

Meeting:	CLAPHAM PARISH COUNCIL 20 th February 2024 at 7.00pm
Council Members in attendance:	Cllr. Phillipa Simms, Chair (PS) Cllr. Tamsin Bromley-Rahike (TBR) Cllr. Ali Dove (AD) Cllr. Jacky Fraser (JF) Cllr. Ian Gaskin (IG) Cllr. John Keech (JK) Cllr. Adrian Langley (AL) Cllr. Michael Walmsley (MW) Cllr. Nigel Sparrow (NS) Cllr. Sarah Walker (SW)
Apologies received:	Cllr. John Reid (JR) Cllr. James Petrides (JP) Cllr. Charlie Tompkins (CT) Cllr Eric Cooper (EC)
Non-attendance:	Cllr. Allan Prudham (AP)
Borough Council Members Present:	Cllr. Jane Walker – late arrival Cllr. Jon Abbott (JA)
Guest Speakers:	1. Deputy Police & Crime Commissioner Ian Dalgarno Ian Dalgarno (ID) 2. Deputy Mayor & Portfolio Holder for Environment, Highways & Transport Cllr Jim Weir (JWe)
Clerk to the Council:	Rosemary Plum (RP)
Public Attendance:	None

MINUTES OF MEETING

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from the following members:

- Cllr. John Reid (JR)
- Cllr. James Petrides (JP)
- Cllr. Charlie Tompkins (CT)
- Cllr Eric Cooper (EC)

2. Declarations of Interest

- Cllr. Jacky Fraser declared she is an allotment holder.
- Cllr. Phillipa Simms is Chair of the Village Hall Committee.

3. Open Forum

Nothing to report

4. Minutes of Previous Meeting

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

PROPOSED: Cllr. John Keech

SECONDED: Cllr. Adrian Langley

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

None reported.

6. Clerk's Report (for information only)

All matters covered on the Agenda for this meeting.

7. Police Matters

a) Q+A with Deputy Police & Crime Commissioner Ian Dalgarno

- ID gave thanks for being invited and outlined his role in engaging with Parish Councils and the wider public. Over 130 Town and Parish Council's in Bedfordshire.
- Big issues overall in policing and Bedfordshire is no different. Our local Force is funded as a rural police force but Bedfordshire also include the Metropolitan Borough of Luton as well as Luton Airport.
- Government has given additional funding allowing an increase to 1,456 warranted Police Officers Bedfordshire and this will increase further to 1,466 by end of year. This will then represent the largest Police Force we've ever had in Bedfordshire.
- Bedfordshire also has the youngest age demographic police force in the Country which bodes well for the future.
- The Police & Crime Commission wants to see more police officers in the local communities.
- Policing has changed massively over the years. The largest type of crime the police deal with is online, where the primary target is the elderly. A lot of investment and resources going into this.
- Huge resource being invested in public contact with the police. Calling times into control room on 101 or 99 have dramatically reduced.
- Bedfordshire Police undertake a lot of work on crime in rural areas. Farming communities are being very heavily targeted with farmers losing GPS tracker units through theft and which are then shipped to Eastern Europe. Hare Coursing is a huge issue in the County. It's organized crime giving rise to hundreds of thousands of pounds changing hands in the process of the activity.
- Bedfordshire Police receive £140m funding from Government. They are trying to get a review to improve this figure as they are not receiving the amount of funding they need to operate successfully. When compared to Metropolitan Police funding criteria, Bedfordshire would have an additional 400 police officers.
- The police are very aware of the issues of anti-social behaviour and drug dealing in all local villages. The Government is providing grants to help

tackle these issues, particularly ASB. More information will be provided to the Clerk reading the sponsorship of youth engagement.

- Blue light services do not get funding. Bedfordshire is the largest growth area in term of housing in the country.
- Large piece of work going on with Fire, Ambulance and Public Health for partnership working.
- Riseley Police Station is manned by volunteers and open to the public one day a week on Wednesdays.
- Huge recruitment drive for Special Constables and concentrating on deployment in area where they live.
- In view of the size of Clapham Parish, ID feels there must be opportunity for a police officer to be based in a rural community room.
- ID explained that Police Commissioners cannot tell the courts what to do but they are working with them in different ways to explain the crimes we are facing.
- Parish Councillors called for more proactive policing as police currently seem unwilling to pursue anything that will not result in a conviction.
- Police Commissioner is working a lot with retail sector and independent shop owners to tackle and prevent shoplifting in the future.
- The Police work to heatmaps. It's therefore important to report everything all the time as resource is invested into areas with the highest levels of crime based on the reporting.
- Facial recognition systems are being introduced into Bedfordshire Police.
- PS gave thanks to the Riseley based Police Team and highlighted the marked improvement in communication between them and the Parish Council since the arrival of Inspector Goldsmith. The Parish Council feels there is real partnership working now in place including a Charity Football with local police and Clapham Football Club involvement.

b) Motorhouse parking issues – update

- I. PS / RP had a positive meeting with owner and accountant of Motorhouse, Inspector Russell Goldsmith and PC Mark Hancock.
- II. Agreements have been reached that no commercial cars will be parked in the Village Hall car park. Staff cars maybe temporarily parked in the car park when they manoeuvre stock.
- III. Motorhouse have put up signs up to stop customers and prospects parking on double yellow lines.
- IV. Resolutions have been made specifically with police involvement who will hold the Company accountable.
- V. Motorhouse have agreed to sponsor local events on request by the Parish Council.

