

Meeting:	CLAPHAM PARISH COUNCIL 16 th July 2024
Council Members in attendance:	Cllr. Phillipa Simms, Chair (PS) Cllr. Sarah Walker (SW) Cllr. Tamsin Bromley-Rahike (TBR) Cllr. Eric Cooper (EC) Cllr. Jacky Fraser (JF) Cllr. Ian Gaskin (IG) Cllr. John Keech (JK) Cllr. Adrian Langley (AL) Cllr. James Petrides (JP) Cllr. Allan Prudham Cllr. Michael Walmsley (MW)
Apologies received:	Cllr. Nigel Sparrow (NS) Cllr. John Reid (JR) Cllr. Ali Dove (AD) Cllr. Jon Abbott (JA)
Non-attendance:	Cllr. Charlie Tompkins (CT)
Borough Council Member:	Cllr. Jane Walker (JW)
Clerk to the Council:	Rosemary Plum (RP)
Public Attendance	2 x residents Gloria Chukwuji, Community Outreach Officer from Healthwatch

MINUTES OF MEETING

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from the following:

- Cllr. Nigel Sparrow (NS)
- Cllr. John Reid (JR)
- Cllr. Ali Dove (AD)
- Cllr. Jon Abbott (JA)

2. Declarations of Interest

Declarations were received from:

- Cllr. Eric Cooper as an allotment plot holder
- Cllr. Jacky Fraser as an allotment plot holder
- Cllr. Phillipa Simms as Chair of the Village Hall Committee and for Item 15 on this Agenda.
- Cllr. James Petrides as member of the Village Hall Committee

3. Open Forum

- I. Resident of The Glebe/Milton Road area in the vicinity of the verge/ditch along Milton Road is very concerned about the condition of the

overgrown grass and hedges. Resident reported that the Borough Council occasionally clear the ditch despite promising it would be done annually. Whilst other work has been done on the estate including lopping trees, new grass areas etc. the ditch continues to be ignored and it is an eyesore, health risk with rats and a flood risk during wet weather. Parish JW clarified the work being done on the Glebe Estate is being undertaken by Persimmon in preparation of handover to Borough Council. The Borough has however promised to maintain the ditch and trees along the highways in the area. RP to follow up with the Borough for maintenance and environmental health (rats). PS has also reported the ditch to the Borough Flood Officer. **RP**

- II. Introduction from Gloria Chikwuji. Healthwatch is the Local voice of the people for health and social care services. They are an independent body who operating health champions for people and signposting for healthcare. They deal with concerns about GP's or Care Homes, publishing and making recommendations for change to Public Health England and the wider public. Currently doing Pharmacy First survey for feedback by all residents and organizing a Diabetes event on September 10th 2024. RP to add page to Parish Council website and distribute information through social media. **RP**

4. Minutes of Previous Meeting

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

PROPOSED: Cllr. Ian Gaskin

SECONDED: Cllr. Eric Cooper

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

Nothing to report.

6. Clerk's Report (for information only)

1. Memorial maintenance

- I. Team of volunteers at Foster Hill Road restore neglected memorials to their former glory including fallen headstones, mending broken gravestones and statues, re-marking the borders around graves, cleaning headstones and generally tidying up. **RP**
- II. RP in contact with the team to find out more about how they operate – form the group, H&S, Risk Management, insurance etc.

2. River safety

- I. RP in contact with the Community Safety Officer for water who is the main point of contact within Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service.
- II. They have recently issued letters for parents to all Bedfordshire schools providing information and advice in relation to water safety.

- III. There is also a Beds Drowning Prevention Advisory Group meeting in August, chaired by Group Commander Prevention which is a forum to discuss water safety matters with partner agencies. JR volunteered to attend the meeting.
- IV. Throwline boards at various locations along the River Great Ouse. Throwline training for Parish Council representative can be organised.
- V. Thursday 25 July is World Drowning Prevention Day. Representatives from the fire service will hold water safety sessions at the Embankment at the rear of Bedford college simulating various emergencies.

