

Meeting:	CLAPHAM PARISH COUNCIL 17th March 2026 at 7pm
Council Members in attendance:	Cllr. Phillipa Simms, Chair (PS) Cllr. Ian Gaskin (IG) Cllr. Allan Prudham (AP) Cllr. Jacky Fraser (JF) Cllr. Sarah Walker, Vice Chair (SW) Cllr. Tamsin Bromley-Rahike (TBR) Cllr. Michael Walmsley (MW) Cllr. John Keech (JK) Cllr John Reid (JR) Cllr. Nigel Sparrow (NS) Cllr. Charlie Tompkins (CT) Cllr. Adrian Langley (AL) – late arrival
Apologies received:	Cllr. James Petrides (JP) Cllr. Eric Cooper (EC)
Non-attendance:	
Borough Council Member:	Borough Cllr. Jane Walker (JW) Borough Cllr. Jon Abbott (JA) – late arrival
Clerk to the Council:	Rosemary Plum (RP)
Public Attendance	2 x residents

MINUTES OF MEETING

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from:

- Cllr. James Petrides (JP)
- Cllr. Eric Cooper (EC)

2. Declarations of Interest

The following interests were declared:

- Cllr. Philippa Simms, Chair of Clapham Village Hall Committee

3. Co-Option of Councillor

- I. Vacancy has arisen on the Parish Council following the resignation of Cllr. Dove.
- II. Resident Mr. Chris Hardwick has put himself forward although he could not attend this meeting due to short notice.
- III. PS agreed to read out his information for co-option in absentia.
- IV. NS asked for confirmation the candidate would be able to meet the dates of future Parish Council meetings as he does not want the Parish to

appoint a 'part-time councillor'. In so doing, NS raised concerns about workload and commitment with other organisations.

- V. The Parish Councillors agreed to defer co-option to the April meeting to allow standing members to ask direct questions.

4. Open Forum

- I. Two residents of The Close raised concern about cars always parking on the corner of the street.
- II. Councillors advised grasscrete is being considered as an alternative option to create two off-road parking spaces.
- III. The residents are concerned that creation of parking spaces in this way will pose a traffic safety risk due to lack of vision for drivers as it's a blind corner.
- IV. It was noted that local shop owners seem to be the main cause of the parking issues in the area.
- V. Visibility mirrors on street corners no longer legal.
- VI. RO to continue discussions with Borough Highways Dept about available options to prevent the area becoming a mud pit.

5. 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. Sarah Walker

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

Nothing to record.

7. Clerk's Report (for information only)

- Borough will officially start grass cutting in April although, weather permitting, they may bring this forward to w/c 23/03/26 due to the length of the grass.
- Allotments Association have reported a very large tree in the garden of 198 High Street, on the Southern boundary. Tree appears dead, looks unsafe and close to breaking through the fence. RP to write to homeowner asking for necessary measures to be taken to remove the tree.

8. Police Matters

a) Crime Figures

Circulated prior to the meeting.

9. Borough Council Report

- I. Borough budget has been passed.
- II. Mayor has established monthly Finance & Improvement Exec Cttee to review finances. This will be a public meeting.

- III. Household support fund from Govt ceases at end of March. Childrens Services have been using it for vouchers over school holidays. Borough no longer has any money to continue with this.
- IV. New Crisis and Resilience Fund aims to support people in crisis if they apply but will not be entitled to it on a regular basis.
- V. Family hubs operate throughout holidays with food available at sessions (in place of vouchers).
- VI. Govt have promised some funding to support families with heating in view of current oil crisis, but no details available as yet.
- VII. Bedford Local Development Scheme due to go to executive in coming months.
- VIII. Govt has advised Sharnbrook Hotel is closing as an asylum centre around June 2026.
- IX. Borough Flood Forum on 26th March will be held in Great Denham.
- X. NS – raised concern about the cessation of free car parking in Bedford town centre. He asked for confirmation of all day parking costs on Saturdays as the current 2hrs isn't sufficient to shop in the town yet free parking is being offered on Sundays when the shops close early. NS called for the Borough Council to consider reintroducing free all day parking on Saturdays.
- XI. JW advised this free parking was in the Mayor's budget but various political groups objected and it had to be taken out.
- XII. JA noted evening parking charges kick in earlier and are very expensive which is adversely affecting night time economy. This type of decision is set by the Executive Committee and not by Borough Councillors who aren't allowed to override it.
- XIII. Bin days are changing – resident should go online to check the Borough website.

10. Environment Committee

a) Report from meeting 10th March 2026

- I. Minutes circulated prior to the meeting.
- II. Very pleased to confirm work will start on new soakaways for allotment entrance on 7-9 April. This date chosen specifically as its during school holidays so children walking to school won't be affected.
- III. Installation of soakaway and re-surfacing of road will be done together. Allotments will be closed for 3 days. Signs going up this week to advise all those affected.
- IV. Residents wanting to use dog park can access it from FP14.
- V. Envco is confident the flooding issues in the parking area will be rectified by the larger soakaway. In time we may have to change the soakaway crates which is normal.
- VI. Thanks formally given to RP for the amount of work needed to achieve the commissioning and completion of this work.

