

GREAT DENHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of The Great Denham Parish Council Meeting held on 4th March 2024 at 7.30pm at Great Denham Community Hall.

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Chris Staite (Chairman), Helen Allen, Anna O'Meara, Janice Moran, Joanna Szaub-Newton, Jon Hannah, Joe Quinn, Jim Weir (also Borough Councillor).
David Brough (Locum Parish Council Clerk).

1 **Apologies for Absence:** Cllr Joe Quinn (Family commitment).

2 **Declarations of interest in items on the agenda:** None.

3 **Public Open Session**

One member of the public was present and spoke on a number of items, including: Assistance in finding the party responsible for fixing a streetlight, the local bus service, and a redundant bus shelter.

4 **Correspondence received since the last meeting (requiring council attention)**

- *A resident emailed regarding the streetlight in the courtyard behind 13-21 Wayland not working which is leaving the area in complete darkness. Clerk has contacted the management company to repair but this has yet to be done.*
- *Two residents have submitted photos of Country Park wildlife to be considered for the interpretation boards. Received, with thanks.*

5 **To confirm the minutes of the parish council meeting held on 5th February 2024**

Resolved to approve the minutes of the meeting as an accurate record.

6 **Clerk's report on actions not covered by agenda items**

- *To create a Facebook post asking the community for any wildlife photographs they may have which could be used on the interpretation boards the parish council is creating for the Country Park. **Complete** – Residents have been sending photos to the clerk's email address.*
- *To contact BBC Repro Department to clarify the required specifications for photographs to be used on the interpretation boards. **Complete** – Clerk has been in communication with BBC regarding the design requirements.*
- *To contact Bromham United AFC to enquire when football matches will be held in Great Denham during the month of September 2024. **Complete – Awaiting a response. Action:** Cllr O'Meara to assist in contacting the team.*

7 **Finance**

- *To approve payments and note income and balances. **Resolved** to approve payments as shown in the appendix.*
- *To note the Spend versus Budget variance report
Report received and noted. See appendix.*

14* **David Wilson Homes (DWH) *Item moved forward on the agenda**

Cllr O'Meara to provide the council with an update on the Mercia Road development following a meeting held with the DWH Construction Director, Matt Johnson.

Cllr O'Meara provided the following update:

- The build is expected to take 2 years, with target end date of July 2026. First phase will be the school end of Mercia Road and the properties on edge of green space opposite the Community Hall; the sales office will be located here (opposite Hall) and additional parking spaces will be created where the current block paved area is on Saxon Way (in line with the submitted plans). First occupation of properties is forecast for October 2024.
- Fencing has been erected on site boundaries.

*Mrs R Brough, Clerk, Great Denham Parish Council
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- The existing compound on Mercia Road will be the site compound for the duration of the build, and a high perimeter fence will be put in place to provide privacy to residents backing onto this area for the duration of the build, at which point it will be replaced with standard size fencing.
- Mercia Road is now closed at the compound entrance; for health and safety reasons this applies to both vehicle and pedestrian traffic. This gate will be manned by site staff to ensure safe entry and exit of vehicles.
- Site times are between 8am and 5pm; Construction Traffic will enter the site via Greenkeepers Road and Mercia Road, and due to schedules may arrive before this start time; every effort will be made to avoid school drop-off and pick-up times (8.15 to 8.45am, 3.15 to 4pm).
- Regular road sweeping will take place.
- In the next 2 months residents will see work starting on land clearance, the roads and sewers programme, digging of foundations, the setting up of the compound.
- DWH confirmed that any shrubbery clearance will be done in line with requirements for protection of nesting birds.
- The expansion land for the school has been fenced off and the legal transfer of this land to Bedford Borough Council has been completed; any work to prepare the school land for future use will be done by the Local Authority.

The following items were raised:

- Appointment of a Management Company – the PC highlighted that this is a significant concern for residents and highlighted recent issues with management companies.
- Continued use of remaining green space by the Community – DWH will ensure that this area is prepared in readiness for the Summer Festival at end June/beginning of July, including removal of bund.
- Contact points for key staff should any concerns arise during the 2 year build – DWH to supply contact numbers for Contracts Manager and Site Manager.
- Communication with residents – DWH produce a newsletter and marketing material, which will be made available to the Parish Council; DWH will also come along to June Parish Council meeting for an agenda slot.
- Status of Footpath Number 1 (Public Right of Way) during Mercia Road closure – to confirm route and any planned diversion.