8. Highways

a) Q+A with Deputy Mayor & Portfolio Holder for Environment, Highways & Transport Cllr Jim Weir

- JWe introduced his role and outlined his experience as a Borough and Parish Councillor.
- Drainage vehicles double up as gritting vehicles in the winter hence the shortage of vehicles to accomplish both tasks at the same time.
- Borough is getting close to achieving funding agreement to support bus services.
- Council tax will have a maximum 4.99% increase for 2024-25 to cover the costs of work urgently required across the Borough which is in a situation of high demand on low resource.
- NS gave thanks to Borough for completion of extension to Browns Wood country park and noted appreciation to the Borough Officers who worked on that project.
- Thanks given for action taken with the Oakley Railway bridge. For years the Parish Council been chasing a sensible answer and it feels it's admirable that the Borough Council has taken the initiative to sue Network Rail.
- The questions was asked whether the Borough is going to come away from expenditure in central (town) areas and concentrate more on rural needs. JWe explained all criteria are assessed on a score based system to ensure fairness for all.
- The following specific issues were raised for the attention of Cllr. Weir:
 - Kings Ditch: Borough carried out works on FP14 replacing bridge with small diameter culvert. Parish Clerk has requested this be examined and rectified with no action to date. Parish Council has spent a lot of money clearing the debris and maintaining the free flow of water but we're now at risk of heavy flooding due to inadequate installation of culvert.
 - The Close: Parish Council has been requesting gulleys to be cleared and work to make good the area following the removal of bollards. This has led to unregulated parking and formation of large muddy filled areas along the pedestrian walkways.
 - Green Lane: Approx 7 years ago the Borough acknowledged the condition of the road at Green Lane was inadequate for the volume of traffic to access the housing developments, golf club and hotel. It was deemed "one of the worst roads in Bedford Borough, would be put into improvement programme". The road has now deteriorated further with pot holes, issues with AWA water leak, temporary repairs with the water coming back through the surface. AWA set-up and then removed everything because it was "too dangerous to work" due to volume of traffic. The Parish Council has heard nothing further about any remedial plans to resolve this situation.

- Road markings: Many throughout the village need repainting but we are constantly told by it's the wrong time or year or by the time we come to do the work, the condition of the road isn't good enough.
- Sainsbury's roundabout: 100% better following resetting of the traffic lights frequency. The Parish Council requested thought be given to a slip road off Gt Ouse way for Clapham drivers which would greatly improve traffic flow at peak times.
- Highbury Grove very busy road currently 30mph – needs consideration to slow traffic down
- Bedford Road, Clapham: Cyclist crossing point was paid for by Cllr. Walker's Ward Funding after which, the Borough Highways Officer said it was not possible to carry out the work because of traffic regulations. We are now waiting for changes which will be due with Milton Rd development but that is still years away.

b) Highways – other matters

- I. Damaged kerb in The Glebe reported at Environment Committee 13/2/24 was repaired the following morning.

9. Borough Council Reports

a) Update from Borough Cllrs

Councillor Jane Walker

- Borough annual budget approved 2 weeks ago – 4.99% increase in Council Tax going ahead.
- Green waste starts 1st March
- 4hrs free parking all week extended temporarily at Allhallows Car Park. Bus usage gone up and town centre footfall has increased.
- Greenwich Leisure now in charge of Borough Leisure Sites and all seems to be going well.

Cllr. Jon Abbott

- Mowsbury Park is flooded so closed until ground dries out.
- New all-weather mini golf in Russell Park
- Access now extended all around the rowing lake in Bedford now
- Call from Mayor for Councillor input for sports and leisure strategy. Contact JA or JW with any thoughts for groups to get involved.
- The passing of Former Mayor of Bedford, Sylvia Gillard has been announced.

10. Environment Committee

a) Update

- I. Millennium Park trees and BeActive Group covered under Playing Field Trust Agenda.
- II. Kings Ditch covered with Borough Cllr Weir at this meeting.

- III. Riverside Gardens – agreement to put shingle around the base of the 'Christmas' conifer tree up to a width of 2ft.
- IV. Agreed to turf area along the fence at the top level. Thanks to Cllr. Tompkins who will donate turf.
- V. Volunteers return to work next month.
- VI. Delighted to see Browns Wood scheme has been completed to the boundary with the burial ground. Borough doesn't have resources at present time to put in benches. RP
- VII. Tree planting will take place in autumn. RP will contact Woodland Trust to register our interest. EC has prepared a draft scheme for consideration.
- VIII. PS announced that NS will stepping down as Chair of Environment Committee after the March 2024 meeting but will remain on the Committee. There was a round of applause for the huge contribution given by NS over many years of service as a Councillor. IG will step into the role. NS gave thanks saying it's been an honour and privilege to have served as Chair of the Committee he believes to be the driving force for a lot of things in this village. He also acknowledged he's had a great team around him.

