

Meeting: CLAPHAM PARISH COUNCIL
16h December 2025 7.00pm

Council Cllr. Phillipa Simms, Chair (PS)
Members in Cllr. John Keech (JK)
attendance: Cllr. Eric Cooper (EC)
Cllr. Ian Gaskin (IG)
Cllr. Allan Prudham (AP)
Cllr. James Petrides (JP)
Cllr. Jacky Fraser (JF)
Cllr John Reid (JR)
Cllr. Sarah Walker, Vice Chair (SW)
Cllr. Nigel Sparrow (NS)
Cllr. Tamsin Bromley-Rahike (TBR)
Cllr. Adrian Langley (AL)

Apologies Cllr. Ali Dove (AD)
received: Cllr. Charlie Tompkins (CT)
Cllr. Michael Walmsley (MW)

Non-
attendance:

Borough Council Borough Cllr. Jane Walker (JW) – left meeting at 19.55hrs
Member: Borough Cllr. Jon Abbott (JA)

Clerk to the Rosemary Plum (RP)
Council:

Public
Attendance

MINUTES OF MEETING

1. Apologies for Absence

Received from:

- Cllr. Ali Dove (AD)
- Cllr. Charlie Tompkins (CT)
- Cllr. Michael Walmsley (MW)

2. Declarations of Interest

Received from:

- Cllr Eric Cooper – allotment plot holder and Allotments Association Committee
- Cllr. James Petrides – Village Hall Admin Committee
- Cllr. Phillipa Simms - Village Hall Admin Committee

3. Open Forum

- I. Kings Ditch cleared out but there are piles of debris blocking behind plot 105 and in front of the drainage grill near the road. RP
- II. Flooding at entrance to allotments – RP has updates in Clerk's Report.
- III. Garages in Cody Road – check if anything been done to close the entrance into back garden at 77, Highbury Grove. IG

4. Minutes of Previous Meeting

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

PROPOSED: Cllr. Allan Prudham

SECONDED: Cllr. Ian Gaskin

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

Nothing to report.

6. Clerk's Report (for information only)

- Major tree and grounds maintenance work across the Parish carried out by JDT Contractors is almost complete. Strimming the ditches in the burial ground today and earth moving scheduled from 14th January.
- Used syringes found outside garages in Cody Road. Maintenance person disposed of these appropriately.
- Defibrillator now installed and registered. IG offered to be the responsible person for regular checks. IG
- Solar lights for parking at entrance to allotment and Cody Road Garages – awaiting delivery.
- Forestry Commission has advised that the Borough request to defer the planting of these trees to this year has been denied. Borough therefore unable to plant 40 trees without this funding. Borough able to plant two trees as original funding was for 12 trees and 10 planted last year.
- RP asked Borough Standards Committee how contractors investigating utility cables were appointed. Borough advised this is not a Standards Committee matter as that cttee deals with complaints against Councillors only. It was suggested a Parish Council Representative could raise this as a question during a public session at one of the Borough Meetings. Good practice to email a request to speak at a meeting with the question so a valid response could be given. Alternatively, it might be something forward Councillors to query.

7. Police Matters

a) Crime Figures

- I. Circulated prior to meeting.
- II. PS put out statement about screws which was corroborated by police.
- III. Surveillance cameras put up around village together with a call to cut down online sensationalising.

- IV. Parish is affected by handfuls and not individual screws that can fling off tyres on a daily basis.

8. Borough Council Report

- I. Planning permission for Universal has been confirmed subject to Government procedures or any legal challenge.
- II. Flooding under Oakley Rd bridge has been cleared more quickly. Capital business case submitted to divert the drainage course without need to cross Network Rail land.
- III. Closure of A6 bypass one lane in each direction 24/7 for entire month of January.
- IV. Free school has been reinstated completely and built by Government money to cover shortage of secondary places. It is one of only 16 in the country to have been approved.
- V. Govt has funded two antisocial behaviour officers for the Town Centre to patrol town centre to promote messages of no street drinking, aggressive begging. Initially short term funding for one year taking Borough to its promised 3 year funding settlement.
- VI. Work starts on Greyfriars improvements in January throughout 2026.
- VII. Council tax reduction scheme is not changing for another year. It will cause funding issues for the Borough but will protect the most vulnerable.
- VIII. Athletics track completely refurbished and will resume attracting international events.