Other items discussed:

- Provision of new energy-efficient technology integrated in the build – Matt confirmed that the build spec will be in line with regulations in force on the land, and that, unless specified by the Planners, this is not in the plan. As a result it is unlikely that any off-plan sales will accommodate any such requests from potential buyers.
- Ensuring that the Sales Office give out correct information on things like Service Management charges, Open Space Management fees, facilities such as Country Park, as information provided during earlier build phases has been misleading.
- DWH Sponsorship of future community events and activities – to be discussed with PC and Hall Committee, Anna to raise any future opportunities with Matt in first instance.

Next and future meetings

- We agreed to meet every 2 months initially to cover progress to date, what's coming next and for both parties to raise any concerns, issues or opportunities. Next meeting will be in April.
- DWH to come along to June Parish Council meeting if possible.

Action: Cllr Weir to investigate if a Construction Management Plan has been submitted to the borough council.

8 **Community Facilities:**

Update on standing water on the old golf course.

The Clerk provided an update that the borough council and Bidwells were still coordinating work to resolve the issue; this will continue to be monitored. It was noted that the footpath was still flooded.

9 **Planning Applications:**

To consider any planning applications received since the last meeting – includes any received after the agenda is issued up to the date of the meeting.

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APPLICATION NO: 24/00286/FUL Full Planning Application

PROPOSAL: First floor bedroom converted into a home office. Loft conversion to create a bedroom with dormer window, En-suite and dress.

LOCATION: 7 Alnwick Way Great Denham Bedford Bedfordshire MK40 4SX

Resolved not to comment or object on this application.

APPLICATION NO: 24/00224/MOF Major Outline and Full application

PROPOSAL: Hybrid application for (1) Full planning permission for the erection of a community hub for local community uses and meeting rooms (Use Class F2), public worship (Use Class F1), café, creche and staff offices (Use Class E), car and cycle parking, pedestrian and vehicular access, provision of amenity space, landscaping, plant and other associated infrastructure; and (2) Outline planning permission with all matters reserved except access, for up to 79 dwellings (Use Class C3), pedestrian and vehicular access; and associated amenity space, open space, landscaping car and cycle parking, and other associated infrastructure works.

LOCATION: Land To The North Of Cemetery Road (Behind Pumping Station) Kempston Bedfordshire

Resolved to object to this planning application. The council supports the objection set out by the Environment Agency, that there is an absence of an acceptable flood risk assessment (FRA). Great Denham residents already suffer from a heightened flood risk in the area around the country park and this development would exacerbate this risk.

10 **Borough Councillors Report**

Update from Borough Councillor Jim Weir.

See parish council website for full report.

11 **Summer Event Working Group**

To receive updates from the working group for the summer event.

The council heard the following update:

Cllrs Staite, Moran, Quinn, Szaub-Newton held a working group meeting. The date for the "Great Denham Village Fete" is expected to be either 21st or 28th September 2024 between 12pm and 7pm. The fete is hoped to include: catering stands, crafting tent, photo competition, baking competition, sports races, football tournament, displays from local groups, petting zoo, bouncy castle.

12 **Internal Auditor**

To consider changing the parish council's internal auditor.

Resolved to request the current internal auditor to continue. If not available then the council will approach the Bromham PC Clerk, who carries out this service.

13 **Parish Council Risk Assessment**

Annual review of the parish council risk assessment.

Resolved to approve the parish council risk assessment. Available upon request.

15 **Savings Account Options**

To consider moving a portion of reserves into a higher interest savings account. Options to be presented to council.

Resolved to open a Unity Trust current account and savings account, to close the HSBC account, and to open a 30-day-notice Redwood Business Savings Account and transfer £85k into it. Cllrs Hannah, Szaub-Newton, and O'Meara to be added as signatories.

16 **Annual Parish Meeting**

To consider a date in May 2024 to hold the Annual Parish Meeting.

Resolved to choose 7th May for the Annual Parish meeting and the Annual Parish Council meeting.

17 **Business for future agendas (No actions can be taken on items not on the agenda)**

Proposal from Cllr Staite: To install a power box on King Alfred Way.

Date of the next meeting: 8th April 2024, Great Denham Community Hall.

