resident who had advised him that things seemed to have settled down at this point in time.

PC.674 MORETON VILLAGE GREEN

Councillors noted that following on from the EFDC Local Council Liaison Committee meeting in September, and a meeting Clerks had with the Leader of EFDC in October, EFDC were pressed to consider transferring certain assets to local councils prior to Local Government Reorganisation taking place. EFDC stated they would be happy to 'have a conversation' about this, subject to the asset being primarily for the local community and not income generating for EFDC. As such, Councillors supported that the Clerk had now formally written to the Chief Executive of EFDC to progress transferring the ownership of Moreton Village Green to this Parish Council. A response had been received confirming it has been passed on to EFDC's legal department to look at, and EFDC will come back to this Council in due course, albeit it could take some time. Councillors were asked if there were any other areas of public land owned by EFDC that this Council may want to take on. It was felt that the Bobbingworth Nature Reserve was too large and too costly, however it was suggested that perhaps the two green areas south of Moreton Bridge which were maintained by local residents should be

considered. Councillors noted this land was owned by ECC, and it was **AGREED** the Clerk should contact ECC formally asking them for an asset transfer of this land.

PC.675 HERITAGE PROJECT

Cllr Stuart provided an update on progress with the Heritage project, setting out that he had drafted some display board ideas which had been sent to Councillors, along with an idea of the type of board that could be used. Cllr Stuart advised that both himself and the Clerk were looking at appropriate locations to place the boards. It was noted the Clerk would be trying to source funding to fully fund this project, and at this stage there was no expected cost to the Council. The Clerk advised she had completed the necessary land registry checks, and that generally she agreed with the proposed locations, however felt a full board was unsuitable for the Pump housing in Pedlars End. It was suggested that perhaps a plaque could be located here instead. Cllr Padfield advised that she was fully prepared to give the necessary permission to place boards on land she owned by High Laver Church. Cllr Carpenter advised that some years back there was a visit to the Parish by members of the family associated with one of the historic characters detailed by Cllr Stuart. Cllr Stuart confirmed this had taken place, and that he had also recently attended a talk in London by an Academic also associated with this. Cllr Collins suggested that as part of this project, perhaps a plastic replica pump could be sourced for the Pedlars End pump house.

Councillors were fully supportive of the work to date, including the proposed ideas of boards. Works would continue and an update given at the next meeting.

PC.676 COMMUNITY SPEEDWATCH

No update.

PC.677 LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION (LGR)

Councillors noted that final submissions have now been submitted to the Government regarding possible options for Local Government Reorganisation. A link to the full details was included in the main body of the agenda. EFDC supported a three tier proposal which would see Epping Forest merge with Harlow, Maldon, Chelmsford and Brentwood districts. The Government is expected to run a public consultation before the end of the year, with a recommendation to the Minister on a final proposal expected in March 2026. Councillors noted that elections for the Greater Essex Mayor will be taking place in May 2026, along with any relevant district and parish elections.

PC.678 DIGITAL ESSEX

The Clerk advised she had received an email from Essex County Council informing the Parish Council of an initiative they are exploring to improve mobile connectivity in rural and underserved areas across the county. This work forms part of their wider Mobile Connectivity Strategy, which is currently in development, and aligns with their digital ambitions to ensure equitable access to reliable mobile services for all residents. They are working in collaboration with Atlas Tower Group (ATG), a national infrastructure provider. ATG offers a single, shareable mast structure that can be used by multiple operators, reducing the need for multiple installations and minimising visual and environmental impact. The email states that following a review of mobile coverage, ATG has identified several areas, including Matching Green and Moreton, as commercially viable sites for initial deployment. ATG is keen to work with ECC and local communities to identify suitable mast locations and have successfully delivered similar projects in Dorset and Northumberland, working closely with parish councils and residents. Their approach involves transparent community engagement, visual impact assessments, and site visits with local stakeholders to ensure inclusive and informed decision-making. The email received was to inform the Parish Council of this work in case this Council receives any enquiries regarding mobile masts, however no action is required at this stage.

