

Meeting:	Stevington Parish Council Meeting 27 th November 2024 at 7.30pm
Council Members in attendance:	Cllr. Janet Day (JD), Chair Cllr. John Strutt (JS) Cllr. James Surtees (JSu) Cllr. Gareth King (GK) Cllr. Jim Sinfield (JSi) Cllr. Dylan Simmons (DS)
Apologies received:	Borough Cllr Robert Rigby (RR)
Non-attendance:	None
Borough Council Member:	Cllr. Dylan Simmons (left meeting after Item 6 on Agenda)
Clerk to the Council:	Rosemary Plum (RP)
Public Attendance	1 x Local Resident

MINUTES OF MEETING

1. Welcome

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies received from:

- Cllr. Robert Rigby

3. Declarations of Interest

Declarations received from:

- Cllr. Janet Day, Barringer Trust committee member

4. Open Forum

A local resident raised concerns about accumulation of events in Silver Street including:

- Narrow section of the road where non-residents turn up and randomly park across front doors, causing obstructions and other vehicles can't get by.
- Building contractors parking vehicles and leaving debris with no concern for residents and pub users.

- Could a sign be added to front of pub about car park? Really noisy with cars mounting the kerb and crashing down.
- Could a questionnaire be sent to all Silver Street residents for suggestions.
- Concern about HGVs added to this. Another resident has had roof rethatched and lorries could cause damage to this.
- Resident wants to see bollards along the road.
- RR working on evidence with Borough Highways to try and force next steps.
- JD spoke to team working on Warwick Cottage and suggested they park in the Red Lion car park during the day as not used by restaurant.
- Drivers breaking the rules, when challenged are now quite abusive.

JS advised the Parish Council understands the problems but doesn't have a solution in its grasp. Actions to consider include:

- I. Residents only parking
- II. Enforcement
- III. Site visit with member of Borough Highways to consider signage.

RP

5. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes were agreed as a true reflection of the meeting and signed by the Chair.

PROPOSED: Cllr. John Strutt

SECONDED: Cllr. James Surtees

6. Matters Arising from the minutes – *information only*

- Local resident still waiting on Borough to carry out promise street works to kerb outside home
- Waiting for confirmation of site meeting with Borough Highways

RP

7. Clerk's Report – *information only*

- Bulbs have arrived and will be deliver to John S.
- Dog bins – RP chase Borough
- Anti-social dog situation – ongoing
- RP engaged with Village Hall committee member for advice on play equipment and parking bonfire event.
- Insurance Village Hall – agreed Parish Council will continue to pay for due to:
 - complexity of ownership/responsibility for liability for the hall and the playing field i.e. the Village Hall committee had responsibility for the contents, the Parish Council for the building as landlord, the Village Hall for liability for events in the

RP

hall and the Parish Council for any activities on the playing field and play area etc.

- Parish Council paying the premium and ensuring the insurance met all potential liabilities was preferable to splitting the insurance out between both parties and the Parish Council having to provide annual grant to Village Hall as they are not able to be commercially viable otherwise.
- Annual premium would be prohibitively expensive for Village Hall to bear and would likely cause it to run at a loss, which would, in turn, require the Parish Council to provide funding going forward.
- Village Hall is considered as owned by the Parish Council and recorded as an asset.
- The Village Hall used to pay back the element of the premium relating to contents i.e. Parish Council paid buildings cover and Village Hall paid contents portion.
- RP summarised discussion at recent Bedfordshire Association of Town and Parish Council AGM.
- Bedford Borough Council Flood Forum Thursday 3rd October cancelled.
- Clapham Parish Council to host a similar event for North Bedfordshire villages 11th February 2025, involving a number of agencies and stakeholders.
- EWR non-statutory consultation started 14/11/24 and closes 24/1/25.
 - EWR holding number of events locally, but not in Clapham.
 - View online virtual consultation room with considerable detail.
 - Clapham Parish Council will formulate a response on behalf of the Parish Council and residents.
 - Wide range of views across the area for and against EWR.
 - We need to do our best to ensure residents are aware of the massive disruption they will face for many year due to the enormous scale of the construction work.
 - A dedicated Clapham Parish Council public meeting 3rd January 2025 with draft response discussed by Parish Council on 14th January and response ratified at full Parish Council on 21st January 2025.
 - Clapham will allocate budget for production of quality photos of the impact of the building works in order to show residents what they will be facing and prevent as many people as possible saying they 'didn't realise' or 'didn't know'.
- Cleat Hill - The primary focus of all Borough Council agencies is still the safety of the public and responders. Residents still evacuated and being supported by the Borough Council and number of other agencies. Once the results from the assessment are available, agencies will be in a

