



# RIVENHALL PARISH COUNCIL

SERVING THE COMMUNITIES OF RIVENHALL AND RIVENHALL  
END IN THE BRAINTREE DISTRICT IN THE COUNTY OF ESSEX

## ANNUAL REPORT

### ***RIVENHALL PARISH COUNCIL - DETAILS***

You are hereby invited to attend the  
**ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY**

To be held on Tuesday 7th May 2019, in the Village Hall, Church  
Road, Rivenhall, Commencing at 7.00pm.

This Annual Meeting will precede the Annual Parish Council Meeting  
and will, therefore, end just prior to 8.00pm thereby allowing time  
for the Parish Council Meeting to commence at the usual time of  
8.00pm.

*The Parish Councillors hope that you will make every effort to support this  
important annual village meeting, which has proved very successful in  
previous years.*

Your Parish Council meets each month, usually on the first Tuesday.

Agendas advertised on the Council notice boards and website.

Residents are welcome to attend the meetings and to question Councillors or  
comment upon local issues.

**CHAIRMAN: (At date of publication)**

James Abbott: (01376) 584576

**COUNCILLORS: (At date of publication)**

Bob Wright 07870231479      Jack Prime (01376) 514255  
Sally Anderson (01376) 514351      Dennis Clark (01376) 512418  
David Knubley (01376) 502298      Bob Turner (01376) 513659

**PARISH CLERK:**

Mr. Keith P. Taylor

23 Mersey Road, Witham, CM8 1LL

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## REDUCTION IN GRANT FROM BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Over the past few years the Parish Council has received a Government funded Localism Grant from Braintree District Council towards the running costs of the council, in addition to the Annual Precept which the Parish Council levies upon the District Council to cover the cost of the budget for the ensuing year. This Localism Grant has, thereby, enabled the Parish Council to maintain a low Precept amount, however there will be no grant provided for 2019/20.

This means, therefore, that for the Parish Council to maintain a consistently good service to local residents, there has been an increase for the year 2019/2020 in the Precept levied upon the District Council, which has resulted in a slightly higher level of Council Tax.

I am sure that all local residents will wish to see their Parish maintained to the same high standard and representations made on their behalf regarding future housing, industrial and highway planning matters; but the Parish Council will always give careful consideration to all financial matters at the annual Precept setting meeting in December.

The council's financial accounts are audited annually both internally and externally by independent auditors when any balances carried forward are closely monitored; to date there has not been any criticism of the council's financial management.

If anyone has any question regarding Parish Council finances, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Keith P. Taylor (Parish Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer)

## **Chairman's report 2018/2019**

The Annual Parish Assembly will be held on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2019 at 7.00pm in Rivenhall Village Hall. Residents are once again invited to attend to raise any local issues and to put questions to invited representatives.

Please let us know if you think your Parish council is doing the right things – or if you feel we need to make improvements. If you cannot get to the Annual Assembly you can always contact the parish clerk at

[parishclerk@rivenhallparishcouncil.net](mailto:parishclerk@rivenhallparishcouncil.net) or telephone 01376 1516975.

As detailed above, Braintree District Council is reducing financial support to parish councils in response to the Government reducing its grant funding. Each year in December the Parish council looks carefully at how much we need to spend to maintain services. To balance the reduction in support from BDC we have decided to increase the parish precept by a modest amount but also to take some money out of reserves so that we can continue to deliver services such as grass cutting, litter picking and the maintenance of trees and posts around the village greens.

Over the years we have been pleased to be able to financially support the parish magazine and make a regular contribution towards the costs of the annual Christmas tree. There are also several one-off or occasional items such as bus shelters and repairs to the village sign.

Essex County Council has asked parishes if they would like to take on more minor highway maintenance in return for some extra funding. We looked carefully at this offer but, like several other local parish councils, we felt that whilst, in principle, this is something we would be keen to do, the obligations being placed on small parishes such as Rivenhall appear disproportionate to the sum being offered. Hopefully the scheme can be improved.

