

Meeting:	CLAPHAM PARISH COUNCIL 20 th May 2025 7.15pm
Council Members in attendance:	Cllr. Phillipa Simms, Chair (PS) Cllr. Sarah Walker, Vice Chair (SW) Cllr. Ian Gaskin (IG) Cllr. John Keech (JK) Cllr. Michael Walmsley (MW) Cllr. Allan Prudham (AP) Cllr. Nigel Sparrow (NS) Cllr. Jacky Fraser (JF) Cllr. James Petrides (JP) Cllr. Ali Dove (AD) Cllr. Eric Cooper (EC) – arrived 7.05 Cllr. John Reid (JR)
Apologies received:	Cllr. Tamsin Bromley-Rahike (TBR) Cllr. Adrian Langley (AL)
Non-attendance:	Cllr. Charlie Tompkins (CT)
Borough Council Member:	Borough Cllr. Jane Walker (JW) Borough Cllr. Jon Abbott (JA)
Clerk to the Council:	Rosemary Plum (RP)
Public Attendance	2 members of staff from Clapham Post Office 2 x Clapham Residents

MINUTES OF MEETING

1. Election of Chairman

PROPOSAL: Cllr Phillipa Simms to continue as Chair of Clapham Parish Council.

PROPOSED: Cllr Allan Prudham

SECONDED: Cllr John Reid

VOTE: Unanimously in favour

2. Election of Vice-Chairman

PROPOSAL: Cllr Sarah Walker to continue as Vice Chair of Clapham Parish Council.

PROPOSED: Cllr Phillipa Simms

SECONDED: Cllr John Keech

VOTE: Unanimously in favour

3. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from:

- Cllr. Tamsin Bromley-Rahike (TBR)
- Cllr. Adrian Langley (AL)

4. Declarations of Interest

The following declarations were received:

- Cllr Eric Cooper as an allotment plot holder
- Cllr Phillipa Simms as Chair of the Village Hall Management Committee
- Cllr James Petridis as a member of the Village Hall Management Committee.

5. Open Forum

- I. Using Chairs liberty, PS introduced Vish and Nish from Clapham PO. Nish reached out to CPC asking for help and support subject to discussions at this Parish Council meeting, regarding the consultation to move Clapham Post Office. The postmaster (who, contrary to popular belief, is not Nish) has resigned and has nominated Clapham Food & Wine Store to take over as the location for Clapham Post Office.
- II. The Post Office has been sited in its present location for over 100 years.
- III. Consultation currently open and support required to make residents aware together with signposting to response website.
- IV. Change of location is subject to peoples opinion. Going forward if residents are minded to not support the move, Nish and Vish are hoping to take the Post Office back into the building where it is now as they own the building.
- V. Never any access issues with nobody ever turned away from the Post Office in its current location. It is believed there will be access issues in the proposed new site.
- VI. Clapham is growing in demographic with a further 500 houses soon to be added. Clapham is a key service village, used by number north beds villages that have already lost their village post office and Bedford no longer has a dedicated space in the town.
- VII. The village needs a dedicated space for a properly functioning post office and any reduction to one counter is not acceptable.
- VIII. Clapham PO currently provides an excellent service to nearby villages and it wants to keep what it's got with Nish and Vish having exciting plans to expand the PO even further if the move can be stopped.
- IX. Due process in place with consultation currently under way. Vish and Nish hopeful they can take it back in either case.
- X. The postmaster who has resigned was employed by PO and Nish and Vish were never approached despite their twenty-one years of commitment and experience to the successful running of the Post

Office in Clapham. The Post Office management only has contact with the postmaster.

- XI. CPC wants to oppose any move of our village Post Office from its' current site with as louder voice as possible. There are already big issues with lack of parking along shopping parade. The current PO site has ample parking, including DDA spaces, Infront of and behind its location.
- XII. JP has contacted regional change at PO. They're going to get back to him with an official statement on the procedure being followed which CPC can validate. Genuine concern noted from those proposing to take over as they don't want to upset local residents as they have another business to run. Need to ensure correct language and facts in fairness to all.
- XIII. It was noted that consultation questions aren't very clear.
- XIV. Many councillors have been talking to residents around the village and never known such strong feelings of opposition to a proposal. The overwhelming feeling is the current post office is a key part of the village and are strongly opposed to any re-siting.
- XV. The Parish Council is opposed to any move of Clapham Post Office from its current location and urges individuals to respond to the application and sign petition.
- XVI. In drawing the discussions to a close, NS applauded Nish and Vish for their dignity in the way they have handled this awful situation with the residents of the village and wishes there could be more organisations capable of handling their business affairs in the same manner. He also gave thanks to the brothers for their 21 years of service to date.

