

GREAT DENHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of The Great Denham Parish Council Meeting held on 6th January 2025 at 7.30pm at Great Denham Community Hall.

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Jon Hannah (Chair), Joanna Szaub-Newton, Anna O'Meara, Janice Moran, Chris Staite, Oliver Payne, Joe Quinn, Jim Weir (also Borough councillor), Robbin Brough (Parish Council Clerk).

1 **Apologies for Absence:** None

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

3 **Public Open Session** – One member of the public in attendance.

The owner of the Premier Convenience Store located on Anglia Way attended the meeting to address the council regarding the new pedestrian barrier which has been put in place on Anglia Way. He asked the parish council to look at alternative methods of preventing cars from parking on the pavement. Since the installation of the barriers the convenience store has seen a large reduction in customers and monthly earnings.

Action: clerk to contact BBC Highways to see the use of AMPR cameras can be used by local councils to combat traffic offences. Also, to check if it would be possible to create a gap in the barrier to allow easier access to the entrance of the convenience store.

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

- A resident emailed the council to request the salt bin on Carnoustie is removed as it is not used and the contents inside are rock hard and unusable. The council discussed the requested and resolved to keep the salt bin in situ.
- A resident contacted a councillor to voice their concerns of the high-speed limit on the A6 which leads to the Kingswood roundabout and a pedestrian island. The parish council was aware of past discussions with BBC Highways of a reduction in the speed limit along the A6. Clerk will contact BBC Highways to see if this is still being considered.

5 **To confirm the minutes of the parish council meeting held on 6th January 2025**

Resolved to approve the minutes as an accurate record.

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

- To create a "Save the Date" poster for the Great Denham Summer Fete – **Complete.**
- To BBC manager of Transports and Sustainable Travel to chase on a response to the council's request for a bus shelter at the rear of Sainsbury's carpark and a shelter by the new bus stop near the Park & Ride. — **Awaiting reply.**

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.

8 **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.

No applications received.

9 **Borough Councillors Report**

Update from Borough Councillor Jim Weir.

See parish council website for full report.

*Mrs R Brough, Clerk, Great Denham Parish Council
E-mail: clerk@greatdenhamparishcouncil.gov.uk*

- 10 **Crime Statistics report** – (Crime report to be issued to councillors prior to the meeting)
To discuss the most recent crime report.
The parish council noted there were no reported incidents of shoplifting in Great Denham in the reports.
Action: Clerk to write to Sainsbury's to request incidents of shoplifting are reported to the police to ensure there is an accurate picture of the antisocial behaviours occurring in Great Denham. This is critical to ensuring local police are aware of these worrying incidents.
- 11 **2025 Great Denham Fete**
To confirm the date on which the event will be held in 2025.
Resolved to hold the 2025 Great Denham Fete on the 24th of August.
Action: Clerk to update "Save the Date" poster and post on noticeboards and social media.
Action: Cllr Quinn to apply for a TEN's license for the event.
- 12 **Parish Council Community Noticeboards**
To consider the quote from Metrosigns for the refurbishment of three of the noticeboards located in Great Denham. This would include the placement of a magnetic panel on the boards to replace the cork board.
Resolved to accept the quote from Metrosigns of £886.00.
Action: Clerk to place an item on the March's agenda to consider installing a new noticeboard where there is a high amount of footfall near the grassed area by the pedestrian crossing near the Park & Ride.
- 13 **Great Portway Double Yellow Lines**
To consider the proposal of double yellow lines on Great Portway from the north-western kerb, extending from a point approx. 17.5 metres east of the projected centre of Woodville Drive (the end of the existing parking restriction) for approx. 84.5 metres in a north-easterly direction.
Resolved to approve the proposal for double yellow lines on Great Portway.
- 14 **Footpath No.1 Lighting**
Proposal from Cllr Payne: To install lighting along the footpath from where it meets with Sainsbury's to the Country Park.
Resolved to not move forward with the footpath lighting proposal.
- 15 **2025/2026 Parish Council Projects**
To discuss which projects the parish council would like to focus on during the upcoming year.
The parish council discussed several possible projects they would like to work on during the next coming year.
Action: Clerk will create a Drop Box folder for councillors to place an outline of their purposed project which should contain how their project would benefit residents of Great Denham.
- 16 **Great Denham Neighborhood Development Plan (NDP)**
To review the current NDP and decide a date to begin the process of refreshing the plan.
The NDP is due to be reviewed 5 years after it's original creation. Due to the current situation with the Local Plan and five-year land supply the parish council may consider refreshing the plan sooner. The current NDP will be reviewed by the NDP working group.
- 17 **Bedford Borough Local Plan**
To discuss the Local Plan update shared by Jon Shortland of Bedford Borough Council.
See summary of Local Plan update in the appendix.
- 18 **Greenkeepers Bus Gate**
To discuss the request from the local taxi service (Hackney Taxis) to be allowed to use the bus gate on Greenkeepers Road.
The parish council discussed the request and have no objections if use of the bus gate is limited to official Hackney Taxis and a public consultation of the request takes place.
Action: Cllr Weir to request BBC complete a public consultation.

