

Meeting:	CLAPHAM PARISH COUNCIL 21 st October 2025 at 7.15pm
Council Members in attendance:	Cllr. Phillipa Simms, Chair (PS) Cllr. Sarah Walker, Vice Chair (SW) Cllr. Nigel Sparrow (NS) Cllr. John Keech (JK) Cllr. Eric Cooper (EC) Cllr. Tamsin Bromley-Rahike (TBR) Cllr. Adrian Langley (AL) Cllr. Michael Walmsley (MW) Cllr. Ian Gaskin (IG) Cllr. Charlie Tompkins (CT) arrived 8pm Cllr. Jacky Fraser (JF) – arrived 7.30pm
Apologies received:	Cllr. Ali Dove (AD) Cllr. James Petrides (JP) Cllr. John Reid (JR) Borough Cllr. Jon Abbott (JA)
Non-attendance:	None
Borough Council Member:	Borough Cllr. Jane Walker (JW)
Clerk to the Council:	Rosemary Plum (RP) (unwell) Minute secretary Cllr Sarah Walker
Public Attendance	Maria Dunne (Resident)

MINUTES OF MEETING

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from:

- Cllr. Ali Dove (AD)
- Cllr. James Petrides (JP)
- Cllr. John Reid (JR)

2. Declarations of Interest

The following declarations were received:

- Cllr. Phillipa Simms- VH
- Cllr. Eric Cooper – Allotments

3. Open Forum

- a) Maria Dunne, Miller Close resident, raised the challenge of traffic and parking on the Glebe estate. Discussion about options to raise awareness and improve driver behaviour. Proposal referred to Agenda under Highways.

- b) IG had discussed ongoing drainage problem on exterior wall of residents' home, who are hosting defibrillator. Agreed action is required to

IG

mitigate risk of flooding and damp ingress. Referred to Environment Committee for November discussion and proposal.

- c) IG also raised possibility of installing solar lighting where cars are parking on old garage site. (See clerk's report below)
- d) Property near crossing near Mount Pleasant/High St – query on progress. JW confirmed litigation with Bedford Borough Council is ongoing. (See clerk's report below)

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 John Keech

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

All matters included on the Agenda this evening.

6. Clerk's Report (for information only)

- a) RP met with Iain Booth (IB), Borough Highways Manager on 16th October with Cllr. Ian Gaskin also in attendance. Discussions included:
 - I. Clearance of ditches, gulleys and drainage to support flood prevention. IB assured us the entire length of Clapham High Street is considered a priority area for regular clearance every 3-6 months, together with the gulleys near the Fox and Hounds and nearby homes. The Parish as a whole is on a cyclical cleaning schedule and IB will provide RP with this schedule for the next 12 months.
 - II. IB explained his teams cannot be as reactive as they would like to clearance requests for individual drain and gulley requests because Bedford Borough only has two gulley motors, one of which breaks down regularly, covering 24,000 gullies in the Borough and its 47 Parishes.
 - III. Anglian Water Authority also have a huge part to play in the issues we face because they don't maintain the surface water system as they should.
 - IV. IB also asked for Councillors to consider the massive increase in the level of traffic in recent years, without any corresponding increase in maintenance budget or resource.
 - V. Green Lane traffic issues, particularly speeding. RP to speak to Borough Streetworks Manager and request monitoring by Borough Speed Vehicle and consideration of other traffic/data measures including cable across the road to determine increase of traffic. IB is going to look into the cost of Speed Indicator Devices to be positioned in Green Lane. RP
 - VI. IB agreed to prioritise clearance of the 'hidden' ditch along Milton Road from the entrance to the Burial Ground down Milton Road for

approx. 200mts before it crosses under the road to re-emerge on the Glebe side of Milton Road. This will be done in collaboration with the work to be carried out by JDT Contractors to recreate the drainage ditches in the Burial Ground.

