

Meeting:	Stevington Parish Council Meeting 26 th March 2025 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. Nick Jones (NJ)
Apologies received:	Cllr. Robert Rigby (RR) Hannah King (HK)
Non-attendance:	None
Borough Council Member:	Cllr. Dylan Simmons (DS) Cllr. Nicky Gribble (NG)
Clerk to the Council:	Rosemary Plum (RP)
Public Attendance	None

MINUTES

1. Welcome

2 residents were present at the meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies received from:

- Cllr Robert Rigby
- Hanna Coleman

3. Declarations of Interest

Declarations received from:

- Cllr. Janet Day, Trustee of Barringer Trust
- Cllr. John Strutt, Trustee FOSMS
- Cllr. James Surtees, Parish Representative on Village Hall Committee

4. Open Forum

- Complaint from resident about items placed on footpaths, particularly Silver Street. Councillors advised of recent walk around with Bedford Borough Highways team to inspect potential issues. Large parcel box placed by a resident in Silver Street should not be placed there.

Borough Highways Department will contact the resident to advise.
Parish Council has been in contact with resident to advise of further action from the Borough.

- II. Further reports of properties on Silver Street with plant pots on the path. RP to speak with Borough Highways for their view on this situation.
- III. Concern raised about domestic refuse bins left on the pavement in Silver Street throughout the week. RP to report to Borough Environment Manager.
- IV. Following the walk round with the Borough Highways team, it was agreed there is no immediate solution to the narrow footpaths in the Parish.

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

Nothing to report.

7. Clerk's Report – information only

Covered on Agenda items for the meeting.

8. Borough Council Matters

a) The future of Rural Buses – Cllr. Nicky Gribble Portfolio Holder for Bedford Borough Council Environment Department and Ward Cllr (Ind) for Renhold & Ravensden

- I. Review of rural bus services commissioned in Autum 2024 with review of travel patterns. Concern raised about use of buses with 30% of buses running empty or with hardly any passengers.
- II. Borough has received more complaints about empty buses being run than complaints about buses not turning up.
- III. Bedford Borough has no statutory requirement to provide or support public transport. However, it recognises the need to support rural areas and wants to continue doing so. NG believes it's important to have a consistent bus service even if infrequent. Bus companies were invited to tender for two options:
 - A. A bus service without high usage
 - B. A bus service tailored to what people want, as evidenced by the data collected.
- IV. The annual cost of bus services in Bedford (Aug 2024) was between £1.3-£1.4m A service tailored to when it will be used, would reduce the cost to £850k per year.

- V. Stagecoach is non-profit and supported by Bedford Borough Council. Grant Palmer runs their services commercially and therefore only run a service where it is profitable, leading to some overlapping of services.
 - VI. Tendering process closed in Jan 2025. It then needs to be approved by the Traffic Commissioner, followed by timetabling which started in March 2025. Timetables have been issued based on passenger data and usage. There is an element of flexibility to consider some additional designated stops. Timetables cannot be changed once agreed by the traffic commissioner so changes can't happen overnight.
 - VII. Bedford Borough Council only have a small team for the area of work with decisions based on data. New timetables start 31st March 2025.
 - VIII. The Parish Council will pass any issues and feedback from residents and the Borough Council will try its best to help.
 - IX. Data comes from ticket information, passenger hard data and consultation questionnaires from both bus service providers.
 - X. Parish Councillors raised concern that the new timetable for Stevington sees the loss of the 7.30am and 8.30am service which misses school times for Bedford schools. The 6.20pm has also been stopped so students can't get home. Councillors feel it's illogical to have a bus arriving at 9.05am for work or study. NG will look into this concern and report back.
 - XI. Parish Councillors also called for smaller buses being run on rural routes.
- b) Borough Councillors Report
- I. DS and RR privileged to go to Church Room opening. It was a 'wonderful event, lovely lunch, great speeches. Fantastic new addition to the Church Room'.
 - II. Local devolutions has been shelved for this year as the Borough authorities involved couldn't agree what a future devolved authority would look like. Discussions will continue but Bedford is no longer in the fast-track option.
 - III. £150k allocated to flood reserve for problems within local communities. Flood groups can apply for recovery funds.
 - IV. St Pauls Bedford Town Centre – delayed redevelopment is now a work in progress with some overnight closures to traffic with total traffic closures during July school holidays.
 - V. Borough Highways maintenance budget has been increased by the Borough with additional contribution from the Government.
 - VI. Stevington Parish is now on scheduled 6-monthly drain and gulley clearance.
 - VII. 30% of Bromham now covered by glass recycling trial and DS and RR will be pushing heavily to remove bottle bank on parish

border with Stevington when 100% permanent coverage reached.