3. The Close

- I. In April 2024, the Highways Manager stated *"I think there is a valid point to be had regarding the safety of pedestrians along this stretch although at present not entirely sure what could be done about it, there isn't enough space to separate pedestrians and vehicles through this passage with a physical barrier such as bollards"*.
- II. The same Manager called for thoughts from the Head of Highways Dept on the yellow lines and whether they should they be extended to prevent people parking as this may add some extra visibility.
- III. Borough Highways Manager has now advised *"We have been monitoring this area over the last few months over various times of the day and have not seen an issue with vehicles parked in this location. That said, if we consider waiting restrictions are required, then I will be pleased to meet your reps to discuss this matter on site."* **RP**
- IV. RP to arrange meeting for IG with the Borough manager on-site and owner of no.2 Highbury Grove. Considerations to include: **RP**
 - white line marking of the crossing.
 - Hardstanding areas that aren't completed and gravel cascading onto the road.
 - Planning enforcement for non-completion of drive.

4. Clarification of opportunities for Parish Councillors to attend a Borough Highway public meeting:

- I. The only relevant meeting would be Environment & Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee. The next meeting is on the 18th July, although they're not looking at Highways which will be later in the year. Agenda will be published later this week.
- II. Questions can be asked at the start about any area within the committee's remit (so highways is included)
- III. Alternatively they can attend the meetings of the executive and ask questions at the start or full council.

5. Report of motorbike in River at Riverside Gardens
 - I. Police would use 3rd party recovery service and pass on costs to Parish Council. Once recovered by us, the Police want chassis number and other details to see if it is stolen. Cheaper for Parish Council to resolve and matter is in hand. **RP**

6. Borough Maintenance issues
 - I. Green Lane overgrown banks: Reported to Borough and they will carry out the work asap or get back to RP.
 - II. A6 Milton Road: request acknowledged for cutting back of the hedge bordering the ditch along the old A6 Milton Road near the bus stop up to the junction with Highfield Road.
 - III. Milton Road and Bridle Drive, Clapham: almost completely blocked by laurel bushes. There are also large holes in the path/ground and a dead tree stump at edge of footpath, hidden by overgrowth. Borough have acknowledged request for maintenance in the alleyway

7. Tree planting project – covered on this Agenda.

8. Litterpicking
 - I. Made contact with member of FC who's arranging the events.
 - II. Cllr. James Petrides has spoken with Amazon who are sorting the Hi Vis jackets. In addition they're keen to send people to help as well as part of their community engagement project. **RP/JP**
 - III. Parish Council needs to direct which areas to be cleared.

7. Borough Council Reports

Borough Cllr. Jane Walker reported:

- I. Civic Theatre reopened as a customer service centre with advisers onsite and help for online actions. Tourist Information in same space for now – hoping to reopen Tourist Information Centre in future.
- II. Agreed Cultural partnership with lots of groups around town to develop a cultural or artists and street performers platform in the Town.
- III. Town Centre and Greyfriars brief agreed. Debenhams site has been purchased by the Borough Council and offers submitted on several other building.
- IV. Greyfriars partnership with BPHA – roundabout outside Bus Station will be removed and police station will become flats. Complete restructure and rebuild of whole area around bus station.
- V. Tennis courts reopening in Bedford Park from this weekend with free sessions available.
- VI. Bedford to MK Waterway to link Grand Union with River Ouse has started.
- VII. Wixams train station approved and given go ahead. Will be funded by Borough Council.

8. Police Matters

- a) Update
Crime report circulated prior to this meeting.
- b) Priority Setting Meeting 26/7/24 – attendance
JR will attend meeting.

9. Environment Committee

- a) Report from Committee meeting 9th July 2024
 - I. Minutes circulated prior to this meeting.
 - II. Thanks given to all Envco members for their good work over the last month including bench painting, sign cleaning, grass cutting etc and to NS for his work with the volunteers at Riverside Gardens.
 - III. Envco has approved proposal to hold a picnic or barbecue to thank the Riverside Gardens. There are challenges due to weather and lack of handwashing facilities so Envco is now proposing to arrange a breakfast or lunch at Milton Ernest Garden Centre for the volunteers.
 - IV. A presentation at Clapham Show at Clapham Show in September was agreed.
 - V. Bedford Borough Council going to plant 58 trees in the village. Locations have been approved and we are now waiting on sourcing of trees. Good mix around the village. The Borough will plant and maintain the trees for 3yrs. Details will be published in Village News for residents comment/feedback to the Borough.
 - VI. JR will be stepping down as Chair of the Clapham Flood Group and we need a willing and able volunteer to take over.
 - VII. FP14 fencing all completed – really good job. Paths appears a lot wider and we have 3 new gates. These will be locked at specific times. Opening hours will be affixed to allotment and Millennium Park gates.

