

Meeting Environment Committee, Clapham Parish Council
12th December 2023 at 7:00pm

Parish Council Members in attendance: Cllr. Nigel Sparrow (NS) - Chair
Cllr. John Keech (JK)
Cllr. Michael Walmsley (ML)
Cllr. Jacky Fraser (JF)
Cllr. John Reid (JR)
Cllr. Ian Gaskin (IG)
Cllr. Adrian Langley (AL)
Cllr. Charlie Tomkins (CT) - late arrival

Apologies Received: Cllr. Eric Cooper (EC)

Not in attendance:

Clerk to the Council: Rosemary Plum (RP)

Members of the Public: None

MINUTES OF MEETING

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies received from Cllr. Eric Cooper

2. Declarations of Interest

Declarations were received from:

Cllr. Jacky Fraser – allotment holder

3. Open Forum (*Open to the public for 10 minutes*)

4. Minutes of Previous Meeting held 14th November 2023

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

PROPOSED: Cllr. John Keech

SECONDED: Cllr. Ian Gaskin

5. Matters Arising (*for information only*)

Non reported

6. Clerk's Report (*for information only*)

See individual items below.

7. Allotments

a) Trees and ditch – updates

Everything looking good following recent maintenance work.

8. Riverside Gardens

a) Update

- Volunteer team are taking a break for a couple of months over winter.
- Grass is expected to recover from effects of cherry picker used to set xmas lights.
- It was agreed the lights look brilliant this year.
- Suggestion from owner of cherry picker for future consideration is to put a circle of shingle around the base of the cypress tree to minimise ground damage when heavy equipment is needed. NS will discuss with the volunteers for their views.

NS

9. Millennium Park Community Gardens

a) Update

- Currently awaiting update from Be Active representative who had an onsite visit with NS/RP and Chair of Parish Council.
- A number of community activities were presented as options for consideration in the park.
- There seems to be increased interest from NE Bedfordshire villages for wellbeing activities and schemes, including a further outdoor gym.
- A few residents have mentioned whether it would be possible to consider 'Men In sheds' as a community based activity.

10. Highways & Footpaths

- I. More bad potholes appearing. Councillors urged to pass information to RP for logging with Borough Council as soon as new potholes are noticed.
- II. RP is aware of the missing bollards in The Close and has already engaged with Borough Highways team. Concern was also raised about the large hole on the bend now filled with muddy water and caused by parking. RP
- III. Indiscriminate parking all over the area now.
- IV. Motorhouse still parking in Highbury Grove and causing major issues with buses regular traffic. Chemist delivery van has to park on Highbury Grove as unable to turn into road in front of shopping parade.
- V. RP has requested repainting of double yellow lines from High Street into Highbury Grove as recommended by the Police. The Borough feels seasonal weather isn't very suitable for this work to be done at this time of year. RP
- VI. Ditch on Milton Road near pedestrian crossing: rain is coming out of the pipes rather than draining away because ditch is full of rubbish and weeds. Foreman of AWA said non return valve needs fixing.

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| VII. | Ditch at Miller Road: AL has cleared greenery and current condition is not too bad. | |
| VIII. | As a result of this Environment Committee meeting and meetings with the Police, RP to email Borough Councillor Jim Weir requesting he attend a Parish Council meeting to discuss the number highways issues we are facing. | RP |
| IX. | Parish should consider reporting Borough Highways matter to Scrutiny and Overview committee. | |
| X. | Still waiting on work where the cycle track ends. | RP |
| XI. | AWA came out to a blockage in the sewer system in Highbury Grove. Operatives onsite told IG there's a lot of fat built up in the system, possibly not all from households and maybe caused by shops/fast food outlets. | |
| XII. | RP to follow up with homeowners about overgrown hedges either side of the alley in The Slade/The Close. | RP |
| XIII. | RP to write to site owners about renewal of car showroom lease. | RP |
| XIV. | Deep water gathered in the drains at bottom of green lane, caused by overflowing ditch. Homeowner needs to clear the ditch under Riparian Rights regulations. | |
| XV. | Homeowner needs to clear the ditch along The Ford under Riparian Rights regulations. | |

11. Burial Ground & Churchyard

a) Update

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| I. | Volunteers carried out work on section of wall managed by Clapham Parish Council. Bedford Borough Council are responsible for grass cutting and maintenance for the closed part of the cemetery including along the wall. NS spoke to Stephen Liley who contacted St Albans Diocese. | |
| II. | CT asked to be advised when Bedford Borough is going to undertake any work requiring access from his field. Furthermore, he is not prepared to pay for anyone to clear the wall on his field. | |
| III. | NS will look at wall and report back. | NS |
| IV. | CT offered to 'keep an eye on it and keep it clear in future' when the immediate clearance work is completed. | |

12. Flood Group

a) Update

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| I. | Flood Group continues to monitor water levels in Parish. |
| II. | Residents at 9 & 10 Paddock Close reported water running off fields and causing flooding in their residential property. |
| III. | CT confirmed field drains are 'doing what they're supposed to do'. However, there are issues with roots growing drainage pipes dating back to the 1950's. CT has continued to monitor situation and has put in another drain linked it to the Borough French drain in approx. 2004 |

to alleviate situation. Lands drains are all clear. Climate is and has been extraordinarily wet this year with water running off the land. CT is prepared to work with the Borough Flood Group to check the current condition of the storm drain. CT/JR will discuss further to try and assist the situation. JR/CT

- IV. JR to request Xmas staffing rota from Environment Agency should JR
information be required for sluice gates over the Xmas holidays.

13. 2024-25 Precept

a) Discussion and proposals for consideration within Environment Committee Area of Responsibility

- I. NS gave formal thanks to all councillors and volunteers for their commitment and support throughout the current financial year. It was noted that without volunteers, the Parish would have had a lot of further expenditure.
- II. Next year is going to be exceedingly difficult for all nationally and locally. Need care and prudence on the precept.
- III. Street lights have been transferred to Borough ownership and Parish is paying an annual fee over 7 years.
- IV. Millennium Park – Recommendation to keep budget at £4,000 for next financial year.
- V. Village Maintenance - Recommendation £1,000 budget for next financial year.
- VI. Grass cutting – same figure as 2023/24 contract.
- VII. Riverside Gardens- volunteers have requested turf or seed grass be laid from shrubs to compost bins where ivy has been cleared.
- VIII. We should consider calling for sponsorship and possibly create a web page such as Go Fund Me to encourage and manage donations.
- IX. CT called for a Duck race along the river.
- X. CT has a card for trade plant suppliers which may be used for future purchase of plants and bulbs.
- XI. Allotments maintenance - Recommendation to keep budget at £1,000 for next financial year. It was further noted that “No way should the requested fencing costs be put onto the budget”. The recommendation is for grant funding to be considered.
- XII. Burial Grounds – Recommendation that budget should stay the same
- XIII. Bus Shelters – Need to get updated costing for possible new shelter outside Tesco.
- XIV. CCTV – Recommendation to review cost from the Borough for the camera outside Tesco.
- XV. CIL income – summary to be provided at full council meeting.
- XVI. Garages – Allocate £3,500 for repainting doors if any money available in the budget.
- XVII. War Memorial - Recommendation for £500 budget. NS formally gave thanks to MW for his volunteering efforts at this site.

14. Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday, 9th January 2024 – Precept Council Meeting

Tuesday, 13th February 2024 – Environment Committee Meeting

The meeting was closed by the Chair at 8:45pm

Signed as a true reflection of the meeting:

Signed	
Dated	13 th February 2024

Chair