

## BERDEN PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Parish Council** meeting held on **Monday 22 January 2024** at 8.00pm

**Present:** Duncan Murdoch, Kathleen Merino, Harry Wadsworth, Debbie Thomson

**Public:** Kerry Calder, Darren Calder

317.0	<b>Apologies:</b> Diane Holt due to work and Cllr Loughlin
317.1	<b>Declarations of interest:</b> None
317.2	<b>Approve minutes of Berden Parish Council from Monday 11 December 2023</b> Approved by Harry, signed by Duncan
317.5	<b>Highways</b> <b>Community Speedwatch</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Kerry and Darren Calder joined the meeting to update the Council on their participation in the Berden Community Speedwatch scheme.</li><li>• There used to be 10 members in Berden but they are currently down to five and they would like to boost numbers through an appeal to the village.</li><li>• Joining requires a short training session via Zoom. Members already have the required equipment although Kerry would like to put up some of the small Speedwatch Area signs around the village and will apply for some.</li><li>• DT will send out a Mailchimp inviting more volunteers to come forward.</li></ul> <b>Traffic and Speeding Steering Group</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This is an initiative led by Albury Parish Council to address speeding in the surrounding area. Kerry agreed to attend the first meeting and will communicate with Albury Parish Clerk and offer the use of Berden Village Hall for the meeting.</li><li>• Kerry and Duncan leave at 8.25.</li></ul> <b>School bus accident</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Duncan contacted Ray Gooding prior to the meeting for an update on the report. Ray will check on its progress.</li></ul>
317.3	<b>Berden Parish Magazine</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Andrew Nelson was unable to be present at this meeting but will join the next Parish Council meeting in March when this issue will be discussed.</li></ul>
317.4	<b>Churchyard maintenance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Duncan reported that in view of the new Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act which became law on 26 December 2023 we can now give money for church repairs and improvements although there is no obligation for the Council to do this.</li><li>• Duncan, Harry and Kathleen are in favour of contributing to the maintenance of the churchyard, but the fabric of the Church will require more money than the Parish Council could contribute.</li><li>• Recent contributions of £350 per year were stopped last year due to legal uncertainties but it was agreed that Diane should now be asked to pay £350 as the Council's contribution for 2023. The amount given in 2024 can be assessed later in the year. It was noted that the church will be short of funding due to lack of money coming from the annual village fete.</li></ul>

317.6	<p><b>Battery Units/Solar Farms</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Berden Hall.</b> The Council's comments were submitted on 8 January and this application is now being reevaluated. The Planning Inspector might hold a hearing.</li> <li>• <b>Pelham Springs.</b> This is being redetermined by the Secretary of State</li> <li>• <b>Crabbs Green.</b> This is mainly an issue for East Herts although the access road is in Uttlesford. Berden PC sent a letter in December with comments primarily on the issue of construction and emergency traffic. Stocking Pelham PC is writing a joint letter with neighbouring parish councils with further objections. (This letter was received post-meeting and Duncan asked for comments from Councillors. Debbie sent the Council's response 25.1.24)</li> </ul>
317.7	<p><b>Planning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are no current planning applications although it is likely that there will be a new application for the development on Bonnetting Lane following a speed survey and traffic count.</li> <li>• Neighbourhood Plan. Duncan took the opportunity to discuss this as a longer-term project. His thoughts are that should the current solar farm applications be unsuccessful we should, as a village, draw up a community led Solar Farm Plan outlining what we see as acceptable for future solar farm development, thereby restricting the amount of land that could ultimately be used. Funding is available for this and plans need to be updated every five years. Harry is concerned that developers would take advantage of the areas suggested and then go for more.</li> </ul>
317.8	<p><b>Finance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In Diane's absence, Duncan went through: January payments to ratify: Clerk's salary £715.50 HMRC Tax £11.20 And January payments for approval: Gift for P Hewitt £27.99 Clerk's stationery £36.99 All were approved.</li> <li>• Clavering school donation. Duncan commented that in his experience the Parish Council has never given a contribution to any schools and felt that by donating to Clavering it would set a precedent for other schools to apply. It was agreed to ignore this request.</li> </ul>
317.9	<p><b>Village Hall</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Duncan reported that the Village Hall Committee has a robust Safeguarding policy. Debbie confirmed that there is no requirement for the Parish Council to have a Safeguarding policy or Safeguarding Officer.</li> <li>• The next joint meeting between the Berden Parish Council and Berden Village Hall committees is now due. Harry will set this up prior to the next Parish Council meeting on 4 March.</li> </ul>
317.10	<p><b>Footpaths and Grounds maintenance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uttlesford tree initiative. High quality fruit trees have been delivered and have been planted with the help of Sue Hennell in Simons Field. Duncan asked if they could be photographed when in flower for use in the magazine. Kathleen asked if they were suitably protected from deer damage. Harry is reinforcing the perimeter fence.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tender document for Berden Grounds Maintenance 2024. Harry has presented his tender with estimated number of cuts and cost per cut. This was approved and signed by Duncan.</li> <li>• It was confirmed that Harry will also be given the Essex County Council contract for path cutting in 2024.</li> </ul>
317.11	<p><b>Grants</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Essex Alliance Ford Britain Trust Community Grant. Kathleen has checked that the Parish Council is eligible to apply for this and we meet the criteria. She would like to apply for new outdoor tables for the playground. She suggested that round tables are easier to access and are also very heavy and should not be moved. Harry asked if they could be placed on paving stones to eliminate the need to cut the grass around them. This was agreed and Kathleen will apply for a grant of £1,000 to purchase 2 x round wood tables and seating plus the paving slabs. The style of table was agreed. (Application was posted 26.1.24)</li> </ul>
317.12	<p><b>Playground</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Debbie is now receiving the monthly playground reports from Bob Mason. The December reports highlight the rotten legs on the seating which will be rectified when the new tables (see above in Grants) are installed. And re-seeding of some of the grass is required which Harry will do when the weather warms up.</li> </ul>
317.13	<p><b>Defibrillators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Debbie has received reports that these were in good working order to the end of December 2023.</li> </ul>
317.14	<p><b>CLlr Loughlin</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Duncan reported that Janice spoke against the Crabbs Green battery development at the January Planning Committee.</li> <li>• Janice will be unable to attend the next few PC meetings due to surgery. The Parish Council wished her well.</li> </ul>
317.16	<p><b>Parish Council appointments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Following Kerry Calder's agreement to run the Berden Speedwatch group she is also considering joining the Parish Council.</li> </ul> <p>Next meeting: Monday 4 March 2024</p>