The Chairman advised that he, along with a number of other local residents in Moreton had received a letter from Alex Burghart MP, in which he sets out that following an article he had recently written in Ongar News about poor mobile phone signals and slow broadband in High Ongar, it had triggered some responses from constituents in Moreton stating they are suffering similar problems. The Chairman confirmed he had written a response to Mr Burghart setting out that in terms of broadband, most people in the Parish now have access to Gigaclear superfast broadband, so this wasn't an issue, but agreed that mobile phone coverage was poor. Within the letter the Chairman also reminded Mr Burghart of the recent planning application for a 5G mast on Moreton Village Green which was objected to by parishioners, the Parish Council, and ultimately rejected by EFDC. The Chairman reminded Councillors that the previous mast application for 5G only had a proposed 500m range, so it really didn't resolve the issue. Within the letter, the Chairman requested that Mr Burghart engages with both the Parish Council and residents in the village. The Chairman suggested that the Parish Council also writes to Mr Burghart regarding this.

It was **AGREED** that the clerk would respond to the email, and also write to Mr Burghart regarding this matter, to ensure that early engagement was cemented before any action was taken.

PC.679 CLERKS COMMUNICATIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE REPORT

The Clerk reported the following:

- a) ECC, EFDC, EALC and RCCE communications are emailed to Members on a regular basis and where relevant information is included
- b) 'Tommy' to be placed on Moreton Village Green for Remembrance Sunday, and Remembrance day.
- c) EFDC Waste Event 12th November at Civic Offices – Cllr Darken to attend.
- d) Email received from Downing, company consulting on Solar Farm in Hastingwood, advising that they intend to hold the second public event once the design has been refined and finalised based on the complete survey results, and this will be in early 2026.
- e) Assisting Cllr Padfield with issues of potholes on The Glebe. Cllr Padfield thanked the Clerk for her support.
- f) News article published by EFDC regarding planning (copy attached to agenda)
- g) Responded to Freedom of Information request (Finances last 3 years, events, expenses, etc)
- h) EFDC Local Council Liaison Committee meeting held 18th September. A number of questions were put to the committee by the EFDALC, and responses were received, a copy of which was attached to the agenda. Minutes are not yet available.
- i) EFDALC Meeting 5th November – Cllr Crosbie attended
- j) Monthly defibrillator checks continue to take place.
- k) Query raised with enforcement regarding additional outbuilding at 6 Maltings Hill, Moreton – Update – Additional building is in line with Permitted Development rights.
- l) 26 November 2025, 7pm Gypsy and Traveller planning training – Councillors can attend and should contact the Clerk
- m) 3rd December 2025 7pm Highways planning training - Councillors can attend and should contact the Clerk

PC.680 COMMUNITY INITIATIVE FUND 2025/2026

Councillors noted that funding of up to £10,000 is available to voluntary organisations, community groups, residents' associations and Town and Parish Councils. Essex County Council's Community Initiative Fund (CIF) aims to strengthen local communities and make Essex an even better place to live, work and visit. Since it launched, the CIF has supported projects such as upgrades to sports facilities, improvements to community buildings such as new heating systems or accessible toilets, staff costs for projects or maintenance, IT systems or support and cultural events and activities. Through the main CIF round, grants of up to £10,000 are available for projects designed to strengthen local communities. Applications to the fund should be made before the closing date of Friday 28 November. Alongside the main CIF round, micro grants of up to £1,000 are also available. These grants could help reduce social isolation, improve wellbeing or encourage communities to connect. They could also support organisations to build and develop their capabilities and skills. Applications to the micro grants fund will remain open until all the funds for these are allocated. Councillors **AGREED** the Clerk should submit an application for the Heritage project.

PC.681 OPEN PARISH MEETING

Councillors considered the organisation for the Open Parish Meeting and Lighting of the Christmas Tree which will take place on 9th December, as follows:

Arrangements: Glasses and equipment (Clerk to collect and return to Cllr Padfield)
Layout and Preparation (Clerk)
Refreshments, etc (Clerk) – Cllr Darken to assist on the evening
Christmas Tree Lights (Chairman to organise)
Delivery of Leaflets – agreed to contact the Mr Cooper to ask if the Lane Ambassadors could deliver to Moreton and Bobbingworth addresses.
Clerk contacted Moreton School ref decorations created by the Children – no response.
Clerk contacted Choir to see if they are available – checking, will come back to Clerk.

