

GREAT DENHAM PARISH COUNCIL

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

MINUTES

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

- 1 **Apologies for Absence:** Cllr Janice Moran (holiday). The council noted the resignation of Cllr Joe Quinn and expressed its thanks for his contribution and service to the parish council.
- 2 **Declarations of interest in items on the agenda:** None
- 3 **Public Open Session** – One resident in attendance.
A resident raised concerns about overgrown vegetation on Carnoustie Drive, which is now encroaching onto the grass verge and forcing pedestrians to walk along the road.
Action: Cllr Weir will speak with Highways Officer Paul Pace to request BBC cuts the overgrowth back and recharges the property owners.
- 4 **Correspondence received since the last meeting (requiring council attention)**
None which require council attention and are not on the agenda.
- 5 **To confirm the minutes of the parish council meeting held on 7th September 2025**
Resolved to approve the minutes as an accurate record.
- 6 **Clerk's report on actions not covered by agenda items**
 - To chase David Wilson Homes for completion of outstanding maintenance issues. **Complete.**
 - To request permission from Bedford Borough Council to place playground equipment on the green space near Archer Street. **Complete.**
 - To write to David Wilson Homes regarding the recent hard wiring issues found at the Community Hall during the recent inspection. **Complete.**
 - To contact BBC Highways to request an update on the installation of the Greenkeepers pedestrian crossing. **Complete.**
- 7 **Finance**
 - *To approve payments and note income and balances.*
Resolved to approve payments and note the balances – see appendix.
 - *To note the Spend versus Budget variance report.*
Report received and noted. See appendix.
 - *To note the first and second quarter financial checks.*
There were no issues highlighted, and the check was signed off by Cllr O'Meara.
 - *To receive the outcome of the external audit for 2024/25 from Mazars.*
Resolved to accept Mazars completed audit. The council received the completion letter from Mazars and noted the comments received.
- 8 **Annual Parish Council Insurance Renewal**
To consider the quotes received from insurance providers.
Resolved to accept the quote from Aviva Insurance for the parish council's annual insurance coverage.
- 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.

APPLICATION No 25/01388/S73
TYPE: Variation of Condition Application

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

PROPOSAL: Construction of 4-bed house with detached triple garage and all ancillary works, including variation of approved plans condition 1 and removal of condition 5 (Gates and Boundary Treatments) attached to 24/01188/FUL, to allow for a change to the approved materials for the main dwelling and altered position of the gated access.

LOCATION: Land Adjacent 16 Vicars Close Biddenham Bedford Bedfordshire MK40 4BG

Resolved to not provide a comment for the above noted planning application.

10 **Borough Councillors Report**

Update from Borough Councillor Jim Weir.

See parish council website for full report.

11 **Great Denham Summer Fete**

To receive a report from the Great Denham Summer Fete Working Group following its meeting regarding this year's event.

The working group reported a number of positive outcomes from this year's Summer Fete and noted several areas for improvement to inform the planning of future events.

Action: Clerk to tally the total amount spent by the council on the fete and bring information to Novembers meeting.

12 **Great Denham Carol Event**

To discuss plans for this year's event and agree a spending budget.

The council agreed to hold this years Carolling Event on the 23rd of December 2025. Cllr Staite has arranged for a choir to attend the event.

Resolved to donate £100 to the choir's chosen charity and to allocate a budget of up to £500 for event refreshments.

Action: Clerk to approach Sainsburys for a contribution of mince pies and mulled wine for the event.

13 **Great Denham Community Hall Lift Repair**

To discuss quote of £1481.11 received to complete a repair to the ceiling of the Community Hall lift.

The council reviewed the reported damage to the lift ceiling and found one strip of edging has been dented.

Resolved to not repair the ceiling of the lift as the small amount of damage does not impact on the use or safety of the lift.

14 **Parish Council Projects**

To receive an update from lead councillors on their project proposals.

The following project updates were provided:

Additional Playground Equipment (Croxden Gardens open space) – Two quotes have been received; one was significantly higher than expected and did not include the requested equipment type. A further quote will be sought.

EV Charging at the Community Hall – The parish council has been successful in its REPF Capacity Building and Infrastructure Support Grant application and has been awarded £17,600 towards the project. Cllr Hannah will prepare a business plan to assess the project's viability and will approach the hall trustees to present the proposal and seek their support.

