

BERDEN PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on **Monday 11 December 2023** at 8.00pm.

Present: Pete Hewitt, Harry Wadsworth, Duncan Murdoch, Debbie Thomson, Kathleen Merino, Diane Holt.

Public: Mike Healey, John Walker

316.0	Apologies: Cllr Loughlin and Cllr Gooding
316.1	Declarations of interest: None
316.2	Public participation session <ul style="list-style-type: none">• John Walker spoke about a situation that has arisen due to the Social Club and Bar opening on Sunday afternoons. Two under-eighteens had recently attended to play table tennis and had been asked to leave as they were not accompanied by an adult (as per current safeguarding policy).• It was agreed that this is a shame as it is somewhere for them to meet but, as Duncan pointed out, it is not possible for the Social Club to host unescorted children in a drinking environment. It would require those on duty to be trained and DBS checked. Diane suggested that if parents are interested, they could set up a dedicated youth club with all relevant checks and safeguarding policies in place. John will feed this information back. He left at 8.10pm.• Debbie to locate and circulate current safeguarding policy.• Kathleen asked if we have a Safeguarding Officer for any of the village organisations. Debbie will check our obligation for this.
316.3	Approve minutes of Berden Parish Council from 13 November 2023: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approved and signed.
316.5	Battery Units/Solar Farms <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Crabbs Green Battery Unit. Duncan thanked everyone for their comments on his letter to East Herts and Uttlesford County Councils re the secondary access, added water storage and noise screening. This has now been sent.• Green Farm Battery Storage. This is still a live planning issue but with no recent updates.• Berden Hall. A new Inspector has now been appointed. Claire is sending Duncan a draft letter detailing areas on which we should focus for our response as a Parish Council. Duncan will draft our response (deadline 8 January 2024).• Low Carbon. Their challenge to their refused planning permission has been taken to the High Court.• It is probable that both solar farm applications will be considered at the same time.
316.6	Planning <ul style="list-style-type: none">• New Town/Bonnetting Lane. Planning application for a new house has been refused.• 32 St Nicholas Field. Recent work has been noted as acceptable.• The Crump. Planning permission has been given for internal alterations and an extension.

316.7	Footpaths and Ground Maintenance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Harry explained to Mike his contracts with the Parish Council for grounds maintenance in the village and path cutting with Essex County Council. Harry will give a copy of his new tender document to the Parish Council to Debbie. No news on the fruit tress expected as part of Uttlesford tree planting initiative. Harry asked Mike for help with planting these when they arrive. Mike asked where the piles of cuttings from Simons Field go to. Harry explained that cuttings from Simons Field, the Village Hall grounds and the Playground are taken to the bonfire field at Berden Hall. He will have a proper fire in the spring.
316.8	Finance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diane clarified the situation regarding the Parish Council's ability to donate to the church. In anticipation of a change to the law it was agreed to wait and see what the details are from the NALC in the New Year. In the meantime, the £350 paid to Berden Village Hall has been refunded. <p>2024/25 Budget</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Councillors have been sent a copy of the budget. The precept required for 2024/25 is £9,973 (an increase of £230). The Precept form was completed and signed by Diane and Pete. Payments from December Payment Log were approved. The Budget was agreed and Diane thanked for her work. Kathleen asked for an update on the Uttlesford Community Project Grant. Diane reported that the VAT on the shed/ladder is still to be reclaimed and she is waiting for the £2,000 award to come in. There will also be some additional costs involved with the preparations and construction of the shed. (Harry reported that they have marked out the area of the base and that some steps have been built down the slope. They will be ready to start after Christmas and not too much levelling is required.)
316.9	Highways <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Speedwatch. Duncan reported that Kerry Calder is happy to come to a meeting to explain how she is getting on. Debbie to send Kerry the agenda for the January meeting. School bus accident. The report on this is expected in the New Year. 40mph buffering zone. No response yet from Cllr Gooding
316.10	Churchyard funding. To be discussed at next meeting (see note above).
316.11	Playground <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pete handed over the fortnightly reports from Bob Mason on the state of the playground to Debbie for safekeeping until a new Councillor appointed. (Reports are done so that the insurance is valid). The bench needs to be replaced now and Harry will get some quotes.
316.12	Defibrillators were reported to be in good order.
316.15	Parish Council

- Diane reported that she and Kathleen have delivered two more Welcome to Berden booklets and will upload the latest version to One Drive. Pete will upload onto Berden website.
- **New chair for 2024.** Duncan thanked Pete for chairing the meetings in 2023 and for his 10 years in the Parish Council. He asked if any Councillor wished to take on the role.
- Duncan agreed to chair if the other functions are filled, those being:
 - Highways
 - Playground
 - Website
- It was suggested to Mike that the Playground might be a good area for him if he joins the Parish Council.
- Pete will continue managing the website until anyone wishes to take this on.
- Diane will need a new signatory for cheques.

Meeting ends 9.20pm.

Next meeting Monday 22 January 2024