- VII. RP is calling for contractor to submit quotes to create paid-for parking spaces in the area of the Cody Road garages at an agreed rental fee of £24 incl. VAT for allocated parking.

11. East West Rail

a) Update

Nothing to report. No updates or further details have been issued since the last Parish Council meeting. Richard Fuller MP has not had any response to his formal enquiries and will be chasing further information from EWR.

12. Planning Committee

a) Update - validations & decisions

Report circulated prior to the meeting.

[The following section to be redacted from the public minutes]

13A High Street – builders claim they’re putting in 16 rooms upstairs which must mean an HMO. Serious concern raised by councillors about the lack of space for parking to accommodate predicted volume of cars. Check if its licensing rather than enforcement and whether a licence is required which they possibly don’t have by claiming it’s not an HMO. Planners seem unable to get any evidence to proceed with a prosecution but are aware of the situation.

RP request enforcement visit.

b) NDP update

- I. Consultation is live and has been publicised for 7 weeks until 3rd May.
- II. Feedback form distributed with Village News and also available on the website.
- III. Thanks given to all the team for their work on this project.

13. Communication

a) Updates

- I. Easter Egg Hunt in Millennium Park covered in Playing Field Trust meeting.
- II. Planning already underway for 2026 Clapham Show.
- III. Village Quiz will be held in the Village Hall on 3rd April 2026. It’s intended to continue with a monthly quiz event.

14. Allotment Committee

a) Report from meeting 2nd March 2026

- I. All going well.
- II. 13 people on plot waiting list.
- III. Association discussing ways in which plots could be cleared more effectively including options to incentivize new tenants by offering discount to take on plots ‘as seen’ or other plot holders to help clear new plots.
- IV. Spike in cost of Sept-December 2025 water rates invoice probably due to combination of long, hot and dry summer, an increase in plot holders and

previous meter readings being estimated. Consideration also given to a leaking tap which remained undiscovered for some time as leaks from the self-filling troughs aren't always easily visible

- V. All plot holders will be encouraged to collect rain water using guttering and water butts and report any leaks or blockages.
- VI. A nominated committee member to do walk around water points and check once a week (to be discussed at next CAAC meeting)
- VII. Monthly checks for leaks will be undertaken regularly when the water is switched on for the summer (take reading at gate close/gate open).
- VIII. Meter readings will be regularly submitted to AWA to avoid estimated bills in future.
- IX. Self filling troughs will be replaced with high rise taps and blue barrels (work planned for May 2026)

15. Burial Ground

a) Update

- I. Commemorative Oak tree paperwork been submitted.
- II. NS raised concern about the number of shrubs or small bushes and conifer trees on burial plots in Green Lane cemetery. RP to review cemetery rules to prevent planting of shrubs, trees or bushes.
- III. Church Warden has contacted Parish Council Chair regarding access to Church Yard for resurfacing and plans for the Fellowship Centre.
- IV. JW had complaint about poo bags left at the entrance to the burial ground.

16. Highways & Footpaths

a) Update

- I. 254 and 256 High Street leaving waste bins out on the road at all times. RP to report.
- II. Resident at 230 High Street is having flood gates installed at front of the house.
- III. PS has reported the gully outside Riverside Gardens to the Borough as it needs clearing. Parked cars will need to be moved when we have a confirmed date. RP to follow up with Borough.

17. Village Hall

a) Update

Nothing to report.

b) Replacement of defibrillator

PROPOSAL: To decommission current defibrillator as it is 13yrs old and beyond recommended lifespan of 10 years and replace with new defib purchase with funds raised and donated.

PROPOSED: Cllr. John Keech

SECONDED: Cllr. Sarah Walker

18. Finance

a) Payment of Accounts

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

PROPOSED: Cllr. Sarah Walker

SECONDED: Cllr. Tamsin Bromley Rahike

19. Correspondence

- I. Complaint from residents aged 90+yrs who were attending Green Lane cemetery to place flowers on a grave when they were verbally abused by a group of young children estimated age 11-13yr olds. RP to advise Rev. Liley.
- II. New resident in The Glebe development surprised at neglect of the numerous designated 'play areas' throughout the development that only have one piece of broken or poorly maintained equipment. RP has replied to resident advising the large play area near the basketball courts is the responsibility of Bedford Borough Council with recommendation to keep Ward Cllrs informed.
- III. Local resident has given thanks to Parish Council for taking action to mitigate the flooding at the entrance to the allotments near the parking bays.

20. Date of Next Meeting

- Tuesday 14th April 2026 in the Methodist Church Hall, Clapham

The meeting was closed by the Chair at 20.47hrs.

Signed as a true reflection of the meeting:

Signed	
Dated	21 st April 2026

Chair