9. Councillor Roles & Responsibilities

a) Co-Option of new Councillors

PROPOSAL: To co-opt Hannah King to the position of Parish Councillor for Stevington.

PROPOSED: Cllr Jim Sinfield

SECONDED: Cllr. John Strutt

PROPOSAL: To co-opt Nick Jones to the position of Parish Councillor for Stevington.

PROPOSED: Cllr Gareth King

SECONDED: Cllr. Jim Surtees

b) Vice Chair role

Forward planning and legacy planning deferred to next meeting.

c) Review Portfolio holders

Appointment of Vice Chair and Portfolio Holders deferred to next meeting.

10. Planning

a) Wheaton Hill Appeal – update

Parish Councillors consider the appeal to be a reiteration of the statement before. Grounds for appeal don't seem clear. No new evidence or reason why Parish Council should change its previous objection. There are now 2 static caravans on the site. Parish Councillors unanimously opposed to the erection of a house on-site when, only in the last few years, the site had been deemed agricultural.

PROPOSAL: JD to attend the Planning Inspector's session with other Councillors to join if available.

VOTE: Unanimous agreement.

b) 14-16 Silver Street – additional application

No objections raised and the Parish Council will support this application.

11. Highways & Traffic Management Update

a) Site meeting with Borough Highways Officer – Update

- I. JSi,JSu,JD had very informative walk round with Borough Highways and Flood Management officers to look at various issues including:
 - a. trip hazard outside Red Lion and agreement reached on safety issue to be resolved by Borough Highways.
 - b. Bus stop bench - low priority and to be discussed further.

- c. Potential of a bell bollard on corner of Silver St – positive discussions but agreed this is a long permissions process without any great benefit and may even cause more issues with lorries turning/driving over them.
- d. Bollard outside property in Silver Street – Highways will discuss directly with resident regarding overhanging thatch and risk of high sided vehicles clipping the property.
- e. Parcel box outside property in Silver Street – see Open Forum Item i) on this Agenda.
- f. Clearance of trees and bushes covering signs near Duck End Farm – RP to refer to Highways Manager.
- g. Dragons Teeth and gate – still no update, RP to chase.
- h. A number of potholes have been temporarily filled in the last few days.
- i. JD advise residents of planned 40mph extension.
- j. Parish Councillors would like to see a further extension at West End. Discussion a while back about a red area on the bend as this is a dangerous area with no footpath and limited vision for drivers. RP to follow up with Borough Highways.

12. Environment & Footpaths

a) Update – Cllr. Strutt

- I. See attached report.
- II. 250 copies of document to be printed and distributed.
- III. Thanks for funding provided by Stevington Parish Council for the flood mitigation meeting.
- IV. Recent litter pick achieved 12 volunteers, 13 bags of rubbish. Issue for picking on Silver Street and Park Road as no insurance available outside 30mph limit and a lot of the rubbish is outside that limit. RP to check insurance for litter picking.
- V. Discussion around fly tipping along A421 – special training required for picking on national highways dangerous roads.
- VI. Community Bid for Lake Meadow – SEG discovered the asking price was high and weren't able to respond fast enough to get a bid together. JS called for a group of people to get together who may be willing to contribute financially should another opportunity arise. JS prepared to take the lead.
- VII. Grant funding may be available for putting in a storage pond to prevent flooding in other areas subject to land being available. Appears to be a lot of support for this type of initiative. Agreement fro councillors and JS willing to lead on this with support form other councillors.
- VIII. Call for strategic planning for longer-term projects including review of NDP when portfolio discussions are next held.

- b) SSSI update – Cllr. Day
 - II. Still waiting on site meeting with landowners and Councillors from Stevington and Pavenham.
 - III. Richard Fuller MP willing to attend site meeting about the footpath. JD to follow up.
- c) Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) for dog control – Borough Survey
 - I. Increase in dog fouling on the Playing Fields noted. May be a culmination of 3 months of bad weather and no observation.
 - II. Enclosed play area and graveyard are currently subject to PSPO.
 - III. Councillors agreed to not extend PSPO to entire Playing Field.
 - IV. Dog barking – pending prosecution action beginning of April.
 - V. Need new dog bins - consider dual purpose bins

13. Police Matters

- a) Update – Cllr. King
 - I. 1 reported of harassment.
- b) PCC public meeting April
 - I. RP to distribute information to Councillors

14. Community Matters

- a) Update – Cllr. Day

See attached report.
- b) Barringer Trust – update Cllr. Day
 - I. All policies reviewed at the monthly meeting 25th March 2025.