position to create a plan of action and the next steps to bring us back to a normal situation including the re-opening of the B660.

- Alison Nelson retires from post as Footpaths Officer in December 2024. **RP**
- National consultation opened about allowing remote and hybrid attendance and proxy voting at local authority meetings in England. There is continued support for councils to have the maximum possible flexibility. Issues and challenges include technical capability and capacity, guidance and sharing of good practice, predetermination and confidentiality, and ensuring effective meetings, mainly when held hybrid.

8. Borough Council Matters (item take at the beginning of the meeting due to time constraints for Borough Cllr. Simmons)

a) Borough Councillors Report

- I. EWR construction work will affect access to Stevington considerably and could mean up to a decade of disruption for residents. **JD**
- II. Recommend Stevington Parish Council meet with Chair of Clapham Parish Council in consideration of proximity of development works. **JD/JSu**
- III. Pavement outside Red Lion marked by Iain Booth for action 9 Dec for 3 days dependent on weather. Need to be clear on the area that needs looking at. JD and JSu will meet Iain on-site.
- IV. Bus review – had hoped for new bus routes or additional service because of poor Grant Palmer service. Bus review has showed only 11% of Stevington buses are regularly used. (384 buses – 43 passengers in 1 month meaning 341 buses have no passengers.) Borough going to consolidate and find alternative solutions. Potentially a Borough run taxi service where people in need call the Borough and are point-to-point dropped-off. £2.4m bus funding from Government to Borough Council which will be looking at point-to-point taxi service. Hard to argue with these statistics that send a negative message. Government has unveiled a bus bill that will give more rights to local Councils to regulate bus services – this will be reviewed. Consulting on an alternative provision before any actions are taken. Need to find out what community thinks. DS raised concerns with Borough portfolio holder and will be working closely together.
- V. **Cleat Hill** - There is an ongoing response and recovery proceeding in the area, a 100-meter cordon remains in place for the time being to allow investigations take place. The Council is currently offering residents affected by the incident access to a quiet working space at

Borough Hall, including free parking and Wi-Fi. The Council is working closely with relevant organisations to monitor and manage the situation. Over recent days the authorities have been escorting residents to their own homes, enabling them to safely collect personal belongings and essential items.

VI. **East West Rail (EWR) update** - In the autumn budget (30th October 2024) the chancellor confirmed Government commitment to the East West Rail (EWR) project signalling there route will include plans for a partial electrification of the route with hybrid battery electric trains. In response to the budget announcement EWR Co has announced that there will be a 10-week non-statutory public consultation that will begin on the 14th November 2024. Dates and venues in and around Bedford Borough include:

- 30 November (12pm-5pm) – The Grand Hall, The Sixth Form, Bromham Road, Bedford
- 6 December (2pm-7pm) – Lidlington Village Hall, High Street, Lidlington
- 9 December (2pm-7pm) – Bedford Swan Hotel and Thermal Spa, The Embankment, Bedford
- 11 December (2pm-7pm) – Wilden Village Hall, High Street, Wilden
- 13 December (2pm-7pm) – Stuart Memorial Hall, Church Street, Tempsford
- 7 January (2pm-7pm) – St Neots Town Football Club, Kester Way, St Neots
- 17 January (2pm-7pm) – The Summerlin Centre, Woburn Sands Station Road, Woburn Sands

The following information was supplied by RR as a written report in his absence:

- VII. **Emergency Accommodation Units at Charis House** - To address the urgent need for emergency accommodation, the Council put together an £18 million capital programme to expand its emergency housing stock to ensure support is always available for residents who need it. On the 21st October 2024, the Mayor and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Regulatory Services officially opened 8 new emergency housing units at Charis House on Ashburnham Road. The units feature their own Kitchen, lounge area and bedroom space.
- VIII. **GP Update** - Many areas in Bedford Borough lacked critical access to a GP. In order to address this issue, in 2023, the Council created the Strategic Health Estates Board that would focus on the delivery of key GPs in areas such as Kempston, Great Barford and Wootton. In 2024, the Council agreed to include £9 million of investment into

the budget to help deliver plans that will see these GPs built.

Updates as follows:

- Great Barford – The initial feasibility study has been completed which will see the GP practice moved to a new, purpose-built location on Silver Street. The Council is now working with experts to review the designs to ensure maximum efficiency.
- Kempston – The Halsey Road Police Station has been identified as a potential site for Kempston’s multi-speciality community care centre (MCCC) that will consolidate the three existing GP practices under one roof. The Council has put an extra £2 million in the budget to support the potential purchase of the site.
- Wixams – The Council is working with the ICB and Central Bedfordshire Council to get this surgery built as soon as possible. There is confidence a solution will soon be found to move this project forward.
- Wootton – A high level feasibility study has been created to look at all options for moving this project forward.

IX. Town Update - The Council has made the decision to purchase the former Lloyds building to aid the Mayes Yard regeneration project. The Mayes Yard project aims to turn this area into a vibrant, mixed-use space that combines residential, retail, hospitality, and cultural elements. Additionally, the purchase of Lloyds specifically facilitates the provision of a public square and can potentially provide other benefits such as increasing seating capacity for the Corn Exchange or potentially redeveloping the nearby library. Previously the wider area was home to a number of anchor stores (Debenhams, Beales, M&S, Next) which vacated in the last few years, turning what was a prime shopping pitch into an area of large, unused empty shops that negatively impacted shopping and footfall. The Council conducted an independent valuation of the property before purchase to ensure a fair price was paid – Council officers had negotiated the price down from its original asking price.

X. Council Invests in School Improvement - To address the previous decade or more of low educational attainment in our schools the Council agreed to bolster the School Improvement Team from 2024/2025 onwards with a significant £200,000 of investment every

year. The boost will aim to increase standards in early years from KS1 to KS5 and SATS.

- XI. Bedford Borough's SEND provision and Key Stage 2** - A new report has highlighted, despite increasing demand and financial pressures, many positives in the Council's provision for students who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). For example, Bedford Borough Council manages 2,080 EHCPs (Education, Health and Care Plans), there has been a 46% increase EHCPs over the past 4 years. Yet the Council finalised 90% of EHCP's within the 20-week timescale, significantly outperforming both regional and national averages. Bedford Borough's Key Stage 2 (KS2) performance has historically been below the national average, with the borough being among the bottom five performing Local Authorities (LAs) for a decade. To combat this the Education Improvement Governance Group (EIGG) was established in Autumn 2022 to address low attainment, with focus on reading, writing, and maths. The Council also produced a new long-term education strategy aimed at continuing improvements across all key stages over the next decade. These have led to recent improvements which have moved Bedford out of the bottom five, ranking 135th out of 152.
- XII. Damp and Mold partnership** - The Council is the lead partner in an innovative Health and Housing Partnership for 2024-2025 – collaborating with housing providers Grand Union, Peabody, and recently joined partner, BPHA Ltd. This is a 3 year programme that is designed to establish housing as a fundamental component of health, focusing on critical issues like the impact of damp and mould. Key actions would include supporting housing association tenants with respiratory conditions who may be living with a cold or damp home. There is also an action called Project 'ADaM' (Asthma, damp and mould) looking at how we can join up data and insights to support improvements in housing association processes to tackle damp and mould and support vulnerable residents.
- XIII. Christmas Light Switch On** - The lights switch on will be taking place on Saturday, 30th November in Bedford Town Centre. There will be many activities starting from 12pm noon onwards, the Light Switch on is at approximately 5:45pm with live performances, crazy golf, a craft fare and a Christmas photo booth and more running all day. There are more festive activities happening in the Town Centre though-out the weekends in December, please keep an eye for more information. Lastly, there are 4 hours free parking in Lurke and Allhallows multi-story car parks every day.