19 **Highways Matters**

To update the council on any progress made relating to ongoing highways requests and projects.

- Clerk has requested the cycle lane for the proposed pedestrian crossing on Greenkeepers is removed as this was not part of the parish council's original request and there are no cycle lanes within Great Denham. Awaiting a response from BBC Highways.

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

- To consider purchasing a fifth noticeboard.
- To decide when the next parish council newsletter should go out to residents and what the content will be.
- To agree the purchase of a lockable storage box to be placed in the bin store of the pavilion carpark.

Date of the next meeting: 3rd March 2025, Great Denham Community Hall.

Great Denham Parish Council - Receipts & Payments - Feb 2025

					Bank reconciliation					
Account	Date	Category	Payee	Description	Transfers	Receipts	Payments Gross	VAT	Cashbook Balance	Bank Balance
HSBC Current	Opening								172,526.94	172,526.94
	13 January 2025	Transfer	GDPC (HSBC)		- 60,000.00					
	13 January 2025	Transfer	GDPC (HSBC)		- 60,000.00					
	15 January 2025	Transfer	GDPC (HSBC)		- 52,510.97					
	Closing								15.97	15.97
Unity Trust - Current	Opening								23,894.37	23,894.37
	28 January 2025	GDCH Tea & Talk	GDCH	GDCH - Tea and Talk room hire from grant - 4398			63.75			
	28 January 2025	Hall hire	GDCH	GDCH - Room hire - 4397			24.00			
	28 January 2025	Admin - other	GDPC (Hinckley Rugby)	Test			1.00			
	31 January 2025	Banking charges	Unity Trust				6.00			23,799.62
	Not Yet Paid	Community Events	A O'Meara	Expenses for Carol Event			33.55			
	Not Yet Paid	Community Events	J Quinn	Expenses for Carol Event			27.78			
	Not Yet Paid	Community Events	R Brough	Expenses for Carol Event			72.90			
	Closing								23,665.39	
	HSBC Savings	Opening								0.03
No transactions										
Closing									0.03	0.03
Unity Trust - Savings	Opening								60,858.70	40,548.67
	13 January 2025	Transfer	GDPC (HSBC)		60,000.00					
	13 January 2025	Transfer	GDPC (HSBC)		60,000.00					
	15 January 2025	Transfer	GDPC (HSBC)		52,510.97					
	Closing								233,369.67	233,369.67
Redwood Savings	Opening								87,064.63	87,064.63
	31 January 2025	Bank Interest	Redwood			297.62				
	Closing								87,362.25	87,362.25
					0.00	297.62	228.98	0.00		

GREAT DENHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Financial Year 2024/25

