



GREAT DENHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Great Denham Parish Council held at 7.30pm on Monday 7th December 2020. The meeting was held remotely.

Present:

Parish Councillors: Donna Parsons (DP) - Chair; Chris Staite (CST); Helen Allen (HA); Vince Arthur (VA); Jo Ruskin (JR)

Borough Councillor: Jim Weir (JW)

Parish Clerk: Anna O'Meara (AOM)

Members of the Public: no members of the public in attendance

Guest: Jane Hamilton, Chair, Bedford-MK Waterways Trust

Public Questions

There were no public questions.

1. Apologies

Absence for Chris Slinn is agreed until January 2021; apologies for this meeting have been received from Louise Evans.

Resolved: Apologies were accepted.

2. Declarations of Interest

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

3. Minutes of the last meeting

Resolved: The minutes of the meeting held 2nd November 2020 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by DP.

4. Bedford-MK Waterways Trust

DP welcomed Jane Hamilton, Chair of the Trust, as a guest speaker, to talk about the work of the trust and opportunities to work together regarding Great Denham Country Park, and the land around the Great Ouse at Great Denham.

Jane gave a short outline of the Trust and its work. Established in 1996, the Trust's vision is to create a national recognised Waterway Park linking Bedford and Milton Keynes for the social, economic and environmental benefit of our communities, with the following benefits:

- Improved water resilience across the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, improved local flood risk management and opportunities for transfer between regions
- Improved connectivity between existing rivers, canals, water bodies and wildlife corridors
- Increased natural capital and biodiversity
- Increased opportunities for healthy living and recreational activities
- New accessible waterside environments and green spaces, routes for cycling and walking.
- Can offset impacts of hard infrastructure required to support growth.

Locally they have been working with developers at Marston Vale – proposed build of 5000 homes – who are building the Waterway park into their plans, linking Brogborough and Stewartby Lakes. Three Local Plans support the Waterways Park, also the SEMLEP Economic Strategy and the Oxford-Cambridge Arc economic prospectus.

Benefits to Great Denham:

- Potential to reduce localised flooding, especially in Kempston
- Increased tourism and economic growth
- John Bunyan Boat trips; the trust is building a landing stage at Kempston Mill to enable the boats to use the river through Bedford and south of Queens' Park.
- Potential in involve local communities in the riverside environment and encourage more activities on the river

The Trust has already bid for Heritage Lottery Funding (which was unsuccessful), but expects there to be further opportunities for funding bids, and would welcome working in partnership with the Parish Council on these. They have also spoken to Craig Lymn from the Great Denham Nature Group. They already have a number of ideas as potential projects:

- Improve the footbridge near Kempston Mill and put in a hard surface path to the Mill bridge
- Tidy up areas around the ponds to reduce leaf fall
- Reduce the number of willows around ponds for flora and fauna to thrive
- Smaller footbridges along the riverside path across the ditches
- Boardwalks along the river to improve all year-round access

DP noted that the Parish Council had started work on a Neighbourhood Plan for Great Denham and this could feed into this. She invited Jane to attend the next Steering Group meeting on 15th December.

Action: Clerk to circulate the slides Jane has sent and to invite Jane to the NDP Steering Group meeting on 15th December.

5. Update on Great Denham Golf Course

DP reported that the Parish Councils of Great Denham and Biddenham, and the Borough Councillors, had met with Bidwells on Friday 4th December. She asked VA to give a short report on the meeting, as follows:

There was little new information as a result of the meeting.

- Sheep grazing will start soon, and will be alternated with hay/silage cutting; electric fences will be in place when the sheep are on the land. Bidwells will supply the number plates of the contractors, as residents are naturally concerned to see unknown vehicles on the land.
- A planning application for the Proposed Nursery in the Clubhouse building is expected soon (JW advised that this has been received by planning and is undergoing the standard checks before going out for consultation).
- No decision has yet been taken on the best category of use for the Compound, but seems likely to be B8, general/industrial.
- Security – Bidwells advised that they are working on some additional measures, some of which may require planning permission. The Council has asked for further information on these which can be shared with residents.
- Signage – the large advertising signs off the Branston Way have now been covered up, and the remaining sign at end of Carnoustie Drive has been reported.
- Continued use of the course by people playing golf – Bidwells will be putting up signs around the land to state no golf, and asking people to stick to footpaths. They confirmed that walking on the course would be considered to be trespass.