9. Councillor Roles & Responsibilities

a) Councillor Vacancy

There is the opportunity to co-opt further Councillor as Stevington still has a vacancy on the Parish Council.

b) Review Portfolio holders

The following portfolio holders were appointed:

Windmill & Police – Cllr. Gareth King

Highways – Cllr. Jim Sinfield with support from Cllr. James Surtees

EWB – Cllr. John Strutt with support from Cllr. James Surtees and Cllr. Jim Sinfield

Barringer Trust and Magazine contributions – Cllr. Janet Day

Emergency Flood Group – Cllr. John Strutt and Cllr. Jim Sinfield

10. Planning

a) Update

Reports circulated prior to the meeting.

11. Highways & Traffic Management Update

a) Update

- I. RR chasing Borough Highways Manager and will take matters higher **RP** if no response to following received in a timely manner:
 - Resident kerb issue outside home
 - Extension of speed restrictions at West End
 - One way give way proposal

b) STAG and Speedwatch Volunteers

- I. GK meeting with local police officers to discuss on Friday 29/11

12. Environment & Footpaths

a) Update – Cllr Strutt

Report circulated prior to meeting.

- I. Stevington Environment Group (SEG) want to apply for grant for work on footpath that crosses SSSI from Stevington to Pavenham. Had a report written by a local resident. Difficult and dangerous to get across the marsh.
- II. JD attended Pavenham Parish Council meeting to discuss SSSI. Dependent on landowners who need to be treated with respect.. Pavenham Parish Council and residents present at meeting called for the footpath to be closed with immediate effect for the winter. Matter ongoing with Borough Council.

- III. SEG keen to take responsibility for monitoring condition of footpaths and report back. Maybe organise some walks to review the situation. **JSt**
- IV. Majority of residents feel recent flooding was worst experienced ever in Stevington. All ditches and culverts overcome and 3 locations West End, Court Lane and Church Road with ingress of water into properties. Need to do inspections to find out what constriction is causing it.
- V. Set up an emergency response centre for storing equipment, warm up, take messages. Use Village Hall for this and have meeting planned. Village Hall already identified as an emergency centre by the Borough Need permission from Parish Council. **JSt**
- VI. Set up emergency phone number
- VII. Short length of ditch at West End that runs into a culvert. Tried to get it cleared by riparian owners but no response to date.
- VIII. Get phone and key volunteers would have it on a rota. JSi has taken over walkie-talkies. **RP/JSt**

Proposal: Purchase emergency response phone for village and JSt to formally agree with Village Hall for its use as a rest centre **RP/JSt**

PROPOSED: Cllr. Janet Day

SECONDED: Cllr. John Strutt

- IX. Write to residents with reminder of riparian duties. **RP**
- X. EWR – update website and village magazine. Produce flyer to circulate with Stevington Magazine. **RP**

- b) SSSI update
See points i) and ii) above.

13. Police Matters

- a) Update
 - I. GK meeting with rural police officer on Friday 29/11 **GK**
 - II. Crimes reported in Stevington: 2 x assault, 1 x theft from skip, 1 x antisocial behaviour.

14. Community Matters

- a) Update - Cllr Day
Report circulated prior to meeting.
 - I. Remembrance Day very well attended at War Memorial.

- II. Playing field and dog mess near play area reported, otherwise not too bad. Need another grass cut before end of the year.

b) Anti-social dog situation – update

- I. Following received from Borough Council:

I'm afraid XX is currently off work ill, he may be back tomorrow and be able to provide a more detailed update in time for your Parish Council meeting tomorrow however I am reluctant to promise that for obvious reasons. In his absence I have reviewed the case file and see that XX is moving forward with the necessary steps to prepare a case file for formal action against the owner of the dog. We appreciate the impact this matter is having on the community and we will endeavour to get the file completed as quickly as possible. If there is anything further he can add then XX will send a further update when he returns to work.

