

Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 3rd March 2026 in the Village Hall

PRESENT:

Cllr. S. Fardon (Chair), J. Abbott, C. Bays, P. Jones, R. Saunders, T. Saunders, J. Walker, P. White, R. Worker the Clerk, Mrs. Paice and 1 member of the public.

1. Public Open Session:

Resident had come to observe the Council. She offered to donate two Persian ironwood trees and indicated that her company might be able to help with producing the Directory. Council thanked her and would discuss where to plant the trees at the April meeting.

Clerk

2. Apologies: P. Olney (illness) Council noted that Cllr. Olney had missed 6 meetings due to illness but Council was content for her to remain as a councillor.

3. Declarations of Interest: Chair for item 10 as a member of the Youth Club Committee. Cllr. Abbott for item 15a) as a resident of The Furlong and 20a) as a Trustee of the Scout Group.

4. Minutes of the Meeting held on 13th January 2026:

Resolved: to adopt the minutes.

5. Clerk's Report:

Highways – Clerk had requested lines in Station Road near the crossing be re-painted, the verge in Highfield Road be repaired and ivy be cleared from the path from Station Road to Chapel Pound. Clerk had also requested an update on the dips in Lovell Road – no response to date. Bridleway 2 (Highfield Road – Milton Ernest) would continue to be closed for railway embankment works and Station Road would be closed 09:00 -14:30 on 29.03.26. for the Oakley 20 Road Race. Concerns had been raised that a vehicle was blocking the access road to the Kindergarten. The road is privately owned but there is a public footpath along it which had been blocked and Cllr. Walker had reported to the Borough Footpaths Team.

Speed Cameras - 58 notices of intended prosecution were issued in January, 56 for speeds up to 40mph and 2 for speeds between 40mph and 41mph

Speed Watch – no events in January or February

Litter bins – all bins were emptied w/c 19.01.26. but the ash tray at the Post Office bin was left. Reported to Bedford BC. All bins were emptied w/c 16.02.26. & w/c 02.03.26.

Quiz – profit from the January quiz was £238.01 and the February quiz £249.00

Station Road Development – Council and NDP Group would be meeting with the planning agents for the site on 11.03.26.

Land at the Weir – the new lease to be signed by the Chair

Council Website and Email – the new website address was www.oakleybedford-pc.gov.uk and the new mailbox parishclerk@oakleybedford-pc.gov.uk These would be linked to the current addresses for the time being.

6. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Meeting held on 13th January 2026: none

Action

7. Reports

ORA Meeting 17.02.26.

Cllrs. Abbott & T. Saunders attended. ORA/OSSC reported that feedback from the Christmas Fair and New Years Eve event was positive and the extension was expected to be completed mid to late March with an opening night event on 20.03.26. R&B Garage event would be held on 29.08.26, fireworks on 07.11.26. and the Christmas Fete on 12.12.26. A new contractor had been appointed for the football pitches, in addition to the current maintenance. Good numbers were attending poker sessions on Wednesdays and Sundays and a new darts area had been installed. The Motorcycle Club finished the year with 592 members. £6,800 was given to East Anglian Air Ambulance in December, their AGM was 12.03.26, sponsor dealerships would be visiting on various Thursday nights and a band would be playing on 30.07.26. for an anniversary event. A noise mitigation group had been set up and was liaising with Bedford BC. Councillors had no concerns to raise.

Action

8. East West Rail (EWR):

Cllr. Walker reported that the EWR meeting on 27.01.26. at Clapham was well attended but EWR was reluctant to show new drawings. A tunnel at Clapham had been dismissed and there would only be minor amendments to the scheme in the future. A formal submission to Government was expected in 2027 but the railway was not likely to be constructed until the 2030s. Cllr. Walker noted that bore holes had been dug following the gas issue at Cleat Hill and EWR was satisfied that this would not be a problem.

