

A meeting of Croydon Parish Council was held on Wednesday 19 February 2020 in the Reading Room at 7.30pm.

Apologies: Mrs Slator - away

Present: Mr Barnes, Ms Newland, Mr Wheeler, Mr Wenman, Mr Sole, Mr Brown, Cllrs Kindersley and Williams, the Clerk and one member of public.

Minutes: of the January meeting were agreed and signed.

Declarations of Interest: None received.

Matters Arising and Village Issues:

Implementation Group report (by e-mail):

IG Meetings and HNS: There has been no meeting of the IG so far this year. One of the reasons for this is that several potential items for the IG are to some extent on hold pending the response from Hastoe/ACRE on potential Affordable Housing sites. We had perhaps expected a response by now and we understand it is likely to emerge soon though when it does it will still be on restricted circulation as, even if some sites are identified, no landowners will have as yet been approached.

Village Clear up day: No date has as yet been fixed for the Spring Village Clear Up though April has been suggested. More news in time for the March Council meeting. The enquiry about mechanised path clearing equipment remains with our District Councillor.

Website: Progress towards a new village website continues, rather slowly. Current state of play is that contact is being encouraged between George (Ralph) and the current leading bidder to address particularly issues around security of Council pages and multiple contributors to the website. |Recent

Field Sports Shoots: The early shoots in particular caused some concern with problems in the field behind the Queen Adelaide in which a well used footpath passes. There were also issues near the Church and Churchyard which should not be repeated with dogs running all over and picking up. However, Manor Farm were responsive to comments made and arranged for changes which latterly showed significant improvements. Prior warnings were given and circulated on the village WhatsApp system. The suggestion has been made that 24hrs notice would be helpful and this would seem to be a good idea, also more information on which fields are to be used. It would be helpful if the Council passed these suggestions on to Manor Farm but also acknowledged the improvements already made.

Website: Nothing further to report, although Mrs Slator is working closely with this and should be able to report at the next meeting.

Speedwatch meeting: Cllr Williams reported that whilst there is uncertainty over who will take the role of Police and Crime Commissioner, she is unable to arrange a date for this.

Clopton Village Sign: Mr Brown should be able to report on this at the March meeting.

Telephone Kiosk/Defibrillator: The kiosk is covered by PC insurance. Council resolved to ask for a formal quotation on the costs for a locking cabinet. Council was undecided regarding a Maintenance Contract and Clerk with ask for further information and costs on this.

Parking in Church Lane, Arrington: Nothing further to report on this.

Churchyard Grant: A letter from the Parochial Church Council was received, thanking the Parish Council for increasing their contribution to the maintenance of the Parish churchyard.

The IG report also mentioned this:- " The trees have been pollarded for a cost of £600. The further £100pa, which was agreed by the PC, will be appreciated by the PCC. Please thank Councillors. While on the subject of the churchyard, councillors have already been briefed about a churchyard nature conservation scheme, which the PCC and the First Tuesday Group are moving forward on and more news will follow. Community involvement will be very much encouraged."

Zero Carbon Workshop: Two members of the IG will be attending this at South Cambs Hall, Cambourne on 7th March, on behalf of the village.

ACRE funding: The following communication was received from Connecting Cambridgeshire:-
"We contacted you in September 2019 about a potential funding bid to connect your village hall with public access Wifi, using a fibre broadband connection. Unfortunately, we have now had confirmation that the Government funding available cannot be used for this purpose. If you are interested in installing

your own superfast broadband and Wifi to support village hall activities and attract bookings, you can check if superfast broadband is available in your area using our postcode checker and find out more about Getting Superfast via your chosen Internet Service Provider. You may also consider contacting Cambridgeshire ACRE who can offer advice and put you in touch with other village halls in Cambridgeshire that have successfully installed Wifi. Contact Lisa Chambers, Community Development Officer, email lisa.chambers@cambisacre.org.uk or call 01353 865048."

Council felt it was not prudent to pursue this installation without access to outside funding.

Village Shoot: The complaints received following a recent shoot in the village have been dealt with satisfactorily.

District Cllr Williams gave the following verbal report:-

Planning: There are legal developments going on at present on which Cllr Williams is unable to report. There is a surplus of 149 houses in the county, so more will have to be approved to meet with Local Plan requirements.

Cleaning: Cllr Williams is in discussion with the SCDC cleaning operatives regarding the equipment needed to clean the footways in Croydon, which are very narrow.

Speedwatch meeting: Reported elsewhere.

Debt Procedure: Clerk asked about debt procedure at SCDC, having discovered in the SCDC Weekly Bulletin that a large amount of money would be "written off" as it was impossible to reclaim. SCDC's Constitution requires that any debts in excess of Level 2 (currently £25,000) must only be written off with agreement from the Lead Cabinet Member for Finance. Cllr Williams was unaware of any of this and will make some enquiries.

