



GREAT DENHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Great Denham Parish Council held at 7.30pm on Monday 5th October 2020. The meeting was held remotely.

Present:

Parish Councillors: Donna Parsons (DP) - Chair; Chris Staite (CST); Louise Evans (LE); Helen Allen (HA); Vince Arthur (VA)

Borough Councillor: Jim Weir (JW)

Parish Clerk: Anna O'Meara (AOM)

Members of the Public: 4 members of public in attendance

Public Questions

The meeting was adjourned for public questions as follows:

1. Resident asked about the Parish Council's position regarding the proposed closure of the Golf Course.

As this is an agenda item it was covered there.

2. Does the Council have any update on the gates in the railings outside the school, or the CCTV that was to be installed outside the school entrance by the Borough Council?

Clerk has chased the lockable gates for the school railings with Highways – these were delayed due to Covid, and there is no info at this time on delivery; CCTV cameras outside the school were promised during the May 2019 Local Elections, but due to budget constraints the budget for this has now been delayed until FY21/22.

The meeting was re-opened.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Chris Slinn and Jo Ruskin

Resolved: The apologies were accepted.

2. Declarations of Interest

DP declared a non-pecuniary interest as trustees of Great Denham Community Hall (GDCH).

3. Minutes of the last meeting

Resolved: The minutes of the meeting held 7th September 2020 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by DP.

4. Update on Great Denham Golf Course

A meeting was held between councillors from Great Denham and Biddenham Parish Councillors with Bidwells, the agents of the landowners of the site, on Friday 2nd October 2020. VA gave a brief summary of the discussion:

- Bidwells advised they had a follow up meeting with Richard Fuller MP after the meeting held 4th September (as minuted in September PC meeting); communication channels were via the Parish Councils.
- Bidwells restated their desire for openness and gave more details about the golf course land and building once the current lease finishes on 16th October.

- The Clubhouse – they have a Nursery business interested as prospective tenant and Heads of Terms are being discussed; any planning applications on change of use will be made in due course.
- The Compound – plans for this are not as advanced but they intend to find a tenant for the property. Again, a planning application for change of use will be made in due course.
- Land – they have a contract farmer, and the land will be strip-grazed (sheep) and for hay. Footpaths will be maintained and they are conducting a tree survey. They stated they have no plans to fill in the features of the golf course (e.g. bunkers) at this time.
- Bidwells invited community views on longer term future opportunities for the land itself, as they are exploring the subsidies/grants available, e.g. wildlife.
- Parish Councils reported their surprise and scepticism that these plans would generate more income than the existing golf course, and that Bidwells/the landowner remain open to the possibility of return to use as a golf course if the current plans prove unsuccessful. Bidwells re-stated their view that by diversifying their revenue streams the risk to income is reduced and they can achieve a better return.
- Parish Councils raised the ongoing security of the site – both land and buildings – as a significant concern, both for ASB/drugs and traveller invasion. Access to the car park and the course will need to be blocked in some way as a deterrent. Bidwells advised they will have a security firm holding the keys and will implement deterrent measures if needed. A further meeting with Bidwells to update on security arrangements is scheduled for Friday 9th October, and the Parish Councils will re-iterate these significant concerns on behalf of residents.
- Parish Councils also raised concerns about proximity of electric fencing used for strip grazing to children/dogs using the footpaths.
- Further open engagement was promised, and a regular monthly meeting will be set up with Councillors.

DP then invited JW and Brian Cox (BC), Chair of the “Save the Golf Course” Residents Group to update on their meeting with Bidwells which had taken place on the morning of the 5th.

- JW opening statement recognised that Bidwells were acting in the interests of their clients, but hoped they would review their client’s objectives in the light of the discussion.
- Bidwells explained the planned operations of the land – clubhouse, compound, grazing, future opportunity for the land as open space through subsidies/grants – consistent with other meetings held.
- BC noted that it was important to residents that they understood why these proposed actions were being taken. Bidwells responded that their clients wished to avoid a single-income stream and their plan would facilitate this.
- JW and BC asked Bidwells to consider a number of alternative options which would enable the golf course to be retained in some guise, with a mix of lease/sale of assets, to be run by a Community Charity; they also explained how income generation from these alternatives might work. Bidwells re-iterated that they would not consider any option with a single income stream, but would review the alternatives very seriously, although did not want to raise any false hopes at this point.
- It was noted that Bidwells seem very fixed on the Nursery idea for the Clubhouse – they suggested that a second clubhouse may need to be built if an alternative to retain the golf course was considered.
- JW and BC also stressed concerns over the security of the land and buildings, and their belief that Bidwells may have underestimated this requirement.