Great Denham Parish Council - Receipts & Payments - Mar 2024

								Bank reconciliation	
Account	Date	Category	Payee	Receipts	Gross	VAT	Net	Cashbook Balance	Bank Balance
								56,216.42	56,216.42
Current	11 February 2024	Banking charges	HSBC		8.00		8.00		
Current	03 March 2024	Staff costs	Multiple		1,210.32		1,210.32	54,998.10	54,998.10
Current	Not yet paid	Hall hire	GDCH		20.00		20.00		
Current	Not yet paid	GDCH Tea & Talk	GDCH		60.00		60.00		
								54,918.10	
								122,413.45	122,413.45
Savings	21 January 2024	Bank Interest	HSBC	203.78				122,617.23	122,617.23
				203.78	1,298.32	0.00	1,298.32		

GDPC - Balances - Mar 2024

	£	
HSBC Current	54,918	
HSBC Savings	122,617	
Total funds held	177,535	
<u>Allocation of Balance Sheet</u>		
Remaining budget spend (approx)	7,500	
CCTV Extension (Play areas)	9,241	
Christmas lights (inc Retail centre)	7,258	
Entry Feature King Alfred Way	4,450	
Traffic, road safety and parking		
- No verge/pavement parking		
- Double yellow lines	30,025	
- Pedestrian crossing points		
- 20mph speed limit signs		
- CPZ outside Community Hall		
GD Community Hall landlord responsibilities	10,872	
Defibrillator supplies	1,262	
Election costs	1,960	
Great Denham Youth Club	13,000	
GD History Memorial (School Project)	8,000	
Upgrade to paths in Country Park	30,000	
VAT refund due	-1,591	
General reserve	55,558	Balancing figure
Total allocation	177,535	

GREAT DENHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Financial Year 2023/24

<u>Income</u>	YTD (Actual) Gross	YTD (Actual) Net	Annual Budget 2023/24	Full year (Forecast)	Variance
Precept	42,607	42,607	42,607	42,607	
VAT reclaim	1,959		1,174		
CIL Income	0	0	0	0	
Bank Interest	0	2,081	195	2,081	
Insurance claim	691	691		691	
GDCH income from DWH	3,655	3,655		3,655	
Other income	4,346	4,346	0	4,346	
Total Income	48,912	49,034	43,976	49,034	
<u>Outgoings</u>					
Staff costs	17,410	17,410	15,250		
Staff costs	17,410	17,410	15,250	18,620	-3,370
Christmas lights	0	0	2,500		
GDCH expenditure	6,751	6,637	3,600		
Community defib	140	117	200		
CCTV Monitoring	2,182	1,818	4,000		
CCTV Maintenance	567	473	473		
Electrics (Unmetered supply)	74	70	100		
Open spaces & community facilities	9,715	9,115	10,873	9,115	1,758
Audit	453	390	375		
ICO Annual Fee	58	40	40		
Insurance	3,807	3,807	3,700		
Payroll	148	148	180		
Travel - mileage	0	18	100		
Hall hire	220	220	300		
Banking charges	88	88	96		
Information Technology	252	232	400		
Stationery	0	0	100		
Membership/Affiliations	1,005	1,005	1,031		
Training	63	63	500		
Admin - other	104	104	100		
Admin	6,197	6,114	6,922	6,214	708
Newsletter	1,015	846	1,931		
Youth Club	0	0	6,250		
Community Events	190	159	2,000		
Other	1,205	1,004	10,181	7,265	2,916
GDCH Tea & Talk	765	765	0		
Grants	765	765	750	765	-15
Total Outgoings	35,291	34,408	43,976	41,978	1,997
Return Groundworks	1,818	1,818	0		
BBC Pedestrian Crossing	40,000	40,000	0		
Gateway sign	989	825	0		
Benches (From CIL)	1,957	1,631	0		
Bench install	1,040	867	0		
Outside budget	45,805	45,140	0		

Monthly Borough Cllr Report for GDPC March 2024

- **Budget Update**

Since our last meeting, the 7th of February Full Council passed the budget for 2024-2025. Council Tax has been set at an increase of 4.99%. The settlement from the central government has not addressed the major underfunding issues that have been experienced by most local authorities recently. Despite the meeting going on until 11:00 pm we did manage to set a balanced budget. The Executive will look to ensure any other funding streams are pursued. The Open Space Management charge reduction was also part of the budget, but some sections of the opposition are still arguing that GD and KW should still have to pay this additional charge.

