

Radwinter Parish Council

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Village Hall, Radwinter,
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Minutes of **Radwinter Parish Council meeting** held on Monday 31st March 2025, at Radwinter Village Hall.

Present: Cllr Richardson, Cllr Duck, Cllr Halls, Cllr Davidson, Cllr Boyden, Cllr Gerhard, Cllr Foley, Cllr Tayler and the Clerk.

Minutes

25/37 **Apologies for Absence**

Cllr Rains and Cllr Foley

Resolution: Accept apologies of absence

Proposed: Cllr Halls **Seconded:** Cllr Duck

25/38 **Public Forum**

No public representations.

25/39 **Members' Declarations of interest**

Cllr Richardson advised of his connection with the Church, with reference to the grant application. Cllr Halls confirmed that he was part of the team that had supplied the quote to the Church, for which the grant application was being applied for.

25/40 **Minutes**

Resolution: Approve the minutes of the Council meeting held on 24th February 2025 as a true record.

Proposed: Cllr Halls **Seconded:** Cllr Davidson

25/41 **District & County Councillors Reports**

See Appendix A

25/42 **Clerks Report**

The Clerk advised that a Letter of Engagement had been received from new internal Auditor.

It was Resolved that Cllr Richardson should sign on the parish councils behalf.

Proposed Cllr Davidson **Seconded** Cllr Duck

Subscription renewal invitation received from RCCE.

It was resolved that the Clerk should complete the form and pay subscription of £61.80 (incl VAT) for 2025/26.

Proposed Cllr Duck **Seconded** Cllr Gerhard

Annual lighting maintenance had been completed by A&J Lighting. Some repairs were necessary and a bill of £157.80 issued. This would be collected via direct debit. The Clerk produced a schedule

of street lights covered by the contract and it was agreed that this would be circulated to all Councillors

25/43 **Action Tracker**

Cllr Richardson went through the action tracker and relevant updates made.

25/44 **Finance**

Payments list as circulated prior to the meeting was approved.

Clerk to set up payments and Cllr Richardson to authorise

Elan City	Speed indicators	£ 5014.78
SSE	Electricity	£ 2.43
A&J Lighting	Service fee	£ 48.38
BT	Broadband	£ 47.94
Employee	March salary	£ 436.24
CW Low & Sons	Stocking Green hedges	£ 90.00
Liz Lake Associates	NP Landscape Assessment	£ 9045.60
EALC	Course – Chairman	£ 90.00
Radwinter Primary School	Grant re cycle shelter	£ 1444.50
Uli Gerhard	Reimburse wild flower seeds	£ 193.99

Proposed Cllr Boyden **Seconded** Cllr Halls

Action JP & DR

25/44.1 **Budget 2024/25**

The Budget was compared to actual expenditure for 2024/25 and discussed, together with current reserves.

Proposed: Cllr Duck **Seconded:** Cllr Halls

25/44.2 **Review any grant applications**

Application received from Friends of Radwinter Church regarding replacement of the fence along the main road. They have received a quote of £10,780 and requesting a grant of £2000 towards this.

It was resolved that £755 should be allocated to unspent grant budget for 2024/25, and balance to come out of village improvements reserve.

Proposed Cllr Gerhard **Seconded** Cllr Davidson

Application from Bowls club discussed but no grant awarded.

It was noted that Radwinter Primary School had asked for thanks to be expressed to the Parish Council for the grant awarded for the cycle shelter.

25/45 **New Planning Applications**

APPLICATION NO: UTT/25/0716/DOC

DATE APPLICATION VALID: 18th March 2025

DEVELOPMENT: Application to discharge condition 3 (materials) and 4 (additional drawings) attached to UTT/24/1904/LB.

LOCATION: Coules Barn Walden Road Radwinter Saffron Walden Essex

APPLICANT: Mr And Mrs Geary-Jones

**ADDRESS: The Refill Barn Walden Road Radwinter Essex CB10 2SP
EASTING/NORTHING: 559394 – 237506**

No comment

APPLICATION NO: UTT/25/0739/DOC

DATE APPLICATION VALID: 21st March 2025

DEVELOPMENT: Application to discharge condition 3 (Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan), 4 (materials), 5 (hard/soft landscaping), 6 (Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy) and 8 (external lighting) attached to UTT/24/1903/FUL.

