

Meeting:	CLAPHAM PARISH COUNCIL 21 st January 2025 7.15pm
Council Members in attendance:	Cllr. Phillipa Simms, Chair (PS) Cllr. Sarah Walker, Vice Chair (SW) Cllr. Eric Cooper (EC) – late arrival 7.05 Cllr. Ian Gaskin (IG) Cllr. John Keech (JK) Cllr. Adrian Langley (AL) Cllr. Michael Walmsley (MW) Cllr. John Reid (JR) Cllr. Tamsin Bromley-Rahike (TBR) Cllr. James Petrides (JP) Cllr. Charlie Tompkins (CT) – late arrival Cllr. Jacky Fraser (JF)
Apologies received:	Cllr. Ali Dove (AD) Cllr. Allan Prudham (AP) Cllr. Nigel Sparrow (NS)
Non-attendance:	
Borough Council Member:	Cllr. Jane Walker (JW) Cllr. Jon Abbott (JA) – late arrival 19.05
Clerk to the Council:	Rosemary Plum (RP)
Public Attendance	None

MINUTES OF MEETING

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies received from:

- Cllr. Ali Dove (AD)
- Cllr. Allan Prudham (AP)
- Cllr. Nigel Sparrow (NS)

2. Declarations of Interest

- Cllr. Eric Cooper (EC) declared an interest in all matters concerning allotments.
- Cllr. Phillipa Simms (PS) declared an interest in all matters relating to the Village Hall (VH).

3. Open Forum

- Rural Crime Forum:** CT and JR to attend the forum on Friday.
- Bin Requests:** A resident requested additional bins on The Glebe estate on the corner of Loake Close. AL to provide a map for RP to locate the bins. **AL**

- III. **Parking and Bollards on The Glebe Estate:** PS suggested replacing bollards with trees to improve the environment and parking. AL to consult residents and pass this to the Environment Committee for further discussion. Would need formal consultation. Highways have been adopted only green areas not yet handed over by Persimmon. Replace bollard with trees and better support the environment. Pass to Envco for further consideration and decision whether to propose.
- IV. **Farming Impact Presentation:** CT shared concerns regarding East West Rail's (EWR) impact on farming, including loss of 303 acres of farmland and delays in compensation. CT noted constructive discussions with EWR but emphasised the need for follow-up actions.
- V. EC asked to put on record his disappointment in the standard of Borough Council debate on EWR. Nobody looked at the Clapham Parish report or commented on it with an inordinate amount of time spent discussing design details such as car park sprinklers. As a result there was not enough time to even consider the Clapham Parish Council response. Liberal Democrats put in a motion for tunnel between Bedford and Clapham. Clapham is caught between two distinct parts of the EWR project between Bedford Town and East Clapham, with two different design teams looking after each section independently and who don't appear to be communicating with each other. There is a real worry that Clapham is going to get divided by the plans. Richard Fuller MP noted the concerns and will look into these further when concern was raised with him directly. He noted the lack of discussion around Clapham concerns.

AL

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. Michael Walmsley

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

Covered under individual Items on this Agenda.

6. Clerk's Report (for information only)

Covered under individual Items on this Agenda.

7. Police Matters

a) Yarlswood Immigration Removal Centre local community notification system.

- I. Concerns raised regarding delays in police communication during emergencies. PS to draft a letter to relevant authorities proposing a better notification system.
- II. The Parish Council wants timely information on incidents. PS to reach out to Milton E to find out if they are notified.
- III. Borough Councillors for our Ward only have emergency WhatsApp that doesn't include police as it is a community safety partnership.

PS

b) Crime Figures

Circulated prior to the meeting.