Since the meeting in November, Bidwells have now spoken to the Trust again and the Trustees have confirmed that they do not want golf here as they do not see this as a long-term income generator for the land. JW has informed the Save the Great Denham Golf

Course Community Group of this, given they had submitted proposals for both a 9- and 11-hole course.

When questioned on longer term plans, the Bidwells representatives remain vague on these; they referred again to the government's "Public Money for Public Good" proposal, but there are no confirmed details yet of this, or their Green Parks and Farming Policy proposal that have recently been reported in the press. They could therefore give no timeframe to the Councils for future plans, including questions raised by JW regarding direction of travel for the Trust overall.

What was clear from this discussion that there are currently no clear alternative plans to a nursery, and no sense of plans being made within the next 5 years.

JW noted that dogwalkers are particularly concerned over the proposals for sheep grazing and that the proximity of livestock in a residential area and dog population may give rise to future incidents.

Nomination as Asset of Community Value

The Council agreed to prepare and submit a nomination for the Buildings and Land of Great Denham Golf Course at its November meeting.

Clerk reported that she had sent the draft nomination to the Save the Golf Course Community Group for their input on proposals for purchase and running of the Asset, as they had already done a lot of work on this. Awaiting response.

Action: DP asked JW to confirm with the Community Group at their meeting on Wednesday (9th December) whether they still wish to proceed with this nomination as proposed by them, in the light of the recent responses from Bidwells.

6. Neighbourhood Development Plan

DP gave a short update on the Steering Group meeting of 10th November.

- Roles were appointed as follows: Chair – Lou Evans, Vice Chair – Will Sinclair, Secretary – Anna O'Meara
- In line with the themes previously identified, each SG member had been allocated a section of the plan to develop.
- Terms of Reference were drafted – for approval by the Parish Council.
- The first grant application for Locality funding had been made successfully, and £1820 had been received to cover the Ecology Survey and production of a NDP newsletter in February. Any remaining applications for funding for this financial year would need to be made by 29th January 2021.
- A new email address has been set up: ndp@greatdenhamparishcouncil.gov.uk

The next Steering Group meeting is Tuesday 15th December at 7.30pm. If anyone is interested in joining the Steering Group then please contact the Clerk.

Resolved: The Terms of Reference for the NDP Steering Group were agreed.

7. Traffic and Parking

a) Pedestrian Crossing, Anglia Way

DP advised that the Feasibility Study has been completed and the Council is awaiting the report on this. 2 potential locations for a crossing have been identified and installation would be best when the Retail centre is a 20mph zone.

Action: Clerk to copy report to JW once received as he has been liaising with Highways on the 20mph zone.

b) Reported issues from residents

2 issues have been reported and were discussed.

- Parking at the end of Lavender Lane and blocking of resident driveways. CST and VA have both investigated this and confirmed that there is no provision for turning at the end of this cul-de-sac (unlike other roads) and therefore any parking here creates obstruction. The resident has also reported cars driving across the land separating this road from the adjacent road and this is causing a nuisance and potential danger to children playing etc. CST advised that the original plans did show the 2 roads connected, but this had not been implemented and that 2 developers are involved – DWH and Linden Homes. It may be appropriate to consider double yellow lines to prevent obstructive parking and installation of bollards between the 2 roads to prevent vehicles crossing over the land between.

Action: Clerk to investigate the double yellow lines with Highways

Action: Clerk to write to DWH re installation of bollards to show clear separation of the 2 roads.

- Traffic calming measures on Carnoustie Drive – a resident has written to Clerk and JW re the traffic measures outside the old Clubhouse, as he is concerned that the limited visibility at this section prevents vehicles being able to see oncoming traffic and that drivers do not take adequate precautions when approaching this section of the road. With the potential imminent planning application for a Nursery at the Clubhouse building traffic flow may increase. Following discussion, it was agreed that no further action would be taken at this moment, pending a meeting between JW and the Highways Officer. Resident concerns were noted in relation to any potential planning applications received.