<u>Income</u>		YTD (Actual) Gross	YTD (Actual) Net	Annual Budget 2024/25	Full year (Forecast)	Variance
	Precept	41,415	41,415	41,415	41,415	0
	VAT reclaim	1,419		1,500	1,419	-81
	CIL Income	164,068	164,068	0	164,068	164,068
	Bank Interest	2,201	2,201	1,000	4,000	3,000
	Other income	0	0	0	0	0
Total Income		209,103	207,684	43,915	210,901	166,987
<u>Outgoings</u>						
	Staff costs	12,209	12,209	15,497		
	Staff costs	12,209	12,209	15,497	15,497	0
	Christmas lights	6,696	5,844	2,500		
	GDCH expenditure	1,474	1,228	3,600		
	Community defib	146	122	200		
	CCTV Monitoring	0	0	0		
	CCTV Maintenance	0	0	0		
	Electrics (Unmetered supply)	118	112	0		
Open spaces & community facilities		8,434	7,307	6,300	9,644	3,344
	Audit	453	390	420		
	ICO Annual Fee	0	0	40		
	Insurance	4,581	4,581	4,000		
	Payroll	135	135	230		
	Travel - mileage	0	0	0		
	Hall hire	224	224	220		
	Banking charges	113	105	96		
	Information Technology	120	100	400		
	Stationery	0	0	150		
	Membership/Affiliations	882	882	1,031		
	Training	0	0	500		
	Admin - other	1	1	100		
	Admin	6,510	6,419	7,187	7,768	581
	Newsletter	833	833	1,931		
	Youth Club	6,250	6,250	6,250		
	Community Events	4,294	4,055	5,000		
	Other	11,377	11,138	13,181	12,181	-1,000
	GDCH Tea & Talk	679	679	750		
	Junior Park Run	1,200	1,200	1,000		
	Grants	1,879	1,879	1,750	1,879	129
Sub total		40,408	38,951	43,915	46,969	3,054
	Gateway sign install	266	266	0		
	Pedestrian barrier	4,502	4,502	0		
	Outside budget	4,768	4,768	0		
Total Outgoings		45,177	43,719	43,915	46,969	3,054

GDPC - Balances - February 2025

	£
HSBC Current	16
HSBC Savings	0
Redwood Savings 4.02%	87,362
Unity Trust Current 0%	23,665
Unity Trust Savings 2.6%	233,370
Total funds held	344,413

Allocation of Balance Sheet

Christmas lights (inc Retail centre)	0	
Double yellow lines		
Pedestrian barrier	4,500	
Give way markings		
Pedestrian crossing points	90,000	
20mph speed limit signs		
GD Community Hall landlord responsibilities	10,872	
Defibrillator supplies	1,140	
Election costs	1,960	
Great Denham Youth Club	6,500	
GD History Memorial (School Project)	8,000	
Upgrade to paths in Country Park	30,000	
Interpretation boards	3,300	
VAT refund due	0	
General reserve	188,141	Balancing figure
Total allocation	344,413	

January Monthly Borough Report For GDPC

- **Open Space Management Charge**

The Facts

The Country Park in Great Denham of 200 acres contains football pitches parking, dog bins grass cutting, and trees and shrub care. The commuted sum paid by the developer for 20 years of maintenance was £2,570,000

So, £2,570,000 divided by 200 acres = £12,850 per acre divided by 20 years = **£642.5** per acre per annum to maintain.

In Great Denham and Kempston West, Council owned open spaces equal 28 acres. In 7.5 years, the residents have paid **£2,134,168** divided by 28 acres then divided by 7.5 years = **£10,163** per acre per annum to maintain. This charge was set to continue in perpetuity. How can anyone think that this is fair?

A recent report by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) recommended a number of reviews that would make the setting of any “special area charges” more accurate and fairer. They highlighted that the Council's Green Space Strategy had not been updated since 2012 and that the review was based on data from 2007 and therefore needed to be reviewed again. The information held on the identification and amount of open spaces in the Borough was also highlighted as out of date and should be addressed by review. A proposed Governance Review of the Kempston Rural Parish area could also dramatically sway how the allocation of “special area charges” would be allocated.

The Liberal Democrats have picked out of the many recommendations by CIPFA just the one on the Open Space Management charge and how perhaps that should be treated, to call in, to a scrutiny committee. They want the charge reintroduced to the residents of Great Denham and Kempston West.

7th February 2024 The Full Council voted to drop this charge by reducing it by half in the 24/25 financial year and removing it altogether in the 25/26 financial year which starts in April 2025. They raised objections to the removal of this charge which were defeated. Not being happy with that the Lib Dems had the decision called in to the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee. The committee had no concerns about the decision to remove the charge. When the CIPFA report was made available the Lib Dems called it into the Budget & Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This committee also said it had no concerns with the decision.

Why? The Council Executive recommended deferring any implementation of changing the current “special area charges” for a year until all the other recommendations in the CIPFA report could be addressed.

