

Minutes of Extra Ordinary Parish Council Meeting on 25th February 2026
Meeting of Elmstead Parish Council
Community Centre, School Road, Elmstead Market, CO7 7ET

Present: Cllrs Adam Gladwin (Chairman), Amanda Brennan, Liz Richfield, Tony Sanders
Martine Ward.

Also Present: Mrs Baxter (clerk).

Absent: Cllrs James Chable, Michael Hare and Maxine Jeggo.

26/042 Chairman's welcome and notifications.

26/043 Apologies for Absence.

Apologies were received from Cllrs Chable, Hare and Jeggo.

26/044 Declaration of Pecuniary Interests and Personal Interests.

None.

26/045 Approval and signing of the minutes from 5th February 2026.

This was held over until the next meeting as they weren't ready.

26/046 Public Speaking

No public present.

26/047 New Community Centre and Open Space land.

i) A general update on the value engineering process.

Last week we had an informal catch-up with Lexden Contracts at their offices. We then had a meeting today with them, DCB, our QS and Brontide. We went through value engineering. We've covered it for most things, the questions left are to do with the heating, hot water and changing rooms. There was a long discussion on the underfloor heating. If we change to air-to-air heat pumps it won't be much cheaper. The underfloor heating would be a little cheaper to run, but not as reactive. You could keep it as a steady temperature all the time, but if you needed temperature changes between groups the air-to-air system would be better. This would be a big redesign for them to do and with no cost benefit do we do it? One option is to have a small commercial air-to-air system that could be installed in addition to the underfloor heating, so if the heating needs a boost, you can use it to increase the temperature quickly. That would also function as an air conditioner. This would be an extra cost. We need to wait and see what they come back with.

If we make changes it will hold up the start of the build, but with the BNG still outstanding we won't be able to start building anyway. We'll need to speak to people to try and get it through as quickly as possible.

The clerk has received an e-mail from Mr Smith of Market Field School to say that the school wants to take over the playing field. We have a meeting with him tomorrow to find out more and it will be brought back to the next council meeting. If we don't have the playing field, do we need the changing rooms? We spoke about this at the meeting today. They said that if they took out the changing room fittings it would be tens of thousands of pounds savings, more if we scale down the hot water system as we would not need the big cylinders. Our QS thought that it would be an overall saving of less than £100k. However we have £200k we can put into the building for the changing rooms, so we would be worse off on our funding for the building. It can be spent on open spaces instead.

The school is interested in purchasing the current community centre. If we can do it with a lease back arrangement we can use that money towards the new community centre.

Cllr Gladwin suggested that if the school does get the field, could we keep a strip down the side.

Cllr Sanders suggested we investigate what the current community centre would be worth if we had outline planning permission for it. We got evaluations last year but not with outline

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planning. Our Neighbourhood Development Order was for up to 9 units, and that was too many, so perhaps it could be for up to 8. Cllr Sanders will speak to an estate agent family member to ask for advice. The clerk will send Cllr Sanders details of the Fenn Wright contact who gave us the valuation last year.

From a commercial aspect it's a good location. Retail or office space.

ii) Biodiversity net gain planning condition:

a) An update on the current situation.

This is a big sticking point. Ecology Essex did our previous BNG but they are not responding. Cllr Sanders has been trying to track down the ecologist who also works for Arbtech Consulting, a national ecology specialist. They are happy to give us a quote. Cllr Sanders will request that and provide them with the landscape plan which the clerk will send to him.

The clerk tried to find an alternative and contacted Ground Control, who were recommended to us by Lexden Contracts. They are willing to help but they don't have an ecologist so they won't be able to complete the BNG work for us.

Looking at the Place Services Response to the BNG condition it doesn't look as if they had sight of the landscaping plan, which answers some of their missing information questions. The plan shows where the trees are going to go. Mr Pateman-Gee confirmed they didn't have that landscape plan. He also said we will need a s106 agreement for the BNG, so we will need to pay the legal fees for that.

Cllr Sanders suggested that we change the location we are achieving the BNG to the field where there is more space and it doesn't affect what we are doing on the new community centre site so much.

The clerk will ask Mr Pateman-Gee about the impact of moving some or all of the BNG onto the field. What would happen if we split the BNG? If we do move it we'll need to do a new landscaping plan.

b) Next steps regarding the work Ecology Essex did.

Ecology Essex was only formed in July last year and are not returning any calls. It's strange because they didn't exist when they quoted originally and it was Matthew Game Consultancy who invoiced for the work. Cllr Sanders will continue to try and contact them. Cllr Gladwin offered to help.

c) A quote received from Planning Direct to complete the BNG pre-commencement condition.

We have a quote from Planning Direct to do the work that is required. The quote includes an updated BNG Report, BNG Matrix and Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan. DCB sent them the refusal information and they quoted for the work they believe is required.

We need to be really clear on what they are delivering, it needs to be clear that they will be doing all the work required to complete the condition. The clerk will contact them directly and ask for an itemised written quote.

iii) Any other updates.

Cllr Gladwin asked Lexden Contracts about the potential for installing land drains as they build the community centre. They have quoted a cost per metre. It is needed to improve the drainage. We have open spaces s106 funds we can use to pay for this. The clerk shared information regarding a £43k plus indexation open spaces fund still to be triggered. We have another £57k which is ring fenced for recreational facilities. We don't know how much of the Lanswood s106 will be left after expenditure on the car park.

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26/048 Exclusion of press and public for private and confidential matters under Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 s.1(2) as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.
Not necessary as no public present.

26/049 New Community Centre.
A more detailed update on the value engineering process.
Nothing to add on what has already been discussed. The figures are still being refined.

26/050 Date of next meeting
5th March 2026.

The meeting closed at 6.40pm.
There being no further business councillors were thanked for their attendance.
Minutes written by Mrs. A Baxter.