

Minutes of Meeting on 26th June 2025
Elmstead Parish Council – New Community Centre Committee
Community Centre, School Road, Elmstead Market, CO7 7ET

Present: Mr R Fairweather, Cllr A Gladwin, Mrs J Grotier (Chairman), Cllr M Hare (arrived late) Cllr L Richfield, , Mrs D Stammers, Mrs R Valentine, Cllr M Ward and Mr S Wright.

Also Present: Mrs A Baxter (clerk) and 4 members of public.

Not present: Cllr T Sanders, Mrs L Scott and Mrs J Triscott.

25/046 Chairman’s welcome

Mrs Grotier welcomed everyone to the meeting.

25/047 Apologies of Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr T Sanders and Mrs J Triscott. Apologies were also received for Cllr Hare who would be arriving late.

25/048 Declaration of Pecuniary Interests and Personal Interests

Mrs Grotier declared a personal interest in item 20/051(iii) due to her husband being involved with and her son playing football for Elmstead FC.

25/049 Approval and signing of the minutes from the meeting of 29th May 2025

It was resolved to accept the minutes from the meeting of 29th May 2025 as true and accurate. Proposed: Cllr Ward, Seconded: Mr Wright, all in favour.

25/050 Public Speaking

Mr Beard spoke in favour of keeping the changing rooms and football on the playing field. He had reviewed the concerns raised about football on the playing field. He noted the difficulties with the council not being able to directly charge a fee for a club to use the field (due to it not having a legal interest in the field) but previous to Reed Hall Sentinels FC clubs weren’t charged a fee. A fee could be charged for the changing rooms in the new community centre as they will be owned by the PC.

There is a concern regarding a councillor having to get involved with games being called off due to weather and pitch conditions. Football has been played on there since 1971 with games never being called off. The school is calling the games off to protect the field for their use but it’s the PC’s time at the weekend.

With the new trees on the playing field Mr Beard stated that it’s not big enough for an adult pitch, but Charity Field is. The residents adjacent to Charity Field asked for youth football on that field, but it will need to be adult now.

If the pitch is being messed up then the PC should look to whether the school should be playing on a Saturday during non-school time, particularly as they don’t pay anything for their time.

He has spoken to Elmstead Market FC, which has a lot of residents playing in it, and they are struggling to find a home. They wanted to run a women’s team and got substantial interest but they weren’t able to play without facilities. There is an urgent need for football facilities, the changing rooms will be used for football and for other activities.

The community centre has been a long time in the making, with plans agreed for over 10 years, how much extra would be spent to change the design to remove changing rooms and add an extra hall? Mr Beard checked with Mr Fairweather and the 2 current halls are never fully booked, so a third hall is a strange idea.

Mr Roberts spoke on behalf of Elmstead Market FC. It formed 2 years ago and has had 6 different home grounds. They aim to have their club in Elmstead. They had 14 women interested in a women’s team but St Osyth (their current ground) wasn’t interested. They have 7 youth teams that were ready to go this summer but with nowhere to play. They can only play at St Osyth on a Saturday and they would have needed a Sunday too. They want to be part of and give back to this community. A lot of their players are from here, some grew up

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here. The current situation isn't working. Last year they paid £135/game/team and spent more money than they made.

Mr Hunter (Wivenhoe United coach for under 14s) is an Elmstead resident. Wivenhoe United currently play on King George Field in Wivenhoe. They have just under 10 teams in the U8s to U14s playing in the Colchester and District League on Sundays only. They offer free football for children. Parents don't pay anything other than to cover the costs to the club through fundraising and donations. They also contribute to the maintenance of the field at King Goerge. They also use another location. They don't currently have a need for changing rooms for these age groups.

The whole of the U8s team are at Elmstead Primary School. There are Elmstead village children spread throughout the age groups.

They would like to use the pitches in Elmstead as a home ground.

They are starting to form a teenage and an adult team but they play elsewhere. They tried to use a pitch in Great Bromley but the Colchester District League said it couldn't be used with no facilities.

It was asked if the 2 teams could merge? They could discuss this outside the meeting.

The clerk explained that the playing field belongs to Essex County Council and it needs to approve any use of the field and no club can be given permission to play without an agreement in place. The agreement is expensive for the PC.

It was raised that the surface at Charity Field is not good and needs work.

It was asked if the plans for the changing rooms are adequate for football clubs – they are, they meet the requirements. Youth teams don't need changing rooms but there do need to be toilets available.

25/051 Work stages 4a (building regulation stage) and 4b (tender stage) and pre-commencement conditions.

- i) *An update from the meeting with DCB and Brontide to ask questions on the drawings from Brontide for the preliminary M&E designs and Superstructures for the preliminary foundation and steelwork designs.*

Cllr Gladwin reported that all the changes the committee raised were agreed. Cllr Fairweather raised further queries. Q) Are they putting the power and BT feed into the Scout Store? No, this was spoken about at the meeting and it's going into the plant room.

Q) What about batteries? We could have a domestic battery for the solar panels. There was a discussion on how many would be needed. Some of the solar energy will go to the grid with a feed in tariff. There are four air exchangers running all the time which will need power. We can decide on the exact batteries when it comes to the tender. It was thought 12-16kW storage would be needed, perhaps a little higher. There are 36 solar panels.