9. Environment Committee

a) Update from meeting 9th December 2025

- I. Minutes circulated prior to meeting.
- II. EC invited members to attend allotment association committee meetings in future. Allotment Association put in a lot of hard work and have only spent half of their allocated budget so far this year.
- III. RP has reported and requested removal of advertising sign on verge in Green Lane which is a distraction.
- IV. Borough will advise when they're coming to clear drains outside Riverside Gardens so we can put out signs for no parking.
- V. Referring to the cancelled Borough tree planting project, EC said clearly something has gone wrong and IG asked why the Borough Council has not looked into it and whether the Parish could consider partnering with the Borough to pay for the trees.

RP

10. East West Rail

a) Update

- I. Meeting with EWR held in Parish Council office last week, with EWR largely pushing back against our request for a tunnel.
- II. Good to have a positive relationship with EWR for Clapham specific issues.

- III. Meeting with MP had led EWR to agree to internal meeting about tunnel which was not well accepted by EWR. Technically, tunnel appears to be feasible. EC requested plan of footprint and costings – dialogue ongoing. Design engineers were present at the meeting and said it was feasible.
- IV. Discussion taking place about green bridge over FP 5 and FP6 which would be positive for ecology.
- V. Ordinary bridge planned for Carriage Drive so we need to provide more info about historic and ecological elements.
- VI. Sainsburys, flooding, viaduct – EWR agreed to meeting in the New Year to discuss these. EC has today chased the further information that was promised.
- VII. To date, EWR multi-factor assessment of 3 options suggests they currently don't think a tunnel is an option but we do have the opportunity to keep lobbying for it.
- VIII. Statutory consultation in the New Year 2026 was expected but doesn't appear to be happening now. There will be a process for a Government Consent Order late 2026 as this is a pathfinder project for new Government legislation. New consultation now expected in Spring 2026.
- IX. Further technical updates with new set of drawings expected in January 2026.
- X. One of the biggest problems for residents is Development Consent Order not expected until 2027 with spades in the ground not before 2029. We need to keep people's attention throughout the interim period.
- XI. Need to continue with EWR/Parish dialogue which is positive.
- XII. Do we go back to Richard Fuller MP's team and find out how the areas that weren't having tunnels are now having them?
- XIII. Ravensden and Wilden having discussions because gradient on railways has been changed and will affect their roads.
- XIV. EC will circulate updated report asap and called for members to read the information and consider how it will affect residents. We need to EC question every step of the way.

11. Planning Committee

a) Update validations & decisions

- I. Report circulated prior to meeting.
- II. The Parish has strongly objected to a new development of 75 dwellings on Milton Road.
- III. PS and EC met with Agent who advised issues have been largely addressed and it's likely the application will be approved by the Borough Planning Department.
- IV. 2 key issues were raised: pedestrians and parking around shopping parade. The developer will look into this and talk to the Planning Officer with suggestions for mitigation of extra traffic impact.

b) NDP update

- I. Additional paragraphs will need public consultation for which we have 2 options:
 - 1) Brief Public Consultation possibly through the Village News magazine (RP to reserve space) and send to Borough Planning to be ratified; RP
 - 2) Make no amendments to the current NDP but it will look out of date as it doesn't include the Milton Road 500 house development or EWR.
- II. Spoken with Borough and our Planning Consultant and it seems prudent to go through a quick round of public consultation early in 2026 with updates for residents. Further feedback can then be sent to Borough Planning for ratification without referendum.
- III. Good for the Parish Council to be seen to be going through this process and demonstrating we're actively updating the NDP as it shows we are using our NDP to meet village needs.
- IV. It is possible the NSP will have to be renewed again in 18 months in which case we will have done all the work as part of this update.