8. Borough Council Report

Cllr. Jon Abbott reported:

- I. Busy week with Full Borough Council meeting to 11.45pm.
- II. Capital programme agreed, some 10yr projects will become a feasibility study. These include Kempston & Robinson Pools, Padel Courts and Mowsbury. We need 21st century leisure facilities in Bedford.
- III. Large public attendance at Borough Council EWR meeting. The Borough lost the vote to overturn it support for EWR.
- IV. Bedford BID that was voted against last year. Currently working on what will replace it. In the meantime, ensure retailers are able to communicate with each other via radio and try to establish a Town Centre Business Board.
- V. Flood Group rearranged for 12th February 2025.
- VI. Anticipate Council Tax increase to be around 5% to avoid Government penalties for not increasing this tax.
- VII. Borough developing devolution plan to avoid Government imposing their own plan. Luton, Milton Keynes and Northampton have agreed but Central Beds has not agreed to the new devolved plans. Concern raised about financially stable authorities having to take on bankrupt counties. Plus points might be more control of local transport, providing for people rather than for profit.
- VIII. Government devolution plans would be an opportunity to create greater synergy by replacing District Councils with Unitary authorities.

Cllr. Jane Walker reported:

- I. Leisure – good presentation with GLL (new Fusion) who have hit the ground running. Numbers up, improvement programmes in place.
- II. Additional money awarded for buses within Bedford Borough so shouldn't be any cuts to bus services. Borough to pay for real time travel information at bus stops (installation and maintenance). Completely new routes to be created to address need.
- III. SEND School opens 10th February.
- IV. Borough to install pump under Lovell Road, Oakley bridge to tanker storage during half term week. The footway will then be removed.
- V. Sale of Debenhams still in hands of legal team. Christmas trade went very well.
- VI. As of last week, Bedford Borough does not have 5-year land supply and this may trigger lots of speculative planning applications. NDP in place which gives Clapham an element of protection. Only have 3.5yrs land supply in the Borough so it is approx. 2,000 homes short for the required Government allocation. Borough CEO John Shortland is on record as having said 'the Borough will not be looking at villages for extra housing allocation however', however the description 'on the fringes of the town' could include Clapham.

9. Environment Committee

a) Update

- I. There was no January meeting so nothing to report.
- II. Bedford Borough North Beds Flood Group meeting rescheduled to 12th February 2025.

10. East West Rail

a) Ratify Parish Council response to Consultation

- I. Thanks given to all who attended the Parish meeting last week to discuss the EWR non-statutory consultation response was very well and very thoroughly put together by EC.
 - II. The legacy for Clapham will be more flooding, no traverse into Bedford for a very long time, we will lose the majority of land from our only farm and nobody is listening at EWR.
 - III. Clapham Parish Council does not trust EWR to pay attention to any relevant reports and cannot understand why the Parish Council is not being supported by any of the people it talks to at EWR.
 - IV. Glaring omission not to include a tunnel, and the Parish Council certainly supports that.
 - V. Borough Council supports 4 not 6 tracks and EWR say they've never talked about 4 track and the line could now be carrying freight – where are we with this?
 - VI. The motion put forward at the meeting of the Ful Bedford Borough Council did not include any mention of Clapham – why are we constantly being ignored by everyone?
 - VII. The onus is now on the Parish Council to drive this forward and we have to demand more engagement with an event in Clapham.
 - VIII. The Parish Council feels that people who make a lot of the right kind of noise get listened to better. Very difficult because a lot of people in Clapham don't have a view or an opinion of the reality.
 - IX. We need to push for intelligent, well thought through, persistent demands for answers.
 - X. We want proper EWR representation at a meeting in Clapham at the end of this year before the statutory consultation gets under way next year.
 - XI. CT was urged to also respond independently as a resident with a powerful farmers' response.
 - XII. Clapham Park residents are specifically impacted and that has been included in the Parish Council response.
 - XIII. The Parish Council response can be viewed on the it website. RP
- PROPOSAL: To formally accept the draft response circulated to all members prior to this meeting and discussed in full on 14th January 2025.**
- PROPOSED: Cllr. Phillipa Simms**
- SECONDED: Cllr. Adrian Langley**
- XIV. Only statutory bodies can respond to the Scoping Consultation by the Planning Inspectorate.
 - XV. It was noted that the 1,000 page scoping document is beyond the comprehension and ability of all Councillors and residents.

- XVI. EC has put together responses to key points, PS has been through the table and addressed the issues scoped in for consideration.
- XVII. SW will review in detail and create the response document from the Parish Council. **SW**
- XVIII. RP add reports to website 22nd January 2025. **RP**

11. Planning Committee

- a) Applications Decided
Circulated prior to meeting
- b) Current Applications
Circulated prior to meeting

12. Communication

- a) Youth Club Update
 - I. The project is going well.

