

BERDEN PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on **Monday 13 November 2023** at 8.00pm

Present: Pete Hewitt, Harry Wadsworth, Duncan Murdoch, Debbie Thomson, Diane Holt, Cllr Janice Loughlin.

Public: Lavinia Lawrence, Stephen Poole, Simon Barr, Karen Cox, Ellen Kershaw, Charlie Kershaw, Simon Brow

315.0	Apologies: Kathleen Merino (holiday)
315.1	Declarations of interest: None
315.2	<p>Public participation session</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stephen Poole spoke on behalf of residents from the part of Dewes Green Road which runs alongside The Old Kings Head. These householders are concerned about the Leylandii conifer trees which run around the edge of The Old Kings Head. These used to be regularly trimmed by the Jesters who own the property and trees, but this hasn't happened in recent years. They are now very high, three have fallen in recent years and their branches have shorted a BT cable. Each has spoken to the Jesters. He asked how the Council could help.• Duncan replied that this is not a Parish Council issue and that there is a clear process for complaining about a neighbour's high hedge on the Government website. It requires information on the steps already taken to settle the dispute in person/writing. He is, however, happy to speak to the Jesters on their behalf.• Janice said she will take the matter up for them once the evidence of communication is provided.• The residents of Dewes Green Road left the meeting at 8.20pm. <p>Post meeting note: Duncan met with Peter and Barbara Jester on 15 November. They have not been contacted by their neighbours regarding the high hedge. They are however aware of the issue and got a quote in 2020 just before Lockdown. This was too expensive at the time and would require a road closure. They are away next week and are unlikely to get a quote until February. Duncan has passed on details of Atkins Arborists to the Jesters and reported back to Charlie Kershaw again making the comment that Uttlesford tree officers are unlikely to act until the neighbours have discussed their concerns with the Jesters and recorded the content of such discussions.</p>
315.3	<p>Approve minutes of Berden Parish Council from 9 October 2023: Approved and signed.</p>
315.4	<p>Solar Farms/Battery units Duncan reported on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Crabbs Green battery unit – a new plan has been submitted with secondary access and increased water storage facilities.• East Herts battery station – this has been running for over two years and there is nothing new to report.• Berden Hall Solar Farm – no new news on the Statutory Review

315.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pelham Springs Solar Farm - Low Carbon has mounted a challenge to their refused permission and has been given leave by the High Court to proceed. <p>Planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bonnetting Lane – there have been objections on access and size of proposed development. • The Parish Council has objected, Janice has called it in. Unlikely to hear anything this year.
315.6	<p>Footpaths and grounds maintenance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uttlesford tree planting initiative – the fruit trees requested by Harry for Simon’s Field have been sourced and will be supplied as containerised plants. Debbie has forwarded Harry’s details for delivery. • Field footpath – Duncan has asked Frank Tinney to reinstate the field footpaths post ploughing.
315.7	<p>Finance</p> <p>Draft Financial Regulations 2023</p> <p>Diane has made the following amendments to the existing document for this year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The RFO/Clerk can incur expenditure on behalf of the Council in urgency up to £500. • The Clerk will affect all insurances and negotiate claims with the Council’s insurers. • The RFO will prepare a Financial Risk Assessment annually. <p>The Council approved the changes.</p> <p>Financial Risk Assessment</p> <p>Diane has made the following amendments to the existing document for this year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The RFO has internet access for making payments (the preferred method) and account information. Cheque is the method of payment when necessary. • The RFO prepares a budget for the following financial year with a comparison to current year for discussion in November by the full Council. This budget and its underlying precept agreed by the Council in December • The NALC is to be consulted in the event of a lockdown. <p>The Council approved the changes.</p> <p>The Fixed Asset register has been updated.</p> <p>Budget</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of interest has been increased. • The contract for hedge cutting allows for 16 cuts but we will only need 12. • Increase for village green maintenance • The Parish Council cannot pay money to the Church. • The grant for the new shed and ladders has been match funded: £700 from fete, £600 from the Village Hall Committee, £600 from the Social Club and VAT claim. • Diane asked if any other area in the budget should be increased. • Harry has provided a quote of £700 to cut the grass in the churchyard but as this work has been contracted for 2024 it will need to wait until 2025. • The PC will increase the donation to the Village Hall Committee from £700 to £850 <p>Payments to ratify</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Walker £1329.99 for shed

315.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In addition, we will need to pay the VAT on the ladder/shed which we will reclaim, the Village Hall rent of £150 and an audit gift for Paul Chapman. <p>Grants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uttlesford Community Project Grant Work will be done by end of February, still need to pay for labour, digger and concrete. Sports Provision Grant It was not felt that it was worth applying for pool cues and mounting rack.
315.9	<p>Highways</p> <p>Community Speedwatch</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diane reported on a meeting she attended with Kathleen, coordinated by Janet Willey. It seemed to Janet that Berden needs some Speedwatch leadership and it was thought that Kerry Calder in Berden may be doing this. Duncan contacted Kerry during the meeting and she replied that she and her husband will coordinate this once she has received her training this Saturday. She will then draw up a rota. The Speedwatch equipment is with John Riddell <p>Buffering signs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There has not been a response to Nick's letter yet. <p>It was noted that a new Councillor for Highways is required.</p>
315.10	<p>Playground</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Furniture near the gazebo needs to be replaced (there is money in the budget for this). Harry suggested a trestle table and this was agreed. Harry will source one in the spring. Harry will also see if he can replace the grass on top of the tunnel.
315.11	<p>Defibrillators were reported to be in good order.</p>
315.12	<p>Cllr Loughlin</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Janice reported that she has been reinstated on the Local Plan group. The consultation is open until 18 December. There are no housing plans which impact Berden. Duncan asked if Janice could go back with our concerns over the section on Solar Farms i.e. that ground mounted solar energy developments and proposals on buildings will be supported which contradicts an earlier point that they should only be on previously developed land. <p>Diane raised the subject of recruiting new Councillors now that Nick has left and the December meeting will be Pete's last. She has drafted a flyer which Debbie will put in her report for the December edition of the Parish magazine and will then be used for a door drop.</p> <p>Next meeting Monday 11 December 2023</p>

