



GREAT DENHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Great Denham Parish Council held at 7.30pm on Monday 1st March 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: 3 members of the public in attendance

Public Questions

The following questions were raised by members of the public:

1. *The amount of speeding on Anglia Way and King Alfred Way is a concern to residents. Is it possible to petition for this to be made a 20mph area?*

DP gave an update on what is being done to tackle speeding around Great Denham, and on this road in particular:

- We have asked both the developer and Bedford Borough Council to install a 30mph sign at the King Alfred Way/Branston Way entrance to Great Denham.
- We plan to install another Speed Indicator Device, similar to that on Kingswood Way and are in dialogue with DWH re its location.
- A feasibility study has been commissioned (report on tonight's agenda) for a Pedestrian Crossing on Anglia Way by the Retail Centre
- The Parish Council has asked Highways to consider reducing the speed limit across Great Denham to 20mph. JW has been pursuing this with the Borough Council, initially around the Retail Centre, and then for the whole development. It is made more difficult due to the number of unadopted roads, and there are costs for this work. JW has agreed to fund the Retail Centre 20mph work from his Ward fund, we are awaiting more info from Highways on the cost for the remaining development.

2. *When will the post-box on Kingswood Way be replaced?*

The box was removed following a vehicle collision in January. Royal Mail have advised that standard replacement timescales are 3 months. It was noted that this post box had been a priority box.

3. *(received via email) Resident has raised concerns over the increased parking on St Mellion Drive by visitors using the former golf course land for exercise. It is becoming more congested, and a vehicle collision occurred there on Sunday.*

The Council are aware of this and that visibility for residents entering and exiting St Mellion Drive is affected as a result of this vehicle parking. It was noted that the Park and Ride was available but that people were not using this. **Action: the issue will be raised at the next meeting with Bidwells and the situation will be monitored.**

The meeting was re-opened.

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 1st February 2021 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by DP.

4. Update on Great Denham Golf Course

a) Update on correspondence/meetings held since last PC meeting.

DP reported that the last meeting with Bidwells had taken place on 5th February.

- The concerns regarding use of resident boundary fences as part of the containment approach for the sheep were reiterated.
- We have asked Bidwells to put more signage up that the course is closed and advising people to keep to the footpaths; we continue to chase this.
- The recent flooding opposite West Hill Close was reported promptly to Bidwells and other agencies (the developer, Anglia Water, Borough Council); following investigation it is believed to come from the water feature on the golf course land. Bidwells have now begun work to clear the drainage/gullies, it was noted that the land is still waterlogged.
- Bidwells advised that the planning application for change of use for the former clubhouse was being withdrawn. This has subsequently been confirmed by Planning. Bidwells advised that the lease for this building would now go to the open market to find a tenant.
- Bidwells advised that a planning application for the Compound building is being considered.

b) Nomination as Asset of Community Value

A draft of the submission had been circulated for comment. No further changes were requested. DP proposed that the nomination was submitted to the Borough Council, in line with sections 87-108 of the 2011 Localism Act.

Resolved: It was agreed to submit the nomination of the former golf course and buildings as assets of community value. The Council will advise Bidwells as a matter of courtesy when the nomination application has been submitted.

5. Neighbourhood Development Plan

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

- A newsletter and questionnaire will be distributed to all residents of Great Denham in next few weeks as part of the community engagement for the plan. It will cover all areas of the proposed plan: Green space, infrastructure, facilities, future development, ecology and environment etc.
- We will be selecting a planning consultant in due course to support work on developing planning policies.

Anyone interested in helping with the work on the NDP please email ndp@greatdenhamparishcouncil.gov.uk

6. Annual Audit Preparation

a) Review of internal controls

CSL confirmed that this review had been completed. A couple of small items had been fed back to the Clerk regarding the Asset Register but nothing of concern.

Resolved: Review of Internal controls completed; Internal controls are satisfactory.

b) Internal Audit Effectiveness and re-appoint Internal Auditor

Resolved: It was agreed that all the criteria of the Effectiveness of Internal Audit were met and the document was signed by DP.

c) Review Asset Register and Risk Register

The Asset Register was reviewed. It was agreed to arrange disposal of the old PC laptop computer. Risk Register was reviewed.

Resolved: Asset Register was agreed with the above amendments.

