Parish Council
Thursday 19-Mar-2026 @ 18:30
Dave Law Sports Pavilion, Park Crescent, Stewartby

MINUTES

1: Apologies
Apologies were received from Cllr Haley who is currently working away.

2: Declarations on Interest in items on the Agenda
None.

3: To consider any applications for dispensation
None.

4: Public Participation
Robert and Michelle Ford attended the meeting raising issues as follows:

The long-term impact of Universal Studios on traffic, local communities, potholes, contingency plans for roads etc. Robert advised the Council that Blake Stephenso MP, wanted to lean on him to assist with local consultation.

Communication about the Universal development – Cllr Melville and Borough Cllr Spice advised that meetings involving all parties will be starting imminently. This will enable the Parish Council to communicate more effectively. This situation has been impacted and hindered by some bloggers.

Train Station moving – Borough Cllr Spice advised that a consultation would be starting out this however she encouraged people to contact EWR and copy this to the Engagement Team at Bedford Borough Council. Cllr Spice will give Robert the details.

Hansons Reach – concern was raised about the anti-social behaviour and thefts for the Co-op. Cllr Melville advised that very little is reported to the Police therefore the data does not suggest that there is an issue. Cllr Melville encouraged the reporting of incidents by residents and will put a post out on social media and will also speak to the Community Inspector.

Persimmons/Encore – expressed frustration that no-one is held accountable for maintaining or completing works and therefore the site cannot be handed over to the Borough Council. There are currently no effective speed or parking restrictions and significant cracks in the roads and pathways.

Cllr Melville advised that there was no mechanism in the UK to hold these companies to account and no timeframes set.

Increase in Council Tax – concerns were raised about this and the fact the Parish Council had an excess of funds. Cllr Melville advised that the Council holds approximately £340k which is the remainder of the monies that it was given by Permissions in 2020 to run the Sports Pavilion and field ten years. These monies are ring-fenced and they cannot be spent on anything else. The Council has had to allow for an increase in staffing costs due to national annual pay awards that have to be accepted and National Insurance costs.

Contractors have also had to increase their costs and the there is an aging Village Hall in a Conservation Area that has increasing costs.

The increase in Council Tax as a result of the Parish Council's increase is about £18 across the year.
100 Year Event – was concerned that this was happening and then the precept was increased. Did not feel that it was appropriate for funds to be spent on fireworks. Cllr Melville confirmed that the cost of the fireworks was being met from sponsorship.

Lack of Communication – feels that Facebook could be used more proactively an Agenda and minutes of meetings could be shared there. Cllr Melville advised that the Cllr responsible for social media is currently absent and hat there is a shortage of Parish Councillors.
He advised that community engagement is something that the Council is looking at as previous surgeries have not been well attended.

Cllrs were reminded by Cllr Melville to speak through the Chair at meetings.

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 19th February 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 a solicitor's letter about the paths would go out next week.

Cllr Melville asked Cllr Banks if she had spoken to the Middle School about using their car park on the 4th July 2026. Cllr Banks advised that she thought this was no longer needed but will now speak with them.

7: Chairman's Report

Cllr Melville advised that Cllr Haley was still not available and that he would continue to be absent until the end of June 2026.

Cllr Melville reiterated that communication needed to be improved and that there should be regular Facebook posts (weekly).

8: Report from Bedford Borough Council

Cllr Spice advised that there had been recent issues at the Traveller's site. Funding was secured too clear the litter, asbestos and tidy the area.

Cllr Burnage asked if the residents will be held accountable for this? Cllr spice advised that she did not know but would find out. She assumed that they had a duty to be good tenants.

Cllr Spice feels that many of the concerns relating to Montgomery will be resolved once the works have been completed as there will be no loss of parking. A temporary ramp has been installed at the bus shelter to assist with accessibility, and a permanent one will be installed later.

Cllr Spice advised that the damage caused to a grass verge on Hansons Reach will be made good by the Borough Council. They will also clear the substation area and clear the litter. She asked if anyone had a photo of the bin lorry on the grass.

