

## **BERDEN PARISH COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the Parish Council** meeting held on **Monday 24 February 2025** at 8.00pm

**Present:** Duncan Murdoch, Harry Wadsworth, Weston Steimel, Debbie Thomson, Kathleen Merino, Diane Holt, Janice Loughlin, Ray Gooding

**Public:** Deborah Patrick, Peter Patrick

326.0	<b>Apologies:</b> None
326.1	<b>Declarations of interest:</b> None
326.2	<b>Approve minutes of Berden Parish Council meeting from Monday 13 January 2025:</b> Proposed by Diane, signed by Duncan
326.3	<b>Berden Fete</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• John Groves has confirmed that the fete can go ahead in 2025 if there are enough key stall holders.</li><li>• He has requested that a Parish Councillor join the Fete Committee and attend some of the Fete meetings. Diane volunteered to do this as long as it is only a couple of meetings (Post meeting John suggested that this would be fine and asked Diane to choose two meeting dates that she could attend).</li></ul>
326.18	<b>Cllr Ray Gooding</b> <p>Ray's discussion on local government re-organisation was brought forward due to the public participation of Peter and Deborah Patrick.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The current Government has committed to a devolution priority programme by the end of this Parliament, with Greater Essex in the first tranche.</li><li>• County Councils could be replaced with a mayoral system</li><li>• County Council elections due for May this year have been postponed for at least one year, potentially three years.</li><li>• It is likely that Mayoral elections will take place in 2026 and Unitary Authority elections in 2027 meaning that in 2027 District and County Councils will cease to exist and responsibilities are devolved.</li><li>• Peter asked about the size of the Mayor's office and what their powers would be. Ray suggested that it would result in a presidential style system - mayors having a direct line to government.</li><li>• Deborah asked about the decision that Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock should team up with Uttlesford. It is apparent that Southend and Thurrock are too small to effect any change on their own.</li></ul>
326.4	<b>VE Day 2025</b> <p>There had been concern expressed by the Village Hall Committee that they should not be involved in funding one third of the cost of hiring the band on 10 May, however this had now been agreed and will go ahead.</p>

326.5	<p><b>Solar/Battery</b></p> <p>Duncan reported as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Berden Hall: Approved, no new information.</li> <li>• Pelham Springs: No new planning application.</li> <li>• Greens Farm BESS: Has a current planning application.</li> <li>• Ginns Road/Crabbs Green: Application was received in April 2022 and is awaiting decision.</li> <li>• Hixham Hall BESS: New impact assessment was filed Friday 21 February citing construction traffic.</li> </ul>
326.6	<p><b>Neighbourhood Plan</b></p> <p>Duncan reported that as Manuden has not responded to the suggestion of forming a joint NP, it may not be keen to go ahead. To be raised at the Annual Parish Meeting on 2 May.</p>
326.7	<p><b>Planning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapel Field (next to Village Hall). Surveyors were recently on-site; Pelham Structures has an interest.</li> <li>• Field House. Duncan drafted a letter to Uttlesford, sent by Debbie 25 February.</li> <li>• Little Potash Barn: No issues.</li> </ul>
326.8	<p><b>Finance</b></p> <p>Diane reported:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Few new entries since the last meeting - £505.88 for new Parish Clerk laptop. Debbie has sent grant application for this to Sue Hayden.</li> <li>• 31 March 2025 is year-end.</li> <li>• Diane has reviewed the Risk Assessment document and this year has only changed playground inspections to 'regularly'. Changes were accepted by all and signed by Duncan.</li> </ul>
326.9	<p><b>Footpaths and grounds maintenance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The path cutting tender document has been issued with a deadline of 31 March.</li> <li>• Littler pick is in hand for 15 March 2025.</li> </ul>
326.10	<p><b>Grants</b></p> <p>Ward members initiative: Janice confirmed that she had signed the form for the Parish Clerk laptop.</p>
326.11	<p><b>Berden Repair Café</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kathleen was contacted on 21 February to say her application to the Love Essex Fund had been successful, however, they can only offer a micro-grant of £220 instead of £500. Therefore, Kathleen asked if the Parish Council had budget to pay for hall hire, insurance and membership of the organisation. The Village Hall Committee has agreed to halve the hall hire cost provided there are no other bookings for the dates.</li> <li>• Diane confirmed that there was money available for the subscription fee and insurance in the budget (which is near end of the financial year).</li> <li>• Weston has set up an email account and paperwork and there will be a booking system and timetable.</li> </ul>

326.12	<p><b>COVID Day of Reflection, Sunday 9 March 2025</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kathleen reported that there have been two magazine announcements for this. At 6pm candles will be lit and she has some help to decorate the triangle. Note: it is on the same day as the pets to church afternoon.</li> </ul>
326.13	<p><b>Playground</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Picnic tables: Harry reported that the base is under construction and that money will need to be spent on more sand.</li> <li>Weston has been performing regular inspections and will be sending them through to be filed by the Parish Clerk.</li> </ul>
326.14	<p><b>Anti-social behaviour</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No new incidents have been reported since Christmas</li> <li>Kathleen confirmed that Alex Stewart is our PCSO.</li> </ul>
326.15	<p><b>Defibrillators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Both machines reported to be working except for 9 Feb when the phone box defibrillator needed resetting probably due to cold weather. John Burton swapped this for the one from the Village Hall. Both working from 10 February.</li> <li>Defibrillator familiarisation session in the Village Hall 28 February.</li> </ul>
326.16	<p><b>Annual Parish Meeting 2 May 2025</b></p> <p>Duncan will be available to chair and introduce the session (Debbie will be away). Debbie to make social clubs aware of the meeting via magazine and individual emails.</p>
326.17	<p><b>Cllr Loughlin</b></p> <p>Janice followed up on earlier discussion regarding local government reorganisation. This affects District Councils as much as County Councils and she considers it to be an undemocratic decision since she was voted in for a four-year period. She will have more information following Full Council on 25 February when budget will be discussed.</p>
326.18	<p><b>Cllr Gooding</b></p> <p>Ray's discussion was held at the beginning of the meeting (see above).</p> <p><b>Exchange of information to be raised for next Agenda for meeting 7 April 2025</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kathleen would like the Berden Emergency Plan to be discussed which she hopes to have finished for the meeting.</li> <li>Diane is printing booklets to take to new residents.</li> </ul> <p>Meeting closed 9pm.</p>