- VII. Water leak near Towers Gym in the vicinity of the cycle crossing – IB has serious concerns about ice creating treacherous conditions due to this leak and he is constantly chasing AWA to carry out the necessary repairs. If AWA don't respond, IB will provision sandbags on the sides of the road to try and prevent ice formation in coming months.
- VIII. Request for additional pedestrian crossing in Clapham High Street – this will be considered as part of the High Street redesign with the Milton Road Development.
- IX. Cycle track crossing on High Street just past Green Lane -RP to engage with Melanie McLoud at the Borough who is officer responsible for improving the existing infrastructure with the Milton Road Development, including a footway over the A6. RP
- X. Borough is in contact and taking necessary action with High Street resident who has paved front garden for off street parking near pedestrian crossing at junction with Mount Pleasant Road. No further details can be shared at this stage due to legal process.
- b) PS updated councillors following BATPC AGM 16th October. Speakers on the theme of flooding and flood resilience, included representatives from Anglian Water and the Environment Agency, Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire Councils and Richard Fuller, MP.
- c) Defib for entrance to allotments has arrived and arrangements being made with electrician for install. RP looking into costs for solar lighting (and for the sand store in Cody Road). Environment Committee have requested defib training for all Councillors and volunteers. RP to create map of positions of defibs in Clapham. RP
- d) Planned tree pollarding, pruning and general maintenance by JDT Contractors has started this week and is expected to last up to 3 weeks. All good quality bark and tree spoil will be chipped and redistributed between Allotments, Riverside Gardens if required and Millennium Park redevelopment. Further details under individual Agenda items.
- e) Bulbs for planting in Allotments, Millennium Gardens and Burial ground collected from storage in Pavenham this week.
- f) Borough tree officer to carry out site visit in coming weeks to address concerns about trees in Church View and Highbury Grove Silver birch. RP
- g) Suzuki garage staff parking on roads opposite – work in progress with RP. RP
- h) Police have authorised road closure for Parish Remembrance Service. However, the Borough have 11 street closure requests for the same time on the same day and only 3 operatives to deal with these. Borough has agreed to drop off street signs and parish council are to take care of placement and road closures in accordance with Borough instructions. RP

7. Police Matters

a) Crime Figures

No crime reports received since August 2025. JW will forward.

JW

8. Borough Council Report

a) JW updated on BBC's financial position (JW report pending)

JW

b) JA report submitted before meeting. Details were relayed. Summary priorities for Clapham are:

- Supporting resident participation in the Bus Survey and Budget Consultation.
- Monitoring the impacts of proposed funding reductions (Ward Fund, Rural Grants, etc.) on local community projects.
- Maintaining oversight of the Tempsford New Town proposal to ensure proper engagement with existing communities.

c) Further details provided on the following:

- **New Towns** Taskforce and Tempsford Proposal
- **Local Infrastructure and Environment** Updates
- **Queens Bridge** remains closed following the discovery of significant rot and decay in the timber structure. Options for repair or replacement are under review.
- **Bedford Lock** Refurbishment begins late October, led by the Environment Agency, and continues until Easter 2026. Access to Mill Meadows will be restricted, but footpaths will remain open.
- **Kerbside** Glass Recycling Expansion: Borough-wide rollout begins 1 December 2025, enabling glass to be placed in orange-lidded bins
- **Bus Services Consultation:** The Bus Survey 2025 (open until 19 December) seeks residents' views on local bus provision and rural connectivity.
- **Oasis Beach Pool:** Bedford Borough Council has announced that the Oasis Beach Pool will close on 3 November 2025 following the October half-term programme.
- **Town Centre and Borough-Wide Initiatives** The Bedford Town Centre Advisory Board's first meeting.
- **Parking Update**
- The Borough's financial position - projected £32.5m budget gap for 2026/27.
- **Proposed Budget Savings and Community Impact** Bedford Borough Council's Budget Preparation Process 2026/27 identifies need for £11.5 million, including reductions in discretionary community support budgets. The following proposals are particularly relevant to rural wards:

- Introduction of green waste (garden bin) charges
Withdrawal of funding for Bedfordshire Community & Voluntary Service (£40,000)
- Review of the Community Centres Support Budget (£100,000)
Reduction in maintenance and public toilet budgets
- Possible rationalisation of library services
Review of grass-cutting schedules. (£200,000 Borough-wide.)
- Budget Consultation 2026/27. Public consultation on the 2026/27 Budget until 18 November. The consultation can be accessed at:
<https://www.bedford.gov.uk/your-council/have-your-say/consultations/budget-consultation-20262027>

- **Capital Programme draft updates**

Removed Schemes:

- Sharnbrook Primary
- Robinson Pool
- Leisure Village Feasibility
- Leisure Complex and Asset Refurbishment

Reduced Schemes:

- Wixams Railway Station
- Bedford Commercial Park
- Town Centre Regeneration
- Upcoming community events to mark Remembrance/Armistice Day
- Cllr JW encouraged comments on consultation and website functionality to be reported online to council.