Once again the past year has been challenging on the planning front. Due to the Draft Braintree District Local Plan being found legally “Unsound” by a Planning Inspector last June, the work needed to make the A12 safer and an end to the uncertainty of the route around Rivenhall End has again been postponed. Essex County Council announced, also in June, that it preferred “Route D” for the A120, which would cut across open countryside from Braintree to join the A12 between Rivenhall End and Kelvedon. We should know later this year if the Government agrees with that route and if it is prepared to fund it.

Because the Draft Braintree District Local Plan has been found Unsound, there will need to be changes to it and so there should be new public consultations later this year. A consequence of not having an up to date Plan is that developers can apply for planning permission on sites which would not normally be allowed. Many local villages are experiencing this and it became the case last year for the field between Witham and Rivenhall fronting Rickstones Road. Planning permission was given by BDC for a housing estate on that field despite the fact that it has never been allocated for development. However, following concerted local efforts, the mature hedge alongside Rickstones Road, which BDC at first said should come out, will now be kept – half in-situ and half to be transplanted on to a new line.

The area between Witham and Rivenhall is under significant pressure for further development. It was recently announced by Essex County Council that a new school could be built on part of the Rickstones Academy playing fields and an application is before BDC for another housing estate on land north of Conrad Road. Whilst housing and schools need to be provided, it is important that the right locations are chosen and that services are improved to support growth. To date, and despite repeated requests, BDC has not allocated any money to Rivenhall parish from major developments within the parish boundary.

In respect of major applications and sites, further planning applications have been submitted for the Quarry at Colemans Farm. These include increasing the number of HGV movements. Further applications have also been submitted to ECC for the proposed Rivenhall Airfield waste site, as well as a permit variation application for the incinerator which has been submitted to the Environment Agency. Rivenhall Parish Council continues to submit comments on these and where necessary, other applications in, and close to, the parish.

You can find out about the comments we have made on planning applications by looking at the minutes of our meetings posted on the notice boards, in the parish magazine or on our website which is at

<https://www.rivenhallparishcouncil.net/>

If there is an application you are interested in, and wish to speak about at a parish council meeting, there is always a public session at the start of every meeting.

Braintree District Council has now finalised its proposed parish boundary changes. For Rivenhall the land along the A12 at Eastways is to go into Witham Parish as well as the new housing land at Forest Road (Rivenhall Park). But no other land is to be transferred to Witham.

The Parish council continues to work with the Braintree Local Highways Panel. Two Casualty Reduction Schemes have been agreed for Rivenhall on Church Road and at Appleford Bridge. Problems with HGVs along Oak Road appear to be getting worse and all reports, and photos when available, of over-sized HGVs going down Oak Road are being forwarded to ECC. New conventional signage will be installed but we are also requesting an interactive warning sign, that is specifically designed to warn drivers of over-height HGVs to stop well before they get down to the railway bridge.

Oak Stores appears to be doing well under new owners. Please do use our village shop.

The pre-school in the village is due to move into a new building behind the Village Hall later this year.

On behalf of the Parish council can I again thank everyone who helps to support the parish; including the local groups who support the community, the management of the 2 village halls, volunteers who pick up litter and our village maintenance contractor and litter picker. In addition, many residents have commented on the well organised commemoration events held in Rivenhall for the Centenary of the end of World War One.

James Abbott  
Chairman

## **Planning**

Braintree District Council's Draft Local Plan has been held up due to the Planning Inspector finding it "Unsound" last June. This related to Part 1 of the plan which is about "Garden Communities" such as the proposed new town at West Tey. Until Part 1 can be decided, Part 2 cannot start – which is about local sites in Rivenhall and other parishes, as well as policies.

A key concern is that in Part 2 of the Draft Plan, BDC has proposed that the "Green Buffer", separating Rivenhall from Witham, is set back well to the north of Rectory Lane. These buffer zones are designed to stop villages merging with nearby towns. Given that BDC has now granted planning permission for a housing development on an unallocated site off Rickstones Road that effectively joins Witham to part of Rivenhall, we have asked BDC why they have proposed leaving such a vulnerable gap between Rectory Lane and the golf course.

