

Meeting: **Clapham Parish Council**
19th September 2023 at 7.30pm

Council Members in attendance: Cllr. Phillipa Simms, Chair (PS)
Cllr. Sarah Walker (SW)
Cllr. Ian Gaskin (IG)
Cllr. John Keech (JK)
Cllr. Allan Prudham (AP)
Cllr. Nigel Sparrow (NS)
Cllr. Tamsin Bromley-Rahike (TBR)
Cllr Eric Cooper (EC)
Cllr John Reid (JR)
Cllr. Michael Walmsley (MW)
Cllr. Charlie Tompkins (CT)
Cllr. Jacky Fraser (JF)

Apologies received:

Non-attendance: Cllr. Dora Ornithari
Cllr. Adrian Langley

Borough Council Members Present: Cllr. Jon Abbott
Borough Cllr. Jane Walker

Clerk to the Council: Rosemary Plum (RP)

Public Attendance 1 resident

MINUTES OF MEETING

1. Apologies for Absence

None received.

2. Declarations of Interest

The following declarations were recorded:

- Cllr. Jacky Fraser – allotment holder
- Cllr. Eric Cooper – allotments
- Cllr. Phillipa Simms – Chair of Village Hall Committee
- Cllr. Charlie Tomkins – family connection to JDT Consultants but not involved in any of the negotiating processes.

3. Open Forum

- AP raised serious concern about the standard of work carried out by Bedford Borough Council in the replace of the footbridge over Kings Ditch on Footpath 14 with a culvert. RP confirmed she is in conversation with the Borough about the quality of the repairs undertaken.

RP

- AP advised that Bedford Borough Council painted the white lines at the wrong bus stop in Highbury Grove. RP will take up with Borough Council.

RP

4. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes were agreed as a true reflection of the meeting and signed by the Chair.

PROPOSED BY: Cllr Nigel Sparrow

SECONDED BY: Cllr John Reid

5. Matters Arising from the Minutes (for information only)

Nothing reported.

6. Clerk's Report (for information only)

- I. Clapham Parish Council is still awaiting permission from Borough Tree Officer to go ahead with prune/pollarding Coronation Tree on corner of Green Lane.
- II. Cleaning of road signs has been requested.
- III. Borough has cleared brambles along the A6 cycle path and grass verges have been cut.
- IV. Some residents have complained about grass verges being cut as they feel it's not an environmentally friendly policy. It's Borough policy to cut at this time of year to allow re-seeding for spring next year.
- V. Article published on back page of last edition of Village News giving information on what to do in event of flooding.
- VI. Formal thanks have been given to the team who recovered the litter bins from the river.
- VII. RP visited new culvert over Kings Ditch on Footpath 14 and will provide to the Borough Council Footpaths Officer, photos of the appalling quality of the work and the state in which the site was left. **RP**
- VIII. Footpaths officer promised to clear the site 3 weeks ago but no action has been taken. **RP**
- IX. RP is in conversation with Borough Highways department about a number of issues. **RP**
- X. Annual Governance and Accountability Report has been submitted for external audit **RP**

7. Police Matters

a) Crime Figures

- I. RP has distributed report to all Councillors. The data received from the Police is becoming more limited and is now issued every 2 weeks.
- II. Increased number of sirens through the village has been noticed in recent weeks, maybe due to closed by-pass.
- III. Concerns raised about police unwillingness follow up anti-social behaviour despite evidence being provided.
- IV. NS recommended that all Councillors and residents complete the Borough Citizens Survey

b) ASB issues - Richard Fuller meeting 01/09

- I. Councillors are extremely frustrated that anti-social behaviour incidents are being reported to police with names, addresses and evidence but we're receiving no response or support.
- II. Richard Fuller MP has taken this up with the Chief Constable and is organizing for him to attend a Parish Council meeting. Acknowledgement has been received and we are awaiting a date.
- III. Clapham, along with other villages, has been affected by anti-social behaviour over the years and we have never received adequate support from any authorities.
- IV. We need to prepare a clear, concise and focused set of requests and objectives for the Chief Constable when he visits, with key actions and demands.
- V. Clapham Parish Council has invited the Police & Crime Commissioner to Parish Council meetings in the past. We should make reference to his 7-point plan for tackling crime in Bedfordshire.
- VI. This type of behaviour is not only creating damage but also causing fear in the Community. Signs of residents being concerned to go onto allotments or be out later in the day.