The recommendations in this document are not only well-founded but also essential for the effective and fair management of the Council's resources by addressing these critical areas and the need for the recommended reviews.

- **Parking error**

An error on the fees and charges report that showed a £2 charge for Sunday parking had not been spotted by any Council members before the new year.

The error has now been corrected to show no charge as originally intended.

- **East West Rail**

On the 15th January 2025, Bedford Borough Councillors were presented with a motion to officially withdraw the Council's support for the currently proposed EWR route.

Previously, on the 2nd June 2021, a majority of Councillors voted to officially support EWR and the current route despite the concerns raised by residents regarding the risks and potential harm this route would do to the Borough countryside.

At that meeting a Councillor put forward an amendment demanding a better consultation process and a more comprehensive evaluation of all route options before declaring any form of support.

This motion was defeated and Councillors proceeded to vote in favour of EWR.

At the January 15th Full Council 2025, a majority of the Councillors voted down the motion to withdraw support for EWR. The votes are as follows:

For the Motion (16)

- Councillors Atkins, G. Coombes, Foster, Frost, Gambold, Gribble, Layne, Mahboob Din, Martin-Moran-Bryant, Rigby, Simmons, Sira, Spice, Towler, Walker and Weir

Against the Motion (25)

- Councillors Abood, Atiq, Bywater, Caswell, L. Coombs, Crofts, Edmonds, Foley, Headley, Hendrickx, Masud, McHugh, McMurdo, Meader, Nawaz, Oliver, Rider, C Royden, M Royden, Sawyer, Sultan, Thapar, Valentine, Vann and White

Abstained (2)

- Councillors Abbott and Akhtar

- **Capital Programme**

The Full Council, 15th January 2025, the Council voted unanimously to support the Capital Programme that balances fiscal responsibility with ambition.

The revised plan included a strategic reduction in projected borrowing from £125 million to £88.2 million. Additionally, many "invest-to-save" projects are tied to tangible, revenue-generating assets, such as Wixams Station ensuring that the programme is financially sustainable.

The report also applies a 15% discount rate to anticipated capital receipts, acknowledging the risks of over-reliance on this source of funding and mitigating overestimation. Additionally, the Executive has committed to ensuring expenditures are only made when receipts are guaranteed, or alternative funding is secured.

- **5-year land supply/Local Plan 2040**

Until December 2024, Bedford Borough Council had been able to use the housing target in its Local Plan 2030, of 970 per year to maintain its 5-year land supply.

In order to replenish its land supply, the Council needed to refresh its Local Plan, which it started in 2020 with the Local Plan 2040. However, the Planning Inspector rejected the former Mayor's Local Plan 2040 twice, with the last rejection on 23rd November 2023 over "fundamental concerns about the soundness of the Plan."

Due to the plan being rejected twice and the introduction of new planning regulations and housing targets by central Government in late December 2024, which has increased the Borough's housing target to 1,202 per year – an increase of almost 25%. Bedford Borough Council has had to announce that it no longer has a five-year supply of land for new housing.

The impact of the planning changes and rejection of the former Mayor's Local Plan 2040 on Bedford is that the council can now only identify a 3½-year forward supply of housing land.

What that means is that, until the number of permissions is increased to reach five years under the new regime, a "tilted balance" will apply for the determination of planning applications.

In effect, less weight can now be given to the council's policies on where development can take place, and developers are likely to submit applications for sites that are not supported by the council's Local Plan. The government will expect these to be approved unless there are very strong technical reasons why they should not be (such reasons might include flooding, highway or heritage impacts, for example).

This change may potentially put pressure on rural areas of the Borough to accept new housing proposals that would previously have been resisted as not being in conformity with the council's plans.

Additionally, the Council is looking to address the Planning Inspector's concerns regarding the Local Plan 2040. However, improving this plan will cost an additional £1 million for the current Council to put right.

- **Improvements to Children’s Services**

The Bedford Borough Council Children’s Services have made significant updates and improvements following the MacAlister Review and the revised Working Together 2023 guidance.