6. Minutes of Previous Meeting

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

PROPOSED: Cllr Sarah Walker

SECONDED: Cllr Michael Walmsley

7. Matters Arising from the minutes *(for information only)*

Nothing to report.

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

- I. First phase of ground investigations starting next week for East West Rail (EWR) along the proposed route of the railway for the following 4 weeks (up until 9th June). The ground investigations are expected to take place over several months. The duration of individual surveys varies depending on the type of ground investigation being carried out. It's unlikely that the ground investigations will cause any significant disturbance to communities and our contractor team will be adhering to robust health and safety procedures. Measures in place such as limiting working hours to 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday and

laying trackway into fields to try and avoid mud being brought onto the roads.

- II. Resident raised concerns about condition of dog park, specifically the broken fence and gate. The damage has left sections of the park insecure, allowing dogs to easily escape and posing safety concerns for both pets and their owners. Envco agreed to ratify proposal at full Council. RP to get quotes for fencing and quotes from Maintenance Officer to repair/replace gate. In the meantime, gate will be repaired and fence made good.
- III. Renewed request to Police for speed gun monitoring Green Lane – Highbury Grove.
- IV. Thanks given to Borough Grounds team for great job they're doing.
- V. Requested planning inspector visit for the road crossing at The Close

9. Police Matters

a) Crime report

Report circulated prior to meeting.

10. Borough Council Matters

a) Borough Councillor Reports

- I. Bedford Kite festival 21 – 22 June 2025. Book fair and year of reading will also be present.
- II. Kempston family fun day – 2 August 2025.
- III. Saturday 24 May – inclusion festival national campaign trying to promote inclusion Russell Park
- IV. Friday 23 May – Bamberg Beer Festival at Corn Exchange
- V. Oakley Road Railway Bridge walkway removed. JA and JW tried to purchase walkway with ward funds but Highways would charge £20k to keep it and would cost £5k/yr to maintain. Financial commitment too much for Ward funding.
- VI. Oakley PC asked if anything else can be done to prevent children walking along raised kerb. Borough Highways team came back with 4 options none of which were ideal. Discussion ongoing and will be represented with Milton Road plans.

b) 51 Bus Service

- I. 51 bus is being withdrawn. This is a commercial decision. Grant Palmer been very successful with the 25 bus service, possibly due to lower fare. Borough Councillor met with Stagecoach Manager and nothing can be done without considerable money from Borough Council to fund the service.
- II. Grant Palmer putting together new timetable to provide more services.
- III. JA meeting with Lincroft and Grant Palmer 21 May 2025.
- IV. 6.45 service will no longer run from Clapham. First service of the day from Clapham will be 7.20am with Grant Palmer.

11. Environment Committee

a) Appointment of representatives

PROPOSAL: All members currently on the Environment Committee are happy to continue for another year.

PROPOSED: Cllr Nigel Sparrow

SECONDED: Cllr John Keech

VOTE: Unanimous – thanks also given to IG for making excellent job in taking over the role from NS.

b) Report from meeting 13th May 2025

- I. All very pleased with new grass in Riverside Gardens, thanks to JR for cutting the grass and volunteers for doing great job.
- II. Village Tree planting project delayed. Borough contractors found underground issues. The project will be picked up again asap in autumn.
- III. Bedford Borough Flood Forum on 8 July 2025. Representatives from Environment Committee will attend and put together questions from CPC at their June meeting.

12. Planning Committee

a) Appointment of representatives

- I. EC happy to stay on this committee but wants to see changes. He expressed concern that he has spent a lot of time putting representations together without receiving backup from other Parish Councillors. He want to see more collective input to our planning responses.
- II. NS would like to stay on the Committee and asked EC if he would be prepared to Chair the Planning Committee as he has experience and knowledge.
- III. Members of the planning cttee used to undergo training. RP to ask RP BATPC to set up planning meeting.
- IV. Suggestion to tie-in NDP review with the Planning Committee and PS dedicate a meeting per month to planning. Discussions around arrangement were taken offline with further email correspondence to arrangement a meeting day.

