

Meeting:	CLAPHAM PARISH COUNCIL 17 th June 2025
Council Members in attendance:	Cllr. Phillipa Simms, Chair (PS) Cllr. Sarah Walker, Vice Chair (SW) Cllr. John Keech (JK) Cllr. Michael Walmsley (MW) Cllr. Allan Prudham (AP) Cllr. Nigel Sparrow (NS) Cllr. Eric Cooper (EC) Cllr. John Reid (JR) Cllr. Tamsin Bromley-Rahike (TBR) Cllr. Adrian Langley (AL) Cllr. James Petrides (JP) – late arrival
Apologies received:	Cllr. Ian Gaskin (IG) Cllr. Ali Dove (AD) Cllr. Jacky Fraser (JF) Borough Cllr. Jon Abbott (JA)
Non-attendance:	Cllr James Petridis Cllr Charlie Tomkins
Borough Council Member:	Borough Cllr. Jane Walker (JW)
Clerk to the Council:	Rosemary Plum (RP)
Public Attendance	None

MINUTES OF MEETING

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from:

- Cllr. Ian Gaskin (IG)
- Cllr. Ali Dove (AD)
- Cllr. Jacky Fraser (JF)
- Borough Cllr. Jon Abbott (JA)

2. Declarations of Interest

- Cllr. Eric Cooper for all matters relating to the Allotments
- Cllr. Phillipa Simms for all matters relating to the Village Hall

3. Open Forum

- a) Bedfordia Solar Farm – Presentation by Harry Witt, Manager and James Othen, Planning Manager Pace Development
 - Project name changed to Thurleigh Road Solar Farm

- Planning access likely to be submitted through Clapham PC although site will no longer be accessed from the Clapham.
- Reduced in size because Rutters Farm and other members of community raised serious concerns.
- Not good from archaeological perspective around Yarl's Wood.
- Hedges and paths maintenance will be offered to landowners and then to local contractors. As part of their work, there will be a monitoring plan for environment and natural habitats.
- Fixed site with no rotation to follow sun because that technology isn't the most reliable and not a viable solution at the moment.
- For residents living on perimeter area at the top of The Baulk, consideration being given to landscaping, architects suggest there will be reduced effect from glare.
- Bridleways and footpaths will have 10m corridors and screening put in place by the landscaping team which will improve biodiversity.
- A6 traffic count done and development vehicles anticipated to be 6 per day.
- Approx. 12 months before construction starts, depending on planning clearance and materials supplies.
- Chair of Parish Council acknowledged the public consultation was very helpful, very clear and the Parish Councils appreciate change away from Twinwood Road.
- If Borough Planning decide to make alterations to the application, the Parish Council will be advised especially if they have any effect on Clapham's perspective.
- Point of connection is battery overhead line and substation which has already been consented. Grid connection and land aligned to not need to extend the site in the future. Battery will be monitored 24/7.

b) Other matters raised

- Request for planning enforcement to deal with car crossing footpath at bottom of Mountpleasant Road.
- Car parked outside Post Office on waiting time area reported to Borough Council.

4. 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 James Petridis

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

Nothing to report.

6. Clerk's Report (for information only)

- I. New memorial bench has been placed in Browns Wood to replace dilapidated bench, in agreement with Borough Council. All costs borne by the resident.
- II. Flood store is tidy and ready for use. Thanks to councillors who helped in moving the contents of the garages. Agreed to add key safe on outside of garage next to sand store as only one set of keys available for the garage lock.
- III. Trees outside shops will be trimmed back by Borough.
- IV. Hedges vastly overgrown onto footpath - written 6 and 10 Cody Road
- V. Police have been monitoring traffic speed along Green Lane on more than one occasion. Does seem it's younger contingent from Golf Club that aren't respecting the speed limit. Write to Golf Club manager and ask for support in speed awareness amongst members.
- VI. The following online training courses are available:
'Planning Nuts & Bolts' - an introductory training session for Parish/Town Councillors and Clerks covering the basic principles of planning including policy, applications, appeals and enforcement.
Planning Responses – A course focusing on the practical element of responding to planning applications, looking at what should – and should not – be included in councils' responses.
 JR – SW - AP
- VII. JK concerned people may be living at Craddocks old building and would like Planning Inspectors to check whether it's a HMO. Advised this would be picked up at Parish Council on 17th June 2025.
- VIII. RP continues to chase numerous Borough issues – old and new including:
 - Holes in Cody Road footpaths reported.
 - Ditch from High Street at bottom of Green Lane very overgrown and silted - Needs to be cleared by autumn in event of flooding (as well as Milton Road)

7. **Police Matters**

a) Crime Figures

Report circulated to members prior to the meeting.

8. Borough Council Report

- New visitor centre open in Debenhams and proving very popular. Tourist Guides working from there plus info and seating area, box office and taking flyers for other promotions, gift shop for Bedford.
- Schools art collection to be placed in Debenhams windows.
- Summer of SEND starting with 500 events open to families including at the Kite Festival this weekend and year of reading marquee, 300 classic and vintage cars.
- REPF Grant scheme now open. Applications by 30th June 2025.
- Request for bin in the middle of The Glebe at the end of Loake Close. Need to understand why and Borough to do a needs assessment.