Cllr Williams subsequently sent responses to issues raised at the February Council meeting:-

- Raised concerns around the scheme of delegation that was proposed, with only a single officer now constitutionally permitted to determine what came to committee or not.
- Raised concerns that there would be potential money used on electric bin lorries which was concerning as this is new and unknown technology.
- Mentioned that I would be asking at full council for the possibility of the three free trees scheme to be used on district council land (since the meeting, this has been confirmed so long as permission is sought)
- Made the PC aware that the district council's budget meeting was coming up and I expected there to be an increase in tax.

Written report from District Cllr Williams (received after the meeting - due to SCDC legal inspection):

Planning: At the last planning committee, we were given less than 24hrs to make an incredibly difficult and complex decision around the scheme of delegation for planning. Many councillors, like myself, expressed their dissatisfaction and concern that we were put in a position that we were making such a decision in a rushed and chaotic manner.

There were 6 options put forward with the first option proposing that the Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development make the decision of which applications were to come to committee in consultation with the chairman. This was not welcomed by many residents, nor myself, as this leads to an impression of officers "marking their own homework".

The Leader of the Council recently contacted all parishes to reassure them that the Chairman of Planning would have a veto, however this was not deemed legally possible and so the 6 options at the eleventh hour were given to us to choose from.

I felt that for us to take such a decision while parishes had been given a false sense of security (via the veto) was wrong and so I proposed a temporary stopgap (cited below) to provide us some time to properly think through the options and at least make parishes aware that the veto was no longer possible before we made an alternative decision. I believe there was sympathy for my proposal but that did not result in enough votes, and my proposal was voted down.

After this fell, I pushed for an automatic referral option so the power of the agenda was with parishes and members, instead of officers, but this was lost and the majority of committee members voted to approve the first proposal without the veto. I think this approach means that elected members

have not lost their authority in this but have given it away. One thing that was unanimous at the planning committee was that there needs to be a full review of this and it should happen as soon as possible. Following this meeting, however, at the full council on the 20th February, it was raised by a member of the public that the planning committee did not have authority to make this decision and that it must be full council that decides on any changes to the constitution.

Councillors have now been notified that it would be advisable that at the full council meeting on 2nd April that full council will now need to vote on this change. I will of course make parish councils aware of the outcome of this meeting, I shall be pushing for as much democratic involvement in this process as possible yet again at full council, but I would welcome any of the parishes views on this in preparation for this meeting.

Proposal by Cllr Heather Williams, planning committee 12th February 2020:

“The receipt of a request for call in by a parish council within 21 days, or a member within 28 days, of notification is referred automatically to Committee - where material planning considerations are cited by the parish or member for seeking such a decision

This will take place for the next 6 weeks to allow full scrutiny and time to digest a way forward given the short time we have had to assess the options. During this 6 weeks the committee will sit more often, as often as is necessary, to ensure decisions are not delayed.”

Budget Day at S Cambs: At the February full council meeting the administration set the business plan and budget for the forthcoming year. There were elements of the budget, which I and others welcomed, for example the proposal to put money towards improving the environment, however I did disagree with how the money was being spent. £1.8 million is being spent to make South Cambs Hall an “exemplar” building; my belief was that this money should be spent on a way of helping residents to reduce their carbon footprint, for example, providing fast speed charging points or looking into community heating schemes given how dependant we are in South Cambs on oil. There is also budget for electric bin lorries; the views from officers have been mixed as to if this is an appropriate direction for the council at this stage. They are a very new technology and have been tested so far in areas such as London, my concern is that the council will rush through with this in order to be one of the first as opposed to analysing whether this will truly work in South Cambs. I would like to reiterate that I am not opposing £5 million investment in green improvements, but I do not agree with how the money is being spent.

It has also been budgeted for a decrease, in comparison to last year’s budget, in relation to planning. This being a 17.5% reduction was something I thought worthy of challenge as this means nearly £1million less for the department. It was questioned how much of the budget was due to be spent on consultants, this was unanswered but written answers will be provided in due course. I shall be pursuing these answers as I do not believe it is good for the planning department, nor value for money, to be as heavily dependant on consultants as it has been, in last years budget it was clearly shown as a near million pounds.

Last year I wrote about my concern of the £3million gap in the council’s budget; I am even more deeply concerned with the £5.683 million gap between now and 2025. This alongside an increased investment strategy that has gone from £100million to £340million. This level of borrowing is unlikely to be paid off within the next 50 years and I must question whether this is really the right direction for the council to be going in.

Overall, this led me to a point where I felt unable to support the General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital Programme or General Fund Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Funding for VE Day celebrations: The deadline to apply for grants in relation to VE day celebrations is 15th March, it can go towards one-off costs for projects that leave a legacy, such as a commemorative bench or plaque or a memorial in the centre of a village.

