



GREAT DENHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council, held Monday 6th July 2020. Meeting held by videoconferencing.

Present:

Parish Councillors: Donna Parsons (DP) Chair; Helen Allen (HA); Jo Ruskin (JR); Chris Staite (CST); Chris Slinn (CSL); Louise Evans (LE)

Apologies: all councillors in attendance

Borough Councillor: Jim Weir (JW)

Parish Clerk: Anna O'Meara (AOM)

Members of the Public: 72 members of the public attended via videoconference

The meeting was adjourned for public questions:

Public Questions

The following questions were raised:

What is the Council's thoughts on the recent increase in Crime over recent weeks?

The Police have informed us that the recent crime increase had been seen across all of the local villages and that it was not isolated to Great Denham; CST notes that this is reflected in the monthly crime reports. Police patrols have been stepped up in recent weeks across Great Denham in response to increased 101 reports which had justified the increased patrols. LE reported that Streetwatch had recently restarted patrols since these were suspended because of Covid restrictions, in response to the increase in crime over recent weeks. Two of the three visits have been accompanied by our new Police Constable. The Streetwatch team speak to the Police regularly. CST also noted that 3 people are currently going through Police vetting and a fourth is waiting for identify documents, and once this is completed, they will become Streetwatch members.

Can anything be done about the path at the end of Wortham Close?

This was reported some months ago and investigated by the Clerk. A response was sent at the time.

Action: Clerk to check outcome and advise resident.

Parking outside the Post Office on double yellow lines continues to be a problem.

DP advised that these parking issues have been discussed at previous meetings and as a result Council have asked the Borough to undertake a feasibility study for a pedestrian crossing; this will include whether installation of railings here would be helpful in changing the behaviour of drivers. This study has been delayed due to Covid but should start in September when it is thought that traffic and pedestrian numbers will be returning to more normal levels. Unfortunately, double yellow lines are not enforceable using CCTV enforcement cameras, and no-loading markings (which are camera-enforceable) are not an option because of shop deliveries and Royal Mail collections/deliveries. DP advised that use of signage will be looked into as a deterrent/warning in this area, but asked all residents to drive and park responsibly and to use the Car Park when visiting the shops/post office.

Does the Council back any Crime-related Facebook groups?

LE confirmed that the Council does not support specific crime-related FB groups and that following checks she had made neither Streetwatch nor the Police had backed any local Facebook groups. The Council will share information from recognised groups such as

Streetwatch and Neighbourhood Watch, and reminded all residents that the Police had again advised against the sharing of any CCTV images via social media.

The vegetation at the top of the river walk by the roundabout is now overgrown and is reducing visibility for pedestrians using this crossing point.

Action: Clerk to report to Borough Council and request that this be cut.

Will the Council be arranging Litter Picks in the near future?

DP advised that planned Litter Picks had been cancelled due to Covid guidance; we will look to schedule future dates in line with guidance and when we can ensure necessary safety measures (Covid-safe). It was noted that the Borough Council had been responding quickly to any litter problems during lockdown.

Can Bins/Dog Bins be installed in the Country Park between the Pavilion and the Pond?

We have asked Bedford Borough Council on previous occasions regarding bins – location and access for emptying are key considerations for them.

Action: Clerk to speak to Bedford Borough Council who own the park regarding this.

Can some benches be installed in the Country Park for people with reduced mobility to rest on walks?

The Council has 2 benches in the water meadows and has made provision in 20/21 budget for the purchase of benches. These will require the permission of the Borough Council.

Action: Clerk to contact the Borough Council for permission and potential siting of benches.

DP reopened the meeting.

1. Apologies

All Councillors were in attendance.

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 Annual Parish Council Meeting on 1st June 2020 were signed by DP.

4. Casual Vacancy on the Council

The Council currently has 3 Councillor vacancies; the necessary notices have been posted on the noticeboards. Any resident interested in joining the Council is asked to contact the Clerk via email for details.

Change to Agenda

DP proposed that items 7, 8, 9, 10 (b) and 12 be deferred to an extra ordinary meeting which will be called for next week, in order to ensure that agenda items 5 and 6 had sufficient time for discussion, given the high level of public interest in these items and the number of members of the public in attendance.

Resolved: it was agreed unanimously to defer these items and rearrange for an extra ordinary meeting next week.

5. Neighbourhood Plan – guest speakers

Paul Jenkins and Janet Goodland were in attendance as members of the Turvey Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. This was in response to the action and discussion at the last Council meeting on 1st June 2020.

Paul outline the main points of a Neighbourhood Plan:

- About the use and development of land – scale and location of sites for housing growth
- Part of the Local development plan
- Opportunity to develop policy at local level on the way and is used.
- Can also set requirements for transport/access, building design, renewable energy projects etc.
- Local Green Spaces can be a part of a NP.

The amount of work involved will depend on the focus on the plan. Turvey formed a Steering Group of 7-9 people at any time, 2 of which were councillors, the rest residents. Consultation and communication events with residents are key, as the final plan must be voted on by a majority of residents to be adopted. BRCC can provide advice and also paid-for consultancy, other consultants are also available. Parish Councils can apply for a grant towards costs of writing a NP.

Green Spaces – Turvey have included 2 policies relating to their green spaces, and have used policy to determine controls on development on these spaces.

Green Space must meet certain conditions to be recognised, e.g. wildlife, use of footpaths etc. There is no clear guidance on size, but Bedford Borough Council consider 10 hectares the upper limit (note that the Golf Course is c. 70 hectares in size).

DP thanked Paul and Janet for a very useful and informative discussion. They left the meeting.