RP

- JW could provide bigger bin from Ward funding outside the shops as it fills in a day.
- Mayor complained to Police Commissioner complaining about his handling of crime in the Borough. We're concerned regarding police matters within NE Bedfordshire as reduction in numbers at Riseley and are not getting the service we expect. Has the Mayor included NE Beds as well as Bedford Town Centre? Yes, the whole Borough is covered in the concerns.
- NS very concerned with Clapham during the summer and problems as soon as schools break up with youths wandering around the village. Increase of vandalism without available resources. Concerns also about lack of communication regarding Yarl's Wood.
- We have very good police team with great response and great relationship with them. Would be good to have backup from PCC. We should write to PCC and cc TW. Could ultimately complain to the Police and Crime Panel.

9. Environment Committee

a) Report from Committee meeting 10th June 2025

- I. To review and update Clapham's flood plans [this to be done after the next Environment Committee meeting]
- II. Proposal to investigate the use of solar lights in flood compound & by vehicle parking bays at entrance to Allotments and VH entrance.
- III. EC standing down from Environment committee due to commitment as Chair of the newly formed Planning Committee. Borough Planning to rewrite Local Plan that could take up to 3 years. In the meantime, we're open to speculative applications.
- IV. Concerns raised about lack of engagement from Borough Highways Department.

b) Other matters

- I. 8th July meeting - Chair and Vice Chair on a/l and also date of Borough flood forum that could run on to early evening. Unless anyone has a major objection, the July meeting will be re-scheduled. By re-scheduling the meeting, members will have time to digest any outcomes and proposals from the Borough flood forum, discuss them in more detail and evaluate any opportunities and implications for our Clapham flood plan.

10. East West Rail

a) Update

- I. Positive Meeting last night with N Beds Parishes EWR Alliance. Meeting monthly to ensure those parishes not directly impacted can also take an interest in statutory consultation and build awareness.
- II. Next meeting in September.
- III. PS following up with Richard Fuller MP to get his views on Clapham situation.

PS

11. Planning Committee

a) Report from Planning Committee 10th June 2025

- I. EC delighted that Planning Committee has been re-established prior to Environment Committee and accepted role of Chair.
- II. Will review with RP how to operate going forward particularly with planning applications. This could include site visits, discussion and monthly updates to full Parish Council.
- III. 75 houses application – formally responded objecting on many points.
- IV. Training sessions – everybody encouraged to attend. Very useful for Councillors to understand Borough Planning process and be in a position to influence the process.

b) NDP update

- I. Needs reviewing – nothing wrong with it but good practice to review.
- II. SW spent some time with consultants before but they can no longer support. SW contacted funding organisation for best practice, process and what other opportunities there are. Contacted alternative suggestions for consultants.
- III. As Milton Road development hasn't started work, nothing has changed other than the wider context of the plan to include EWR,
- IV. Milton Road development already consented.
- V. We only need a light touch review to update policies as and where appropriate. Everything still stands as our commitments remain same.
- VI. Volunteer in village who is Head of Strategic Housing at Luton has offered to give time and expertise. SW to share draft review and follow up with process in due course.
- VII. EC suggested process is reasonable but with new Local Plan 3yrs away, we should be aware we will need to update NDP again on completion of the Borough Local Plan. Just need to make sure ours is robust enough pending the new Local Plan.
- VIII. Thanks given to SW for work to date.

c) Applications validated and decided

Distributed to members prior to the meeting.

12. Communication

a) Clapham Show – update

- I. VN circulated with Show Programme incorporated.
- II. Planning going well – many more classes this year.
- III. Date of event is 6th September 2025.

13. Allotment Committee

a) Report from Allotment Committee meeting 9th June 2025

- I. Maria Dunne taking over as Chair of Allotment Association
- II. Less than 20 plot holders still to pay their fees. These are being chased by the Association Secretary.

- III. Plot occupancy at 93% with a number of new plot and part-plot enquiries
- IV. First person signed up for Health & Wellbeing plot.
- V. New shared plot created to allow 4 people to share including shed.
- VI. Very short of volunteers to help clear plots ready for allocation.
- VII. Inspections ongoing
- VIII. EC is the new Vice Chair of Clapham Allotments and Community Gardens Association. If committee here thinks there's a conflict, EC will step back.
- IX. IG looking into including in the Borough Contract, the mowing of grass tracks around allotment.
- X. Approx. £1,500 Ward funding for defibrillator available.

a) Burial Ground

b) Update

- I. Report of badly subsided plots in Green Lane cemetery.
- II. RP to clarify with Borough about Green Lane cemetery maintenance as reported on the annual audit.
- III. RP to look into funding for walls enquiry

14. Highways & Footpaths

a) Update

- I. Wooden bollards on The Glebe green – 4 currently missing as rotted and several more unsecure. Get quotes for replacement.
- II. Residents asking about bushes on High Street coming out onto the path. RP to write letter.

15. Village Hall

a) Update

- I. Internal refurbishment now in final stages. Electrics nearly finished.
- II. More grants being applied for.
- III. High volume of bookings being confirmed.

16. 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) Ratify AGAR 2025-26

RP outlined the Annual Governance and Accounting Report and figures to members present.

PROPOSED: Cllr. John Keech

SECONDED: Cllr. Allan Prudham

17. Correspondence

Nothing to report.

18. Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday, 15th July 2025 in the Methodist Church Hall