In response to the question raised under public questions (above) about the Parish Councils position on the golf course and its future, Councillor LE reiterated that the retention of the golf course and the long term protection of the urban gap/green space were held equally

important by the Council, but that Bidwells had continued to state that the golf course is not an option as a single revenue stream.

With regard to the security issues and concerns of residents, LE noted that Streetwatch were aware of the security issues and would include the area in its patrols wherever possible. The contact details of the rural policing team for Great Denham had been passed onto Bidwells.

BC raised the potential to register the land/buildings as an Asset of Community Value. This had been identified by the Parish Council at the July meeting, and the Clerk had made enquires with the Borough Council without response. JW advised that he has also raised this and the Borough have put a small team to look at it, and he was hopeful it could progress.

Action: JW to provide info on this to the Clerk.

5. Neighbourhood Development Plan

The Council agreed to proceed with this at their September meeting. DP and the Clerk gave a brief update on activity/progress made to date and next steps.

- A meeting had been held with BRCC about the Green Infrastructure Plan and the changes to the methodology due to Covid. Awaiting a response and updated costs from BRCC re this.
- An ecologist has been engaged to conduct an ecological survey of the golf course land, as this will provide necessary evidence on which to develop policies for the NDP. They have been asked to kick this off before the current tenant leaves, as permission to be on site has been obtained from the tenant for this.
- 3 Planning Consultants have been approached regarding potential work on the plan, in terms of writing policies etc, and their costs.
- There has been a good response to the Neighbourhood Plan survey distributed in the last newsletter, and this will be valuable input to the plan.
- Interest has been expressed in the Steering Group, further interest from any resident is welcomed.

Next steps will be to hold an initial meeting of the Steering Group, create an outline view of contents for the plan and apply for funding. Whilst NDPs can be time-consuming (and take years), the Council hopes to move this work on as quickly as possible and practicable.

6. Local Services

a) Covid-19 Briefing

DP reported that she now attends regular meetings for Covid Health Champions, where the Mayor takes the meeting through the latest information and updates.

Any information received from these meetings will be circulated to residents via the Council's mailing list and social media pages. If anyone is interested in becoming a Health Champion then please get in touch.

b) Update from Quarterly meeting with David Wilson Homes (held 1st October 2020)

HA gave a short overview of the main points of the meeting, as follows:

- DWH expect to be off site from the H9(iii) development by end March 2021 (area behind Sainsburys).
- The green space off Anglia Way – Meaningful Meeting place – should be ready by the end of this year. The Parish Council has concerns over parking on this area, and this will be kept under review. The next quarterly meeting will be on-site to look at this area (subject to Covid guidelines).

- The area between the houses – FP1 – should be completed by March/April, and it is hoped to reopen the footpath earlier than is currently planned (closure recently extended to October 2021).
- Road resurfacing – remedial work outside the Eatery should be done at end of October (awaiting confirmation), and resurfacing work on Anglia Way/King Alfred Way is being costed and a start date agreed.
- There has been no progress on the installation of the 30mph sign at the King Alfred Way entrance and this is now being held up between the Borough Council and DWH.
Action: JW to provide support back through the Borough Council to put pressure on for this to be completed.
- Double Yellow Lines at Junctions/corners – The Parish Council are asking all developers for permission for the unadopted areas of Great Denham, as per a previous parish council meeting. DWH agreed in principle. Any such changes have to be done by Highways and published for consultation.
- Adoption of Greenkeepers Road is progressing, but still slowly. Once the drainage adoption is signed off it is hoped the other elements will proceed more quickly.
- It was noted that DWH have submitted sites off Mercia Road and also the land at the top of the Country Park in the recent call for sites for the Local Plan.
- Pedestrian/Cycle Bridge – this is now being negotiated with the Borough Council as a sum of money in lieu of a bridge. The Parish Council has lobbied for a number of years that the money for this in S106 is better used elsewhere for the benefit of Great Denham.
Action: JW to investigate the details with Planning to ensure the S106 monies involved can be directed to benefit Great Denham.

c) Replanting of Trees on Kingswood Way.