Speakers: St Mary's Funding – Claire Cambridge will present
LGR / Devolution (Clerk short presentation)
Changes to Waste (Cllr Balcombe – TBC)
Question: Would community support a Rural Affordable Housing project?
Poss Margaret Moreton Village Hall update.

PC.682 SIGNAGE AND SPEED ISSUES BOVINGER MILL - LHP

In light of the fact that the Local Highway Panel are not currently accepting requests for any future schemes, it was agreed at the September meeting that the Clerk would look at other ways this could be addressed. The Clerk provided information to the Council regarding different signage options. It was **AGREED** the Clerk would start the licence process with ECC to place a gateway sign at the entrance to Bobbingworth. It was also agreed Cllr Stuart would look into the correct historical name for this area for the sign. Other signage was also considered to support the local community.

PC.683 RURAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Councillors discussed the Rural Affordable Housing address that was given at the September meeting, and whilst they agreed the information was very detailed, they felt it did not fully address the concerns Councillors had as to how any such project would work in an environment so rural as this parish. However, it was noted that a question would be put to the Open Parish meeting on 9th December for a community view.

PC.684 BUDGET / PRECEPT 2026/2027

Councillors were asked to advise the Clerk of any specific items they would like included for consideration in the 2026/2027 Budget and Precept, which will be considered at the January meeting. Information needed to be with the Clerk by 15th December. The Chairman asked if the earmarked reserved would be looked at, to which it was confirmed they would be. The suggestion of a reserve fund for churches was put forward to be considered.

PC.685 PLANNING

- a) Councillors **NOTED** the following planning applications below which had been responded to by way of the Clerk's delegated powers following email consultation with Councillors:

EPF/2197/25	Hobbs View, Moreton Road, Ongar, CM5 0LX	Replacement dwelling and garaging within existing garden curtilage - minor house redesign and repositioning within curtilage following previously consented scheme (Ref: PL/EPF/1693/21). NO OBJECTION
EPF/2188/25	Wind Hill Cottage, Wind Hill, Magdalen Laver, Ongar, CM5 0EX	Single storey rear infill extension. NO OBJECTION
EPF/2070/25 & EPF/2087/25	Wynters Cottage, Hastingwood Road, Magdalen Laver, Ongar, CM5 0EW	Removal of outbuilding, new garden room, changes to fenestration and roof repairs, and Grade II Listed Building application for the same. NO OBJECTION
EPF/1756/25	Hobbans Cottage, Moreton Road, Ongar, CM5 0LX	Proposed Alterations and Extensions to As-Built Dwelling. NO OBJECTION (note: originally missed off weekly list)
EPF/1803/25	Greenways, Moreton Bridge, Moreton, Ongar, CM5 0LL	Double storey side extension NO OBJECTION
EPF/1686/25	The Brewhouse, Watery Lane, Little Laver, Harlow, CM17 0RQ	Grade II Listed building consent for regularisation of glazed link, changes to outer building knows as shed and erection of timber gates and brick pillars to front of site. NO OBJECTION

- b) To **NOTE** the following planning application for which EFDC **do not** accept comment: **NIL**

- c) To **NOTE** the following Planning decision by EFDC

EPF/1608/25	Weald Lodge, Weald Bridge Road, North Weald Bassett, Epping, CM16 6AU	Approval of Details Reserved by Conditions 3 (Materials) and 4 (Large Scale Details) of EPF/0950/22 (Replacement amenity building).	<i>Granted 08/09/2025 DRC – PC unable to comment</i>
EPF/1463/25 & EPF/1541/25	Bushes, Murrays Barn, Wind Hill, Magdalen Laver, Ongar, CM5 0DS	Proposed Rear Extension and Internal Alterations for Triple Bay Garage and Open Plan Kitchen, and LB for the same	<i>Refused 12/09/2025 for reasons of harm to the significance of the affected designated heritage assets PC had no objection</i>

