

## **BERDEN PARISH COUNCIL**

**Minutes of Berden Parish Council** meeting held on **Monday 12 January 2026** at 8.00pm

**Present:** Duncan Murdoch, Diane Holt, Weston Steimel, Harry Wadsworth, Kathleen Merino, Ray Gooding (from 9pm).

**Public:** Claire Russell (until 8.50pm), Natalie Trapmore.

333.1	<b>Apologies and reasons for absence:</b> Janice Loughlin, unwell.
333.2	<b>Declarations of interest in items on this agenda:</b> None.
333.3	<b>Approve minutes of Berden Parish Council from 8 December 2025.</b> Proposed: Diane, seconded: Weston, signed: Duncan.
333.4	<b>Highways</b> <b>Highways inspection with Cllr Ray Gooding.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Diane and Natalie reported on their tour of the roads in and around Berden on 5 January 2026. They highlighted some of the main damage to the roads and signs e.g. the pothole at Highlands, 30mph sign at Bonnetting Lane and the Gigaclear trench and presented Ray with the emails received from village residents. The conclusions reached were:</li><li>• Defects should be reported on the Essex Highways website (in the meeting it was demonstrated that this is not generally effective).</li><li>• If there is a real risk to public safety the defect should be reported via the 24-hour hotline 0345 603 7631.</li><li>• Ray has access to a members' hotline to report these issues .</li><li>• A camera should be driven around the area every three months to identify highways issues. It was suggested that Berden may be omitted from these surveys due to its remoteness. A copy of the latest report has been requested.</li><li>• A meeting has been requested with Ray's Highways Buddy in Uttlesford.</li><li>• 10 to 12 defects will be escalated as priorities.</li><li>• Duncan thanked Diane and Natalie for their work on this.</li></ul> <b>Portable VAS sign/speed detection</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Debbie has registered interest in joining the scheme suggested by Uttlesford District Council for sharing a portable VAS sign.</li><li>• Natalie had queried buying a sign for the village but realised that the costs involved made joining the sharing scheme the rational option.</li></ul>
333.5	<b>Village Christmas Tree</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Due to a failure on the part of the supplier, the Christmas tree ordered by the Sports and Social Club was not received in time for Christmas 2025. The order was subsequently cancelled and the money refunded.</li><li>• The decision of a real versus an artificial tree has been scheduled for discussion October 2026.</li></ul>

333.6	<p><b>Defibrillators</b></p> <p>Following Duncan's email of 6 January 2026 with proposals for new defibrillators/parts the following were confirmed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An order has been placed with Heartbeat for a defibrillator for Little London.</li> <li>• The new unit which will be housed in the telephone box is due for delivery on 13 January. This has been ordered from Defib Warehouse along with a Rescue Kit.</li> <li>• A light with remote control/movement sensor for Little London has been ordered, delivery due 14 January.</li> <li>• It was agreed that a battery should be ordered for the unit currently in the telephone box (will be moved back to the Village Hall) for £205 plus VAT.</li> <li>• This leaves £365 ringfenced for defibrillators in the budget.</li> </ul>
333.7	<p><b>Finance</b></p> <p>Further to Diane's emails of 5, 6 and 11 January 2026 she reported that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final quarter 2025 figures have been posted on the website.</li> <li>• No money has come out of the account since December.</li> <li>• Payments to be ratified were in order.</li> <li>• She has started a VAT return which will include figures to the end of January.</li> </ul>
333.8	<p><b>Local Government Consultation</b></p> <p>The consultation on local reorganisation for Greater Essex closed on 11 January.</p>
333.9	<p><b>Solar/Battery Units/Substation</b></p> <p><b>Berden Hall Farm</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No information expected until summer 2026.</li> </ul> <p><b>Pelham Springs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Claire Russell reported that at the third attempt for planning the Planning Officer has recommended approval.</li> <li>• Parish Councillors agreed that Claire should represent the Parish Council at the Planning meeting on 14 January. She will argue that the application has not changed significantly since the first and second applications. Her focus will be on heritage issues i.e. the Crump and Battles Manor.</li> <li>• Janice has appointed Cllr Richard Silcock to represent her at the planning meeting.</li> <li>• Duncan thanked Claire.</li> </ul> <p><b>Dellows</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The only objection at the moment is on landscape grounds.</li> </ul> <p><b>National Grid</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Duncan attended a presentation on the North London Reinforcement Project from National Grid via Zoom on 11 December 2025. It detailed the upgrading of the substation which will take place between 2026 and 2029.</li> <li>• He has asked that Berden be included in their communications.</li> </ul>

333.10	<p><b>Footpaths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Duncan asked Claire if the footpath from Southfields in Brick House End to Park Green could be added to Essex County Council's path cutting list. This was agreed.</li> <li>Natalie highlighted a section of Bridleway 57 which has been upgraded by the landowner for vehicles and laid with contaminated material. This is a danger to walkers and animals. Duncan to report this to Essex Highways and send details to Ray who will ask the Environmental team to investigate.</li> </ul> <p><b>UCAN volunteers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Berden is still on the list.</li> </ul> <p><b>New dog waste bins</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Debbie confirmed that two bins have been ordered and asked if Harry could take delivery of them and put them up.</li> </ul>
333.11	<p><b>Grants</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kathleen reported that Berden Repair Café has been awarded a grant by Love Essex. Details to follow.</li> <li>There are no other grant opportunities open at the moment.</li> </ul>
333.12	<p><b>Berden Repair Café</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The next repair cafe is scheduled for Saturday 7 March and details are available via the link on the website.</li> </ul>
333.13	<p><b>Playground</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Weston confirmed that there are no issues currently.</li> <li>Harry asked if there is money available to buy some wood preservative to treat the woodwork in the playground. This was confirmed and agreed.</li> </ul>
333.15	<p><b>Cllr Ray Gooding</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ray was pleased that he could help with the road survey at the start of the month.</li> <li>Regarding enquiries sent to the members' hotline, he confirmed there is a requirement to respond within ten days.</li> <li>He confirmed that the drive from Dewes Green Road to Frank Tinney's property is not the responsibility of Essex Highways.</li> <li>Natalie thanked Ray for his help.</li> </ul> <p><b>AOB</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning Field House – This application has received its third refusal. Chapel Field – Duncan to write a letter on behalf of the Parish Council.</li> <li>Natalie would like to book the Village Hall for 2 days for the Berden history project, one of which is 30 March when a Parish Council meeting is scheduled. It was confirmed that she would not need to clear her papers from the Hall for that evening.</li> </ol> <p>Meeting closed at 9.30pm. <b>Next meeting Monday 23 February 2026.</b></p>