This was raised at the last meeting. 7 trees are dead and require replacing. A tree nursery has been found and a contractor to dig up and replace the dead trees with the new stock. JW has kindly given the Parish Council a grant of £855 to meet the costs of this work from his Ward Fund. Clerk has spoken to the Borough grounds team about them taking on husbandry of these trees once the replacements are in.

Resolved: agreed to proceed with the work.

d) Cold Calling Signs

LE proposed that the Council put up more “No Cold Calling” signs around the development; some were put up many years ago on the original roads, but with the increase of homeworking as a result of Covid, the level of cold calling around Great Denham has become more noticeable.

Resolved: Clerk to investigate obtaining signs from the Borough Council.

It was also noted that a number of old developer signs remain up in Great Denham and should be removed.

Action: CST to identify list/locations and Clerk will write to developers.

e) Tree Memorial

Bedford Borough Council have sent an outline proposal for a Tree memorial to be planted in Great Denham Country Park; this could be similar in design to the Tree Cathedrals in other parks around the country, nearest being Milton Keynes. The outline proposal was discussed. It was recognised that this was a lovely idea, but could take over a significant area within the Country Park and that a longer-term plan and view of the Country Park and all amenities should be drawn up, of which this should be a part.

Action: Clerk to share comments with Borough council and suggestion that a long-term plan is drawn up for this area.

7. Community Events and Engagement

a) Halloween Pumpkin Trail

CST proposed that the Council provide a Pumpkin Trail around the Country Park for Halloween; exact details need to be worked up, but it is recognised that due to Covid the Community Hall has not been able to provide its usual well-attended activities this year, and that it would be something for the Community at this time. A number of suggestions for the activity were discussed; anything organised will need to be done in line with Covid guidance of social distancing, rule of 6 etc.

Resolved: a budget of £200 for this event was approved to cover purchase of pumpkins etc.

Action: DP/CST to develop the details of the event in collaboration with the Community Hall and promote to residents.

b) Feast Event

DP proposed that this item is deferred to the next meeting to allow Councillor Ruskin to present the proposal.

Resolved: agreed to defer this item.

8. Grants

An application has been received from Kempston Hammers Cricket Club for a grant towards their fundraising efforts for a new artificial wicket and two-lane practice net facility. They are requesting £2500 from Great Denham Parish Council. The Council recognised that the group have applied to a number of councils in the area seeking grant funding. In discussion the Council noted that the neighbouring parish of Biddenham also provided cricket facilities and a youth section, that the application was not able to provide information on the number of Great Denham residents currently benefiting as part of the club, and that it was not clear that the links with schools mentioned in the application included Great Denham Primary School. The Council's budget for grants is not significant, and cannot meet the level of funds applied for.

Resolved: no grant will be awarded as, although supportive of the endeavours of the group, the application did not articulate the direct benefit to Great Denham residents appropriate to the funds available.

9. BATPC AGM

The meeting will take place on Wednesday 21st October, and councils are invited to send 2 representatives. The meeting will be held remotely.

Resolved: DP will attend if available; any other councillors wishing to attend to contact the Clerk who will respond to BATPC.

10. VERU Project – Update

Clerk provided a short update on progress on this joint project for 14-19-year olds in Great Denham. This project is being run jointly with the Community Hall; a short 6-week programme has been drawn up by the lead Trustee/project leader, the first session is scheduled for Friday 6th November and the room booking at the Hall has been made. The Covid-guidance has been checked to ensure the group size conforms. The funding has been received and the laptops for the project delivered and paid for.

A number of people have expressed interest as a result of the article in the Parish Council Newsletter, and the programme will be further promoted in next few weeks.