Other updates (for information only)

- Standpipe 14-16 Silver Street will be left in current position as may still be connected to water source.
- Footpaths – we note a lot of the hedges been trimmed before nesting season.
- Thanks given to resident, Damian Pell for clearing the footpaths.
- NDP review will be required in next 12 months.
- Friends of St Mary's possibly organising a VE80 event in May 2025. Bedford Borough will waive all road closure fees for VE80 events. JS in contact with FOSMS and will update Parish Council.
- Village Hall possibly organising a VE80 lunch in June 2025. RP write to Village Hall committee for more information.
- Defib training – RP to find trainer details with view to Parish Council organising training event.

15. Stevington Windmill

- a) Update – Cllr. King
 - I. See attached report
 - II. RP email Bedford Borough Council for maintenance update.

16. Village Hall

- a) Update – Cllr. Surtees
 - I. JS attended Village Hall AGM. All went well with no strong actions to follow.
 - II. Discussions about transfer of ownership – there is no strong desire to change the current arrangement with ownership currently residing with the Parish Council.
 - III. RP to send weekly report link to Will Stanbridge (Village Hall) and GK.
 - IV. Will Stanbridge is looking into cost and feasibility of repairs required in the play area.

17. Playing Field

- a) Update

See attached report from Cllr. King
- b) Grass cutting – ratify contract

See attached report from Cllr. King

PROPOSAL: To confirm AJ Contracting & Sons Ltd as Parish Council contractors for parish grass cutting requirements 2025-26.

PROPOSED: Cllr. Gareth King

SECONDED: Cllr. Jim Sinfield

18. Financial Matters

- a) Financial Report

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

PROPOSED: Cllr. John Strutt

SECONDED: Cllr. Jim Sinfield

19. Correspondence

- a. Enquiry about postal box in Silver Street – discussed under 11a) of this Agenda.
- b. Further images of lorries accessing the centre of the village.

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

Nothing report.

21. Date of Next Meeting

The Parish Council meeting date will be moved to the first Thursday of the month for the 2025-26 calendar.

2025-26 Meetings Calendar

- *(24 April 2025: Closed meeting 7.00-7.30pm followed by Annual Parish Meeting 7.30pm) – to be updated if agreed by majority of Councillors.*
- 1 May 2025 - Annual Parish Meeting 7.30pm
- 31 July 2025 – Parish Council Meeting 7.30pm
- 25 September 2025 – Parish Council Meeting 7.30pm
- 27 November 2025 – Parish Council Meeting 7.30pm
- 29 January 2026 – Parish Council Meeting 7.30pm
- 26 March 2026 – Parish Council Meeting 7.30pm

The meeting was closed by the Chair at 9.29pm

Signed as a true reflection of the meeting:

Signed	
Dated	<i>Chair</i>

JS Parish Council Environment Report for meeting on 26-03-2025

Stevington Flood Group

Updated Flood Plan: Following the Sept 24 flood, the Flood Plan is being updated, and arrangements are being made to organise training for flood volunteers and with Village Hall committee to use the Village Hall as an emergency response centre.

Presentation to the Flood Forum 12th February: SFG presented the work done to date in preparing the flood plan and how this supported the community response in the Sept 2024 Flood in Stevington. Our presentation was well received (see note in Bedford Independent [Communities encouraged to set up 'flood resilience groups' after successes in Stevington and Kempston](#)).

Culvert Repair work: At the Flood Forum meeting we specifically mentioned the need to re-engineer culverts at West End and at 17 Church road. Following that meeting, the Mayor encouraged us to submit a proposal to BBC to fund the repair work. Keith Parkinson (SFG) has prepared a first draft of a report on the condition of the culverts at West End and 17 Church Road and this will be discussed on 02-04-25 prior to submission to BBC for funding.

Non-technical summary of the Flood plan: The current flood plan is very technical and so we are in the process of preparing a short non-technical summary which explains what residents should expect and how to respond in the event of a flood emergency. We would like to distribute this to all residents in the village.

Proposition: That SPC fund the printing and circulation of the Non-Tech summary once completed and reviewed

Talk on Natural Flood Mitigation 25th February

Chloe Apicella (Wildlife Trust) gave a talk on natural flood mitigation methods on 25th Feb. The talk was well received by attendees. Chloe has since sent us copies of her slides and useful documentation related to raingardens and natural flood management. These have been sent to Rob Eadie to be posted on the Stevington Website.

SEG have asked me to thank SPC for covering the cost of this event.

Litter Pick

SEG organised a successful litter pick on 8th March. We had 12 volunteers and picked 13 bags of rubbish including some metal junk from the playing field, which has now been removed. The next litter pick event will be in 3 months time.