Resolved: Risk Register was agreed.

d) Review of Fidelity Guarantee

Resolved: The Fidelity Guarantee of £150k which is included in Council Insurance was agreed to be adequate for Council needs at this time, in conjunction with the robust internal financial controls that are in place. To be reviewed at next Insurance renewal.

e) To review Council Standing orders

No changes are required to Financial Standing orders as no new NALC model orders have been published. Clerk has conducted a review of non-financial Standing orders against latest NALC model orders (issued in 2020), with the following proposals:

- Standing orders 1(u), 3(h), 3(zz), 3(aaa), 4(h), 12(f), 18(c), 19(g), 19(h), 23 do not appear in NALC model orders 2020 but should be retained.
- Standing order 20 (c) to be removed as it is no longer required; all minutes are published on the Council website and available.
- Standing order 18 (g) and (h) – financial amounts to be updated.
- New Standing order to be added as 3 (dd) – Where legislation permits, meetings may be held either physically or remotely using a suitable platform. All Standing orders will apply equally in either case.

Resolved: Proposed changes to Standing orders approved. Clerk to publish updated orders.

7. Lease for Community Hall

The latest draft of this lease has been circulated for comment and shared with the Trustee leading on behalf of the CIO; it reflects all previous comments from both the PC and CIO. Clerk clarified the proposed treatment of Insurance payments for the building: in line with established practice, and following advice from the Council's solicitor, the lease contains provision for the CIO to repay the buildings insurance premium if required. The Council will continue to pay the buildings insurance to ensure that the Council's asset is adequately insured; this has not previously or currently been recharged to the CIO. It is proposed that this arrangement continues; the decision over insurance recharge is reviewed every 2 years.

Resolved: draft lease agreed, including proposed treatment of buildings insurance.

Clerk advised that the draft lease will be shared with all CIO trustees before the final document is prepared ready for signature.

8. Road Safety

The Feasibility Study on a pedestrian crossing on Anglia Way, requested by the Parish Council, has been completed and draft report circulated. This was in response to concerns over road safety in this area expressed by Councillors and Residents. The report identifies and supports a crossing on Anglia Way at an estimated cost of £40,000. Installation requires a 20mph zone to be established in this area (JW is dealing, see above). Clerk confirmed that budget provision for a contribution to this work has been made in earmarked reserves and CIL monies.

Resolved: It was agreed to proceed with this work and to offer a financial contribution towards it. Clerk to confirm with Borough and request timescales.

9. Local Services Update

a) Covid-19 update

DP continues to attend meetings with the Borough Council and distribute updates to residents. Bedford Coronavirus figures are showing a downward trend, and the government has published a roadmap to exit restrictions. Everyone is encouraged to continue to follow the guidance re Hands, Face, Space to prevent the spread of the virus.

b) Flood Response Plan for Great Denham

DP reported that she and JW had met the Borough Council Flood Response team regarding setting up a Flood Response group in Great Denham, and inclusion in the information cascade for future events. We will also have access to training and equipment, and be encouraged to build our own Flood Plan. JW advised that he was arranging a further meeting with the Environment Agency, and that he had presented a petition of some 700 signatures to Bedford Borough Council meeting on 24th February. The Borough Council have agreed a Forum of Local Councillors to support local response, led by Parish Councils.

Action: DP/Clerk to circulate information on creating a local flood response group to residents.

c) Provision of on-street charging points

Following correspondence by JW with Bedford Borough Council, the Borough have asked for suggested locations for on-street charging points, to accommodate residents who may not have access to any off-street parking. It is not yet possible to install on any privately-owned land, and so any unadopted areas are not eligible. After discussion the following areas were agreed to be nominated:

- Park and Ride
- Outside the Community Hall (subject to adoption)
- Great Denham Sports Pavilion
- Great Denham Primary School car park (for teaching staff/visitors)

Resolved: Clerk to respond with nominated locations.

10. Councillor Training

Dates for various finance training courses are now available from the BATPC, and councillors were invited to participate.

Resolved: VAT training agree for Councillor Allen; Finance for Councillors training agreed for Councillors Parsons and Allen. Training costs approved. Clerk to arrange.

11. Grants and Donations

A grant application has been received from Country Days, a company offering woodland-based outdoor activities for children, for £1000 towards provision of services and marketing. It was noted that an application had been previously received in March 2020. Although requested, no further information on number of Great Denham children who had participated in these activities had been received; council therefore concluded they were unable to determine the extent of benefit to Great Denham residents.

Resolved: Grant application refused at this time. Council will consider any future application if this information can be provided.