These included:

- Creation of the Connect Team – A new multi-disciplinary unit combining social workers, mental health practitioners, and family support workers to provide early and tailored intervention for families in need.
- Stronger family networks – A significant increase in Special Guardianship Orders, ensuring children remain within extended family settings whenever possible.
- Better support for care leavers – Expansion of the Staying Put initiative, allowing young people to stay in stable homes beyond 18, improving life outcomes.
- Enhanced safeguarding structures – Establishment of Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSPs) across agencies to improve decision-making and accountability.
- Greater collaboration – Introduction of multi-agency child protection units to streamline support and prevent crises.

- **Budget 2025 – 2026**

The budget will be debated on Wednesday 5th Feb by the Full Council and a balanced budget will need to be agreed. Currently, the Liberal Democrats are concerned about the administration's views on short-term borrowing and the breaching of prudential indicators – especially in the less than 12 months borrowing. There is an outstanding payment of £24m from the DfE which is scheduled to arrive in April 2025 which will reduce the short-term borrowing of the under 12 months indicator.

Extract from The Treasury Management External Advisors

“Officers continue to take advice from Arlingclose in relation to the maturity structure of borrowing. Arlingclose advise that the most cost-effective option for the Council is to continue to borrow short term. Long-term borrowing could be structured to eliminate any breaches in the maturity of debt indicator; however, this would result in higher costs to the Council over the longer term.”

Of 355 Councils in the UK that borrow Bedford is the 238th lowest borrowed.

Comparison with our neighbours of borrowing per resident

	Borrowings	Population	Cost per Resident
Bedford Borough	£106,000,000	189,000	£561
<i>When DfE pay £24m in April</i>	<i>£82,000,000</i>		£434
Milton Keynes	£411,000,000	288,000	£1,427
West Northants	£587,000,000	426,456	£1,376
North Northants	£432,000,000	360,381	£1,199
Luton	£719,000,000	224,800	£3,198
Central Beds	£697,000,000	295,500	£2,359

Update from Jon Shortland on Local Plan – February 2025

The short summary

Bedford Borough Council can no longer demonstrate that they have a “5-year housing land supply” – this essentially means that they can no longer show that they can meet the housing targets set by the government for the next 5 years. Therefore, the Local Plan (and its planning policies) are significantly weakened and the borough is at risk (again) of speculative planning applications – potentially more variety in locations they can build on and greater numbers of houses than set out in the Local Plan. A Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) does give some protection, they need to be refreshed before it reaches 5 years old – else it can also be challenged.

The longer version:

Bedford Borough Council’s Local Plan 2040 was recently rejected by the Planning Inspectorate, causing delays in its adoption. The rejection was due to concerns over the development of the A421, to support all the new houses being built to the south of Bedford, and concern that the borough’s housing allocations can’t meet government targets. The Universal Studios project has compounded this by removing land previously allocated for housing and complicating the road network situation.

NPPF, Local Plans, NDPs

Planning decisions are guided by three levels of policy: the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) at government level, Local Plans at borough council level, and the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) at parish level. The NPPF sets out national planning rules, while the Local Plan (set by Bedford Borough Council) determines housing targets and land allocations (amongst many other things). The NDP sits beneath this, shaping development within our parish in line with the priorities of the villagers who took part in the consultations we held. When a Local Plan is up to date, its policies carry significant weight in planning decisions. However, when a council cannot demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply, the Local Plan is weakened, and speculative development becomes more of a risk.

Housing Land Supply and the “Tilted Balance”

As a result of the Local Plan 2040’s rejection, and the delays in overcoming this, we were informed by Jon Shortland that the borough’s housing land supply has now fallen to 3.5 years instead of the required 5 years. This triggers the “tilted balance” in national planning policy, meaning there is a “presumption in favour of sustainable development”. This is a key principle in the NPPF and essentially means that, when making planning decisions, local authorities are expected to approve development (planning applications) unless there are significant harms that outweigh the benefits. In other words, if a proposed development is sustainable, it should generally be approved

even if it doesn't strictly conform with local plans or policies. The bottom line is that it becomes harder to refuse planning applications, even on sites that wouldn't normally be considered appropriate under local policies, as developers can argue that housing targets are not being met.

Risks to the villages

With a weakened Local Plan, developers are more likely to submit speculative applications for housing, including in areas not allocated for development. While applications can still be refused on strong planning grounds (such as environmental harm or infrastructure constraints), the borough's ability to rely on local policies, such as settlement boundaries, has been reduced