



GREAT DENHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Great Denham Parish Council held at 7.30pm on Monday 11th January 2021. The meeting was held remotely.

Present:

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

Borough Councillor: Jim Weir (JW)

Parish Clerk: Anna O'Meara (AOM)

Members of the Public: 4 members of the public in attendance

Public Questions

There were no questions from those in attendance. DP read out a question received via email:

1. Resident enquired about progress on adoption of Greenkeepers Road and roads off, in particular given concerns regarding the state of the drains in the light of recent floods. DP and LE both noted that they had observed many drains seemed full of rubbish during the recent flooding at Christmas.

Action: the issue of drain-clearance to be raised at the next meeting with developers, scheduled to take place on 22nd January 2021.

1. Apologies

All Councillors were in attendance.

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 7th December 2020 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by DP.

4. Parish Councillor Vacancies

There are currently 2 vacancies on the Council. DP reported that 1 expression of interest had been received and the she and LE had met for an informal conversation prior to an application being made.

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 8th January. She asked VA to give a short report on the meeting, as follows:

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

- Approx. 240 sheep were now grazing on the land (on former 10th and 17th fairways at time of meeting) and will be there until end of March. It had been noted that some electric fencing had been attached to resident's boundary fences and sheep have been eating shrubbery; this has been reported to the farmer who has been asked to resolve.

- Parish Councils asked that more communication on future plans as soon as they are known, and engagement with the community on these is put in place.
- Bidwells gave assurances that the buildings are being maintained and insured.
- A planning application for change of use for the former Clubhouse building had been received (see Agenda item 11).
- Parish Councils reminded Bidwells that the promised signage regarding footpaths and that the land is private land is still outstanding.
- The Council has identified the Rights of Way and Permissive Paths on the Golf Course land and this has been sent to Bidwells; the information sent aligns with that published by the Borough Council on their website.
- Bidwells have no date on the proposed change of use for the Compound building to light industrial but are engaging with Beds Borough Planning on this.
- Bidwells advised that any additional security measures remain under review for the moment.
- Bidwells advised that further instructions from the trustees are still awaited, and that this is not likely to happen for some months.
- JW has written to Bidwells asking for greater community engagement on future plans and options for use of the land. His email will be forwarded by Bidwells to the Trustees.

A resident raised a concern about vehicles seen using the Compound; the Council had reported concern over possible storage of chemicals at the Compound and this may be in relation to this. It was noted that no further vehicle activity had been seen.

Nomination as Asset of Community Value

DP advised that the draft application and additional info had been received from the Save the Golf Course Community Group and would be shared with Councillors in order for the Council to consider best way to submit this. This will be discussed at February meeting.

6. Neighbourhood Development Plan

LE gave a short update from the last Steering Group meeting in December:

- The Steering Group is doing further research into each of the identified areas for more in-depth information and references
- The Steering Group is keen to get residents views and is looking for people to get involved in the Steering Group, in particular to support the Design section of the plan.
- Next Steering Group meeting is 21st January 2021 at 7.30pm.

Anyone interested in supporting this work please email

ndp@greatdenhamparishcouncil.gov.uk

7. Budget and Precept 2021/22

Clerk confirmed that the tax base figures had now been received from the Borough Council; due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on increased Council Tax support, there had been a slight reduction in tax base.

Following discussion, it was agreed that the precept for 21/22 would not be increased and the Band D equivalent charge would continue at 20/21 levels; any community projects would be met from current reserves. This was in recognition of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on residents.

Resolved: Band D charge maintained at 20/21 levels of £35. This provides a precept of £58978.

Resolved: Precept of £58978 agreed and Precept Request form completed and signed by Chair and Clerk.

Resolved: 2021/2022 Budget of £58978 agreed; full breakdown to be provided at February meeting.

8. Local Services

a) Covid-19 update

DP is attending Borough Council weekly update meeting as Chair; all messages from the Borough are then shared with residents via email and social media. It was noted with concern that Covid cases in Bedford were increasing, and the increased pressure on hospitals. It was also noted that vaccinations are now taking place for priority groups at 2 sites in Bedford. Unfortunately, a letter sent out by NHS regarding vaccination site in Stevenage has caused some confusion, but JW confirmed that People will be contacted to attend a site in Bedford in due course.

b) Flood Response Plan for Great Denham

Following the events over the Christmas period and the red flood alert that covered Great Denham Country Park, DP proposed that the Parish Council developed a Flood Response policy. This could cover: key contacts of main agencies, accessing equipment, monitoring water levels locally, use of the Community Hall for evacuation/support purposes, communications to residents.

CST noted that the Environment Agency may need to update their survey data for assessment of the area, given the increase in built houses that has taken place. It would be helpful to install a level stick in the Country Park that can be observed using the CCTV cameras.

JW advised that he is presenting a motion to Borough Council to request that a local command structure be put in place, including down to Parish Council level.

Resolved: it was agreed to create a Flood Defence Plan. Clerk and CST to prepare a draft for review by Council at future meeting.