8. Borough Council Report

a) Update from Borough Councillors

Cllr. Jane Walker reported that:

- I. Contract for new leisure facilities management team has been put to tender with deadline beginning Oct. Borough is hoping to appoint somebody new for a 2yr contract with option to extend. Lot of interest so far.
- II. Mayor of Bedford has issued his new vision for leisure in November 2024.
- III. RAAC – by end of this week, all Borough schools will have had intrusive surveys. So far a small amount of RAAC has been identified at Great Barford Academy but a serious problem has been identified at Bedford Modern School.
- IV. TBR asked whether we should be concerned about RAAC in buildings other than schools. Borough is checking their whole estate but schools are the priority.
- V. 181% increase in homelessness in last 2 years. The Borough is facing an overspend this year of at least £6m. People being kept in hotel accommodation using the Government Public Health grant. These

residents are slowly being moved into residential accommodation.
620 people affected in April 2023.

- VI. Rural Affairs Committee has been disbanded. Rural affairs grants can still be applied for and they will be reviewed on application with immediate decision. Criteria remain the same.
- VII. Rural Prosperity Funding of up to £20k also available.

Cllr. Jon Abbot reported that:

- I. A6 due to be reopened northbound 1st Oct 2023. North and south-bound closures overnight from 2nd to 19th Oct between Highfield Rd and Milton Ernest for resurfacing.
- II. Oakley River Bridges will be shut from 28th October for repairs as long as the A6 work is completed as planned by 24th October.
- III. Borough funding remains very tight and budgeting process currently ongoing.
- IV. Stage Coach are re-timing the 51 service.
- V. Grant Palmer being brought to account by Borough Council over quality of their services.
- VI. Ward Fund monies are calculated per elector and money is allocated where needed within the ward. Our Borough Councillors will work together for the benefit of both Clapham and Oakley villages.
- VII. CT asked our Borough Councillors to put pressure on Bedford Borough to sort the flooding under the Oakley Road bridges. Portfolio Holder, Cllr. Jim Weir has told the Borough to start legal proceedings against Network Rail.

9. Environment Committee

a) Report from Environment Committee meeting 11/7/23

NS gave a summary of the meeting. Minutes are available on the website.

b) Proposals for ratification

- I. Great deal of investigation carried out in summer which revealed a huge amount of overgrown areas on the allotments site.
- II. We now have a waiting list for allotment plots so it's essential to start clearing the areas.

PROPOSAL: To contract JDT Consultants to carry out the tree and land maintenance work listed including: Dog walking area – flail hedges; reduce 3 maples on various plots; trim re-growth of Millennium Park hedge; prune 30 overhanging maple trees along Footpath 14; clear overgrown vegetation; remove strip of self-set cherries.

RP

Total cost: £1,670 + VAT

PROPOSED: Cllr. Nigel Sparrow

SECONDED: Cllr. Ian Gaskin

VOTE: Unanimously in favour of work being carried out.

PROPOSAL: To set up a local round table meeting to discuss anti-social behaviour with partners and stakeholder. This event should include a hard-hitting feature in the December Village News outlining the financial and moral cost to the Parish of this type of behaviour.

RP

PROPOSED: Cllr. Nigel Sparrow

SECONDED: Cllr. John Keech

VOTE: Unanimously in favour

c) Riverside Gardens

- I. We now have 10 volunteers for the maintenance group who are working hard on planting bulbs and shrubs.
- II. Bark chippings will be provided by JDT Consultants.
- III. Advance notice is required is a Christmas event is to be held in Riverside Gardens as a number of areas will need to be protected from damage.

PS

d) Millennium Park

No update so far from BRCC.

RP

e) Grass Cutting

- I. It's not been an easy season and the weather has caused problems.
- II. The Parish will be going out to tender for grass cutting next year. Quotes to be in by December in time for budgets.

RP

f) Highways

- I. AWA – leak ongoing. Borough were going to liaise with AWA but haven't heard anything. They can't hear where the leak is because their listening equipment is not adequate enough so they need to apply for the water to be turned off which will cause low pressure. PS and NS met with AWA representatives.