Action

9. Police Report:

Cllr. Abbott attended the priority setting meeting 30.01.26. Car crime was considered the major priority and then drugs. They had also been concentrating on the screws strewn on the roads. Police had advised that they had not seen drug use/dealing at the river and councillors suggested they visit the Churchyard. There were 3 reported crimes in the second half of December, 2 assaults with injury in Lovell Road & Lincroft and 1 sexual offence; 1 malicious communications offence in Lincroft in January and 3 in the first half of February, 1 assault with injury in The Furlong, 1 assault without injury in Parrott Close and 1 malicious communications offence in Station Road.

Action

10. Oakley Youth Club:

Chair and Clerk had met with 4YP on 25.02.26. 4YP had quoted £3,959.00 plus training, phone & overheads to run the Youth Club during Summer 2026 and £10,127.00 plus training, resources, phone & overheads for July 2026 – September 2027. Three young people had attended on 13.02.26 and six on 27.02.26. but entry and refreshments were currently free, which was not a long term option. Chair noted that she would have more time to supervise the Youth Club in a year's time and Clerk reported that Clapham was open to considering a joint Youth Club run by 4YP, however they currently only had twelve regular attendees. Council agreed that the cost of 4YP was too great for the numbers attending.

Proposed by Cllr. Worker, seconded by Cllr. R. Saunders that that the Youth Club close at the end of March and be reconsidered in 2027

Resolved

Action

Chair

11. Play Equipment:**a) installation of play equipment**

The contractor who had been appointed to install the play equipment was injured and unable to work so Clerk had obtained an additional quotation for £1,450.00 (no VAT) to install the equipment. As there was no Council meeting in February Council had accepted so that the equipment could be used and the decision was ratified.

b) quarterly inspection

The latest inspection had indicated that there were a number of loose fixings on The Furlong multiplay and the seat needed re-staining. On the Green, there were loose fixings on three of the multiplay units, the swings and the log climber, wet pour around the seesaw and log climber needed repairing and grass mats needed repairing around the silver multiplay, the supernova, zip wire and wooden multiplay

Contractor had quoted £470.00 + VAT for repairs

Proposed by Cllr. R. Saunders, seconded by Cllr. Bays that the quotation for £470.00 + VAT be accepted

Resolved

Action

Clerk

A new inspection contract was needed for 2026/27 and the current contractor had quoted £342.00 + VAT for including a discount for inspecting Clapham at the same time. Clapham PC had agreed the quotation

Proposed by Cllr. Abbott, seconded by Cllr. Jones that the quotation for £342.00 + VAT be accepted

Resolved

Clerk

b) road safety near Lincroft Academy and Oakley Primary

A resident was concerned about dangerous driving outside Lincroft Academy and Oakley Primary on 27.01.26. when a vehicle was wheel spinning, swerving across the road and losing traction in wet, cold and windy weather. The incident and vehicle registration had been reported to the police but the resident had requested a review of traffic conditions and road safety measures near the schools and consideration of additional protections such as traffic calming, stricter signage, or CCTV. Council agreed not to pursue as no further incidents had been reported.

Clerk

Cllr. Abbott noted that all the potholes in the village had been reported but Highways had a huge number to fill throughout the Borough following recent bad weather. Bedford BC intended to resurface the High Street crossroads and Reynes Drive/High Street junction in due course.

Chair noted that Station Road needed resurfacing too. Cllr. Walker confirmed that the developers of the new site would not be required to resurface under the S. 106 agreement but Council could raise with them. A vehicle had also been left in Station Road for a long period. It had no MOT so Clerk to report to the police.

Clerk

Cllr. R. Saunders commented that water was still leaking the Bromham side of the bridges and Cllr. Abbott noted that Bromham councillors were pursuing.

Cllr. Jones noted that the Post Office was pleased with the new bin at the Reynes Drive/High Street junction.