- II. Parish Council feels process not fit for purpose, not good enough. Dog owners need to be prosecuted. Community Protection Notice has been issued. Issue ongoing since April 2024.

c) Barringer Trust – update

- I. Ramp now finished.
- II. Resident has asked about decorating cross for Christmas at their own expense to make village centre more festive. Parish Council had no objections and feels resident understands historic nature of the village asset. Consider this as part of Parish Council activity in future. RP allow in budget precept. **RP**

15. Stevington Windmill

a) Update – Cllr King

- I. Following the quarterly sail maintenance visit in September, the next visit is due to take place in December. The next full inspection and maintenance visit is due in June 2025.
- II. Borough Council Manager still liaising with Estates regarding the clearance around the base of the windmill and will confirm what is happening with this as soon as I receive an update.
- III. Borough Council Manager liaising with the respective contractors about:
 - the possibilities and limitations around demonstrating the sails turning but does not yet have a cost for this.
 - discussion with a number of other partners about the possibility of heritage walks that may be able to incorporate

the windmill and will update on this also when I have more news.

- IV. Press for an open day in new year – National Mills Day or Walk between here and Bromham.

16. Village Hall

a) Update – Cllr Surtess

- I. Attended Village Hall cttee meeting 23/10.
- II. Committee running smoothly with some former members still attending.
- III. Exploring ownership of the hall which appears to be with the Parish Council and Committee explored change under Charitable Incorporated Organisation. Committee decided to leave as is and ownership remains with the Parish Council .
- IV. Fireworks event went very smoothly – wrap up meeting to be had yet. People who set off fireworks this year not likely to continue and other volunteers to be trained.

PROPOSAL: Stevington Parish Council to continue paying insurance cover for the Village Hall.

PROPOSED: Cllr. James Surtess

SECONDED: Cllr. Jim Sinfield

17. Playing Field

a) Update - Maintenance of play equipment

- I. Trees, bushes and weeds inside play area to be cut back
- II. Acknowledged current contractors are doing a very good job.

18. Financial Matters

a) Financial Report

Accounts to be ratified were circulated to members prior to the meeting.

PROPOSED: Cllr. Gareth King

SECONDED: Cllr. John Strutt

b) S137 Grant Application/Anne Stileman Bursary – Stevington Craft Club

Current costs to club: £50/mnth including hall hire with regular attendance of 11 local children.

Proposal: To grant £150 for current year for materials only with a further £180 ring fenced for next year.

PROPOSED: Cllr. Janet Day

SECONDED: Cllr. Jim Sinfield

RP

c) NALC ratification

PROPOSAL: To ratify NALC national pay increase for Parish Clerk.

PROPOSED: Cllr. Gareth King

SECONDED: Cllr. James Surtees

d) NI Contributions increase

Not applicable to Parish Council Clerk.

19. Correspondence

Following correspondence received (names have been redacted in compliance with GDPR):

- I. Email complaint about traffic chaos in Stevington caused by parking for the fireworks.

Parish Council noted the comment and pointed out road closures are outside Parish Council jurisdiction. The Event was managed according to regulations

- II. 2 x Email messages from residents: Request for discussion about vehicles parking in Silver Street.

Discussion took place in Open Forum at this evenings' Parish Council meeting.

- III. Numerous emails with photos of HGV's ignoring weight restriction into village.

20. Any other Business *(for information only)*

JSi thanked the Committee for his co-option as a Parish Councillor.

21. Date of Next Meeting

22nd January 2025 Precept Budget setting meeting), Village Hall

2024-25 Meetings Calendar

- 26th March 2024 – Parish Council, Village Hall

STEVINGTON PARISH COUNCIL



The meeting was closed by the Chair at 9.21pm

Signed as a true reflection of the meeting:

Signed	Chair
Dated	27 th November 2024