MINUTES

1: Apologies
Apologies were received from Cllr Haley and Burnage (maternity leave)

2: Declarations on Interest in items on the Agenda
Cllr Banks declared an interest in the quote for tree removal from SPS Tree & Garden Maintenance.

Cllr Sartain declared an interest in the quote from the DJ for the 4th July event.

3: To consider any applications for dispensation
The Council RESOLVED that Cllrs Bank and Sartain would be able to take part in the discussions but would be unable to vote.

4: Public Participation
None.

5: Minutes of the previous meeting
The Council RESOLVED that Cllr Melville should sign the minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council held on the 22nd January 2026 as a true and accurate record.

6: Matters arising from previous minutes
The leaflet/flyer for Parish Councillor recruitment has not yet been completed. Cllr Melville reminded Cllr Banks about this.

Cllr Melville advised that the recruitment for a replacement weekend caretaker had been unsuccessful to date. One candidate who had been interviewed pulled out today.

The Council RESOLVED to pause the advert and re-advertise next week. The advert should also go out through the BATPC.

Quotes have not been received for the stoneworks and external tiles at the Village Hall. Cllr Melville reminded Cllr Serino about this.

Cllr Melville asked the Clerk to follow up with the Caretaker about the lone working alarm and the reorganisation of the cleaning materials cupboard.

7: Chairman’s Report
The Council RESOLVED to instruct Woodfines Solicitors to pursue the company that installed the paths on the Sports Field to remedy the defects.

The initial quote is for £900.

Cllr Melville advised that he had been responding to a complaint from a local resident about the works at Montgomery. Bedford Borough Council are also involved. Cllr Melville notes that there are no plans to change the speed calming measures that have been agreed.

Cllr Melville asked Cllr Spice to follow up the issue of contractors leaving mud on the road at Montgomery and also the Universal Studios contractors.

Local residents and the Parish Council do not feel supported by the Borough Councillor team. The Parish Council formally wanted to acknowledge the support and contribution from Cllr Spice however the other two councillors have shown no engagement. Local residents receive no communication from The Borough Councillors and many do not know who they are. Cllr Melville has sent a letter today outlining the concerns and will attend a Full Council meeting in the near future.

8: Report from Bedford Borough Council
Cllr Spice advised that the Borough Council approved the budget for the 2026-27 financial year yesterday. She advised that speed cameras are now in the budget however villages are being asked if they want to retain them.

The Council RESOLVED that it wanted to keep the speed cameras in the village and at Kempston Hardwick.

Cllr Spice that the timetable for the development of the new Local Plan should be agreed by April 2026

9: Clerk's Financial Report

9.1 Authorise payments for BACS Transfer

The Council RESOLVED to authorise the BACS Reports for the Parish Council and the Sports Pavilion.

The Clerk also highlighted some concerns about some invoices from ACE Fire & Security. They are trying to charge for a period when then Council could be out of contract with them. They are suggesting that they will refund at the point however the Clerk feels that the invoices should be re-issued covering the contracted period only.

The Council RESOLVED that the Clerk should proceed on that basis.

9.2 Balances of Accounts

Members were advised that as at the 21st January 2026, the balances of the Parish Council and Sports Fields accounts were as follows:

£11,006.05
£33,613.31
£16,360.07
£341,468.74

The Clerk advised that there were only sufficient funds in the main Parish Council account to cover the expenditure for this month. It was RESOLVED that a VAT return would be submitted to cover the expenditure for March 2026.

10: Quotations for authorisation

10.1 Finance Training for the Clerk

The Council RESOLVED that the Clerk should attend the training on the 19th March about preparing income and expenditure accounts.

10.2 Portable Toilet for the event on the 4th July 2026

The Council RESOLVED to accept the quote from LSK. This will be funded from reserves.

10.3 First Aid provision for the event on the 4th July 2026

The Council RESOLVED to accept the quote from Team Medic for £3,303.20.

This will be funded from reserves.

10.4 DJ for the event on the 4th July 2026

Cllr Sartain declared an interest. The Council RESOLVED to accept the quote from Mac's Entertainment for £135. This will be funded from reserves.

10.5 Entertainment for the Gala Dinner in November 2026

The Council RESOLVED to accept the quote from Colin Reid for £395. This will be funded from reserves.

10.6 Average Speed Cameras

This no longer needed to be discussed in light of the update from Cllr Spice.

10.7 New Premises Licence Application

The Council RESOLVED to accept the quote from Woodfines Solicitors.