16. Borough Council Report:

Cllr. Abbott reported that the Borough budget had been passed and Council Tax raised by 4.99%. Exceptional Financial Support funding had been approved so Bedford BC could use capital monies to fund running costs over the next three years. All councils were suffering from years of Government underfunding and most of Borough money was spent on providing statutory services. A best value inspection was being carried out and residents could comment at BedfordBVI@communities.gov.uk A report would be submitted to Government but Bedford BC would not see it until it was published. Commissioners could be brought in to run the Council if the report concluded it was not currently being well run. Food caddies were being delivered and collections would begin on 30.03.26. Green waste collections had resumed and would remain free of charge at present. Parishes would not be required to maintain speed cameras in villages in 2026/27 and CIL money would be used to maintain them in Bedford. The Flood Forum would be held on 26.03.26. The Local Development Scheme, which set out the process for the new Local Plan, would be considered by the Executive shortly.

Action

Cllr. Walker noted that changes to planning law would take away local influence and NDPs were no longer being given weight. Council agreed to raise with Mr. Fuller MP. She noted that the budget included funding for two ASB officers in Bedford and two mobile officers, previously funded by OPCC. Glass collection had increased by 24% since it could be put in orange bins and international sport had returned to the Athletics Stadium now the track had been replaced. Oasis had been sold to David Lloyd Clubs and would be demolished. The site would be retained for leisure use and sessions for schools and clubs would be provided. Money had been included in the budget for outdoor leisure in this area and Bedford BC was consulting with residents.

Clerk

17. Planning Applications and Decisions and other planning matters:

Decisions notified since Council meeting – 13th January 2026

Application No. **25/02433/TPO** - re-pollarding 4 out of a row of 5 Lombardy poplars - at Treetops, 55 High Street

Parish Comments: No objection

Decision/Date: Permission 08.01.26.

Application No. **25/02390/FUL** - first floor side/rear extension over existing ground floor and single storey rear extension replacing conservatory and associated alterations at 43 High Street.

Parish Comments: No objection

Decision/Date: Permission 20.01.26.

Application No. **25/02434/TPO** - reduction of a poplar and willow tree at Shires Fold, 55A High Street.

Parish Comments: No objection

Decision/Date: Permission 18.02.26.

Applications received since Council meeting – 13th January 2026:

Application No. **a) 26/00116/TPO** – removal of a hornbeam in the front garden of Oakview Westfield Road

Parish Comments: No objection but request a replacement tree in its place

Application No. **b) 26/00128/PIP** - Permission in Principle for the erection of 5-7 dwellings at 20 Lovell Road

Parish Comments: Objection on the grounds that:

1. Oakley has already allocated over 50 houses in its Neighbourhood Plan
2. The site is outside the SPA in the open countryside
3. The development would contribute to coalescence between Oakley and Clapham
4. Lovell Road is narrow and very busy during peak hours. Many students walk to Lincroft Academy from Clapham along this road and additional traffic would exacerbate the risk to them.

Application No. **c) 26/00219/FUL** - erection of detached garage at 3A The Spinney, Parsonage Close
 Parish Comments: No objection

Application No. **d) 26/00228/S73A** - erection of first floor extension above existing garage structure to form gym/ office/activity space (development already carried out) at Parklands, The Drive
 Parish Comments: Objection on the grounds that the proposed extension does not fit with the appearance of the house or the previous appearance of the garage block prior to the extension

Cllr. Walker noted that application 25/02057/S73 for Oakley Kindergarten was not due to be heard by the Planning Committee until April and asked if it could be brought forward to March. Cllr. Abbott to pursue.

JA

18. Planning Policy:

Action

a) Neighbourhood Development Plan Review - Housing Needs Survey (HNS)

159 responses had been received to the HNS i.e. 15.9% response rate which was relatively low. BRCC was compiling a report and would forward to Council shortly.

b) Government consultation on National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Government was consulting on changes to the NPPF. CPRE was concerned that these would weaken Green Belt protections and allow speculative development, erase safeguards for ‘valued landscapes’ outside of officially protected areas and provide no guarantee for minimum levels of affordable housing in rural areas. Council agreed to support their comments.