11. Allotment Committee

a) Update

- I. Minutes circulated to Councillors prior to meeting.
- II. All going extremely well. Very pleased with the way the Allotment Association is developing management of the site.
- III. Membership up to record numbers and in process of clearing another 30 plots.
- IV. Trading hut is open for the season and doing good business. Local residents and those Clapham, can buy fruit and veg plants and goods as an Associate Member.
- V. Parish Council Allotments Committee would like additional Councillor to join. TBR offered to join the Committee.

12. East West Rail

a) Update

- I. Borough Councillor Weir advised that the Mayor has received an received invitation to Parliament to take part in witness statements with National Audit Office on their findings and reports.
- II. Routes assessment shows everything is still "up in the air".
- III. The matter is with EWR who currently are only considering the north route and demanding evaluation of other options.
- IV. Bedford Borough currently still supports the North route however many Councillors would like to see a fair assessment of the alternatives. Mayor has worked towards getting evidence ready so a review could take place.
- V. Flood assessments have only been completed on one of the routes they're not going to use. Borough consultants say the investigation was

inconclusive. Full flood impact assessments will need to be done on any route being considered.

- VI. It now seems likely Clapham will be considered as a venue for consultation in future.

13. Planning Committee

a) Applications Decided

Report circulated to members prior to meeting.

b) Current Applications

Report circulated to members prior to meeting.

Retrospective Bents Close planning application for garden development was commented on.

It was also noted an application has been received for a pelican crossing near Water Treatment Works on Bedford Road. This is linked to the development for Greenacre School which is coming to fruition. School is hoping to be open by September 2024.

c) Milton Road Development – update

- PS advised this application still hasn't gone to Borough Planning Committee but may do in March 2024.
- PS, RP, Jon Shortland, Chief Officer for Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Growth, Gideon Richards, Team Leader Borough Development Management and the Project Developers are meeting next week. Clapham appears to be in line for all the inconvenience without any of the benefits and this is unacceptable.
- Parish Council has been led to believe there's a stalemate between what the Parish wants in terms of community benefits and what the developers are able to offer. The developer offering does however seem to align with Parish Council aspirations and the stalemate is with the Borough Council that is objecting.
- Clapham Parish Council and Oakley Parish Council still objecting on road safety grounds along Highfield Road. It was noted the developers are now making a financial contribution to this.
- Borough Council have asked for a recycling centre on the new housing developing site which the Parish Council will be strongly challenging.

PS/RP

14. Communication

a) Martyn's Law: Draft Anti-Terror bill for public venues and space

- I. National Association of Local Councils (NALC) has published a consultation document on this proposed Government Legislation.
- II. The legislation would not just be limited to indoor events. It will affect Parish events including Christmas lights, Clapham Show, Church events and anything other public event in a defined area.
- III. Parish Council agreed it should support the NALC review as proportional response is required.

b) Clapham Show – update

- I. Date of event will be Saturday Sept 7th 2024.
- II. Events Committee doing well with planning and Allotment Association will be managing fruit and vegetable competitions.
- III. Call for Best Kept Gardens to be considered for future shows.

c) Good Neighbours Scheme

- I. Due to launch at end of March 2024.
- II. Still need volunteers to respond to the large number of requests for help.

d) Forward planning

- I. RP will be on annual leave from 28th February to 21st March inclusive.

15. Burial Ground

a) Update

Burial ground is in good order with maintenance up to date.

16. Village Hall

a) Update

Administration is running well with a lot of ongoing maintenance work being undertaken to bring the building up to minimum legislation.

17. Finance

a) Financial Report

Circulated to members prior to the meeting.

b) Payment of Accounts

Accounts to be ratified were circulated to members prior to the meeting.

PROPOSED: Cllr. Ian Gaskin

SECONDED: Cllr. Adrian Langley

18. Correspondence

- I. Bedford Borough Council *Homeless Rough Sleeping Strategy* has been received for consultation.
- II. EC is requesting creation of WhatsApp Group for Full Parish Council. The use of WhatsApp groups was recently raised at the Bedfordshire Association of Town & Parish Councils recent meeting. Their advice was to consider the use of WhatsApp groups just for the updating of information. Any information exchanged on WhatsApp messages is still subject to FOI request. Add to March Agenda for decision as it cannot be decided without the presence of EC.

19. Date of Next Meeting

19th March 2024 – Methodist Church Hall



The meeting was closed by the Chair at 9.00pm

Signed as a true reflection of the meeting:

Signed	Chair
Dated	19 th March 2024