NS/PS

g) Gullies

- I. Despite regular and repeated reporting of blocked gullies, certain streets haven't been touched.
- II. Call for all Councillors to check their areas of responsibility in the next few days and check whether attention is required.
- III. Important for the flood group to know the situation. Notify NS and RP on the areas and provide photos where possible.
- IV. Copies of lists will be sent to Borough Councillors for their support.

RP

h) Litter Picking

- I. The Close and Alleyway between shops absolutely appalling.
- II. Oakley PC employ a litter picker 8hrs/wk with an area map and paid for. This is proving successful. Volunteers not as effective.
- III. Clapham had a P3 group in Clapham in recent years with volunteers.
- IV. Consider approaching current volunteers to see if they would be interested in a paid for post.

i) Flood Group

- I. Everything under control, sand has been moved to JK and we have flood signs.

j) Other matters

- I. Formal thanks given to MW who, after discussion at the Environment Committee, cleared the churchyard walls of ivy and brambles within 48hrs.
- II. We want to create a 4-year project plan and allocate funds in the annual precepts.
- III. EC requested that JW and/or JA get a copy of the Borough gulley cleaning schedule for the year together with an inspection plan.
- IV. CT raised concern about the number of gardens being lost over the years as taken over by driveways. Reduction of land in this way means less drainage potential. Current building control requires paving to be permeable but we have historic paving to which this doesn't apply.

JW/JA

10. East West Rail

a) Update on latest developments

- I. Nothing to report on EWR.
- II. BeFare have requested Councillor sign the objection letter recently presented to the Minister. Recent cross-Borough action has raised some attention.
- III. JW spoke to Mike Barlow who suggested that BeFare are going to be calling for the whole project to be cancelled rather than push for the Southern Route.
- IV. News we heard today about saving money on HS2 is timely to point out potential to save further £7bn.
- V. We have to recognize there are still people who feel EWR is a good thing. It would be far easier to stop EWR at this stage rather than stop HS2 now.
- VI. We still want costing figures for the latest EWR route which is the most expensive in money and destruction.
- VII. Clapham Parish Council will support BeFare but want to see completion of HS2 before Bedford-Cambridge is started.

b) Public meeting with Mayor and Bedford Borough Council 12/10/23

- I. This meeting is purely with the Mayor and Borough officer to clarify any questions. No EWR reps will be present.
- II. Nobody will be turned away and tickets are not imperative.
- III. We don't want millions to be spent and then the project isn't completed and needs more money.

- IV. It's suggested the Government wants the connection between Oxford and Cambridge to join two world class research centres, thereby creating a definition of benefit. Is this the main or only reason?

11. Planning Committee

a) Applications Decided

Report was distributed to all Councillors.

b) Current Applications

- I. Milton Road developer have put forward amendments but they don't appear to address our original issues.
- II. Clapham Parish Council has re-iterated its original concerns expressed with its objection to the planning proposal earlier this year.
- III. The amended application is expected to go to Borough Planning Committee on 16th October.

c) Fetlock Close application update

- I. Clapham Parish Council has objected to an application submitted for the building of two houses, by the purchasers of the land.
- II. Our objection is now in tandem with the Village Green application which we will be accepted before the application progresses.
- III. Borough Highways said they cannot support the planning application.
- IV. Parish Council hopes the Village Green application which was registered in February 2023 will have been heard and decided by the Borough before the objection by the developer.

12. Communication

a) Areas of Responsibility

The following areas have been designated to each Councillor:

ALL

- Cllr. Eric Cooper: The Glebe estate north (Fox Close/Hulme Close to Spriggs Close/Summers Close)
- Cllr. Tamsin Bromley-Rahike: Cody Road, Bents Close, Knights Avenue
- Cllr. Phillipa Simms: The Baulk and Peppercorn Park
- Cllr. Sarah Walker: Mount Pleasant Road, Queens Crescent, Kings Street, George Street
- Cllr. Ian Gaskin: Highbury Grove (from The Slade to the High Street), The Close, High Street (Highbury Grove to the Suzuki garage)
- Cllr. John Keech: High Street (Horse & Groom to Highbury Grove), Ursula Taylor Walk, Preservine Walk, The Warren
- Cllr. Adrian Langley: The Glebe estate south (Loak Close/Birbeck Close to Miller Close)
- Cllr. Dora Ornithari: Oakley Road, Hunters Close, Folly Park
- Cllr. Allan Prudham: Lanchester Close, The Slade, Highbury Grove (from The Slade)
- Cllr. Nigel Sparrow: Green Lane, Church View, Carriage Drive footpath