Action: JW is meeting Highways Officer in near future and will include this concern in his discussions.

Action: Clerk to respond to resident.

c) SIDS Data and actions arising

CST reported that he has downloaded the data from the Speed Indicator Device on Kingswood Way – 34510 vehicles were monitored between 30th October and 27th November. 42.86% of vehicles were observed traveling above the speed limit of 30mph.

The fastest speed recorded was 60mph at 3.15pm on a Saturday afternoon.

The presence of the SIDs seems to be having an effect in reducing the % of people travelling over the speed limit of 30mph over the 4 weeks: week 1 44.2%, week 2 40.3%, week 3 37.1%, week 4 38.8% (weekdays) and on weekends week 1 53.2%, week 2 52.9%, week 3 49.6%, week 4 50.1%

The data has been shared with the local policing team to assist them with targeting their speed checks; this will now be done on a monthly basis.

Action: Clerk to write to DWH to obtain permission to put a post on King Alfred Way for a second SIDS, as planned.

8. Safety and Security

a) Update on CCTV

CST reported that, given the concerns over the recent service provided by ACE, he had met with both ACE and also potential alternative suppliers. Of the 2 alternative suppliers, one was local but felt that they would not be able to take over our contract due to its size, however they may be interested in the future. The 2nd alternative supplier was Herts CCTV service, provided as part of Stevenage Council CCTV Centre. They offer a combined service, maintenance and 24-hour monitoring service. Due to their location, it would not be possible to transmit data back to them wirelessly and would require a datalink to be installed; this could be done at the Community Hall (in agreement with the CIO), the costs of installation of this fibre link are likely to be high.

Action: CST to circulate a breakdown of Herts CCTV costings to all Councillors for information.

Action: DP to speak to CIO re possibility of installing datalink in the Hall for the PC CCTV service.

Action: Clerk/CST to obtain quote from BT for installation of Fibre to the Premises on demand at the Community Hall.

In the meantime, he had asked ACE to quote for some changes to our existing camera arrangement to include moving the current cameras to more useful heights/locations to better pick up vehicle information, and also provision of a new camera on a post in the Country Park to look down the path there. Following discussion, it was agreed to proceed with the camera moves but not the new camera at this point. CST confirmed that any move to a new supplier would include taking on all existing cameras as they are at that time.

Resolved: it was agreed to proceed with the camera moves as quoted by ACE £767 but not the purchase of a new camera at this time.

b) Streetlighting

The number of streetlights out in the unadopted areas remains a concern. Any outages reported to the Council are sent on to the developers to request repair, but it is taking many weeks to get the repairs done, and the dark nights and reports of vehicle thefts mean this is now a significant issue.

Action: JW to escalate this issue with the Borough and ask them to write to the developers as this is a matter of safety.

9. Community Activity

a) Contribution to "Light Up Great Denham" initiative

JR gave a short summary of this initiative which is being run by one of the local GD businesses. 5 prizes are being awarded for best Christmas lighting on a house in GD. JR proposed that the Council supports this activity and donates prizes in the form of a small hamper of treats, as the opportunity to run community events as usual had been severely limited due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Resolved: a budget of £100 for the purchase of goods to create 5 hampers as prizes was agreed. JR to organise and liaise with the organisers.

b) Land behind the Park and Ride

DP advised that, following a request to the Borough Council, they have agreed to issue a licence to the Parish Council for community use of this land. She is investigating a number of options, including Woodland Trust and Community Orchard, both of which will supply planting packs; this will be included in the Neighbourhood Development Plan.

Action: DP to investigate what grant funding may be available, and develop the potential ideas for this area of land.

10. 21/22 Budget

Clerk advised that the tax base from the Borough Council is still awaited; once received it will be possible to consider any impact on the Parish Council element of Council Tax and potential precept payment. Councillors were asked to send any input on potential projects and budget requirements to Clerk in order for draft budget to be ready for approval at January meeting.

