

BERDEN PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Berden Parish Council meeting held on **Monday 18 May 2026** at 8.00pm.

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

336.0	Apologies and reason for absence Kathleen Merino: on holiday
336.1	Election of Chair and Acceptance of Office Duncan Murdoch offered to stand as Chair of the Parish Council for the forthcoming year: this was approved by all Councillors present. An Acceptance of Office form was signed by Duncan and Debbie. All other Parish Councillors will keep current responsibilities.
336.2	Declarations of interest in items on this agenda: Duncan Murdoch declared a non-pecuniary conflict of interest in item 336.4 Land East of Bonnetting Lane as his son is employed by Walker James Limited, the business owned by the applicants making this planning application.
336.3	Approve minutes of Berden Parish Council from 30 March 2026. Proposed: Weston, seconded: Diane, signed: Duncan.
336.4	Planning <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Land East of Bonnetting Lane Nothing as yet.2. Great Mimms Application to turn paddock into garden. No comments.3. Berden Hall Farm Archaeological condition discharge: Due to the Crump and ancient earthworks near the site there will be a number of exploratory trenches dug. Anything found will be recorded.
336.5	Highways Portable VAS sign <ul style="list-style-type: none">Debbie has submitted the licence application form. The existing 30mph post alongside Gawlers on the Pelham Road has been approved as suitable for the sign. Pot hole update <ul style="list-style-type: none">Some remedial work has been taking place.Duncan has emailed the National Grid to ask for notification of when the heavy goods vehicles will be coming through the village on their way to the substation.
336.6	Footpaths and grounds maintenance Simon's Field <ul style="list-style-type: none">Harry reported the problem of deer breaking through the double row of hedges on the west and north sides of the field. The wire fence between the border

<p>336.7</p> <p>336.7a</p> <p>336.7b</p> <p>336.7c</p>	<p>hedges is damaged in some places. They have destroyed eight of the recently planted fruit trees and the others are unlikely to survive.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frank Tinney has given Harry permission to cut the hedge on his land and Harry asked if the Parish Council could invest in a new wire fence to be installed around the whole field. • Duncan and Weston approved of this idea and Diane confirmed that there were funds available to pay for the fence (Harry to install it). <p>Extra footpaths added to ECC cutting list</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duncan to email contact at ECC. <p>Beating the Bounds 10 May 2026</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harry, Weston and Debbie took part in this walk and it was regarded as a huge success. <p>Footpath 45</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is thought that the landowner has now sprayed this path. <p>Finance</p> <p>Risk Assessment and Financial Regulations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diane has reviewed both documents. She highlighted the requirement that for any contract over £1,000 the Parish Council is required to obtain three quotes. It was decided that this should become a standing item on the agenda. • Duncan signed both documents. <p>Internal Audit form</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To show that the Parish Council complies with requirements. Signed by the Chair and Financial Officer. • Paul Chapman as Auditor has signed to say they are checked and in good order. <p>Annual Governance statement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmed and signed by the Chair and Clerk. <p>Accounting statement Final Page</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signed by the Financial Officer and Chair. <p>Explanation of Variances</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Parish Council has received more in grants than usual and has spent more than usual (defibrillators) in this financial year <p>There were no questions from Parish Councillors.</p> <p>Diane has delivered wine to Paul Chapman as a thank you for auditing the Parish Council accounts.</p>
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336.8	<p>Insurance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The premium for 26/27 is £1,047.57 vs £1,008.96 last year. Diane will pay as soon as Debbie has confirmation that this includes the increase for Repair Café equipment and the third defibrillator.
336.9	<p>Solar/Battery Units/Substation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Berden Hall Farm – Archaeology condition discharge (see Planning above) Pelham Springs – Objection submitted w/c 11 May. Likely to be a hearing Aug/Sept Stocking Farm/Dellows – Going ahead Crabbs Green – Appeal hearing end of March National Grid – On-site works proceeding. Heavy goods vehicles to be monitored through village.
336.10	<p>Parish Council archives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Parish Council has an obligation to keep the last six years of meeting minutes, and signed accounts in the parish. It has been suggested that anything older than this should be accessioned to the Essex Records Office in Chelmsford where it would be securely and correctly stored. Diane raised the point that the metal cupboard in the Village Hall was purchased so that these documents could be held in the village. Particular concern has been raised over one (two?) volumes of hand written minutes dating from 1894. It was agreed that these in particular would benefit from the level of preservation offered by the Records Office, along with minutes and signed accounts over six years old.
336.11	<p>Grants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Duncan has requested funding from the National Grid which is offering the wider Bishops Stortford/Saffron Walden area community grants due to the development of Pelham Substation. Natalie has invited the Fundraising team to the village. Parish Councillors to think about what we could do with a grant.
336.12	<p>Repair Café</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weston has created a URL from the Berden website for the Repair Café booking page so there is no need for a new website. He is starting a Linux Repair Café and will be converting the old Parish Clerk laptop to use for Repair Café documents.
336.13	<p>Playground</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Annual inspection has not been done yet. Weston has been pressure washing the equipment.

336.14	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Carousel. There is money available in the budget for this. Kathleen has obtained one quote for £4,520 plus VAT and installation. A further two quotes need to be sought. <p>Defibrillators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• All machines reported to be working in April.
336.15	<p>Cllr Loughlin has stepped down from her role as a District Councillor due to health issues.</p> <p>AOB</p> <p>Duncan spoke about storage problems that the village will face when Richard Earle's barn is sold and suggested using money from the National Grid grant to purchase some underground storage containers. Another option would be to ask Frank Tinney if he would be prepared to sell some land next to Simon's Field which could then be used for village activities as well as a space for storage.</p> <p>Harry suggested that Frank's empty brick barn may be able to be used for storage in the short term.</p> <p>Diane agreed that the village needs a field for social events.</p> <p>Debbie will be away for the October meeting so will research a minute-taking app for the Parish laptop. She will also work on a list of meeting dates for next year.</p> <p>Meeting ended at 9.00pm</p> <p>Next meeting: Monday 29 June 2026</p>