RP/PS

Clarification from Cllr. Phillipa Simms: PS advised the AOB item on the Envco Agenda was added by the Chair and is in line with normal procedure. Items received after Agenda publication cannot be added but can be raised under Open Forum.

- b) Village Green – Proposal for fencing
 - I. EC summarised a proposal he had circulated to all members of the Parish Council prior to this meeting.
 - II. EC called for agreement to investigate feasibility of his proposal to erect fencing around the new Village Green and the need to get quotes for the cost of the work.
 - III. PS asked for clarification of the length of fencing required in a residents' email in January 2024, a length of 15-20ft of fencing was referred to. EC followed up by stating the length of the fencing would be 10m and the proposal circulated from EC is suggesting 25mts.

- IV. Parish Councillors concerned the Village Green is not Parish Council land although it pays to cut grass and Borough refunds the cost to the Parish Council.
- V. Important we understand our legal position before committing any funding for any project on the Village Green.
- VI. JA has advised he's prepared to commit £500 Ward Funding to the project.
- VII. Majority of Parish Councillors said there must be other things in the village needing £2.5-£3k rather than that level of investment on a piece of land not owned by the Parish Council.
- VIII. The new Village Green could be used by residents local to that area and the Parish Council has ring-fenced funds to add furniture for the benefit of residents.
- IX. EC will investigate options legally open to the Parish Council. EC

10. Allotment Committee

a) Update from Committee meeting 1st July 2024

- I. Minutes circulated prior to this meeting.
- II. Thanks give to the Secretary of the Clapham Allotments and Community Gardens Association for volunteering to take minutes at the Allotment Committee meeting.
- III. RP will continue to prepare Agenda and distribute minutes.
- IV. Association advised £25 deposit will be charged to all new plot holders. This will be refundable subject to the condition of the plot if and when the plot is surrendered.
- V. A lot of people especially children use FP14 and people don't always observe the speed limit along the track through the allotment. Association will erect stop signs either side of gates.
- VI. Power in trading hut being generated from solar panels. Association would like to put in a defibrillator and will take the responsibility of checking, monitoring, maintenance and monthly reports. RP
- VII. Association requested the annual funding from the Parish Council be increased commensurate to the annual increase in plot rental fees. RP will present figures for next Parish Council meeting. RP
- VIII. Asbestos assessment required for green hut at entrance of Allotments owned by the Parish Council RP
- IX. All tenants asked to report all vandalism incidents to police and Association committee. PCSO has provided email and phone number for plot holders questions.

b) Confirmation of site opening hours

PROPOSAL: To change the opening hours of the allotment site to:

Summer (when the clocks change)

Monday – Friday Open 6:15 am Close 9 pm

Weekends Open 7:30 am Close 9 pm

Winter (when the clocks change)

All days Open 8:30 am Close 5 pm

The times will be display in public areas with an emergency phone number.

VOTE: Unanimously agreed.

11. East West Rail

a) Update

- I. SW has introduction phone call with new CEO for EWR for all parishes along route.
- II. No update on consultation.
- III. PS/SW had a private meeting about putting together a representative group of all North Bedfordshire villages along the route.
- IV. EC expressed a need to be sensitive to the existence of the BeFare group and not appear to be in conflict.
- V. PS advised any new representative group would be made up of elected bodies only and not operate as a pressure group.

PS

12. Highways

a) Update

- I. Issues covered in Clerk's report above.
- II. Overgrown hedges no.99 The Glebe still not trimmed hedges.

RP

13. Planning Committee

a) Applications Decided

- I. Report circulated prior to meeting.

b) Current Applications

- I. Report circulated prior to meeting.
- II. House at end of Green Lane has put forward revised plans. TPO on hedge and RP will respond asking for TPO to be observed.

RP

14. Burial Ground

a) Subsidence maintenance – update

- I. Earth being ordered and Parish Maintenance Person will check regularly for subsidence and fill in the event of accident risk.