Workshop: There is a Zero Carbon Communities Workshop: 7th March 1:30pm at the council offices.

East West Rail: Government has now announced that the route for East West rail will now be via Cambourne, this is something that has been hard fought for from those across the political and non-political spectrum, and news that I truly welcome.

New Taxi License policy: A new taxi policy has been adopted unanimously by members of the South Cambs. One of the updates that have been in the pipeline for several years now is CCTV in taxis. This is something that I think is a welcome improvement for public safety. Another requirement in the new policy is a timetable for taxis to become 100% ultra-low or zero emission vehicles by 1st December 2028, I think this is a great way of helping reduce emissions.

CC Cllr Kindersley gave a brief verbal report:-

Church Lane, Arrington:- The National Trust is being difficult - they are, however paying for a consultation exercise, which will only be for Arrington - many Croydon residents have had problems accessing Croydon from Church Lane in Arrington, but will not have the chance to take part in this consultation. There are lots of issues - some of the residents in Church Lane have to park on the road as there are no run-ins for the cars. Residents Only parking is only available in the City and not in South Cambs area. There is a possibility of double yellow lines, but the eventual outcome of the consultation will determine what happens (or not).

Road Closure: There was a road closure at the bottom of Larkins Road due to a burst water main, which it was felt was not advertised widely enough.

Council Tax: This will increase for the County Council and Police proportion. There are many potholes in the County's roads and no budget to repair them.

Greater Cambridge Partnership: A recent meeting was interrupted by the Extinction Rebellion group. This had been anticipated and the meeting moved to a secure location and continued without further interruption.

A decision on the busway has not been made. One Parish Council has announced it will serve a judicial review, as the proposed route would run through 20 parishes. The Mayor said he would take control of the situation.

CamBed Rail Road: The group is pushing for a route alongside the dualling of the A428, as the best option with the least disruption.

Barn Owls: There seems to be an excessive amount of barn owls in the area, which may be due to displacement from the A14 upgrade.

As there were no questions for Cllr Kindersley, he was thanked for attending and left the meeting.

Correspondence:

Electoral Register: One alteration received and circulated to Councillors.

Public Access - planning: Clerk has had problems reading the Terms and Conditions of this, and with registering for access. She will continue to attempt registration.

Greater Cambridge Planning Policy Update: Circulated to Councillors.

Great British Spring Clean: This will take place from 20 March to 14 April. As the IG has already mentioned its own Village Clean Up, it was decided not to join this.

Police - proposals for service change: The consultation for this has already been mentioned on several occasions - please complete it if you have not already done so.

ERTA: a group of enthusiasts under the title English Regional Transport Association. Extract from their e-mail:-

"Within the last 20 years we have argued with local councils in the Cambridge area, to protect the former route, sadly instead we have seen Trumpington Meadows development with a school and playing field on the old rail route and Guided Busway on the route from Trumpington Park and Ride. We argued against doing this and now the consequences are you have tougher choices to make.

The new Bedford-Cambridge so called 'Central Section' of Oxford-Cambridge Rail Link dubbed 'East-West Rail Link' will either have to come via the old route with relocation of enough width for access at Trumpington Meadows Development, a new single track and platform could be built at the Trumpington park and Ride for integration, slew the Guided Busway to run via Long Road to and from Addenbrookes - still gives public transport choice - and re-railing a) to link with the proposed new station 'Cambridge South' alias 'Addenbrookes' b) to restore the trackbed now guided busway to enable 4 tracking into Cambridge and restore the Trumpington Junction for early segregation and more capacity off the existing twin track London lines. This is what we want, this is our vision." Councillors had no comments on this.

Rural Affordable Housing: Changes in the Rural Affordable Housing were made and an extract is included below:-

"It goes a long way to meet calls for change by rural local authorities faced with having to forego affordable housing that would have been delivered on small rural sites. The next step is to widen its application to the almost 70% of smaller parishes that are left out of this change.

The revision was made in September 2019 and states:

"In designated rural areas local planning authorities may instead choose to set their own lower threshold in plans and seek affordable housing contributions from developments above that threshold. Designated rural areas applies to rural areas described under section 157(1) of the Housing Act 1985, which includes National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty."

Paragraph: 023 Reference ID: 23b-023-20190901 <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/planning-obligations>"

Electronic Correspondence: No further comments on circulated material.

Subsequent Receipts:-

Royal British Legion: Croydon's Poppy collection amounted £69-00. The total for the District was £2289-58.

Shire Homes: Offering to lease any empty property "hassle free."

Parish Planning Forum: Clerk will be attending this on 30 March.

