

## BERDEN PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Berden Parish Council meeting held on **Monday 30 March 2026** at 8.00pm.

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

335.1	<p><b>Apologies and reasons for absence:</b> Janice Loughlin: Unwell. A vote at full council has allowed Janice a dispensation to be absent for over the usual six months. Ray Gooding : Attending the High Sheriff's Declaration.</p>
335.2	<p><b>Declarations of interest in items on this agenda:</b> 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.</p>
335.3	<p><b>Approve minutes of Berden Parish Council from 23 February 2026.</b> Proposed: Diane, seconded: Harry, Signed: Duncan.</p>
335.4	<p><b>Planning</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>1. Land East of Bonnetting Lane</b> (Duncan left the meeting for this discussion) The Parish Council submitted a letter of objection to Uttlesford on 3 March 2026. The application is awaiting a decision. Janice will call in application if it is approved.</li><li><b>2. Land rear of 2 Redhill</b> This was refused on 13 March 2026.</li><li><b>3. Chapel Field</b> This was approved on 11 March 2026.</li></ol>
335.5	<p><b>Highways</b></p> <p><b>Portable VAS sign/speed detection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Harry to fix a 3m pole in a suitable location on the west side of the village (post meeting it was decided not to do this).</li><li>• Once in place Debbie to check with ECC that it is suitable and then fill in the licence application.</li></ul> <p><b>Follow-up on pot hole survey</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Further to Diane's email to Ray and Duncan reporting the large pothole at the junction of Manuden Road, Ray has responded to say that his Uttlesford Highways buddy has identified this plus some others for repair.</li></ul>
335.6	<p><b>Footpaths and grounds maintenance</b></p> <p><b>UCAN volunteers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We are still on their list for a group of volunteers who would like to paint the railings on The Street.</li></ul> <p><b>Litter pick</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This was completed successfully in March.</li></ul> <p><b>Beating the Bounds 10 May</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Harry will attend</li></ul> <p><b>Churchyard maintenance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Duncan confirmed that in: 2023/24 The Parish Council made a contribution of £350</li></ul>

In 2024/25 the contribution was £400 plus an extra £200 as a one-off payment. It was agreed to pay the standard £400 this year. If a further amount is requested the Parish Council will ask for a breakdown of how the £200 was used last year.

**Footpath 45**

- John Burton had requested that footpath 45, connecting Little London with the Village Hall be cut this year (it is not part of the Parish Council's contract with ECC). Duncan has reported it to Essex Highways who have requested that the landowner reinstate it within two weeks.

335.7

**Finance**

- As year-end for the Parish Council is 31 March 2026, one day after this meeting, Diane did not prepare accounts.
- The telephone box repair is complete and the invoice is still to be paid.
- The Parish Clerk has a £22 tax credit.
- Berden Parish Council's accounts have been selected for an intermediate review this year instead of the usual basic review as part of a 5% sample.
- Kathleen reported that she had been unable to transfer the money from sum-up from the Repair Café because her name wasn't the account name. She has changed it to an account in her name.

335.8

**Insurance**

- The Parish Council insurance policy is due for renewal on 1 June 2026. Diane will let Debbie know of any updates to the Fixed Assets register e.g. the new defibrillator and Repair Café equipment including grinder.

335.9

**Solar/Battery/Substation**

- Berden Hall Farm – we can expect work to commence over the summer.
- Pelham Springs – a planning appeal has been lodged.
- Stocking Pelham/Dellow – permission granted at committee 11/2/26
- Crabbs Green – the hearing is at Hertford on 31/3/26
- Electricity substation - There is a meeting in Stocking Pelham on 2 April regarding the London Reinforcement project. Anyone wishing to attend needs to RSVP.

335.10

**Defibrillators**

- All reported to be working in March

335.11

**Grants**

- The latest grant offer for playground equipment was not suitable.
- A new community grant application, available from 1 April 2026, was deemed too complex post meeting.

335.12

**Repair Café**

- The latest Repair Café raised £116 in donation and £96 in the café making a total of £212.
- Kathleen has reported this with photos to Love Essex, showing the grinder that has been bought with some of the grant awarded by Love Essex.
- Now saving for a PAT tester.
- Some cable were collected for recycling resulting in more funds.
- Next Repair Café is on 13 June 2026.

335.13	<p><b>Playground</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weston to resume fortnightly inspections.</li> </ul>
335.14	<p><b>Annual Parish meeting 8 May 2026</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Duncan will be making briefer comments this year (last year's longer presentation was because an Annual Parish meeting hadn't been held for a number of years due to Covid).</li> <li>• Debbie to invite social groups in the village to attend and to supply a short report on the year's activity.</li> </ul> <p><b>Annual Parish Council meeting 18 May 2026</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parish Councillors will be required to confirm if they are happy to continue for the next year (please let Debbie know in advance if unable to attend this meeting).</li> </ul>
335.15	<p><b>Local Elections 7 May 2026</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information has been put up on Parish Council notice board.</li> </ul> <p><b>AOB</b></p> <p>Harry wished to make the following known to the Parish Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kevin has completed the bar renovations. Everyone agreed it was an excellent job.</li> <li>• The bar area has been redecorated.</li> <li>• The kitchen door is now self-closing.</li> <li>• Hayden has worked on the electrical systems. All have been checked and there are now new exit signs and the light switches have been changed to buttons.</li> <li>• The guttering has been fixed.</li> <li>• The beams have been cleaned by Kevin using a high-powered vacuum cleaner.</li> </ul> <p>Harry reported that his tree inspection course, while interesting, was really aimed at larger council teams.</p> <p>Ivy is an issue on some of the trees on the main road and it was agreed that he could cut through some of the stems.</p> <p>Meeting closed at 9.00pm.</p> <p><b>Next Parish Council meeting 18 May 2026 (Annual Parish meeting 8 May 2026)</b></p>