10.8 Village Hall Tree Removal

Cllr Banks declared an interest. The Council RESOLVED to accept the quote from Countrywide. These works are pending planning permission.

10.9 Stage & Lighting Tower for the event on the 4th July 2026

Please refer to item 14.

10.10 Golf Buggy Hire for the event on the 4th July 2026

It was RESOLVED that this would be considered at the next meeting when the quote for insurance is available.

10.11 Afternoon Tea for the 100 Year Celebrations

The Council RESOLVED to set a maximum budget of £1,000 for the Afternoon Tea on the 22nd March

11: Planning Applications & Decisions

11.1 Planning Applications & Decisions received before the despatch of the Agenda

Ref: 26/00127/FUL Full Planning Application proposed construction of temporary highway crossover for construction vehicle access and site compound @ Marston Vale Middle School, The Crescent Stewartby, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK43 9NH (please also see amendment)

The Council RESOLVED that it objected to this application on safety grounds given the proposal to have heavy plant near a children's play area. The Council suggests that access to the site could be achieved through the school's own rear access.

Ref: 26/00186/FUL Full Planning Application proposed erection of two-bay garage/garden store building at rear and associated drive/turning area @ 40 Churchill Close, Stewartby, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK43 9LU

The Council RESOLVED that it had no objections to this application.

Ref: 26/00157/MAF Major Full and Change of Use Application proposed development of a flood alleviation scheme in connection with the full application for three Drive Through Cafes (Sui Generis) and / or Restaurants (E(b)) and Buildings for commercial and/or Trade Counter Purposes within Use
Classes Eg (ii) Eg (iii) B2, and/or B8 uses (with ancillary uses) and/or Builders Merchant (Sui Generis) and associated landscaping. car and cycle parking, services areas, access arrangements, and associated works (LPA Reference 25/01169/MAF) @ land on the south side of the A421 Ampthill Road, Elstow, Bedfordshire

The Council RESOLVED that it objects to this application for the reasons discussed previously.

11.2 Planning Applications & Planning Decisions received after the despatch of the Agenda

None

11.3 Update on Universal Studios

None

11.4 Planning Appeal

Ref: 21/03246/MAF Major Full and Change of Use Country Court Care Homes 5 Limited proposed demolition of the existing buildings and redevelopment for a 65-bed care home and associated access, parking and landscaping @ land south west of Railway Cottages, Ampthill Road, Kempston Hardwick, Bedfordshire

The Council RESOLVED that it had no objections to this application and fully supports it. The only condition would be is that there is no right turn allowed on exiting the site onto the B520.

12: Amenities

12.1 Highways/Lighting

Cllr Law and Banks will check the highways and lighting and report any issues.
Some potholes have already been reported.

12.2 Recreation Area

The carousel in the Sports Field play area should be installed soon.

12.3 Social Engagement

It was RESOLVED that monthly updates about the work of the Parish Council should be put out on social media.

12.4 Sports Field/Pavilion

Cllr Banks advised that no football had been played since the new year due to the weather.

12.5 Village Hall

Cllr Melville advised that the Parish Council is having to financially support the Village Hall due to the high energy bills. This will be in the region of £3,500 for the period Jan – Mar 2026. The Subsidence Report has also now been received.

12.6 Policing

None

12.7 Encyclis

None

13: Proposal for Foodbank

Cllr Sartain to lead on this and provide a report for the next meeting.

Clerk to add to the Agenda.

14: Community Events 2026 & Fountain

Cllr Spice advised the meeting that she had been able to achieve a £2,562 saving on the quote that the Council had already received from Concept (£7,320 - £2,562). They will also provide radios/walkie-talkies for the event free of charge.

Cllr Banks was asked to speak to the Middle School about using their car park for the day.

There will be an exhibition in the Village Hall on the 5th September. Cllr Melville asked Cllr Law to lead on this event.

Cllr Melville shared the provisional site plan and road closure plan for the day. The Event Management Plan will be ready for submission on the end of March 2026. The Council RESOLVED to accept the quote for security however traffic marshals will need to be added to this.

The next Events Meeting will be held on the 12th March 2026.

15: Grants

None

16: Council Surgery / Community Engagement

None

17: Bus Shelter

The Council considered the email from a local resident.

The Council RESOLVED that the caretaker would be tasked to make a small ramp.

18: Items of an urgent nature or for inclusion on the next agenda

None

19: Close of Meeting and items for the next Agenda.

Meeting closed at 8.30pm.

20: Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on the 19th March 2026 @ 6.30 pm.