12. Consultations

Council discussed suggestions for Bedford Borough Council Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

Resolved: Council will ask the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to look into the Highway/land adoptions from developers, and how this could be done in a more timely and proactive manner, given the issues and length of time it is taking for the Great Denham development to be adopted and the impact this has on residents.

13. Planning

Planning application 21/00256/OUT – Land adjacent to 16 Vicars Close and plans for 2 dwellings.

This application is in a neighbouring parish. Council have reviewed the plans.

Resolved: no objections recorded, but Council have asked that the applicant must ensure that the Public Right of Way that circumvents this land is not impeded in any way as a result of this development.

14. Borough Councillors Report

JW had circulated a written report before the meeting: in addition to what has already been covered, he gave a short verbal update on the following:

- Estate Management companies – residents have reported similar issues of work schedules, charging/Value for Money and non-existent communications from all management companies. Following escalation by JW, David Wilson Homes and Barratts have met with Chamonix; as a result, a meeting will now take place with DWH and Chamonix. JW advised that he is intending to take a similar approach with SDL and RMG in due course.
- East-West Rail link – there is concern over the proposed Route E and its impact on villages and land to the north of Bedford. A number of groups are lobbying for an alternative route to be considered, including routes to the south of Bedford.
- Bedford Borough have confirmed that council tax will be increasing by 1.99%, and precept for adult social care will increase by 1.75%. Average Band D charge is £1624.
- Police and Crime Panel – a 7% increase in this element of council tax will deliver more police officers.
- COVID-19 – Business Support grants are available; the Test and Trave support payment of £700 is available. COVID-19 updates/roadmaps are being published.

The report will be published on the Parish Council website.

15. 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 100432 was signed.

b) Payroll Services Provider

Clerk reported back on the action from last meeting regarding resilience/contingency arrangements from both prospective suppliers. Following discussion, the supplier more local to Great Denham was selected.

Resolved: Supplier (Pam Antony) and costs approved for Payroll Services from 1 April 2021.

c) Renewal of subscription – The Loop

Resolved: it was agreed to renew subscription for The Loop for 12 months at cost of £10.

d) Revision of Clerk's hours – action from previous meeting.

It was agreed at January meeting to consider increase in Clerks weekly hours to cover additional work required for Neighbourhood Plan and other projects. Clerk has submitted a timesheet which shows hours worked each week average 18 hours; this is an increase of 2 hours per week on contracted hours. CST proposed increase in hours to 18 per week to be implemented, CST proposed to backdate this to 1 December 2020.

Resolved: increase to 18 hours per week agreed with effect from 1 December 2020.

Payment of backdated pay to be made.

e) Update on action from previous meetings

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

- Benches – Clerk has a quote from the Borough Council for installation of 2 benches in the Country Park but has queried the installation element of the cost and is sourcing alternative suppliers for comparison/competitive quote.
- CCTV – The survey for the leased line has been completed and no additional installation costs identified. The order with BT has been put on hold pending further discussion with Bedford Borough Council on work required to maintain service/signal if supplier provision is changed from ACE/BBC. A meeting will be arranged with BBC and CST/Clerk.
- Resurfacing of Large Play Hub – Bedford Borough Council have confirmed that the monies for this work will be met from OSM Play area reserves (£15k) with remainder from 20/21 in year funds, and that there will be no increase to the OSM charge as a result. 2 quotes were shared to demonstrate that the Council has selected supplier based on value for money.
- Clerk has asked Borough Council for update on the opening of the Sports Pavilion and Archers Rest café.
- Great Portway sign – to ask Borough Council to replace as faded/damaged.

16. Correspondence

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

Resolved: No correspondence required discussion.

17. Any Other Business

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

- Clerk advised that she had been contacted by Chamonix who wish to join the quarterly meetings with DWH; she will also set up a separate meeting with Councillors in advance of this (see also Borough Councillors report above).
- Clerk advised that current legislation permitting remote meetings will expire on 7th May, but that lifting of restrictions is not before 21 June, which will prevent face to face meeting being held. Clerk is writing to NALC and MP to support continuing to allow Parish Councils to meet remotely in future.
- LE noted that secondary school places have been confirmed that that many schools are now oversubscribed; this will impact Great Denham children now and in the future. Provision of secondary school facilities will be included in the Neighbourhood Development plan.

18. Date of Next Meeting

Monday 12th April 2021