13. Allotment Committee

- a) Update
 - I. There was no meeting in January.
 - II. 2024 was a very successful year, trading hut has shown great returns with funds generation by raffles and other activities.
 - III. Open day planned for August and hope to launch the Health & Wellbeing plot in March 2025 with many other events planned.
 - IV. Trading hut opens Saturday 1st February 2025.

14. Burial Ground

- a) Update
 - I. Issues with grave diggers for which apologies were received from the Funeral Director in question.
 - II. Ground is very wet and muddy with vehicles leaving tracks. Large number attended burial on 11th January which has caused a lot of mud around the plots at the top of the site. We are keeping an eye on the situation.
 - III. Thanks to the Parish Council Assistant Clerk for her ongoing work updating burial records onto the new software programme.

15. Highways

- a) Bedford Greenacre Independent School Clapham Road entrance issues
 - I. The following statement was received from Manager for Highways at Bedford Borough Council:

With regards to the Greenacres School site, my remit and concern as you are aware is in relation to the Highway and any infringement which this site places on the maintenance of the network and safety of users on Bedford Road.

was contacted in advance of the development taking place with a view to allowing all the surface water drainage from the site to be piped into our existing Highway Drainage system. This request I refused, based on the obvious capacity issues already experienced within the system during large rainfall periods and the subsequent surface water flooding of Clapham during those periods.

There are alternative solutions that the developer/landowner could have investigated, designed, and implemented in order to satisfy the requirement to contain the surface water from the site, without compromising the Highway.

I am also aware that the works carried out by the developer's contractor on Bedford Road in relation to the section 278 works, is not to an acceptable adoptable standard and this will be addressed with them.

I am aware that at this time Bedford Borough Council planning enforcement department are carrying out an investigation of the site in relation to alleged breaches. If the Parish Council or any constituents wish to raise any matters where they think there is a specific breach of the planning permission, please do so through the Council's website.

It is an honest account of the situation from my side of things. As we both discussed It would be extremely remiss of me to have allowed the development to connect to the Highway system which is already at full capacity and subject the residents of Clapham (of which I am one) to increased levels of flooding, especially when there are solutions to the issue that the developer could and should have undertaken.

I am aware that this situation is extremely fluid and as we discussed, officers are meeting regularly and speaking with those concerned, in what context I am unable to comment on further.

- II. Parish Councillors said disappointed all these issues/problems that were recognised in relation to this development and subsequently turned down for planning initially, appear to be coming to fruition. The Parish Council called for these to be addressed by those concerned.
- III. CT emailed JW and Borough Flood Officer about problems with drainage for their farm. CT is calling for the Borough Council to find out where the drains are in conjunction with AWA.

16. Village Hall

a) Update

- I. Ongoing construction issues being identified.
- II. Removal of external roof started this week with huge amounts of water being found.

- III. Thanks to hirers for being supportive and bearing with the management team at the Village Hall in extremely difficult circumstances.

17. Finance

a) Ratify 2025-26 Precept

Annual Precept Budget to be ratified was circulated to members prior to the meeting.

PROPOSED: Cllr. Tamsin Bromley-Rahike

SECONDED: Cllr. John Keech

b) Payment of Accounts

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

PROPOSED: Cllr. Sarah Walker

SECONDED: Cllr. Michael Walmsley

18. Correspondence

a) Complaint about parking on grass verges:

- The only way verge parking can be enforced is if the areas have a no verge and footway parking traffic regulation order in place.
- Cody Road and Highbury Grove don't have this.
- We therefore need to request a TRO be put in place
- We can try placing letters on cars but it is not enforceable.
- TRO is in place at the bottom end of Highbury Grove.
- Utility services located in grass verges so can be damaged. As an alternative could consider grass Crete being put onto verges.

b) Reports of a log pilferer at North End of the Allotment site.

- The tree is actually in Millennium Park and is in very poor condition/end of life.
- The issue has been noted for future reference.

19. Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday, 18th February 2025 7pm, Methodist Church Hall

The meeting was closed by the Chair at 9.40 pm

Signed as a true reflection of the meeting:

Signed	
Dated	18 th February 2025

Chair