15 **Kingswood Way Parking Bays**

To discuss whether the council would like to make a request to change the current restrictions of 30-minute parking bays next to the medical centre.

Cllr Weir reported that enforcement officers have been monitoring the bays and confirmed that no fines have been issued. As Cllr Moran was not present at the meeting, she was unable to share her findings on the duration of vehicle parking within the bays.

Action: Clerk to place this item on November's meeting agenda.

16 **Grant Request Bedford Kendo Club**

To consider a request for funding of £500.00 to support the purchase of junior equipment costs to run junior program for youth ages 11-16.

The revised grant application was not received in time for consideration at the meeting.

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

17 **Golf Course Land**

To discuss the application to renew the golf courses land as an asset of community value.

The council reviewed the draft application prepared by the Clerk. Members suggested that the existing buildings be included within the application and discussed potential ways these could serve the community.

Action: The Clerk will update the application accordingly and present the revised version to the council for further consideration in December.

18 **Great Denham Neighbourhood Development Plan**

To appoint a working group to begin the process of reviewing the current Neighbourhood Development Plan.

Action: The Clerk to seek advice from Bedford Borough Council's Senior Planner, Sonia Gallagher, on when the parish council should commence the review of the current Neighbourhood Development Plan.

19 **Highways Matters**

The clerk will provide an update to the council on any progress made relating to ongoing highways requests and projects.

- The installation of the pedestrian crossing on Greenkeepers Road has been delayed until February 2026.
- There were no comments submitted in response to the double yellow line consultation. BBC is happy to move forward with the installation of the double yellow lines at all junctions.

Action: The Clerk to contact Bedford Borough Council Highways to confirm that the requested double yellow line restrictions on Lavender Lane will be installed and to request completion of the 20 mph speed limit implementation.

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

- An update on the tree planting on Kingswood Way
-

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

Great Denham Parish Council - Receipts & Payments - Oct 2025

					Bank reconciliation				
Account	Date	Category	Payee	Description	Transfers	Receipts	Payments Gross	Cashbook Balance	Bank Balance
Unity Trust - Current	Opening							9,026.97	9,026.97
	08 September 2025	Fete	R Brough	FETE 2025 SUPPLIES			267.89		
	08 September 2025	Grant Rainbows	Rainbows				500.00		
	08 September 2025	Admin - other	Susanne Knapp	Skylark Posters			35.06		
	08 September 2025	Fete	Marquees	Final INV2250			850.08		
	08 September 2025	Fete	Concept	INV-206527			711.30		
	08 September 2025	Grant Brownies	Brownies	GDPC GRANT PAYMENT			500.00		
	15 September 2025	Precept	BBC			20,950.50			
	30 September 2025	Banking charges	Unity Trust				6.00		
	02 October 2025	Staff costs	N/A				81.01		27,026.13
		Not Yet paid Payroll	Pam Anthony	INV 25/1722			180.00		
		Not Yet paid GDCH Tea & Talk	GDCH	GDCH - Tea and Talk room hire from grant - 0460			75.00		
		Not Yet paid Hall hire	GDCH	GDCH - Room hire - 461			24.00		
		Not Yet paid Information Technology	Cloud Next LTD	Annual Hosting			119.98		
		Not Yet paid Information Technology	Cloud Next LTD	Annual Domain			60.00	26,567.15	
Unity Trust - Savings	Opening							140,155.79	140,155.79
	30 September 2025	Bank Interest	Unity Trust			826.29			
	Closing							140,982.08	140,982.08
Redwood Savings	Opening							89,355.55	89,355.55
	30 September 2025	Bank Interest	Redwood			262.49			
	Closing							89,618.04	89,618.04
Hinckley & Rugby Savings	Opening							85,001.00	85,001.00
	No transactions								
	Closing							85,001.00	85,001.00
The Cambridge Building Society	Opening							85,000.00	85,000.00
	No transactions Transfer								
	Closing							85,000.00	85,000.00
					0.00	22,039.28	3,410.32		