Cllr Burnage reported a similar incident at Alexander Close. Cllr Spice agreed to look into this.

Cllr Spice advised that regular communication meetings with Universal Studios and all local parties would be commencing soon.

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.

9.2 Balances of Accounts

Members were advised that as at the 28th February 2026, the balances of the Parish Council and Sports Fields accounts were as follows:

£37,276.23
£32,299.63
£10,935.52
£341,468.74

The Clerk advised that the monies had been received from the recent VAT Return and the grant from Veolia.

9.3 Village Hall Accounts 2026-27

It was RESOLVED that the income and expenditure from the Parish Council would be fully transferred to the Village Hall at the start of their new financial year in October 2026.

9.4 Job Advert for Weekend Caretaker

It was RESOLVED that Cllr Banks would update the Clerk later next week on how the interviews had gone. A budget of £200 for a further advert was set if needed.

10: Quotations for authorisation

10.1 Golf Buggy Insurance

The Council RESOLVED to defer this to the next meeting.

10.2 Replacement Defibrillator Supplies

The Council RESOLVED to accept the quote for the replacement pads at a cost of £100.

10.3 Gate Hinge

The Council RESOLVED to accept the quote to for the gate hinge so that the gate can be reinstated.

10.4 Bus Shelter Ramp

This has been installed by Bedford Borough Council.

10.5 Insurance Excess for the Village Hall

The Council RESOLVED to fund the excess of £2,500.

10.6 Traffic Management for the event on the 4th July 2026

Cllr Melville advised that he was waiting for an up-to-date quote therefore it was RESOLVED that this would be deferred to the next meeting.

11: Planning Applications & Decisions

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

None

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

Ref: CB/18/01969/OUT @ Land between Brogborough, Lidlington and Marston Moretaine Proposal: Outline Application (EIA): development for up to 5,000 new homes specialist residential accommodation, up to 30ha of employment land, retail, community, open spaces, leisure and sport uses, hotel uses, four lower schools, two middle schools, one upper school, woodland planting, waterbodies and waterway links, ecological areas, accesses, cycle and pedestrian routes, supporting infrastructure, ground remodelling, landscaping and demolition works.

The Council RESOLVED that it objected to this application.

11.3 Update on Universal Studios

None

Cllr Melville also advised that he would be attend the Planning Committee meeting next week about the proposed development at the Interchnage.

12: Amenities

12.1 Highways/Lighting

Cllr Law and Banks will check the highways and lighting and report any issues.

12.2 Recreation Area

The carousel in the Sports Field play area has been installed.

Cllr Burnage advised that the play equipment at The Green would be resprayed green in the next two weeks.

12.3 Social Engagement

None

12.4 Sports Field/Pavilion

Cllr Banks advised that the first football of the year had been played last week,

12.5 Village Hall

None

12.6 Policing

None

12.7 Encyclis

None

13: Proposal for Foodbank

Cllr Melville tanked Cllr Sartain for her detailed proposal. It was RESOLVED that this would be deferred until the next meeting to enable Cllrs to have read the document.

14: Community Events 2026 & Fountain

The report about the fountain was considered. The cost to re-instate is £98k plus the cost of reconnecting the utilities. It was RESOLVED that this would be reviewed again next year.

The next meeting of the Events Committee will be held on the 9th April 2026 @ 6.30 pm.

15: Grants

The Clerk advised that the monies for the new carousel needed to be reclaimed.

The grant from Bedford Borough Council also needs to be reclaimed.

16: Council Surgery / Community Engagement

None

17: Review of Asset Register

The Council considered the Asset Register and adding the three mobile phones that staff have however these are on contract and they have not been purchased outright.

18: Section 137 Funding Request from the Pre-School

The Clerk advised that no further information has been provided about the cost of the storage.

The Council RESOLVED to defer a decision into further information has been received.

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

None

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

Meeting closed at 8.18pm.

21: Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on the 16th April 2026 @ 6.30 pm.