

## BERDEN PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Berden Parish Council meeting held on **Monday 8 December 2025** at 8.00pm

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

**Public:** Howard Farmer, Barry Ellis, Jenny Arnell, John Burton, Natalie Trapmore

332.1	<b>Apologies and reasons for absence:</b> Janice Loughlin, unwell.
332.2	<b>Declarations of interest in items on this Agenda:</b> None
332.3	<b>Approve minutes of Berden Parish Council from 20 October 2025:</b> Proposed: Harry, seconded: Diane, signed: Duncan
332.4	<b>Planning</b> <b>Land East of Berden Village Hall</b> A formal application has been made, and the Parish Council used this meeting as an opportunity to raise concerns. Comments were as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Barry Ellis: Would like to know if there is still a badger set in the field. Will the whole hedgerow be removed for access?</li><li>• Howard Farmer: Two speed checks have been done but not close to the proposed entrance. Speed and access are concerns.</li><li>• Duncan: Access and speed of cars.</li><li>• Kathleen: Vehicle speed, particularly if children need to walk along the road.</li><li>• Natalie: Access appears to have been moved on the plan.</li><li>• Harry: Land levels within the site are not natural. Archaeological inspection required.</li><li>• Diane: Number of cars.</li><li>• Duncan will draft a letter of objection.</li></ul>
332.5	<b>Local Government consultation on new unitary authorities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Parish Councillors have joined various webinars regarding potential structures for the county. Essex and Uttlesford have different recommendations.</li><li>• Ray Gooding was able to update the meeting and said that ultimately the final decision on the new model will be made by the Government in March 2026.</li><li>• The new Mayor of Essex will now be elected in May 2028 instead of 2026.</li><li>• Duncan asked if the Parish Council wished to respond to the Consultation. Alternatively, he suggested that we continue to advise the village about updates via the Parish Magazine. The latter was agreed.</li></ul>
332.6	<b>Website</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Weston was thanked for creating the new shared village calendar.</li><li>• The issue was raised that, for those using Outlook calendars, the calendar can only be filled in up to six months ahead and Natalie pointed out that this is an issue as she is already scheduling events for next Christmas.</li><li>• The problem is only with Outlook calendars as Google calendars allow for new entries at any date in the future. Until this is resolved Natalie asked if groups could communicate required bookings dates with each other for bookings more than six months ahead.</li></ul>

332.7	<p><b>Design of web pages.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Natalie requested a redesign of the village website pages that would eliminate the need to scroll down through a lot of information on each page. It was agreed that this could be considered in the future.</li> </ul> <p><b>Defibrillators</b></p> <p><b>Little London</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Duncan reported that after carrying out research he felt that the best model for Little London is the Zoll AED 3 from Heartbeat.org.uk. This is best suited for withstanding cold temperatures.</li> <li>A grant from Stansted Airport of £700 is still to be received and Little London residents have raised the remaining sum.</li> <li>Total cost is £2,420 excluding VAT to include the cabinet.</li> <li>The Parish Council has received a letter of consent to place the machine on the wall of the barn of Petley House Farm belonging to Maurice Haskins.</li> <li>Jenny said that a movement sensor light is required and that she will buy this. Duncan to order the defibrillator once the quote has been confirmed.</li> <li>The Parish Council will be responsible for the Little London defibrillator. John Burton kindly agreed to include it in his fortnightly checks.</li> </ul> <p><b>Telephone Box</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It was agreed that the same model as above should be purchased for the telephone box at a cost of £1,550 excluding VAT.</li> </ul> <p>Any invoices to be sent to Diane please.</p>
332.8	<p><b>Parking for village events</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Natalie asked if the Parish Council would agree to allow parking on Simon's Field for some village events.</li> <li>As the field is liable to flood it was agreed that the decision should be made case by case, depending on weather.</li> </ul>
332.9	<p><b>Finance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diane sent files relating to the precept setting for 26/27 On 7 December. Everything balances with no cause for concern.</li> </ul> <p>The following files were emailed to Councillors on 6 December:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Payments file. All payments were ratified.</li> <li>The Repair Café accounts, showing a net profit of £382.83.</li> <li>The Proposed Budget v2 for 2026. This allows more money for grass and hedge cutting in 2026.</li> <li>Diane has ringfenced £500 for defibrillator maintenance.</li> </ul> <p>All Parish Councillors confirmed that they are happy with the precept and 2026 budget. Diane filled in the required paperwork which was signed by Duncan.</p> <p><b>Village Christmas Tree</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A 4m artificial tree with lights was ordered on 6 December for £428.37. The Parish Council will pay half of this.</li> <li>It was agreed that if this tree is not delivered in time a real tree from a local plantation will be purchased.</li> </ul>

332.10	<p><b>Highways</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ray Gooding had not seen the email sent to him and to Councillor Cunningham on 5 June 2025. Debbie to resend.</li> <li>• Ray agreed to accompany Natalie on a drive in and around Berden to see the extent of pothole damage in the area.</li> </ul> <p><b>Portable VAS sign</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The option to share in a portable speed detection unit that will be moved around the district was agreed to. Debbie to email an expression of interest.</li> </ul>
332.11	<p><b>Solar/Battery Units</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Berden Hall Farm - development not yet started.</li> <li>• Pelham Springs - current planning application.</li> <li>• Dellowes BESS - current application in E Herts.</li> <li>• National Grid meeting in Stocking Pelham on 11 December, to look at how Pelham substation is to be upgraded 2026-2029.</li> </ul>
332.12	<p><b>Footpaths and Grounds maintenance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harry confirmed that while the hedge around Simon's Field only had one cut in 2025, it will need two in 2026, the first to be done as early as possible in the new year.</li> <li>• Duncan will add some paths to the ECC cutting list before the next cutting season.</li> <li>• John pointed out that several finger posts are missing.</li> <li>• UCAN volunteers are still aware that we would like their assistance when they have a team available.</li> <li>• Dog Waste bins. It was agreed that two new dog waste bins should be purchased from Glasdon UK. One is for the bus stop and the other for the Little London end of the 'coffin' path. The Fido 25 is £120.32 excluding VAT. Debbie to order.</li> </ul>
332.13	<p><b>Grants</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Village Hall committee was keen to apply for the Zero Carbon Communities Grant Fund for an air-source heat pump, but the deadline was too tight to get a survey done and receive a quotation which was essential for the application.</li> <li>• The Sports and Social Club applied to the Community Initiative Fund for a microgrant to upgrade the bar. The application was rejected on the basis that the organisation does not part-fund projects.</li> </ul>
332.14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Repair Café has applied for a microgrant.</li> </ul>
332.15	<p><b>Repair Café</b></p> <p>The November event went well.</p>
332.16	<p><b>Playground</b></p> <p>Nothing to report at this meeting.</p> <p><b>Cllr Gooding</b></p> <p>Ray reported that Essex County Council has agreed to the county's affiliation with HMS Venturer, a Type 31 frigate currently under construction in Scotland.</p> <p>Meeting closed at 10pm.</p> <p><b>Next meeting Monday 12 January 2026</b></p>