GREAT DENHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Oct 2025

Income	YTD (Actual) Gross	YTD (Actual) Net	Annual Budget 2025/26	Full year Estimate	Variance
Precept	41,901	41,901	42,054	42,054	0
VAT reclaim	0	0	0	0	0
CIL Income	82,034	82,034	0	82,034	82,034
Bank Interest	3,391	3,391	3,000	4,500	1,500
Other income	0	0	0	0	0
Total Income	127,325	127,325	45,054	128,587	83,534
Outgoings					
Staff costs	7,867	7,867	16,055		
Staff costs	7,867	7,867	16,055	16,055	0
Christmas lights	6,631	6,631	2,500		
GDCH expenditure	1,839	1,533	3,600		
Community defib	0	0	200		
Open spaces & community facilities	8,470	8,164	6,300	10,431	-4,131
Audit	160	160	420		
ICO Annual Fee	47	47	40		
Insurance	0	0	4,581		
Payroll	180	180	230		
Hall hire	144	144	220		
Banking charges	36	36	96		
Information Technology	180	150	400		
Stationery	0	0	150		
Membership/Affiliations	1,071	1,071	1,031		
Training	0	0	500		
Admin - other	35	35	100		
Admin	1,853	1,823	7,768	7,768	0
Newsletter	743	743	1,931		
Youth Club	12,500	12,500	6,250		
Other	13,243	13,243	8,181	13,243	-5,062
Fete	4,847	4,572	5,000		
Events	4,847	4,572	5,000	4,572	428
GDCH Tea & Talk	465	465	750		
Junior Park Run	0	0	1,000		
Grant Rainbows	500	500	0		
Grant Brownies	500	500	0		
Grant: Community Hall Trustees	1,640	1,640	0		
Grant: Hope Across Ages	660	660	0		
Grants	3,765	3,765	1,750	3,765	-2,015
Outgoings	35,198	39,433	45,054	51,261	-11,208
Kingwood Way Trees	2,000	2,000	0		
Noticeboard	1,261	1,051	0		
Outside budget	3,261	3,051	0	3,051	-3,051
Total Outgoings	38,459	42,484	45,054	54,312	-14,259

GDPC - Balances - Oct 2025

	£
Redwood Savings 3.93%	89,618
Unity Trust Current 0%	26,567
Unity Trust Savings 2.6%	140,982
Hinckley & Rugby Savings 4.0%	85,001
The Cambridge Building Society	85,000
Total funds held	427,168

Allocation of Balance Sheet

Christmas lights (inc Retail centre)		
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	
EV Charging	20,000	
Interpretation boards	3,300	
VAT refund due	874	
General reserve	250,022	Balancing figure
Total allocation	427,168	

Borough Councillor October 2025 Report to GDPC

Golf Course Land as an Asset of Community Value

The Great Denham Golf Course land stands as an irreplaceable and essential area of open space for our community. Its significance is rooted not only in its original vision as the heart of a golf village, but also in its enduring role as a gathering place and green sanctuary for all residents. From its inception, the golf course and the first homes formed the foundation of a thriving, connected population, offering recreational opportunities and a sense of belonging.

Crucially, this land serves as a vital buffer, preventing the merging of neighbouring communities and protecting Great Denham's identity as a designated rural area. Unlike the Country Park, which is often inaccessible due to flooding, the golf course open space remains available year-round, ensuring continuous access to nature and recreation.

Since the closure of the golf course, the area has become a haven for wildlife, with increased sightings of deer, foxes, badgers, hedgehogs, and even the endangered skylark. This remarkable biodiversity highlights the ecological value of the land and its role in supporting local species.

Recognising this land as an asset of community value is not just about preserving nostalgia—it is about safeguarding the health, well-being, and quality of life for current and future residents. The open space provides proven health benefits, supports mental wellbeing, and offers much-needed green space for neighbouring areas like Queens Park and Biddenham, where such amenities are scarce.

Furthermore, there remains hope for reinstating the golf course, as its closure contradicted local authority and Sport England policies, and the land is still acknowledged as necessary for meeting the borough's golfing needs. The Great Denham Neighbourhood Plan also affirms the importance of this green space as a defining feature of the parish's identity and heritage.

In summary, the Great Denham Golf Course land is not just open space—it is a cornerstone of our community's character, health, and future for over 5,000 residents of our Parish. Its protection and recognition as a community asset are vital for preserving what makes Great Denham unique.

Current Financial Position of the Borough Council.