Essex County Council has announced that it intends to build a new Special School on part of the Rickstones Academy playing field along Rickstones Road. A planning application is expected later in 2019.

A series of rather confusing applications for the proposed Rivenhall Airfield waste site are to be decided during 2019. Two applications submitted to ECC propose increasing the incinerator chimney stack height from 35m to 58m. But a separate permit variation application to the Environment Agency proposes reducing the stack height from 58 metres to 35 metres!

Whilst a large amount of development is underway or due around local villages, this may not deliver genuinely affordable housing suitable and available for village residents. The Parish council has made some preliminary enquiries about providing an "exception site" for local

affordable housing. This would be on a modest scale. Some potential sites have been identified, but if the proposal moves forward, there will be consultation with residents.

Rivenhall Parish Council meetings are held on the first Tuesday of the month either at the Village Hall or Henry Dixon Hall. If residents wish to speak about any local applications, you are welcome to attend and make a statement. The Parish Council does not decide applications, but it does make its views known with recommendations to BDC or ECC.

## Highways

The relatively mild winter has meant we avoided the clusters of potholes that developed on local roads during the repeated freezing spells late last winter. So road surfaces are generally good though we continue to report any defects that are found.

We have asked ECC to resurface the footways along Rickstones Road which are poor in places.

A persistent problem over recent years has been failed street lights. Over the winter, on two occasions, audits were made of all failed lights in the parish and lists sent to ECC. Some lights have been put back on by ECC but a number remain out and ECC says this can be due to power supply failure. However, having lights out for many months at a time, especially on junctions or other key locations, is not acceptable and we will continue to press ECC to repair lights in a more timely way.

The current Braintree District Local Highways Panel schemes for Rivenhall are :

- \* **Oak Road** - Extended HGV weight limit from the railway bridge to the A12 (only on that side of the road). This remains on hold until the route of the A12 is known. It is expected that there could be fresh A12 route consultations in 2019 but the initially announced start date for the A12 re-routing/widening of March 2020 will clearly not now happen.

- \* **Oak Road** – New signs to further warn HGV drivers not to continue down Oak Road past the recycling area. These are due for installation but ECC is aware that a bespoke interactive sign will likely be needed to alert drivers of over-height lorries to stop HGVs continuing to go down to the railway bridge and get stuck. In reversing out they are causing damage and danger and last year a lorry hit the railway bridge, which led to a prosecution. However the day to day enforcement of the 7.5 tonne weight restriction should be being carried out by ECC.

\* **The “Quiet Lane”** proposal for Rectory Lane went ahead and is being evaluated. Rectory Lane is already a Protected Lane and is part of the John Ray Walk.

\* **Two Casualty Reduction Schemes** for Rivenhall are to be implemented near West Ford Farm Cottage and near Appleford Bridge. At both locations many vehicles going too fast have lost control and left the road at speed.

\* **A scheme** to protect the verge on the junction of Henry Dixon Road and Oak Road failed within days of being installed due to plastic being used instead of grasscrete, Given that this was designed to be an over-run for HGVs, ECC Highways has been asked what it thought it was doing using plastic ! A complete rebuild has been requested at this location.

## **PARISH COUNCIL WEBSITE**

**[www.rivenhallparishcouncil.net](http://www.rivenhallparishcouncil.net)**

The Rivenhall Parish Council Website is regularly being updated with information relating to Parish Council business and activities. On the site you will find meeting dates, agendas and minutes, the annual budget, information regarding local issues that are being dealt with by the Parish Council and the Parish Clerk’s monthly reports upon action taken between meetings. Contact details are also included for other local organisations such as Essex County Council and Braintree District Council; emergency contact details for Police, Gas, Electricity and Flood etc. Annual Reports and official documents, such as Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Annual Returns and many others – all of which can be downloaded (in pdf format).

To contact the Parish Council you can email:  
*[parishclerk@rivenhallparishcouncil.net](mailto:parishclerk@rivenhallparishcouncil.net)* or  
*[councillors@rivenhallparishcouncil.net](mailto:councillors@rivenhallparishcouncil.net)*