13. Allotment Committee

a) Appointment of representatives

- I. EC, IG and TBR happy to continue.
- II. Allotment Association Committee has 8 members.

b) Report from meeting 7th May 2025

- I. Opening of HWB plots by Mayor great success. Credit to Clapham Allotments Association Committee (CAAC) for a very well attended and enjoyable event with a 1940's themed afternoon tea. Mayor and wife delighted to attend and Mayor was impressed with what Clapham can do. All shopkeepers in the village donated to project and plaque position on the HWN plot site to mark this. Milton Ernest Garden Centre donated apple tree thanks to RP 1940's afternoon tea and Mayor was impressed with what Clapham can do.
- II. Renewed call for all Parish Councillors to visit the Allotments Site from time to time to appreciate the amount of work being done by the Allotments Committee and plot holders.
- III. Sandra Fuller stood down as chair of CAAC. Secretary, Carole Darnell will temporarily step into the role with more representation from the association at committee meetings.
- IV. Allotments looking very good. Running out of available plots to for new enquiries. Need to work on further areas to prepare plots but short of volunteers.
- V. 93% occupancy rate. All 2025-26 invoices gone out with 66% paid straight away.
- VI. Social events for which Parish Council support requested:
 - Best kept plot 4th August 2025 with 3 judges (Parish Cllr, Rep from Milton Ernest Garden Centre and 1 from another allotment association.
 - Open weekend 16 & 17 August 2025 to announce/present to winners in conjunction with national gardens week.

14. East West Rail

- I. EC and SW attended first of new series of meetings for community engagement groups. Clapham is on cusp of two area groups. We're now in the Bedford group as well. No major outcomes. More detailed report with themes and key responses at statutory consultation phase at beginning of next year. Next round of meetings in September 2025.
- II. Specific meeting with the Parish Council – design freeze in the summer with feedback opportunity during autumn. Asked for individual meeting with representatives from CPC only. Started north beds online parish meetings.

15. Communication

- a) VE80 Day Beacon Lighting Event – 8th May 2025
 - I. Thanks to all for attending. Very well supported and well received.
- b) Clapham Post Office

PROPOSAL: Clapham Parish Council strongly opposes the move of the post office from its current premises to the new proposed location. We want the post office to remain in the community as is.

PROPOSED: Cllr Nigel Sparrow

SECONDED: Cllr John Keech

VOTE: Unanimous

16. Highways

- I. CPC has received report of a resident at 99, High Street, Clapham, finding it very difficult to leave home in the car due to large vans parked either side of entrance. Exacerbated by parking across entrance to Riverside Gardens leaving very little vision to access by car into the busy High Street. Resident has requested white 'H' bar to be painted in front of house and access to Riverside Gardens entrance. Environment Committee agreed to ratify proposal at full Council.
- II. White H bars don't have any legal standing but they are a visual deterrent. Resident would have to pay cost of placement if the Borough Council were to agree to this.
- III. CPC will ask the Borough on behalf of Riverside Gardens entrance and pass on information.
- IV. Reports of resident parking on corner of Slade and Highbury Grove across dropped kerb.

17. Finance

a) Payment of accounts

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

PROPOSED: Cllr. John Keech

SECONDED: Cllr. Allan Prudham

b) Review of direct debits

RP confirmed the following Direct Debits are in place on the Parish Council bank account:

- HSBC (Bank charges)
- Andrews & Arnold (Phone & internet provider)
- Anglian Water (Water rates)
- SBS UK (Printer hire)
- HMRC (PAYE)

18. Correspondence

- I. "We are considering buying a house in Green Lane but worried about the impact of east/west railway. That said, has it actually been fully approved yet, and what impact would green lane suffer if it was?" SW will reply. SW
- II. See High Street resident enquiry at Item 16) Highways.

- III. See residents' enquiry about dog park repairs under Item 8) Clerk's Report
- IV. Thankyou card received from Sandra Fuller, outgoing Chair of Allotments Association Committee. RP to write formal thanks

RP

19. Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday, 17th June 2025 in the Methodist Church Hall, Clapham

The meeting was closed by the Chair at 9.49pm

Signed as a true reflection of the meeting:

Signed	
Dated	17 th June 2025

Chair