9. Environment Committee

a) Update from meeting 14th October 2025

- I. IG noted circulated minutes
- II. IG proposed items below ratification

b) Tree and vegetation maintenance – Ratify cost

- Work scheduled to be carried out by JDT Contractors from starting 20th October 2025:
- Willows within the garden area to be pollarded back to previous size
- Remove central weed growth interfering with fishing bay
- Two smaller willows in the central bay – pollard by 50%
- Flail vegetation on bank edge and prune various regrowth

PROPOSAL: Cost of £2.5k max. to cover operatives with excavator and flail to carry out work in Riverside Gardens to be ratified by Parish Council.

PROPOSED: Cllr. Ian Gaskin

SECONDED: Cllr. Phillipa Simms

c) Fishing platform update - Ratify cost

Disposal of 1 x fishing platform no longer fit for use.

PROPOSAL: Cost of £500 max. to cover 3 x operatives with digger and disposal fees of all materials to be ratified by Parish Council.

PROPOSED: Cllr. Ian Gaskin

SECONDED: Cllr. Phillipa Simms

d) Parish tree planting

- I. RP has received confirmation from Borough of funding for planting of 40 additional trees in Clapham over the winter months, in the following locations: Cody Road, Fetlock Close, George Street, Highbury Grove, Lanchester Close, Milton Road, Paddock Close, Twinwood Road. Planting will be subject to public consultation and resident feedback. RP awaiting maps and further information. All will be subject to public consultation and feedback.
- II. Number of trees now increased to 96, in same areas, including stakes and guards and 2-year maintenance.

10. East West Rail

a) Update

- I. EC and SW updated on recent round of Local Representative Groups, SW to share for both Clapham and Bedford. Updates on the forthcoming Planning Infrastructure Bill and its likely impact on statutory consultation. Updates on progress expected from EWR later this year. Series of drop-in events to be held across the route.

11. Planning Committee

a) Update validations & decisions

- I. EC to submit monthly summary paper for future meetings.

II. Bedford Borough Council Decisions

25/00728/FUL Single-storey rear extension to replace existing part-built extension 25 High Street Clapham
BBC Decision: Refused – no flood risk assessment

25/00922/PIP Permission in principle for the erection of two self-build dwellings Park Farm Menage Green Lane Clapham
BBC Decision: Within 3 yrs to submit technical details

25/01690/FUL Single storey side and rear extension
5 Lanchester Close Clapham
BBC Decision: Approved

b) Bedford Borough Council September and October Applications

25/01613/FUL Dropped Kerb 244 High Street Clapham

CPC Response: No Objection

BBC Decision: Approved

25/01859/AGR Erection of general purpose portal framed agricultural building, Top Camp, The Baulk Clapham MK41 6AA

CPC Response: No Objection

BBC Decision: Approved – build within 5 Yrs

25/01850/TPO T1 Silver Birch: Fell. 89 Highbury Grove Clapham

CPC Response: Request for further information

25/01785/HPN Prior notification for single storey rear extension(s) 65

The Glebe Clapham Bedford

CPC Response: N/A

BBC Decision: Approved

25/01292/MAF Solar farm with ancillary infrastructure. Reconsult Land East Of Twinwood Road Oakley and Clapham and Land South East of Thurleigh Road Milton Ernest and Thurleigh.

CPC Response: No Objection, but CPC has requested that suitable conditions are added to any consent to cover vehicular movements, property screening (glint and glare) nature conservation, protection of PROWs.

25/01967/MAF Erection of 4 padel tennis courts with canopy with associated office and social space and 20 car parking spaces to replace the netball courts proposed on 16/00111/MAO. Bedford Greenacre Independent School Manton Lane

CPC Response: No Objection, but CPC has requested that suitable conditions are added to any consent to cover the timing and spread of lighting, minimising light pollution and noise pollution.