LOCATION: Coules Barn Walden Road Radwinter Saffron Walden Essex

APPLICANT: Mr And Mrs J O'shaughnessy

ADDRESS: Kay Pilsbury Thomas Architects Honeylands Radwinter Saffron Walden Essex CB10 2TJ

EASTING/NORTHING: 559394 - 237506

DECISION LEVEL: Delegated Decision

No comment

25/46 Recreation Ground & Pavilion

Email had been sent out by RGC chair regarding lease position. This is addressed by Cllr Richardson's draft letter referred to in 25/46.1.

25/46.1 Recreation Ground steering committee

Letter drafted by Cllr Richardson circulated prior to meeting regarding the Parish Council taking back responsibility for maintenance of the recreation ground.

It was resolved to send letter to Recreation Ground Committee.

Proposed Cllr Halls **Seconded** Cllr Duck

Action JP

25/47 Village Hall

Nothing to report as next meeting scheduled for 3rd April.

25/48 Highways and Footpaths

25/48.1 Speed indicator project

Date of Saturday 12th April set for installation.

Cllr Gerhard to check through the boxes of equipment recently delivered to confirm all appears to be complete.

25/49 Stocking Green update

Cllr Gerhard confirmed hedges had been cut and verge ploughed ready for application of wild flower seeds.

25/50 **Neighbourhood Plan**

Cllr Richardson confirmed things were moving forward. Landscape assessment had been commissioned, Liz Lake Associates to carry out. Payment for the assessment is financed by the grant that came in from Groundworks UK last month. The payment is greater, but this is the VAT element, which will be reclaimed in due course.

25/51 **VE Day celebrations**

Being organised by two parishioners in the Church on 8th May.

It was resolved to provide funding of £200 towards this event. Any unspent amount to be added to the donation to RBL made by the event.

Proposed Cllr Halls **Seconded** Cllr Davidson

25/52 **Annual Parish Meeting**

Provisional date of Tuesday 6th May selected.

Clerk to liase with Village Hall to see if date available.

25/53 **Matters to be Raised by Members for the next agenda**

None raised

25/54 **Date of the Next Meeting**

Monday 28th April 2025

May meeting date discussed. Due to unavailability of Clerk & some Councillors, an earlier than usual date of Monday 19th May was agreed.

25/55 **Meeting Close** @ 8.55 PM

Signed.....

Dated.....

Appendix A

Local Government Reorganisation

Last Wednesday, 19th March, the Full Council voted to request the Leader to add her signature to the submission to the Government of Initial Proposals on Local Government Reform which had been drafted between the Leaders of Essex's 12 district, one county council and two current unitary councils, supported by officers.

Although this does not commit the Council to any specific arrangement, it does express a wish that the Council aims to engage as much as possible with the ongoing process. The recommendations for the size of the proposed unitary authorities will be made after discussion between the 15 present councils involved, together with other recommendations, after the summer. However the decisions ultimately will be made by Government, and we will probably be told in January or February 2026.

Probably the most significant decision to be recommended is the size of the unitary authority, probably either 3 or 5 existing district councils.

Peter Holt shared an interesting article he had written to the Municipal Journal with us on 20th March. The graphs with this paper are attached at the top.

Official data gathered by Uttlesford DC for the District Councils' Network undermines the Government's argument for large unitary authorities, says Peter Holt

We now know that Essex is one of the areas that has made it onto the Government's Devolution Priority Programme. Its population of 1.85 million is therefore set to see the biggest churn in local government structures since the early 1970s with both a new Mayor elected in May 2026, and its 12 districts, upper tier county and two smaller unitaries in Thurrock and Southend replaced by a new set of unitary councils in either 2027 or 2028.

We've also had the ministerial invitation to submit initial proposals for Local Government Reform, with helpful additional detail about the criteria that will be used to assess bids – especially important where there turn out to be competing proposals. Not much new though on the vexed question of size – still an expectation of 500,000+, but with the same broad exceptions trailed.

As a single proxy indicator for financial good health, plotting those authorities with S114 notices or having applied for capitalisation directives, they are pretty evenly spread from small through medium to large to the very biggest.

