

Meeting:	CLAPHAM PARISH COUNCIL 16 th April 2024 at 7.15pm
Council Members in attendance:	Cllr. Phillipa Simms, Chair (PS) Cllr. Ali Dove (AD) Cllr. Jacky Fraser (JF) Cllr. John Keech (JK) Cllr. Adrian Langley (AL) Cllr. Michael Walmsley (MW) Cllr. Nigel Sparrow (NS) Cllr. John Reid (JR) Cllr. James Petrides (JP) Cllr Eric Cooper (EC) – late arrival
Apologies received:	Cllr. Sarah Walker (SW) Cllr. Ian Gaskin (IG) Cllr. Allan Prudham (AP) Cllr. Tamsin Bromley-Rahike (TBR) Cllr. Charlie Tompkins (CT)
Non-attendance:	
Borough Council Members Present:	Cllr. Jane Walker (JW) – late arrival Cllr. Jon Abbott (JA)
Clerk to the Council:	Rosemary Plum (RP)
Public Attendance:	2 residents Mayor of Bedford, Tom Wootton – arrived after start of meeting

MINUTES OF MEETING

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from:

- Cllr. Sarah Walker (SW)
- Cllr. Ian Gaskin (IG)
- Cllr. Allan Prudham (AP)
- Cllr. Tamsin Bromley-Rahike (TBR)
- Cllr. Charlie Tompkins (CT)

2. Declarations of Interest

- Cllr. Eric Cooper as allotment plot holder
- Cllr. Jackie Fraser as allotment plot holder
- Cllr. Phillipa Simms as Chair of Village Hall Management 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. Nigel Sparrow

SECONDED: Cllr. Adrian Langley

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

Nothing to report.

6. Clerk's Report (for information only)

- Tree on the Green in Fetlock Close, by the steps going down to the village green, is looking unstable. Chair – tree was pruned by the Borough previously – reported to tree officer. Emailed yesterday today “I believe that one of my colleagues looked at these trees not too long ago. Let me see if they had any comments.
- RP following up on Cllr Jim Weir’s promises following his meeting with NS last month.
- Borough will be in touch with the residents bound by riparian rights along The Ford. As a Parish we have written to them and Green Lane residents warning them further action could be bought against them by the Borough. Only one of the Green Lane residents has responded so we have added the others to the list for Borough contact.
- 6 Green Lane have constructed new driveway and put in inadequate pipe that’s causing the problem. JW has confirmed they are investigating.
- The sloe bushes on East Side of Milton Road by the pedestrian crossing have been cut back this week.
- RP has connected Michael with Cllr John Strutt at Stevington PC to arrange an informal meeting between them as an introduction to Beds GOVET.
- JDT will be working in the last week of April/first week of May to complete the following projects that had all been approved by full Council in recent months:
 - Millennium Park – clearance of brambles, dead trees and overgrown vegetation due to commence at end of April/early May. This will include:
 - Kings Ditch – removal of dead trees in the ditch
 - Trees along FP14 hard prune
 - Allotments – work as agreed with the Allotments Committee
 - Going forward – RP priority will be AGAR.
 - Updating mandate for Hampshire Bank – hope to report back next meeting.
 - NALC hailing Parish Councils as “the unsung heroes of local government, stepping up to play a more active role in improving their communities, and increasingly taking on more responsibilities from financially challenged larger authorities.” It is, of course, also worth pointing out that the average precept charged by a parish or charter trustee for 2024-25 will be £85.88, which is an increase of £6.74 or 8.5% taking overall national spend to nearly £800m. Also, it noted that Mayors and Police and Crime Commissioners were increasing

their charges by more than the average 5% increase in council tax by principal authorities.

- Plants donated via IG not suitable for burial ground and have been offered to the Volunteers at Riverside Gardens and the Allotment Association.
- Grass cutting will commence next week.

7. Borough Council Reports

a) Update from Borough Cllr. Jon Abbott

- Borough Council AGM on 15/5
- Milton Rd development application will be a separate Item
- Bedford Borough turned 50 this month. North Beds Borough Council and Bedford Borough Council have had 30 mayors since 1992.
- Universal Studios consultations for Marston Moretaine/Kempston Hardwick looking positive. Bedford Borough Council also engaged with all the Schools for feedback.
- Community Safety Plan has been published.
- Police & Crime Commissioner elections will be held in Bedfordshire on 2/5/24.
- Local nature recovery strategy been launched.
- Sensory Garden has been created in the Embankment/Russell Park.

b) Update from Borough Cllr. Jane Walker

- Borough has granted new free school in Biddenham area, possibly at the back of Beverly Crescent, next to Harpur Trust land. This will be free of cost to the Borough.
- Over 95% of school children got their first choice of primary school place. The Borough is not particularly short of places.
- The Borough has continued support for low income families over Easter Holidays.
- Universal Studios site already in local plan 2040 for business and housing.
- Pressure being put on National Highways for improvements to A421 subject to Government funding.

