

Draft Response to email dated 15th April 2026

Prepared for review by the Parish Council by David Richards (Clerk)

Email with Responses as follows:

I am challenging both the handling of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) application for a school nursery and the conduct of Parish Cllr Greg Allen during the Parish Council meeting on 15 April 2026

During that discussion about the school CIL application, Parish Councillor Greg Allen stated that

"There are other things that are important in this village besides children"

I consider this statement unacceptable, and indicative of a predetermined and political position. It raises serious concerns as to whether the Council approached this matter with an open mind and with proper regard to all sections of the community when considering this specific CIL application.

Response: Cllr Allen is free to express his views during a meeting without interruption. You have taken this statement out of context as also made other statements that you have not included which are relevant such as "it would be nice to do this if we had the freedom to do it" and others.

I request a clear and evidenced response to the following:

1. **Lawful consideration of relevant factors**

What specific regard was given to the needs of children, young people, and families, and how was this balanced against other priorities?

Response: The Parish Council has previously given several grants to the school including £100,000 for the building works that are undergoing. The decision to provide a further £50,000 was deferred and not refused. This shows an ongoing commitment to support the school.

2. **Equality Act compliance**

How did the Council demonstrate due regard under the Equality Act 2010 in respect of age, and where is this recorded?

Response: The Council's Neighbourhood Plan demonstrates due regard for this reference <https://bishopslydeardparishcouncil.gov.uk/neighbourhood-plan/>

3. **Evidence base**

What evidence was considered regarding demand for early years provision, including the impact of recent and planned housing development?

Response: The Head Teacher James Dakin provided this information to the Parish Council and this information was provided to all councillors – reference document **251104 Bishops Lydeard Sufficiency Assessment**.

4. **CIL decision-making framework**

What criteria were applied in determining whether this proposal met the requirements for CIL expenditure, and how were these applied in this case?

Response: The Parish Council accepts that this meets the CIL criteria. As previously stated, the Parish Council has previously given grants to the school using CIL funds. This request was not refused but the decision deferred.

5. Transparency and record

Will the minutes and any supporting documents fully reflect the substance of the discussion, including the reasoning behind the Council's position? You are currently in receipt of an FoI request because of your failure to share information about your total spend on a competing CIL expenditure (Roads & Traffic) & your failure to disclose comments by Somerset Council about the risks associated with this CIL spend and and the failure to deliver

Response: The draft meeting minutes are now available. The Parish Council will vote at the next meeting to agree whether they are a true record of the meeting. The total spend regarding the Roads and Traffic project has now been provided as requested under FOI.

Despite these concerns you agreed to prioritise further expenditure on a high risk CIL project and not ensure the completion of a strategic education infrastructure project/build that is underway and needs to be completed asap to meet the needs of families living in the new housing developments.

Response: The Head Teacher James Dakin made it clear that the project will proceed regardless of whether the Parish Council provide the £50,000 grant requested and will be completed on time. The Parish Council is not delaying the project. The Parish Council is not responsible in anyway for the planning or completion of the project.

Given the nature of the statement made by the Parish Councillor I am also considering whether this matter should be referred for a formal Code of Conduct review. I would therefore ask the Council to confirm:

- Whether it considers the statement by PC Allen consistent with the Nolan Principles, in particular respect and objectivity
- What steps, if any, will be taken to address this matter with the Parish Cllr concerned.

Response: The Parish Council will not take any further steps on this matter. The Parish Council understands that councillors are free to express their views and these will be respected by everyone regardless as to whether they agree with them or not.

Parish Cllr Allen's comments were made in the context of an application to support early years provision in Bishops Lydeard it demonstrates poor judgement and a lack of appropriate regard for children and families within the community.

While it is entirely proper to debate competing priorities for CIL funding, doing so in terms that appear to diminish the importance of children is inappropriate and contrary to the standards of respectful conduct expected of a Parish Councillor.

Statements of this nature risk undermining public confidence in the Council and should be formally acknowledged and addressed.

Response: The Parish Council makes no comment on the statements above and acknowledges that these are your views.

Separately, I understand that my brief intervention from the public gallery has been characterised by Parish Cllrs Roberts & Lewin Harris as lacking "dignity and respect".

I reject that characterisation. My response was a proportionate reaction to an unacceptable statement made in a public meeting. However, I acknowledge the importance of proper procedure and will ensure that any future contributions are made at the appropriate point.

However, it is regrettable that the Chair failed to rein in the inappropriate comments made by Cllr Allen in the meeting.

Response: The Parish Council understands that the Standing Orders need to be followed during meetings and the chair is responsible for their adherence.

This is a matter of public interest and governance. I request that this correspondence is formally recorded and that a full written response is provided by the Clerk.

Responses provided above.