- c) There was further discussion about the application for 75 homes on Milton Road and the need to understand the likely scale of CIL/S106 community benefits. This key application was referred to the Planning Committee.

d) NDP update

- I. SW updated that draft revisions, added by specialist consultant, are due to be submitted this week to Sonia Gallaher at Bedford Borough Council. Consultant has agreed that only minor revisions, eg references to updated NPFF (Planning Framework) are necessary. Following challenge about not sharing document more widely with councillors beforehand, councillors were happy that it should be shared concurrently with parish councillors and Borough officer.

12. Communication

a) Christmas Light Up

- I. Plans in hand and agreement that in future it would happen on the last Saturday of November.

13. Allotment Committee

a) Report from Allotment Committee meeting – IG updated on:

- I. Bents Close gate – decision to lock gate at night, as with allotment gates. Decision ratified by Parish Council.
- II. Footfall and traffic through allotments, people must walk on the footpath and not wander across plots and access routes.
- III. Increased number of people also parking in allotments.
- IV. Mince pie event on Nov 29

- I. Defibrillator install
As per clerk's report.

14. Burial Ground

a) Update

- I. RP has approached nurseries as suggested by the Borough tree officer for future tree planting. However, before Parish investment can go ahead, water drainage ditches along the Burial Ground boundaries need to be properly re-instated. Grave diggers have filled existing ditches with spoil completely blocking the flow of water during heavy rainfall and contributing to flooding.
- II. The ditch along Milton Road on the side of the Burial Ground has also been blocked with felled trees and branches with completely obstructing any passage of water. See Clerk's Report.

b) Ditch & Hedge maintenance update - Ratify cost

- I. The following remedial work urgently needs to be undertaken by JDT contractors:
 - Clear brambles, vegetation and trees to allow a new ditch to be formed
 - Removal of trees to be selected to ensure good specimens are retained where applicable
 - Create new ditch to link up with existing drainage infrastructure
 - Existing ditch to be cleared
 - Ditch excavation to be retained on site, graded neat to suit
 - When working near occupied burial locations, protective track mats will be used to minimise any ground disruption
 - Post and rail fence will be removed in areas to allow access and reinstalled when complete
 - Roadside ditch at the entrance to the Burial Ground where it joins the boundary ditch has a lot of existing tree waste and debris. Whilst the ditch on roadside is Bedford Borough council responsibility, JDT will

dispose of this debris to clear site and allow Bedford Borough to continue with clearance of the ditch along the length of Milton Road. Refer to Clerks Report above.

PROPOSAL: Parish Council to ratify up to £3k for 3 days labour for several operatives and machinery required to clear trees/vegetation and form new ditch.

PROPOSED: Cllr. Michael Walmsley

SECONDED: Cllr. Ian Gaskin

c) Burial Fees

Cost comparison against other parishes circulated prior to meeting.

PROPOSAL: From 1 Jan 2026, to increase plot fees to £350 for resident, £700 for non-residents. Further charges to be referred to Environment Committee.

PROPOSED: Cllr. Michael Walmsley

SECONDED: Cllr. Ian Gaskin

15. Highways & Footpaths

a) Update

- I. Miller Close (see Open Forum) - Agreed to request a full traffic assessment by Bedford Borough Council and to consider using scrub land as space for future car park. RP

b) Ditch & Hedge maintenance

- I. Refer to Clerks report. RP

16. Village Hall

a) Update

- I. PS reported all going well.

17. Finance

a) Payment of Accounts

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

PROPOSED: Cllr. Sarah Walker

SECONDED: Cllr. John Keech

b) Ratify appointment of new caretaker

RP has agreed fee and job description with new caretaker, Chris Harris. RP

PROPOSAL: Ratify agreed fees for duties outlined in formal job description including locking and unlocking gates in allotments and Riverside Gardens.

PROPOSED: Cllr Nigel Sparrow

SECONDED: Cllr Phillipa Simms

18. Correspondence

Nothing to report.



19. Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday, 18th November 2025 in the Methodist Church Hall

The meeting was closed by the Chair at 21.20hrs.

Signed as a true reflection of the meeting:

Signed	Chair
Dated	11 th November 2025