Q) Where did a Rationale steam oven come from? It was talked about in the past. A range cooker is preferred, we don't have the money for an expensive cooker. There was a disagreement on whether we need a commercial kitchen. Other village halls don't have commercial kitchens. No official decision has been made. The previous discussions were to calculate what the energy requirements would be. Further past discussions led towards the kitchen being done after the building as a separate project.

Q) Why is there a screen for the seating area? This is to get an electric point in case we want a screen.

Q) What happened with the lights? It will probably increase to 12. It will depend on what fittings we have.

Q) What happened to the suggestion for a solar iboost to heat the hot water from the solar panels? You'd need an immersion too. Could the hot water tank be used for the toilets too? Lagging the pipes was suggested to combat thermal losses. To ask if the iboost is a sensible addition.

Minutes of Meeting on 26th June 2025
Elmstead Parish Council – New Community Centre Committee
Community Centre, School Road, Elmstead Market, CO7 7ET

Cllr Hare asked if we have the drawings for foundations and steels yet? Not yet.

ii) To review the first draft of the potential finishes schedule.

It was asked why we are looking at the finishes now, before it's built. The architect needs it for the QS to price everything. Colour doesn't really matter at this stage, it's more the materials. Some members thought it looks old fashioned. Others liked it. It was agreed to have the materials listed in the finishes schedule, other than perhaps vinyl instead of carpet for the office. It was questioned whether vinyl would be better than carpet for the small hall. It might be too clinical with all vinyl, and if we have carpet tiles we can replace those that get stained. The grey is too light though. It was commented that with the hard water we have it will start to stain the dark colours in the changing rooms.

Mr Fairweather asked why the windows and doors have been changed from white to anthracite, as it was agreed it would be white. At the PC meeting after the meeting where white was agreed it was raised that the council didn't have the correct information to make that decision as they were told that all of the houses on that estate have white windows. The council checked with the architect as to what would be best as a planning condition.

Some committee members preferred grey and some preferred white.

Cllr Hare raised that the external door is listed as UPVC. It should be metal. To query with DCB.

Mrs Grotier asked about the doors with no glass panels. They are for the stores, lobbies, changing rooms and toilets.

iii) To consider issues for arranging for football teams to play on the field behind Market Field School and the impact that could potentially have on the provision of changing rooms.

It was asked if there was s106 money ring fenced for changing rooms. There is about £200k of the open spaces s106 contributions that can be used for changing rooms. We don't know exactly what the cost of the changing rooms is and whether the £200k will cover it. It was noted that it will be beneficial for other activities and the changing rooms will future proof against any other activities that will come forward. It will be a new facility and benefit for the village that it hasn't had before.

If we did decide to use the space for something else it wouldn't change the planning permission because it's all internal. In the short term, getting youth teams playing on the playing field we don't need changing rooms. In the longer term we could look at adding an external changing room block?

It was responded that internal changing rooms were planned from the start and give a better aesthetic. It would be good to have the continuity for players from youth to adult teams. There is no lack of demand for football field. However it's not the demand that's the problem. Reed Hall encountered problems for the 7 teams playing on the playing field. They had to find other places to play because of the state of the pitches. They couldn't play for 5 weeks because of the extremely wet weather. There were issues between them and the school and its team. They didn't want to leave but felt they had to. The trees were planted to help with the drainage.

Members of the public commented that the playing field has good drainage and is a good surface for football, and has been rarely seen with problems.

The school does have a say on the state of the field because what the PC does in its time does impact their use of the field during their time. There was a disagreement on this and what the agreement says in that the school can't dictate what happens outside of their hours. It was asked whether the school has the right to use the field on a Saturday. That permission would have been included in the new agreement with ECC.

Minutes of Meeting on 26th June 2025
Elmstead Parish Council – New Community Centre Committee
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It was raised that originally the school got permission from the PC to play on Saturday if they cut the grass and lined the pitches. If ECC give permission to the school to play Saturdays should there be a reduction in the fee for the PC?

It was requested that having a youth club on the playing field be on the PC agenda next week. Cllr Gladwin said that we don't have the councillors available to deal with disputes at the weekends. There was a discussion about the cancelling of games should be a H&S issue only, not a pitch condition issue. It's only the landowner (ECC) or the referee who can cancel a game.

It was reported that a team is playing on the field on a Saturday afternoon, not known by the PC. To check with Cllr Chable.

iv) *Any other updates?*

None.

25/052 Funding update

i) *To review the current funding.*

The committee reviewed the available funding to the end of May. There have been additional invoices since the last update so the total has decreased.

ii) *Any update on potential additional funding or the public survey.*

No updates. Mr Fairweather asked about the timing as he can't see any progress.

25/053 Any other updates

None.

25/054 Matters raised for the next agenda or for information only

None.

25/055 Date of next committee meeting

Mrs Grotier and Cllr Gladwin may not be here for the July meeting, Mrs Baxter won't be here. We'll see nearer the time.

The meeting closed at 8.39pm.

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