- Cllr John Reid: Duke Drive, Milton Road
- Cllr. Michael Walmsley: Bedford Road
- Cllr. Charlie Tompkins: Three Valleys Farm, The Baulk, Clapham, MK41 6AA
- Cllr. Jacky Fraser: Horse estate, Twinwood Road

b) Christmas Event

- I. Meeting date tbc.
- II. Christmas lights training being organised by RP

13. Allotment Committee

a) Report from Allotment Committee meeting 18/9/23

- I. Meeting went very well –Allotment Committee working very well together. Feeling with plot holders that everything is moving ahead well.
- II. Tenancy agreement updated and will be sent out with October invoice.
- III. Discussion for proposal for the rent review from April 2025. Proposed increase to £30 from current £20 – this is a considerable increase and there may be push back but with work being done to allotment, we will be able to demonstrate more value for money
- IV. Considerable waiting list even before new development.
- V. Clapham Allotments will still be the lowest cost rental compared to neighbouring villages.
- VI. Discussed and agreed to continue with the 50% reduction for senior citizens on the first 5 pole only.
- VII. Discussion for a cash float to be held by RP for Allotment Committee small expenditures. **RP**

PROPOSAL: Clerk to hold £300 cash float to reimburse Allotment Committee members for expenses e.g. paint, maintenance sundries without the need for ratification for Parish Council.

PROPOSED: Cllr. Sarah Walker

SECONDED Cllr. Tamsin Bromley-Rahike

- VIII. Serious concern about anti-social behaviour and vandalism. Quite a lot of plot holders are older visit allotments alone.
- IX. Security is a major issue. As landlords we have a duty of care to those who rent plots. Allotment Association is getting quotes for supply and erection of security fencing along FP14.
- X. Investigate contracting services of a security firm to patrol the allotments and possibly the village in general.
- XI. Need to align allotment financial year from 1st October to Clapham Parish Council f/y start of 1st April as proposed by Parish financial auditors and adjust invoicing accordingly. **RP**

PROPOSAL: To invoice plot holders from 1st October 2023 for 6months at the 2023-24 fee and issue a further invoice on 1st April 2024 for 12 months with 6 mnths charged at the 2023-24 fee plus 6 months charged at the 2024-25 fee.

RP

PROPOSED: Cllr. John Keech

SECONDED: Cllr. Allan Prudham

14. Burial Ground

a) Update

RP

- I. More reserved plot markers (50) have been ordered.
- II. IG/NS/RP will meet on-site in October to discuss avenues and trees

15. Highways

a) Update

- I. Leak in Cody Road to be reported.
- II. No contraflow on A6 by-pass resurfacing as road isn't wide enough for barriers and crossover for safe travel of HGV's. Already an £11m project and this would have added even more cost.
- III. Roundabout is deemed a high accident risk so coned off

16. Village Hall

a) Update

- I. Electrical refurbishment ongoing.
- II. Investigations into creation of more car parking space ongoing.
- III. PS has spent time with Jean Coy following the sad news of the passing of Mick Coy.
- IV. Formal condolences will be sent on behalf of the Parish Council and a donation in place of flowers will be made in line with the wishes of the family.

17. Finance

a) Payment of Accounts

The accounts as circulated prior to the meeting were approved.

PROPOSED: Cllr Ian Gaskin

SCONDED: Cllr Sarah Walker

b) Streetlight handover payment schedule

- I. Very protracted schedule of works to bring the streetlights already owned by the Parish up to standard in preparation for handover to Borough Council.
- II. Borough has apologised for delay. We have to pay approx. £10k to Borough for them to take over the lights. This cost has been previously ratified
- III. Borough assurance given that they will be responsible for the electricity charges immediately on handover.

PROPOSAL: to pay the sum of £10k to Bedford Borough Council over a period of 10 years.

PROPOSED: Cllr. John Reid

SECONDED: Cllr. Ian Gaskin

RP

18. Correspondence

- Correspondence list has been distributed to all Councillors.
- Thanks given by AP for the cleaning around the garages in Cody Road

19. Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday, 17th October 2023 in the Methodist Church Hall

The meeting was closed by the Chair at 21:20hrs

Signed as a true reflection of the meeting:

Signed	
Dated	17 th October 2023

Chair