- **Current Bus Operations in Bedford Borough**

Bedford Borough currently spends £3.7m on supporting bus operations on public transport, not including school buses. The majority of this is spent on concessionary fares (£2.3m) with the rest on route support. Many of the routes that operate in the Borough – especially in our rural villages – are not commercially viable and would not exist if the Borough didn't fund them. Of the £3.7m the grant for the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP+) is only £546k so the Borough must provide the rest from Council Tax. The more funding we have the more we can support routes. In 2021 when the Borough submitted a bidding document under the BSIP funding round from the Central Government we were unsuccessful and did not receive any funds. Conversely, Luton and CBC received £19.1m and £3.7m respectively. So, the £546k was a consolation prize in 23/24, we will receive the same amount again in 24/25.

We recognise that the issues being experienced by residents in the rural areas are more profound than those in the urban parts of the Borough. The distances and the recent flooding issues have created even greater problems for the operators in sticking to schedules. The whole bus service operations and routes have not been reviewed for 13 years and the public transport team is doing this now. We are also looking at some new models of operation to see if smaller buses in the rural areas might be able to feed into more main routes. We are also looking at Demand Response Transport (DRT) dial-a-bus type operations – these during the review of routes. I know that both of our main providers (Grant Palmer and Stagecoach) are constantly battling to retain and recruit a full complement of staff when warehousing and courier delivery jobs attract higher salaries and less stressful opportunities.

We meet regularly with the operators, but the changes in patterns of life have been impacted severely since the pandemic on many routes having become commercially unviable. In the last 2 years, 7 services have been withdrawn due to very low patronage. The recent bus survey undertaken by the Borough received 2,500 responses showing that the main usage was shopping at 37.5%, work at 28%, school transport at 9.7% with others at 24.9%. 75% of respondents highlighted timetables and failure by operators to keep to them, as the main issue of dissatisfaction.

Officers continue to push for improvements, and we are determined that the review of services will deliver a better and more reliable bus service for residents in the Borough.

- **Council potentially owed millions in uncollected capital receipts.**

The Executive has been investigating the disaggregation agreement between Bedford Borough Council (BBC) and Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) to ensure all money that could be due to BBC is identified. Various pieces of land noted in the disaggregation agreement that have either been sold or developed will need to be identified and the proceeds of which should be split based on 63% CBC and 37% BBC between April 2009 and March. This is an ongoing process regarding a very significant amount of land (199.167 acres).

- **LTA Funding under threat after opposition motion**

At the most recent Full Council, a motion had been passed by opposition parties instructing the Council Executive to re-negotiate already agreed terms and conditions for funding by the LTA for the Borough's Tennis courts by introducing free "turn up and play" at courts across the Borough.

The terms and conditions set by the LTA to receive the grant of £400,000 were agreed in June 2023 by an Executive decision. Each Executive decision has a call-in period of seven days. This call-in option wasn't used. If we accept the motion this could mean that some dangerous courts in Bedford Borough will not be refurbished and will continue to fall into an extreme state of disrepair which would lead to them eventually closing permanently. There is a provision of free tennis that any appointed operator will have to adhere to, but the motion presented expressly "calls on the Executive to...

- Ensure the protection of turn-up-and-play at Bedford Park Tennis Courts
- Ensure Linden Road Courts remain free turn-up-and-play courts at all times.
- Ensure the protection of free-turn-up-and-play options at other courts throughout the Borough, as has been achieved at Mowsbury Park Courts and
- Consult with Ward Cllrs before making any changes to tennis court provision in their wards.

These requests are at complete odds with the terms and conditions that are attached to the grant agreement with the LTA.

- **NHS Staff announce 48-hour strike at Luton Dunstable and Bedford hospital.**

The union UNISON has confirmed more than 400 workers will be taking strike action beginning on the 11th of March, Monday 7.30 am and last 48 hours.

The strike action will be affecting Bedfordshire Hospitals (Bedford and Luton & Dunstable) and it is advised that any residents who have appointments to check with the hospital if their appointments are still going ahead as planned or if they will need to re-arrange or if these appointments have already been re-arranged.

- **Mayor Tom “deeply disappointed” after East West Rail summit**

Tom Wootton, the Mayor of Bedford Borough, has admitted to being “deeply disappointed” after a crunch meeting with bosses behind the planned East West Rail scheme.

East West Rail would put Bedford at the heart at a rail route also serving Oxford, Milton Keynes and Cambridge.