6. Bedford Golf Club Land

Following the announcement on 2nd July that the golf club and course would be closing at the end of the lease on 16th October 2020, and that the agent/landowner was not renewing the lease, many residents have raised concerns on this, and have attended the meeting. DP outlined the background and the work that the Parish Council and Borough Councillor have been doing since 2nd July to understand the position more fully, to obtain further information and to consider what action the Parish Council and residents might take; this includes investigating planning policies, emailing contacts, contacting the agent and MP, and other Wards and Parish Councils.

DP and JW have met with the Mayor and he has committed to look for all old planning documents and S106 agreements for Phase 1 of the development (The Golf Club). JW has contacted Sport England, JW is also attending Biddenham PC meeting on Weds 8th July (Councillors Jon Gambold and Roger Rigby of Bromham and Biddenham Ward attended tonight's meeting).

DP outlined some of the considerations that a Parish Council may pursue, in addition to current activity; these could include:

- Nominating the land and/or Clubhouse as an Asset of Community Value
- Preparing a Neighbourhood Plan with specific focus on Green Spaces
- Proposing to the Borough that the land is identified as a Green Space in the Local Plan 2040.

Comments, suggestions and questions were invited from members of the public; these have been captured and are available as a separate document, attached to these minutes.

DP and JW stressed the need to ensure all efforts are co-ordinated, and that the initial focus is to ensure continuation of the Golf Course, as the Landowners plans to let it revert to grazing is a likely precursor to a future planning application on the grounds that the land is no longer a sports and leisure facility. It was agreed to focus efforts on this for the immediate next steps.

A number of residents suggested seeking professional planning advice through a consultant. Funding for this will be needed if this course of action is required. A resident who is a professional Town Planner has offered her services (free) to assist with the work required to prepare a response to the landowner and to understand and equip residents and the Parish Council with the necessary information for response to any future planning applications. This was welcomed.

It may be necessary to create a small Steering Group of residents and volunteers will be asked to join this when appropriate.

Residents were asked to send any information or offers of help through to the Clerk who will collate and record them.

Action: a page will be added to the Parish Council website to share information and keep residents informed.

7. Environment

Deferred to next meeting

8. Local Services

Deferred to next meeting

9. Community Events and Engagement

Deferred to next meeting

10. Consultations

a) Houses of Multiple Occupancy – consultation on Supplementary Planning Document
Council have reviewed the proposals and agreed the following response:

1. The Council was pleased to see that Principle 3 – Ensuring Safe Access and Adequate Parking – has been included. Parking is a concern in Great Denham, and the Council has raised this issue in previous consultations.

We welcome the proposed guidance on ratios of 1 vehicle space per bedroom plus 0.4 vehicle space for visitors per bedroom.

We would also ask that a further condition is included regarding the use of on-street parking (clause 4.9.5) with a clearer statement on limits, for example, a 6 bedroom HMO will require 8.4 vehicle spaces: where this can only be accommodated as on-street parking, the % of available space to be taken up must be considered and a maximum threshold stipulated, e.g. % of total available on-street spaces in that road/street. This is particularly important where there are multiple HMO properties in any street.

We also note clause 4.9.7 regarding loss of garden space for on-plot parking; in many new developments garden space is limited and the potential loss of amenity space through HMO on-plot parking is a concern.

2. The Council noted the proposals in Principle 1 – Maintaining Balanced, Inclusive and Mixed Communities. We note the proposed limits of no more than 3 HMOS adjacent to each other, or sandwiching other houses; we also note that the proposed measure of

density is HMOs to be no more than 30% of the density of all properties within 100m radius of the HMO property.

The density of HMOs in any one street is a concern, when taken in partnership with Principle 3 – Ensuring Safe Access and Adequate Parking. We would ask that the density measure is amended to refer to the entire street rather than 100m radius, given the potential impact on density of on-street parking.

3. The Council have asked for confirmation on whether it is proposed to apply these new principles not just to new applications, but also to any HMO licence renewals.

Resolved: Clerk to submit response by deadline of 7th July 2020 when consultation closes.

- b) NALC consultation on Model Code of Conduct

Deferred to next meeting

11. Planning

- a) Planning Application 20/01102/FUL – Erection on 1.8M high fencing, 1 Ellesmere Gardens, Great Denham

Resolved: No objections recorded to this application. Clerk to submit response to Planning.

12. Borough Councillors Report

Deferred to next meeting.

13. Finance and Clerk's Report

- a) Finance Report & payments – initial invoices/approve & initial Bacs payments

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

Resolved: All payments were approved as listed in the Finance report and may be paid. All Bacs payments will be signed by 2 councillors at next opportunity for meeting in person. The Ambivalent Quote was agreed.

- b) Quarterly Financial Check

Resolved: JR confirmed that this had been completed satisfactorily.

14. Correspondence

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

Resolved: No correspondence required discussion.

15. Any Other Business

The following items were raised:

- Resident who is a Governor of the Beds Hospital NHS Foundation Trust asked if the Council could assist him to communicate information from the Trust to residents, and potential to ask residents to become members of the Trust.
Action: Clerk to include an article in next Newsletter and share briefings via social media where possible.
- JW confirmed as a Trustee of the Community Hall that the CIO had obtained a grant and support to furlough staff during the Covid Shutdown, and that future financial projections look ok.

- LE confirmed that she had reached out to local crime groups but had not as yet made contact. CST confirmed that 3 new members had joined Streetwatch, and that a 4th joiner is in progress.

16. Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed to hold an extra ordinary meeting on Wednesday 15th July at 7.30pm. Agenda will be published in accordance with statutory requirements.