There is still a lot of litter along the ditches on both sides of the road on Silver street between A428 and the railway walk entrance at the top of Wheaton Hill. Many lengths of the ditches on both sides of the road were too difficult for the picker to get into to reach the litter. This part of Silver street is also in a national highway speed limit zone with cars travelling at up to 60mph and a significant highway accident risk. Bedford Borough Council insurance which is only valid inside village 30mph zone we should not really be picking outside these limits.

Question: Does Stevington parish council insurance cover volunteers picking rubbish in those areas within the parish boundary that lie outside the village 30mph speed limit zone?

Community bid for Lake Meadow

I was made aware of Lake Meadow being put up for sale after it had been announced on Stevington Facebook by Tim Stanbridge. I posted a response that the village should investigate the possibility of a community bid to purchase the land. Unfortunately, the indicative price of £160,000 (8acres @ £20k/acre) was well above what could be raised within any sensible time limits. The site has been now sold privately, subject to contract.

Community purchase of Lake Meadow would have been very popular. My Facebook message and the note I placed in the village magazine generated a positive response from many residents and several have said they would be willing to make "significant" financial contributions.

One of the problems about organising a community bid for land when it comes on sale, is the amount of time it takes to raise the money. It's usually sold before we can even get a bid group together. I have received suggestions that

we should bring together a coalition of village residents who support the idea of community land ownership and would be willing to contribute to the cost of a future land purchase opportunity, with some idea of how much each is willing to contribute so that we are more prepared should another opportunity arise.

Question: Would this proposal have the support of the Parish Council?

Council Report for Parish Council meeting Wednesday 26th March 2025

Cllr. Janet Day, Chair

This summary aims to highlight the issues I have been involved in or made aware of.

Village Hall

James will update for the VH

Playground/Playing field

We are still awaiting a review of last year's ROSPA report from a colleague of WS.

Playing field and dog mess

GK has highlighted this in his feedback

I propose we consider a more formal monitoring plan

The William Barringer Charity

I have attended the regular trustees meetings which are monthly. No significant issues to feedback on. There is still one vacancy for a trustee.

The Cross

I have continued to take down notices for events which have happened and keep the notices to the bottom level.

Recruiting councillors

We still have one vacancies to fill.

Dog bins

We need to progress having these put in place.

Highways

JSi will give feedback on our meeting with Highways but we still need to approach AP re dragons teeth and gates.

I spoke to and the Clerk e mailed the resident on Silver St regarding the narrowness of the pavement outside her house.

Standpipe outside 14 to 16 Silver St.

I had contact by phone and e mail with the developer on the site regarding the removal and replacement of the standpipe but they decide to leave it in place work around it whilst work on the house is undertaken.

Footpaths

Walking around the footpaths it is noticeable that the majority of hedges have now been cut back. I propose the PC writes formally to Damien Pell to thank him for clearing footpath up along Evening House on Park Road and we ask the maintenance team at the borough to now keep it clear.

If we can fill all the vacancies on the PC it would be good if one councillor had oversight of footpaths.

Church Room link building

I attended the opening of the link building at the Church Rd on behalf of the PC on Saturday 24th March. It was attended by Richard Fuller MP and I spoke to him with one of the landowners affected about the footpath at Stevington Marsh. He indicated a willingness to come along to a site meeting if he was available.

Local Plan and review of neighbourhood plan.

It is likely the NP will have to be reviewed this year, hopefully it will not be as onerous as drawing up the original plan was. We will possibly need a small working group to undertake some work on the review. There is likely to be some workshops for this later in the year.

Janet Day Monday 24th March 2025

Parish Report

Cllr. Gareth King

Maintenance of Cemetery

Following a site visit with Andy Janes of AJ Contracting discussions were held regarding the work to be undertaken/requirements and its frequency.

AJ stated with all the required work it would very time consuming working around the individual head stones/ edging, the uneven ground and the size of the machinery available to complete the tasks

AJ indicated on a good day it's a whole days work for one man on a variety of machinery

AJ stated at this time he would be unable to complete the work required as does not have the capacity in his current work schedule.

I asked him to give me a quote on what he would charge if he was able to complete the work and he stated £280 to £300 per cut

Stevington Windmill

Site visit completed on Wednesday 19th March no ground maintenance work has been undertaken during the winter months on the self set brambles or paths.

No litter at the location

Stevington Playing Field

Site visit completed on Friday 21st March signs of dog fouling all over the field also signs of wild animal excrement at the top right hand side of the field.

Play area no signs of litter but grass will require mowing and bushes trimmed back in the near future.

First signs of flowers on the area by the entrance where the bulbs were sown earlier in the year.

AJ Contracting will start the grass maintenance of the site week commencing 24th March

Cllr. Gareth King