Last month’s summit, at Borough Hall, brought together the Mayor, senior officers and councillors, and leaders of the East West Rail Company.

It followed Bedford Borough Council releasing two reports it had commissioned about the scheme, which gave a detailed breakdown of eight different possible routes, looking at how each of them compared for criteria such as economic benefit, ecological impact, and how many homes would have to be demolished to make way for the new route.

Mayor Tom said; “We’ve shown that there is a real need to look again and decide if the current northern route really is the best one for East West Rail, and for the people of Bedford Borough. Unfortunately, East West Rail made it clear that they are still not going to do that.

“When I asked, they did agree that they would formally respond to our reports, but they seem determined to move ahead with the current route.

“This scheme has the potential to bring enormous benefits to Bedford Borough – but that only makes it more important to get it right. And knocking down people’s homes is not a necessity to make this happen.”

The East West Rail scheme is expected to go out for an eight-week statutory public consultation this summer, and then a second statutory public consultation in 2025.

Mayor Tom added: “This is an exceptionally exciting time for Bedford, and for the entire Borough, and East West Rail could be a key part of that. But it’s crucial that we get the maximum benefit from these developments, and not just settle for what we’re being given.

“I will be asking for another meeting with Huw Merriman, the minister of state for rail, who is the man behind the plans. This is something that I know so many of our residents feel strongly about, and I will fight all the way to the top.”

- **Philharmonia Orchestra**

The Philharmonia Orchestra will be doing pop-up performance sessions over 3 days in March. The Philharmonia’s activity takes place on Friday 1 March, Saturday 2 March, and Saturday 9 March. There will be accompanying VR (virtual reality) activity on Friday 1 and Saturday 9 March. All events are free and open to all.

Performances will take place on:

- 1st March with performances at the Harpur Centre
- 2nd March the timetable for performances is:
 - 10:30 – Damiano Hair
 - 11:00 – Kempston Library
 - 11:00 – Bedford Central Library

- 13:00 – The Higgins Bedford
- 13:00 – Queens Park Family Hub
- 14:00 – Samsons Academy Gym
- 15:30 – Barley Mow pub
- 16:00 – The Standard pub
- To be confirmed: Bedford Bus Station
- 9th March sessions will take place at St Paul's Church
- **Garden waste bin collections.**

Garden waste bin collections will be starting again from 1st March, residents are advised to put their garden waste bins alongside the recycling bins by 6 am on their next collection day.

You can check collection dates and other waste services, at <https://www.bedford.gov.uk/.../household-bins-and-recycling>

- **Grant Palmer 44 service**

Despite financial pressures the Council extended the Grant Palmer 44 service on the 26th February benefitting users of Elstow Park and Ride site, along with residents and commuters in Flitwick and Ampthill. The service is being extended by the Council utilising the Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIP+) grant funding from the Government and ensures continued accessibility and convenience for residents and commuters.

- **SEND School and update.**

Despite financial pressures, the Council is building a £ 26 million SEND school in Kempston at the former site of Robert Bruce Middle School and will have places for 200 children and young people from across Bedford Borough.

The children attending this new school will predominantly have profound and multiple learning disabilities, severe learning disabilities, and autism and will be open in phases and is on track to be delivered on time.

In addition, the old Robert Bruce School was scheduled to be demolished however, it has been discovered that there are pregnant bats now in the school. Due to this, the Council is awaiting guidance from Natural England on how to proceed.

- **Mowsbury Golf Course**

Due to excessive amounts of rainfall Mowsbury Golf Course, like many Golf courses across the UK, has been closed due to repeated flooding.

GLL are looking at the current drainage provision and working with the grounds maintenance provider to look at ways to improve drainage provision.

- **More money to manage Drainage.**

Due to inherited budget restrictions, the Council has limited equipment and resources however, the Council will be using £470,000 which will be used to conduct more highway work to hire more equipment and put together a cyclical drainage programme so drains and gullies are more efficiently cleansed.

- **Home Upgrade Grant expands.**

The Council will be announcing significant enhancements to the Home Upgrade Grant Phase 2 (HUG2) scheme, making it easier for more residents to access vital energy-saving home improvements and further reducing fuel poverty across the borough.

The changes will ensure the Council continues to support residents during extremely challenging times.

Residents can find further information and apply for HUG2 at:
<https://www.bedford.gov.uk/environmental-issues/sustainability/home-upgrade-grant> or
<https://hugapply.co.uk/2023/09/06/hello-world/>