11. Planning

a) Planning applications received since last meeting

3 planning applications have been received for review and comment by Council.

- Application 20/02770/FUL – 17 Woden Gardens- single storey extension.

Resolved: No objections/comments recorded.

- Application 20/02692/FUL – 34 Pennard Close – Loft conversion with dormers to front roof slope. It was noted that similar conversions existed in nearby properties.

Resolved: No objection or comments were recorded.

- Application 20/02594/FUL – 10 Pennard Close – single storey rear extension.

Resolved: No objection or comments were recorded.

12. Borough Councillors Report

JW had circulated a written report before the meeting: he gave a short verbal update on the following:

- Village Medical Centre – a second inspection from the Care Quality Commission has been completed, awaiting the report, although he understands the preliminary report shows improvements. JW is speaking with the Clinical Commissioning Group and has a meeting with the new Operations Manager at the Practice on 16th December. He will update the Parish Council at a future meeting.
- 20mph signage – JW has offered to provide funds towards this, and is in dialogue with Highways
- Pedestrian/Cycle Bridge – JW has been chasing the engineering team on this and will report back when information is available
- Great Denham Golf Course – JW is attending a meeting with the Housing Minister on Friday 11th and will be asking a question re Urban spaces in the Q&A.
- Management Companies – further to previous reports, JW has been in discussion with one of the management companies following request from residents to take over the running of the scheme; currently the scheme in question has not been handed over, but once done, this could become a resident-led scheme.
- Great Denham Community Hall – JW reported, as trustee of the Hall, that the decision has been taken not to re-open at the moment but this will be kept under review.

13. 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 published on the website. All receipts were available for inspection

Resolved: All payments were approved and all Bacs payments approved by two councillors (DP and CST). Invoices will be initialled outside the meeting as soon as possible.

- b) Update on action from previous meetings

Clerk reported progress on a number of actions from previous meetings not already covered in tonight's agenda.

- Replacement of trees on Kingswood Way – JW was thanked for the provision of Ward Fund grant for this work which has now been completed.
- Benches in Country Park – the Borough Council has provided a quote to purchase and install 2 benches; this requires further investigation as the installation costs seem high and alternative installers may be necessary.
- Double yellow lines on junctions – A list of all junctions in phase 1 and phase 2 have been sent to Highways – awaiting costings and timescales.
- Great Portway Play area – the Community Events team at the Borough has confirmed they can provide paint for a volunteer day once Covid restrictions allow; the Play area leader has been asked for quotes for professional surface cleaning, awaiting response.
- Flagpole "Tubes" on Greenkeepers Rd outside the school – this has been escalated again to Barratts, awaiting action.

- 30mph sign on King Alfred Way entrance – Clerk has raised this again with Highways and Adoptions.

c) Asset Register

This has been updated to include new purchase of VERU laptops, Christmas Decorations, Speed Indicator Device and Tommy Statue. Clerk confirmed that she has advised our insurers and they have confirmed no additional charges for cover this year.

Resolved: Asset Register agreed.

14. Clerks Role and Responsibilities

Clerk left the meeting for the duration of this discussion. Decisions taken are noted below.

Resolved: It was agreed to progress 1 point on the pay scale from SCP 21 to SCP22; this will take effect from 1st January 2021.

Resolved: A temporary increase to contracted hours from 16 per week to 20 per week was agreed from December 2020. Clerk will log hours worked on a timesheet which will be reviewed at January meeting when payment will be confirmed. This temporary increase to hours will then be reviewed every 3 months.

An appraisal meeting will be arranged in next 3 months.

15. Correspondence

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

Resolved: No correspondence required discussion.

16. Any Other Business

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

- It was noted that the Christmas lights have now been installed around the Retail Centre and have been well-received by residents.
- Clerk is obtaining quotes for purchase of more lighting for Tree on Kingswood Way; since original purchase of lights in 2013 the tree has grown in height!

17. Date of Next Meeting

Monday 11th January 2021