11. Planning

a) Planning for the Future White Paper – Consultation

This is the government consultation which closes on 29th October. Responses to this consultation can be made as individuals and also on behalf of the Council.

Action: Clerk will circulate the consultation questions, all to review and respond with their comments to Clerk who will consolidate and send a single response on behalf of the Council. All Councillors also welcome to respond as individuals.

b) Planning application 20/01191/FUL – one and two storey rear extension, 24 Great Portway

Resolved: no objections or comments on this application. Clerk to send response.

c) Boundary Commission Review and report

The report and recommendations have been published and are now out for consultation; this closed on 7th December. It includes the recommendation that Great Denham become a Ward in its own right, due to its size and projected growth; these changes, if adopted, will come into effect at the 2023 Local Elections.

Action: Council response to consultation to be agreed at next Council meeting (2nd November 2020).

12 Borough Councillors Report

JW gave an update:

- Golf Course – JW will be raising a motion on this at the next Full Council Meeting of the Borough Council which will cover the owners stated intent to repurpose the course contra to Planning policies (planning conditions on buildings, loss of sporting/leisure facilities, potential impact on urban green space/coalescence). He will be asking the Council to uphold the Local Plan policies and resolve to maintain the Urban Gap and space. He will also be presenting on the petition he presented at the last meeting (July). He has also asked Phil Simpkins (BBC CEO) to send a letter to Bidwells regarding the planning restrictions in force.
- Village Medical Centre – JW has held meetings with the Regional Director who explained the problems they are working to resolved. JW also reported on a letter he had received from the Lead Doctor at the Surgery asking for help and support. It was clear from the letter that the new telephone system has caused a number of issues, with up to 60% of calls going to ghost lines, and they are trying to resolve this. The letter also confirmed that the surgery doors will be opened from 15/10 in order to counter the telephone contact issues, whilst still maintaining Covid-safe measures, and that the Clinical Pharmacist has been replaced, to address the repeat prescriptions issued experienced by patients.
JW has also revived complaints from residents who had registered for the Patient Participation event on 23rd September but then received no joining details; HA noted that she had experienced the same.
Action: JW to confirm whether event took place and why residents had received no details after registration.
Action: JW to send letter to Clerk so it can be published on Parish Council website.
- Covid – JW reported that regular updates on this are being received and published, but that cases were increasing. He reinforced the need for everyone to follow the guidance of “Hands, Face, Space” and rules on group meetings.
- **Action: JW to check on recent reports that Covid testing in Bedford is being reduced from 7 to 5 days availability.**
- Planning for the Future: JW has submitted his own comments on this.

DP asked JW for an update on the issue of the management companies that he has been dealing with. JW confirmed that he has met with SDL who have accepted that they have not had accounts available to residents for the last 3 years. He has had no correspondence with Chamonix to date.

12. Finance and Clerk's Report

a) Finance Report & payments – signature of cheques/initial invoices/approve & initial Bacs payments

The Finance Report had been circulated and a copy is attached to these minutes. All receipts were available for inspection

Resolved: All payments were approved and all Bacs payments approved by two councillors. Invoices will be initialled outside the meeting as soon as possible. Cheque number XXX was signed by DP and a second signature will be obtained outside the meeting in line with our Bank Mandate.

b) Quarterly Financial Check

These checks have been completed by Councillor Ruskin; although not present at the meeting she has confirmed there are no issues.

Resolved: Quarterly Financial Check for end September is agreed.

c) Review of actions from previous meetings

A list of outstanding actions has been circulated to Council. CST has identified a number of items he would like to review at next meeting.

Action: Clerk to add to next meeting agenda.

13. Correspondence

All correspondence was available at the meeting and a list is attached to these minutes.

Resolved: No correspondence required discussion.

14. Any Other Business

For Exchange of information only – no decisions may be made here.

- DP advised that the Tommy Statue was now installed in the Community Garden.
- DP advised that an email had been received from a resident of Lindsey Close re parking; this will be added to next meeting agenda to discuss.
- CST will let Clerk know about the items he would like raised on next agenda.
- CST reported that he had heard from BBC regarding the Pavilion car park but no significant progress at this time. He will report at next meeting.

15. Date of Next Meeting

Monday 2nd November 2020