PROPOSAL:

1. Hold a Public Consultation to present the revised NDP with minor changes, giving the opportunity to residents to read it and feedback using a standard form for comments.
2. Forward all feedback and responses to Bedford Borough Planning as a Regulation 14 Public Consultation and await response from the Borough.

PROPOSED BY: Cllr. Sarah Walker

SECONDED: Cllr. Allan Prudham

VOTE: Unanimous

12. Communication

a) Updates

- I. Thanks given to all who came to the very well attended Christmas switch on and to those residents who supported change of plans.
- II. Plans being considered to change the format for next year so the event is not weather dependent.
- III. Power restored to RG tree this afternoon by Borough.

13. Allotment Committee

a) Report from Allotment Committee meeting

- I. Minutes of meeting circulated.
- II. Ts & Cs circulated – only minor adjustments – for approval by Parish Councillors.
- III. The forecast income for plot rentals is set to double for the current financial year, thanks to the hard work of the Allotments Association.
- IV. Several successful social events were very well attended.
- V. Christmas wreath making event went extremely well and generated a considerable amount of income to be re-invested in the allotments.

14. Burial Ground

a) Update

- I. Ditch clearance almost complete – top end of ditch not yet cleared because distribution of the soil is a major challenge.
- II. Borders still to be dug for bulb planting.
- III. RP raised concern about the number of people disregarding the burial ground rules at Milton Road Burial Ground.
- IV. We cannot be in violation of the terms and conditions of our lease with the Borough.
- V. Next steps:
 - RP and Asst Clerk will carry out an audit in the New Year to identify irregular plots and write to families advising them of the need to bring into line with a deadline of 31/3/25. RP
 - RP/Asst Clerk to write to all Funeral Directors and Stone Masons reminding them of the regulations. However, it was noted several families place their own memorials without professional contractors.

15. Highways & Footpaths

a) Update - Wall at 174 High Street, Clapham

- I. Borough has confirmed 2 gullies in the car park at the entrance to the allotments go to soakaways. Last cleaned out in February 2023 when they were found to be full of silt. When cleansed, soakaways functioned normally.
- II. Over time soakaway effectiveness becomes compromised with silt build up and need replacing, so may be end of life at entrance to allotments or too small for volume of water especially with silt build-up.
- III. Regular cleanse may be sufficient to overcome problems.
- IV. Next steps: RP to arrange for Borough to clean the soakaway including the one behind allotments entrance gates. RP
- V. Monitor performance and rainfall over the coming months.

b) Other matters

- c) 256 High Street – numerous issues now being addressed by the Borough Council.
- d) Knights Avenue footpaths are in terrible condition and need assessment of repairs. RP
- e) Area behind the shops in The Close – request assessment for parking
- f) Renew request for double yellow lines at bottom of Highbury Grove to prevent parking at the junction where the bus service and delivery vehicles to the pharmacy require regular access.
- g) Lights at the new post office are very bright. Check if they conform to regulation.

16. Village Hall

a) Update

- I. Hire charges will be increased from 1st January 2026.
- II. Bookings are increasing and the management committee are operating successfully.
- III. Committee is looking into Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) status
- IV. The Christmas Pantomime was a very successful production with a large number of children involved.

17. Finance

a) Payment of Accounts

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

PROPOSED: Cllr. John Keech

SECONDED: Cllr. Ian Gaskin

b) Precept ideas

- I. NS requested precept proposals be distributed at least 5 clear days prior to the meeting to.
- II. NS called on all Councillors to give careful thought and consideration to the proposals.
- III. Allotments Committee meeting in January 2026 to set their budget funding requests.
- IV. IG asked for consideration to be given to completion of fencing around dog park on FP14 and lighting along FP14.

18. Correspondence

Nothing to report.

19. Date of Next Meeting

- Precept meeting - Tuesday 13th January 2026 in the Methodist Church Hall, Clapham
- CPC Trust meeting – Tuesday 20th January 2026 in the Methodist Church Hall, Clapham

The meeting was closed by the Chair at 21.08hrs.

Signed as a true reflection of the meeting:

Signed	
Dated	20 th January 2026

Chair