Clerk

19. Correspondence:

Action

CPRE commemorative oak tree

CPRE had offered a free oak tree to parish and town councils to commemorate 100 years of CPRE and 40 years of Bedfordshire CPRE. Councillors had suggested Riverside Meadow and Clerk had requested a tree. An engraved freestanding commemorative plaque from CPRE would cost £30.00.

Council had been asked to sign an agreement that the tree would be maintained to ensure successful establishment and would remain at the site for a minimum term of 15 years.

Proposed by Cllr. Jones, seconded by Cllr. Worker that Council purchase a plaque and sign the agreement

Resolved

Clerk

20. Finance Matters:

Action

a) distribution of quiz profits

Council had agreed to donate £200 of the quiz profits to each of the Day Centre and the home for disabled residents for their Christmas events and the remainder to the Scout Group, the Brownies/Rainbows, the two Messy Churches, AFC Oakley Junior Football and the ATC.

Total profit for 2025/26 was £2,928.43. The Day Centre and disabled residents' home had already received £200 each so the remaining profit was £2,528.43. The Good Neighbours Group had recently requested additional funding from the quiz for DBS checks for volunteers. Council had donated £300 to the Group in December 2025.

Proposed by Cllr. Worker, seconded by Cllr. White that £400.00 be donated to each of the six groups previously agreed and the remaining £128.43 be donated to the Good Neighbours Group

Resolved s. 137 donations

Clerk

b) accounts to pay

Income and balances:

NatWest Bank – Current account balance at 28.02.26.	£10,312.89
NatWest Bank – Business Reserve account balance at 28.02.26.	£24,408.50
Nationwide – Savings Bond	£63,147.25
Hampshire Trust – Savings Bond	£85,013.20

Received since last meeting:

Worker	January quiz	£287.01
Davis	Allotment rent	£24.03
Hyden	Allotment rent	£24.03
Elsby	Allotment rent	£24.03
Osmond	Allotment rent	£24.03
NatWest	Interest	£1.90
ORA	Newsletter advertising	£432.00
Whites	Newsletter advertising	£108.00
Malodobry	Allotment rent	£24.03
Worker	February quiz	£301.50
Webster	Allotment rent	£24.03
NatWest	Interest	1.78
Total		£1276.37

Payments Already Made:

Chq. No.

	Rent for upper rooms January &		
Old School	February	307.66	s/o
Salaries	January & February payments	3,001.24	s/o
Paice	Expenses October - December	79.22	2082

Pension Fund	January payment	576.35	2083
HMRC	Quarterly PAYE	993.10	2084
V C Property Maintenance	Repairing Linch Furlong sculpture and installing seat on the Green	914.40	2085
Paice	EasySpace .gov.uk domain name payment	612.00	2086
D M Payroll Services	Half yearly payroll administration	136.80	2087
Oakley Village Hall	Hire of hall 16.01.26. and Committee Room 06.01.26. & 13.01.26.	98.50	2088
Oakley Village Hall	Reissue of cheque 2072 lost in the post	75.25	2089
Oakley Good Neighbours	Reissue of cheque 2074 lost in the post	300.00	2090
Forvis Mazaars	2024/25 external audit	378.00	2091
Pension Fund	February payment	576.35	2092

Payments Made:

White Hart Press	Printing Spring Newsletter	825.00	online
Village Hall	Hire of Hall 20.02.26.	52.50	online
Oakley Scout Group	Donation from quiz proceeds	400.00	2093
1st Oakley Brownies	Donation from quiz proceeds	200.00	2094
1 st Oakley Rainbows		200.00	2095
Methodist Church (Messy Church)	Donation from quiz proceeds	400.00	2096
Oakley PCC (Messy Church)	Donation from quiz proceeds	400.00	2097
AFC Oakley (Juniors)	Donation from quiz proceeds	400.00	2098
ATC	Donation from quiz proceeds	400.00	2099
Oakley Good Neighbours	Donation from quiz proceeds	128.43	2100
Total		11,454.80	

21. Date of Next Meeting: 7th April – Annual Parish Meeting