Action: Clerk to contact Environment Agency re request for updated survey of Great Denham and installation of level stick.

9. Training

Resolved: Training courses and costs were approved for Councillor Arthur (New Councillor Induction, Cost £30) and Clerk (Virtual Practitioners Conference, £75).

10. Firework Safety

Fireworks use across Great Denham appears to have increased in recent months; an email had been received from a resident about the incident on New Year's Eve which resulted in the destruction of a resident's garage caused by an exploding firework.

In response a meeting has taken place with the Rural Policing team, a representative of the Borough Council and Beds Fire and Rescue. Communications will be produced to remind residents of how to enjoy fireworks safely, using appropriate size of fireworks for their properties and any legal/statutory implications to protect residents and their property. This could be used as a reminder before the major events of Bonfire Night, New Years Eve, Diwali and Chinese New Year. The Rural Policing team have already issued a BedsAlert, Twitter message and Facebook post and these have been shared by the Parish council.

Council also noted that fireworks had been used in the Country Park and on the Golf Course land; whilst the Golf Course land is privately owned, the Country Park is a Public Space and therefore any fireworks let off there by private individuals is illegal.

The opportunity for an organised event in Great Denham will be investigated.

Action: Clerk to investigate whether the landowner of the former Golf Course land or the Borough Council would support an organised display in 2021 (Covid-permitting) on either the Golf Course land or Country Park (respectively).

11. Planning

a) Planning applications received since last meeting

Planning application 20/02846/FUL for change of use of building and land from golf clubhouse and associated facilities, parking and practice area to children's nursery and associated facilities, parking and outdoor play area with erection of boundary fences. – the Bedford Golf Clubhouse, 10 Carnoustie Drive, Great Denham MK40 4FF.

DP confirmed that this application had been received and the response date for comments is 3rd February 2021. Whilst the Council would not normally write out on general planning matters, given the high level of interest from Great Denham residents in the closure of The Bedford Golf Club in October 2020 and in any future plans for the property, the Council is keen to ensure that all residents have the opportunity to comment, should they wish to do so. Social media and website posts have been sent; it was recognised that not all residents are social media users, and LE proposed (seconded JR) sending a direct mail to all houses in Great Denham to inform them of the planning application and how to comment.

Resolved: A direct mail letter to all residents was agreed and a budget of £1500 approved for this. Clerk to action.

The Council will consider its own response at the February meeting and meet the 3rd February cut-off for comments.

b) Street Licence – Dessert Boss

The Council commented and responded to the original application at the November meeting. A Variation application has been received to extend the stay from 20 mins to 3 hours on the 2nd Tuesday and 4th Thursday of each month at Saxon Way, Great Denham (opposite the Community Hall).

Resolved: The application was supported, however the applicant must ensure that he parks in a marked parking bay. Clerk to send response.

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, the rating has improved from Unsatisfactory to Requires Improvement. A new Operations Manager is now in post, and has begun to tackle the issues; JW will be speaking with the Clinical Director on Thursday. JW reflected that he feels the CCG has let residents down regarding the Medical Centre.
- JW has met with Highways Officer on a number of items; he is awaiting an outline of proposed 20mph zone around the Retail centre, including costs, timescales and roll out plans. He also discussed the need for signage on Footpath Number 1, given the increased use of this route by cyclists and the proximity to houses the potential for accidents has increased. Cycling is not permitted on Footpaths, and he has asked for signs to be put up asking cyclists to dismount.
- As noted above, JW is presenting a motion to Borough Council regarding the recent flooding in the area, to request that a local command structure be put in place, including down to Parish Council level.

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. Invoices will be initialled outside the meeting as soon as possible. Cheque number 100431 was signed for Clerks expenses.

b) Quarterly Financial Check

JR reported that the quarterly check of financial controls had been completed.

Resolved: Quarterly Financial check completed satisfactorily; no issues identified.

c) Update on action from previous meetings

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

- Flagpole "Tubes" on Greenkeepers Rd outside the school – these have now been removed.
- 30mph sign on King Alfred Way entrance – Clerk has raised this again with Highways and Adoptions.
- A number of streetlights have been reported – these have been reported to the developers for repair.
- The pedestrian bridge to Kempston Mill is closed as unsafe, but the fences have been damaged and people continue to use it. This has been reported to the Borough and remedial action has been taken.
- Final outturn figures for OSM charge for 2018/19 and 2019/20 have been received; further follow up questions have been sent to the Borough Council, awaiting response.
- Given the number of bank holidays over the Christmas/New Year period, the timesheet for Clerks hours will be reviewed at beginning of February as this will be more typical of a month's activities (action from last meeting)

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

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

- The fencing around the excluded land was damaged by the floodwater over Christmas and will be reported to Bidwells.
- The old Barratts car park on Mercia Road is full of junk and an eyesore. Barratts should be asked to arrange for its removal.

16. Date of Next Meeting

Monday 1st February 2021