8. Police Matters

a) Motorhouse parking issues – update

- Reported once again to police as number of cars starting to increase.
- We need photos and registration numbers to be able to report.
- Two breakdown vehicles parked in The Close, behind shops on 15th April in the morning.

9. Highways

a) Green Lane/The Ford riparian rights – Update

See Clerks Report.

b) The Close/Café Piccolo/Clapham Discount Stores junction – Update

Resident has complained about pedestrian safety due to the dropped kerb of private resident. The matter has been referred to the Borough officer.

10. Environment Committee

a) Update

- Thanks given to NS for his work as he stood down as Chair of the sub committee at the last meeting.
- IG elected as Chair and MW as Vice Chair.
- Awaiting better weather for shingle around xmas tree and taking down the final xmas lights.
- Borough have started clearing drains on Green Lane and The Ford.
- MW met with Cllr. John Strutt and Ms. Tricia Lennie of Beds GOVET to discuss water quality in Clapham. MW has volunteered to take water quality sampling. JR and MW going to Bromham Mill tomorrow to understand more.
- SONDE to check for ecoli, nitrates, phosphates and water temperature.
- NS reported lot of activity in The Ford with swimmers and paddle boarders. Following media coverage of pollution should we question if the River water is suitable? Once testing has taken place, we should put up warning to swimmers they do so at their own risk. Currently testing in Ouse Bedford.
- Turf has been ordered for Riverside Gardens. Need better weather before laying.
- Church View flooding - suggestion there may be some springs just above the houses in which case there's little can be done other than create some drains. MW will speak with local resident.
- Riverside Gardens volunteers returned to work 13/4.
- Tree planting – EC has done lot of work mapping opportunities and we need to consult with Borough Tree Officer. Should we give it the project a name?
- Residents should keep old sandbags and not dispose of in bulky waste.
- Concerns raised about new development in Milton Rd. 134mm rain fell in February 2024. Even with all new gulleys, drains etc for new properties the water still flows into the river and we can't change the size of that. Need to go back to the Borough and question whether developments and EWR are going to affect N Beds and in particular Clapham with flooding.
- Formally write to Borough and Environment Agency asking how they intend to deal with these issues. Average river levels at Gt Barford and Sharnbrook slowly increased over last 10 years. RP
- 42 years since river was dredged in Clapham – surely this would make room for more water. Raised with Borough flood group 2 years ago and identified parts of the river that need clearing. Clapham and Bromham are last bastions before getting to Bedford. JR to give RP contact details for other flood groups. JR/RP

- Green Lane – potholes continue to worsen and increase in number and size.
- Cycle Path at High St junction with Bedford Road was paid for by JW and what is there is what was provided with the money. There will be major changes to the cycle junction with the Milton Road development.
- Add to website and newsletter about open water swimming.
- Litter picking - not had a good response. Borough seem to pick litter at times. Trying to speak to Scouts.

RP

11. Allotment Committee

a) Update

- I. Considerable progress being made week on week.
- II. Allotments Committee is working very well and Parish Council is proud of their commitment.
- III. A lot of new lets with arrival of Spring.
- IV. Trading hut is growing – as always, challenge to find volunteers to run the facility.
- V. Work is due to start on the Health and Wellbeing plot at the beginning of next month. Donations both financial and labour resource being gathered to create this in accordance with HSE regulations.
- VI. Water was turned on at the weekend (13/4/24)
- VII. Waiting to hear outcome of grant application for funding for FP14 fencing. Borough were considering applications on 15/4/24 and early signs have been positive.
- VIII. AGM this Friday followed by Quiz Night including chilli.
- IX. Invoices for 2024-25 to be sent out as soon as possible.
- X. Skip on site from 16/5/24 for site clearance. This s not specifically for plot holders.
- XI. Trading Hut available to Clapham gardeners as well as plot holders – spread word and talk about carrots and coffee. Open 10am-12noon Sat and Sun morning
- XII. There have been ongoing discussions with tenants who proposed the removal of the pensioner discount on the basis that all tenants benefit in equal measure from all the work carried out for the improvement of the allotments site, work of the committee, events etc. From an administrative point of view, it is very labour intensive to get proof of entitlement to the discount and we have to consider that many people are now retiring from 55yrs. The tenants also feel that pensioners are the most financially able at the present time considering also plot holders in receipt of disability benefit, universal credit etc. The removal of the discount would give an additional income of approx. £700/yr in addition to the rental increase.
- XIII. The Allotments committee unanimously voted to abolish the pensioner discount for allotment plot holders from 1st April 2025 and increase rental to £5 per pole for 2025-26.