To describe the debate locally amongst these 15 authorities about optimum unitary size as 'somewhat lively' would be an understatement worthy of Sir Humphrey.

The good news round here is that all 15 Essex councils are talking. We're meeting regularly at both a council leader level and at amongst officers – not only the chief execs but also through existing networks of chief finance officers, monitoring officers, housing directors, planning directors and so on.

On the question of 'how many new unitaries?' the 15 have at least narrowed down the early options to either two, three, four or five new councils to be established, and are working with Grant Thornton to illustrate and analyse different models, with one particular model an early favourite of the clear majority of the 15.

Some of the 15 councils have already broken cover and publicly indicated their preferred alignment, based around five unitaries with an average population of just over 360,000. And of course with a population of

anything like 360,000, that would put a new council into the top quartile of unitaries, so it's more in Essex a debate between big and super-big rather than big versus small.

Basildon (Labour led) were first off the blocks, announcing that they'd like to merge with neighbouring Thurrock (so long as the obvious debt issues can be satisfactorily worked through). Next came the leaders of Braintree (Conservative led), Colchester (Lib Dem led) and Tendring (Independent led) with their joint statement pinning their colours jointly to a shared mast.

Not everyone holds this five unitary model as their favourite though, and some believe passionately that a smaller number of even larger new unitaries would better deliver in the future for local people.

Always a fan of following objective evidence, we in Uttlesford went looking for objective evidence to answer the question: when it comes to unitaries, is big better?

Sadly, we found very little evidence to help objectively answer this question, so we've begun to compile our own, looking firstly at four key criteria: financial stability and sustainability, children's services performance, adult social care performance, and housing landlord performance.

Real world actual performance feels like a good place to start, even if we understand a caveat similar those financial services adverts which say: 'Past performance doesn't guarantee future results. Your money may be at risk etc. etc.'

So we started with the most impeccable and unarguable source of qualitative data: government published league tables and inspection results from Ofsted, CQC and the Regulator of Social Housing.

Here's what we found. When plotting all of the current 130+ unitary authorities in England against population size, and then layering on these data sources, we can instantly see whether there is any correlation between these four criteria and how big they are.

Spoiler alert: zero correlation. Nil. Nada. Zilch.

As a single proxy indicator for financial good health, plotting those authorities with S114 notices or having applied for capitalisation directives, they are pretty evenly spread from small through medium to large to the very biggest.

Overlaying Ofsted 'overall effectiveness' judgments in the most recent authority-level children's services inspections, shows that the 'outstandings' 'goods' 'requires improvement to be goods' and 'inadequates' are spread pretty evenly across unitaries by population size. (And yes, I am acutely conscious of the dangers of over-relying on single word judgments, but one has to start somewhere.)

Layering on CQC inspection scores for authorities adult social care performance, there is less data from the new CQC regime yet, but what there is spreads the 'goods' and the 'requires improvements' fairly evenly across unitaries by population size.

And adding the data for top, second, third and lowest quartile results for all unitary housing landlord authorities from the recent Regulator of Social Housing Tenant Satisfaction Measures [TSMs], once again shows no link between top, second, third or lowest quartile scores and unitary population size.

There are of course plenty more piles of beans to count in search of evidence to support any argument for or against super-big unitaries than these. In the meantime though, the debates about optimal size remain seemingly subjective rather than based on any obvious solid foundation.

The top performing and most financially stable authorities are those that have taken tough decisions over many years, invested wisely, performance managed effectively, and led with passion and integrity to put improved resident outcomes first – none of which are a factor of population size.

Peter Holt is chief executive of Uttlesford DC, Essex

Support for Early Breakfast Club and staggered starting times at Radwinter CofE Primary School.

On a recent visit to the School I was very impressed by the proposal to help with peak morning congestion, outside the school, by staggering the start time for some pupils, by a proposed Breakfast Club before school, and encouraging “active Travel” by providing secure cycle/scooter storage.

I have offered £250 for breakfast equipment and £500 towards the cycle/scooter storage from my Ward Member’s Grant Initiative (I have yet to hear if this has been successful)

Mike Tayler (Cllr Mike Tayler) 24/3/2025