CIPFA/Financial information

- The Council commissioned **the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA)** to carry out a Financial Resilience Review to give an honest assessment of the Borough's finances. On the 5th September 2025 the Portfolio Holder for Finance acknowledged receipt of the report.
- CIPFA confirms that Bedford's financial challenge mirrors the national picture: costs have risen by around 25% while Government funding has fallen by a similar amount, leaving the Council's core spending power roughly 7% lower than a decade ago.
- At the same time, demand for statutory services - particularly Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Temporary Accommodation - continues to grow faster than income, creating sustained pressure on the budget and limiting flexibility.
- As expanded in the previous report, CIPFA governance gaps, uneven financial controls, and short-term decisions have compounded these national pressures, adding to the difficult financial position the Borough now faces. As a reminder, some but not all of the issues identified in the report include:
 - Council Tax: CIPFA states the Council kept its Council Tax artificially low when compared to the Government's funding formula. While this decision would have been popular at the time, this has left a permanent funding gap. CIPFA estimates £24 million in lost income in 2024/25 alone, undermining services like adult social care, housing, and children's services, and areas of discretionary spend such as the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.
 - Cost Pressures in Social Care and Housing: Like councils across the country, Bedford is struggling with rising demand for adult and children's care services, and temporary accommodation costs - all of which are pushing the budget further into the red.
 - Weak Internal Systems: CIPFA identifies significant weaknesses and capacity risks in Bedford Borough Council's commissioning, procurement, and contract management functions. These issues stem largely from past savings decisions that reduced staffing and resources in core corporate services such as Finance, Procurement, and Legal. As a result, these functions are now overstretched,

limiting their ability to provide effective oversight and governance across high-risk, high-spend service areas.

- Difficult Savings Expectations: CIPFA states that over the past ten years, Bedford Borough Council has already delivered most of the easily achievable savings - what it refers to as “low-hanging fruit.” These include straightforward efficiency measures and reductions in back-office and corporate functions such as finance, procurement, and legal services. While these steps helped close previous budget gaps, they have now exhausted simpler savings options, and in some cases weakened the Council’s internal capacity to support financial oversight and decision-making. This creates a more difficult financial environment going forward. CIPFA warns that delivering the level of savings required for 2025/26 and 2026/27 will be “extremely challenging.” The scale of the projected overspend and the limited remaining scope for efficiencies means the Council must now look to more complex measures
- Council Tax Reduction Scheme: CIPFA’s review notes that Bedford Borough Council operates a Council Tax Reduction Scheme that is considered generous compared to neighbouring authorities and recommends that the Council do so to assess whether the current scheme remains fair, effective, and aligned with its financial capacity.
- In order to address the financial pressures, following guidance from CIPFA, the Council has implemented a number of measures; however, it is important to stress that CIPFA warned that straightforward savings have already been made. Further savings will be far harder to achieve and will require a careful, borough-wide examination of every service and every pound spent, including options that may be politically challenging.
 - A combined Improvement & Finance Recovery Plan is being prepared to deliver a balanced budget by 2026/27 and rebuild reserves.
 - Asset sales & capital programme cuts: a revised capital plan reduces borrowing by £35 m and markets surplus land/property for sale
 - Income & debt strategy: new policies for debt collection, fees/charges and concessions.
 - Governance overhaul: updating the Constitution, decision-making rules and scrutiny arrangements.

- No decisions have been made yet. All political groups and officers are now reviewing every area of expenditure to identify fair and workable savings that protect essential services while putting the Council on a sustainable financial footing for the future.

Local Plan 2040 Current Position

The Local Plan process was paused with an agreement for submission of the outstanding information to the Inspector by end of May 2025. This submission could not be achieved as outstanding highway matters have not been resolved and lie outside of the Council's control. National Highways ceased to engage in the Local Plan process (since 20 March 2025) due to the failure to secure funding for the road improvements required and in light of the impact of the Universal project, which also has a significant impact on the highway network. There were objections raised by National Highways, as well as delivery rates on a number of allocated housing sites being a fundamental soundness concern; therefore on this basis would lead to a finding of unsoundness and a recommendation that the Local Plan 2040 is withdrawn.