- XIV. **PROPOSAL:** To set the plot rental from 1st April 2025 at £5 per pole and abolish the pensioner discount.
PROPOSED: Cllr. Michael Walmsley
SECONDED: Cllr. Adrian Langley
VOTE: Unanimous

12. East West Rail

- a) Update
- Consultations expected this year, possibly towards end of May and second consultation after.
 - Clapham will be affected more than many other villages.
 - A lot of work to be done to prepare representations and responses.
 - BeFare are setting up working groups and looking for willing persons to take part.
 - No acknowledgement to Clapham Parish Council that people have been receiving land requisition interest notices. We should be representing/supporting residents.
 - Call for councillors to contribute to a working group and identify anyone in the community with particular skill sets.
 - Any response to consultation will need a Clapham Parish Council working group. All
 - Need to revitalise WhatsApp group. Anyone interested to contact RP. EC to add CTA in group. EC
 - BeFare very keen that the Borough revisit the decision passed a while ago. Parishes are engaging to see where we are. The question will be revisited by the Borough.

13. Planning Committee

- a) Applications Decided
Documents circulated prior to the meeting.
- b) Current Applications
- Bents Close resident has written to put forward strong views about the application for retrospective planning on the land at Rear of 36 Bents Close Clapham Bedford Bedfordshire MK41 6DY.
 - RP has requested a site visit for JW with the planning officer to discuss.
- c) Milton Road Development – update
- PS/JW, ably assisted by Chair of Planning Cttee who asked very pertinent questions, had meeting with Borough officers.
 - Application deferred until further discussions with Borough, Developers and Parish Council have taken place.
 - Developers and Parish Council are in agreement in principle. Proposal need to be worked into acceptable options to all concerned and aligned with exceptional circumstances being sought by Parish Council.
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14. Burial Ground

- a) Update
Nothing to report.

15. Village Hall

- a) Update
- RP to update/create new website. Amend information.
 - Roof repairs – waiting on better weather to start work.
 - AGM in May
 - Bookings increased for 2023-24

16. Communication

- a) Creation of Parish Council WhatsApp group
- Already discussed EC proposal twice in his absence of EC and now giving him opportunity to put his views across.
 - EC feels it's an ideal forum for councillors to share ideas outside of parish meetings.
 - Agreed to trial the proposal.
 - PS/RP will set up and invite members to the group.

PS/RP

- b) 4YP Youth Workers – update
- Disappointing progress to date. No meaningful engagement from the group to date.
 - A meeting has been offered in May.
 - Parish Council has put money aside and was hoping to start trial at Easter. Call for anyone interested in being part of the group – let EC and RP aware.
 - JW to be copied into future correspondence.

17. Finance

- a) Financial Report
Circulated to members.
- b) Payment of Accounts

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

PROPOSED: Cllr. Michael Walmsley

SECONDED: Cllr. John Keech

18. Correspondence

- a) Clapham Scouts are applying for a grant. This needs to be considered by the Parish Council to ensure it's in the interest of local residents. 85% of £11k is being sought with the grant and Scouts raising the additional 15% No money is being requested from the Parish Council but councillors need to endorse the application.
- PROPOSED: Cllr. Phillipa Simms
- SECONDED: Cllrs. Adrian Langley
- VOTE: Unanimous

- b) Resident has requested the intervention of Parish Council with regard to a resident on the High Street (just after the junction with Mountpleasant Road. There are a large number of domestic waste bins and large rubbish sacks regularly left on the public footpath outside the property, together with a large number of pallets deposited in the front garden. Members of the public using the bins for their litter, often pulling them over strewn rubbish across the footpath which is never picked up. RP to report to Borough environmental health/waste collection.
- c) Formal contact received from a company of Solicitors regarding subsidence damage to a residential property in Clapham, West Sussex.

RP

19. Date of Next Meeting21st May 2024 – Annual Parish Meeting in the Methodist Church Hall

The meeting was closed by the Chair at 9:54pm

Signed as a true reflection of the meeting:

Signed	
Dated	21 st May 2024

Chair