

BERDEN PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Berden Parish Council meeting held on **Monday 23 February 2026** at 8.00pm

Present: Duncan Murdoch, Diane Holt, Weston Steimel, Harry Wadsworth, Kathleen Merino, Debbie Thomson.

Public: Lloyd Tunnicliffe, Virginia Tunnicliffe, Mark Wickham, Sarah Owen, Sajit Sahadevan, Dionne Jackson, Sarah Howard, Hazel Brookfield, Ina Nelson.

334.1	Apologies and reasons for absence: Janice Loughlin, unwell
334.2	Declarations of interest in items on this agenda: Duncan Murdoch declared a non-pecuniary conflict of interest in item 334.4 Land East of Bonnetting Lane as his son is employed by Walker James Limited, the business owned by the applicants making this planning application.
334.3	Approve minutes of Berden Parish Council from 12 January 2026: Proposed: Kathleen, seconded: Diane, Signed: Duncan
334.4	Planning 1. Land East of Bonnetting Lane (Duncan left the meeting for this discussion) Members of the public who joined this meeting wished to object to this planning application. The points raised: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Martin’s Green, both house and gardens are of historical significance and must be preserved.• The sixteenth century Grade II listed house is an important part of Berden.• The gardens include an ‘historic orchard’ and there are recent examples of local councils refusing permission for planning on them.• This is an area at risk of flooding.• There has already been development within the grounds of this house.• The land on which the development is proposed is high and visible to the village. Trees and hedgerow will need to be removed.• The plot is on Bonnetting Lane, a narrow, single track lane.• Previous application for a single barn-style dwelling in Bonnetting Lane was refused in 2024 Debbie read out written objections from Amanda Pulfer: <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ The proposed access is at one of the narrowest points of the lane.○ Safety aspects for pedestrians and lack of passing places for cars.○ Creating a precedent, there are similar plots along the lane.○ Impact on a Grade II listed house.○ Concern that permission for self-build plots may subsequently be changed. Parish Councillors confirmed that the Parish Council would object and Debbie read out emails from Cllr Janice Loughlin who said she would call-in the application if it was approved on the grounds of open countryside, impact on nearby residences, access, unsustainable location and outside development limits; and from Nigel Brown, Head of Development Management and Enforcement at Uttlesford District Council who confirmed that this was a valid call-in. (Duncan returned to the meeting. Lloyd Tunnicliffe, Virginia Tunnicliffe, Sajit Sahadevan, Dionne Jackson, Sarah Howard, Hazel Brookfield and Ina Nelson left).

2. Land rear of 2 Redhill

The Parish Council submitted a letter on 21 January 2026. The applicant has responded with a rebuttal and it will be left to Uttlesford to decide on further action.

3. Field House

No current applications after last refusal and dismissed appeal.

4. Chapel Field

The November application was refused on 21 January based on insufficient ecology information. A new application has been made and the Parish Council repeated and sent the earlier letter which is now on the website.

334.5

Highways

- Portable VAS sign
Debbie has confirmed with Uttlesford DC that the Parish Council would be prepared to fund the installation of posts and brackets for this portable VAS sign.
- Sarah Owen asked about the Berden Speedwatch group. As there is not a Councillor on the Parish Council to organise this (there is a vacancy for Highways) the group is not currently active. Sarah is concerned that the average speed checks of vehicles entering the village are being reduced by the slow speed of residents turning out of Benskins onto the Pelham Road.
- Bridleway 57, Berden
The County Council PROW officer has inspected and ordered the landowner to carry out a rubbish pick and remove the unacceptable material.
- Diane expressed frustration at the lack of action/response from Ray Gooding after his initial involvement in surveying the local roads for defects. She will email Ray to ask for details of what is planned for the area.
- It was commented that one.network states that the main road out of Berden will be resurfaced in November 2026.

334.6

Footpaths and grounds maintenance

- Duncan has contacted Essex County Council requesting two paths by Brick House End be added to the Cutting List.
- We are still on the list for UCAN volunteers.
- The two new waste bins have been installed and Harry was thanked for this. Harry noted that he holds the Allen key which is needed if the bins ever need to be moved.
- John Burton is organising the litter pick for 8 March. Debbie to send out village Mailchimp.
- Beating the bounds 10 May. Harry to email Natalie about helping to plant a tree on the Manuden/Berden boundary.

334.7

Finance

- Diane reported on the financial files sent to Parish Councillors on 21 February.
- £7,172 is ringfenced for the playground, the Repair Café, the phone box repairs, election costs and nature fund.
 - The recent defibrillator expenditure was itemised and this resulted in total expenditure of £4,995. After funds received from a grant, local fundraising and budget allocation there was a £405 overspend. It was agreed this was a necessary expense.
 - At the end of the year the Parish Council will hold a £31,600 balance (an increase on last year).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was agreed that the repair should go ahead on the telephone box door for £1,105. Volunteers may be able to do the painting to keep costs down. • Natalie has suggested a new village bench to celebrate the National Lottery Heritage Fund and is asking the landowner in Little London permission to place it on their land. A discussion was had on wood versus recycled plastic for the bench.
334.8	<p>Uttlesford Local Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Inspector’s report has been issued and confirms the Plan is sound and can be adopted. The Council will take this to Committee and formally adopt in due course.
334.9	<p>Solar/Battery Units</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Berden Hall Farm – The Government has included this in the latest round of allocations. Archaeology and ecology surveys are expected over the summer with development commencing end of 2026/early 2027. • Pelham Springs – Refused by Uttlesford Committee on 14 January despite officer’s recommendation to grant. • Stocking Farm/Dellows BESS – East Herts resolved to grant permission at Committee on 11 February. • Crabbs Green BESS – An appeal has been lodged and this will require a hearing. Duncan suggested repeating earlier letter of objection and sending it to the Inspector. This was agreed.
334.10	<p>Defibrillators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These are now all purchased and installed. All are registered with The Circuit. • The defibrillators were reported to be in good working order.
334.11	<p>Grants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following an email of 16 February offering grants for playgrounds, Kathleen has identified a roundabout for younger children from Sovereign Play Equipment for £5,725 plus installation and plus matting. • It was agreed that a further two quotes should be obtained with the hope that a grant could pay for the roundabout itself and the Parish Council for the installation and matting.
334.12	<p>Repair Café</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The next one is going ahead on the 7 March with some repairs already booked in. A cable recycling bin will be available again. • Kathleen noted that some repairs are happening outside the Café official opening times and it is important that donations are made for these.
334.13	<p>Playground</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weston to resume playground checks. • Harry asked if he could start cutting the grass in the playground. This was agreed. • Mark Wickham volunteered to help with the gardening for the playground. <p>AOB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcoming new residents to the village was discussed; Kathleen and Diane currently visit new homeowners and ask for a welcome message to be included in the parish magazine. It was agreed that this should come from the Parish Council.

- Debbie to include this information in the next magazine report and ask for any information on new residents to be forwarded to the Parish Council to arrange a visit and the welcome notice.
- Debbie confirmed dates for the Annual Parish Meeting (Friday 8 May) and the Annual Parish Council Meeting (Monday 18 May)
- Diane queried if we are due to hold Parish Council elections this May. Debbie to check with Uttlesford Election Services,
- A muck heap on the path next to Berden Hall was noted. Duncan will contact the Essex Highways Officer.
- Sarah Owen asked if there was any new information on 13 Gawlers due to its current decrepit state. Debbie to ask Janice to investigate when she is feeling well enough.

Meeting closed at 9.20pm

Next meeting 30 March 2026