RP

15. Village Hall

a) Update

PS advised the Parish Council as outlined below:

- I. The Hall continues to experience critical issues with water coming through the flat roof. There is considerable internal damage to the ceiling throughout the building. If the insurers do not accept vandalism in 2023 as the original cause of the damage to the roof, funds will be required to meet the cost of making good the inside of the building.
- II. Insurance loss adjuster has advised it's incredibly unlikely the Hall is covered for a number of reasons:

- There are 2 flat rooves one over the over on the Village Hall.
 - When the latest roof was put on 15yrs by a Parish Council and Parish Council Chair recommended contractor, the previous roof was never removed. This is contrary to professional working practice.
 - The Insurers have advised that any flat roof can be insured for a maximum of 10years.
- III. In the event of a fire caused by water getting into the electrics, the Village Hall will not be covered.
- IV. The Village Hall cannot sustain the cost of repairing the roof continuously and has approached three roofing contractors to assess the situation. All have confirmed the roof can no longer be made watertight due to the level of damage present.
- V. PS has investigated grant funding however, only 6yrs left on the lease from the Parish Council to the Village Hall Committee. A minimum of 10yrs and in some cases 20yrs of outstanding lease is required to secure grant funding.
- VI. PS has looked at emergency loan funding. Any borrowing would have to be repaid within 6yrs making the amount we need to borrow (around £100k) unaffordable.
- VII. The Village Hall Committee will not renew the lease with the roof in its current condition.
- VIII. There is an urgent need for a new roof to be put in place as soon as possible.
- IX. The Village Hall is very well used and generates turnover from hiring of around £45k per annum.

PROPOSAL: To approach Bedford Borough Council for a financial loan against future CIL monies due to the Parish, to cover the cost of the roof replacement and internal refurbishment of the Village Hall. **PS/RP**

PROPOSED; Cllr. John Keech

SECONDED: Cllr. Allan Prudham

VOTE: Unanimous

b) Temporary placement of skip in Car Park

- I. Request by garden maintenance contractor for temporary placement of a waste skip in the car park at the village hall for approx. 5 days at a date to be confirmed in August or September was approved.
- II. Written request by the resident and insurance certificate have been presented to RP.

16. Communication

a) 4YP Youth Workers – update

- I. Report circulated prior to meeting.
- II. EC/JP attended meeting with 4YP.
- III. Outreach work with young people in village to build up rapport will be carried out as a pilot programme over summer holidays on four Friday evenings.
- IV. Model has worked well elsewhere and ultimate goal is to create ongoing youth provision in the village.
- V. Suggested approach be made to Lincroft Academy to get young students to attend Parish Council meetings in future to connect with younger residents.
- VI. JP already goes into Lincroft regularly and could look at integrating the work of 4YP into these sessions. AL volunteered to support the efforts.

JP/AL

PROPOSAL: To carry out a pilot programme over four Friday evenings during the school summer holidays.

RP

PROPOSED: Cllr. Phillipa Simms

SECONDED: Cllr. Sarah Walker

VOTE: Unanimous

17. Finance

a) AGAR – Ratify

- I. Thanks given to RP

AGAR to be ratified was circulated to members prior to the meeting.

PROPOSED: Cllr. Adrian Langley

SECONDED: Cllr. Ian Gaskin

b) Financial Report

Circulated to members prior to the meeting

c) Payment of Accounts

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

PROPOSED: Cllr. Sarah Walker

SECONDED: Cllr. Adrian Langley

d) Assistant Clerk Salary – Ratify

The newly appointed Assist Clerk will start employment on 19th August 2024 at a starting salary of £12.21/hr.

PROPOSED: Cllr. Adrian Langley

SECONDED: Cllr. Tamsin Bromley Rahike

e) Villager Bus – Grant application

PROPOSAL: To accept application from the Villager Bus Company for a grant of £100

PROPOSED: Cllr. Tamsin Bromley Rahike

SECONDED: Cllr. Allan Prudham

18. Correspondence

Report circulated to members prior to the meeting.

19. Date of Next Meeting

17th September 2024 – in the Methodist Church Hall

The meeting was closed by the Chair at 9.40pm

Signed as a true reflection of the meeting:

Signed	
Dated	17 th September 2024

Chair