EPF/1421/25	Humphreys, Greenman Road, Magdalen Laver, Ongar, CM5 0ER	Grade II listed building consent for works to front facade.	<i>Appeal Withdrawn 22/09/2025</i>
EPF/1520/25 & EPF/1422/25	Watermans End House, Watery Lane, Little Laver, Harlow, CM17 0RQ	Demolition of porch extension, large shed and glass house. Relocation of oil tank and construction of small shed. Create new door opening to kitchen. Single storey rear extension to rear with swimming pool and car port, and LB application for the same	<i>Granted 23/09/2025 PC had no objection</i>
EPF/1660/25	Shielings, Cross Lees Lane, Moreton, Ongar, CM5 0HX	Approval of Details Reserved by Conditions 3, 10 and 12 of EPF/0753/25 (Demolition of existing bungalow and replace with new bungalow).	<i>Granted 30/09/2025 DRC – PC unable to comment</i>
EPF/1173/25 & EPF/1256/25	Black Hall, Bridge Road, Moreton, Ongar, CM5 0LJ	Single storey rear extension.	<i>Refused 2/10/25 for reasons of being unsympathetic to listed building - PC had no objection</i>
EPF/1792/25	Spinney Croft, Workers Road, High Laver, Ongar, CM5 0DZ	Proposed replacement of the Gable End Window to match the existing.	<i>Granted 24/10/25 – Was not on the weekly list under MBL, but instead under Ongar – only discovered November. Raised with EFDC</i>
EPF/1686/25	The Brewhouse, Watery Lane, Little Laver, Harlow, CM17 0RQ	Grade II Listed building consent for regularisation of glazed link and changes to outer building knows as shed	<i>Granted 29/10/25 PC had no objection</i>
EPF/1454/25	Blake Hall, Stony Lane, Ongar, CM5 0DG	TPO/EPF/103/10 (Ref: W1) T1: Oak Tree (Tree ID 47 on survey) T2 Oak Tree (Tree ID 49 on survey) T3 Oak Tree (Tree ID 50 on survey) T4 Oak Tree (Tree ID 51 on survey) – All Fell and replace, as specified.	<i>Granted 14/10/25 PC had no objection</i>

PC.686 FINANCIAL MATTERS

a) Councillors approved the payments below. **PROPOSED** Cllr Collins, **SECONDED** Cllr Darken:

BACS	A Jones	September and October Salary (£249.21 PAYE taken off HMRC credit, remainder to be paid to HMRC)	£1,109.26 & £277.40 PAYE
BACS	HMRC	Employers National Insurance contribution September and October	£82.90
BACS	A Jones	Expenses Reimbursement Land Registry Costs and Home Office Apr-Sep (£10/week)	£315.98
BACS	Moreton PCC	Annual Grant, Cutting and maintenance Churchyard	£700.00
BACS	Bobbingworth PCC	Annual Grant, Cutting and maintenance Churchyard	£700.00
BACS	The Lavers PCC	Annual Grant, Cutting and maintenance Churchyard	£2,100.00
BACS	Moreton PCC	Grant towards drainage works St Mary's Moreton	£2,500.00

b) The Chairman reviewed the Bank Reconciliation against the bank statements and signed it accordingly.

PC.687 ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

- RCCE / Moreton Village Hall – Meeting in next 2-3 weeks.
- Devolution and Local Government Reform

PC.688 DATES OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 13th January 2026 – Moreton Village Hall
Tuesday 17th March 2026 – Magdalen Laver Village Hall (*note this is the third Tuesday in the month*)
Tuesday 12th May 2026 – Moreton Village Hall
Tuesday 14th July 2026 – Magdalen Laver Village Hall
Tuesday 8th September 2026 – Moreton Village Hall
Tuesday 10th November 2026 – Moreton Village Hall
Tuesday 8th December 2026 – Moreton Village Hall Open Parish Meeting

Meeting closed 8.40pm

Chairman

Date