The Planning Inspector allowed Bedford Borough Council a number of extensions to resolve matters relating to points highlighted above, but due to there being no meaningful progress on these matters and together with the progress with partners of the Universal Destination and Experiences proposal, has rendered the submitted plan and its evidence base out of date. I refer to points made in the Inspector's letter dated of 10th June 2025 (ED99) in which he states (emphasis added):

- *"11. In terms of taking things forward, in the combination of specific circumstances presented in this case, I see no reasonable way for the examination of the Plan to continue. Instead, I would strongly recommend that the plan is withdrawn and that the Council resolve to work in partnership with their local community to bring forward a new plan, away from the scrutiny of an examination.*
- *12. As an alternative option, I can prepare a report finding the Plan unsound. That would bring the examination to an end. However, doing so would come entirely at the Council's financial expense. The costs incurred would serve a limited purpose in this case as the reasons for the Plan's deficiencies are clear and ultimately boil down to what is set out in this letter.*

- *13. Further, as you rightly say, the implications of Universal cannot be underestimated. Any conclusions I reach on areas where the Plan is unsound cannot be relied upon by the Council to assume that the rest of the Plan is sound, as that would need re-examination with the implications of Universal factored in. As such, a report would have very limited value. Preparing the report would also take time that would, in my view, be more positively spent considering the future of plan making for Bedford.”*

Rural Grants

- As mentioned above, Bedford Borough Council is carrying out a thorough review of all discretionary funding in order to focus resources on frontline statutory services such as Adult Social Care, Children’s Services and Temporary Accommodation, which are under unprecedented demand.
- As part of this process, the Council has reduced the Rural Grants programme alongside several other smaller discretionary funds (including Climate Change Grants, Community Centres support, Town Twinning and others).
- At this moment in time, Rural Grants scheme will not continue in the same way however, the Council remains committed to supporting rural communities in other ways:
 - Funding for essential services such as waste collection, highways maintenance and planning remains in place across the Borough, including rural areas.
 - Parish councils will still have access to national and regional funding streams for community projects, such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and other central government schemes.

Bus Usage Survey

- The Council are running a Bus Usage survey in order to hear from residents and understand the reasons why they may not be using the local bus service and the barriers they face.
- This feedback will help shape future bus services, as contracts are due for review in the coming months.
- You can share your views by completing the [online survey](#). Paper copies are also available at:
 - Borough Hall reception

- Bedford Borough Hub (Horne Lane)
- What's On information and visitor hub (Silver Street)
- All libraries
- All Better leisure centres
- If you need a paper copy delivered, or a translated version, please email: sustainable.transport@bedford.gov.uk.
- The consultation opens on Friday 19th September 2025 and closes Friday 19th December 2025. Paper copies will be accepted until Friday 16th January 2026.

Glass and Food Recycling

- Kerbside Glass Recycling
 - Following a successful trial in several communities, glass will soon be collected in orange-lidded bins across the whole Borough.
 - The trial increased overall recycling tonnage by around 17% and is expected to raise the Borough's kerbside recycling rate by about 6% - with estimations suggesting the move could reduce carbon emissions by over 4,000 tonnes of CO₂ each year.
- Weekly Food Waste Collection (from April 2026)
 - Every household will receive a 7-litre kitchen caddy and a 23-litre outdoor caddy with a lockable lid.
 - Around 5,000 tonnes of food waste are expected to be collected each year, turning unavoidable food scraps into renewable energy or compost.
 - The service is fully funded to start, with over £1.9 million in government grants already received for vehicles, containers, and setup.

Family Hubs

- Earlier this year, the Borough Council made changes to its Children Centre's to better support children and families through the expansion and transformation of Family Hubs. Services that were previously delivered separately through Children's Centres and other providers will come together under a single, more coordinated Family Hubs model.
- These Family Hubs will offer easier access to a wide range of services – including parenting support, early years development, health advice, mental wellbeing, and community activities – all in one place or through

digital and outreach support. They are open to families with children from birth up to 19 years old, and up to 25 for young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

- With all hubs now open there have been ongoing sessions, such as those for Teen parents, offering them a safe space, ability to meeting other people in similar circumstances and build connections. Additionally, over the summer there has been a 57% increase in attendance showing the hubs are reaching the right people and are in the right places.

Tennis

- A number of Tennis sites throughout the Borough (for example, Bedford Park and Russell Park) have been fully refurbished with new surfaces, painting, and SmartAccess gates thanks to the Council entering into an agreement with the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) for capital funding up to (£314,309.62) to renovate courts and implement a financially sustainable model.
- There is a £40 annual household pass lets whole families book courts as often as they like. By July 2025, 354 passes had been sold to 683 individual users, generating nearly **4,000 bookings**.
- Players who prefer occasional games can pay £6 per hour, with over **2,700 “pay and play”** bookings already made. Every Sunday, one court at each site is free from 2-4 pm, encouraging newcomers.
- Additionally, there has been positive feedback from the users of new courts.