Local Highway Improvements: The date for applications to the Scheme has been moved to 1st April - 31st May. This is to ensure that any works undertaken will be completed in the financial year for which they have been budgeted.

East-West Rail: Information from this group was received, regarding meetings open to the Public.

"In January, the Preferred Route Option for the section of East West Rail between Bedford and Cambridge was announced by the Secretary of State for Transport, the Rt. Hon. Grant Shapps MP. It would link existing stations in Bedford and Cambridge with communities in Cambourne and the area north of Sandy, south of St. Neots. Everyone living and working in the area, or with an interest in the railway is invited to join the East West Railway Company team at any of the events we will be holding in February and March this year. You will be able to find out more about us, talk about the next steps for the railway, share your views, and meet experts from across the East West Railway Company.

29 February: Little Gransden Village Hall, SG19 3DP, 11:30am - 5:00pm

6 March: The Priory Centre, St Neots, PE19 2BH, 2:30pm - 7:00pm

7 March: Great Barford Village Hall, MK44 3HA, 11:30am - 3:00pm

10 March: Ravensden Village Hall, MK44 2RL, 1:30pm - 5:00pm

13 March: Sandy Village Hall, SG19 1BN, 12:30pm - 4:00pm

16 March: Scott Hall, Bedford, MK42 0DS, 2:30pm - 7:00pm

19 March: Clapham Village Hall, MK41 6BP, 4:00pm - 8:30pm

20 March: Ross Street Community Centre, Cambridge, CB1 3UZ, 2:30pm - 6:00pm

24 March: Bedford Blues Rugby, MK40 3NF, 4:00pm - 9:00pm

28 March: Comberton Village Hall, CB23 7DY, 3:30pm - 7:00pm

30 March: Webb Library, Cambridge, CB5 8BJ, 11:30am - 5:00pm

31 March: Barrington Village Hall, CB22 7QX, 11:00am - 3:00pm

Event listings are also available at eastwestrail.co.uk, alongside detailed reports on how we chose the Preferred Route Option, a full account of the public consultation we held in 2019 and a number of helpful documents explaining our commitments to landowners, our approach to the environment and our approach to procurement.

Although these events are not a formal consultation, we want to get to know you better, and build a relationship based on trust, transparency and mutual respect."

Planning:

SCDC Planning: Council received information dated 6 February that the Fews Lane Consortium has apparently launched two judicial review challenges against the District Council stating that the Council acted unlawfully by announcing a public consultation on a planning application in Longstanton, and then approved it before the consultation period had closed.

A South Cambs spokesperson said that "Council always tries to be as open and transparent as possible, but there are legal processes being carried out and we are not able to comment further on the details of these cases at this stage. We really care about making sure decisions are democratic and are listening to the concerns of the Fews Lane Consortium. Due to the recent challenge we are reviewing our constitution to make it really clear who is responsible for where planning decisions are made."

Following this, a letter dated 12 February was received from Cllr Bridget Smith, Leader of South Cambs District Council, regarding the actions of the Planning Committee.

She states:-

" I wrote to you last week about the forthcoming decision and wanted to update you now as, due to an additional legal challenge, we have disappointingly not been able to include the 'Chair's veto'. This was the additional measure we planned to include whereby if the senior planning officer and Chair do not agree on whether an application should be considered by Planning Committee, it will automatically be referred up.

As I say, I am disappointed we are not able to include this measure but it is essential we remove any legal ambiguity from this process. The decision not to include the veto was due to case law that called into question whether it was legally sound.

The decision today means that the Chair and/or Vice Chair of Planning Committee will continue to meet with a senior planning officer every week and consider requests for referral to Planning Committee. Once the Chair and officer jointly conclude their deliberations a record is signed by the Chair and officer confirming the outcome. This is unchanged."

Council will monitor this situation.

Finance:

Bank Statement: The current account total at the end of January is £7392-04.

NSI: Interest of £111-15 received from the Community Benefit Fund has been added, and the savings account total at the end of January is £21977-20.

Charles Arnold-Baker: Council resolved to purchase the current copy of the "Parish Council Bible". It was available from SLCC at a saving of approximately £25-00, so a cheque for £108-79 (which included postage) was signed. Clerk will send it to their office.

VAT: The VAT of £102 -79 claimed by the Clerk has been refunded and is in the current account.

Precept: SCDC has acknowledged Council's precept request of £3400-00.

NALC: The National Association of Local Councils has issued guidance on "Financial Assistance to the Church." The Clerk has read it but could not find a lot of guidance - the document will be passed to the PCC for any comments they wish to make.

Items for next agenda:

Road opposite Portelet - deep gulley at the side of the road.

Date of next meeting: Wednesday 18th March 2020 at 7.30pm in the Reading Room.

As there was no further business, the meeting closed at 8.50pm

Signed

Date