

A meeting of Croydon Parish Council was held on Wednesday 20 December 2017 in the Reading Room at 7.30pm.

Apologies: Mr Brown - double-booked, Mrs Hughes and Mrs Mark - unwell, Cllr Smith and Cllr Kindersley - alternative engagements

Present: Mr Wheeler, Mr Wenman, Mrs Slator, Mr Sole, Mr Barnes, Ms Newland, the Clerk and four members of public.

Minutes: of the November meeting were agreed and signed.

Declarations of Interest: None received.

Matters Arising and Village Issues:

Implementation Group: Cllr Kindersley made enquiries regarding the care and maintenance of fire hydrants in the village. The answers he received contradicted those the Clerk was given when contacting the Water Companies involved. Clerk will contact Cllr Kindersley to try and get an accurate answer.

Speed Signs: Cllr Kindersley has been trying to sort this out with Anthony Bancroft-Hall, but as he was unable to attend the meeting this matter will be carried forward onto the January agenda.

Lower Road: The weather prevented the scheduled work on Lower Road, and another date will be arranged for the works, weather permitting.

Parking Issues: Complaints have been received regarding the appearance of what is suspected to be an unauthorised sign at Clopton Close, which states that parking is for residents only. As SCDC agreed to remove their sign because the parking is not only for the residents of Clopton Close, it is believed that this sign should be removed. Clerk to contact Cllr Smith regarding this.

Reading Room Trustees: Mr Barnes felt that as Mrs Barnes is on the Trustees of the Reading Room it would not be prudent for him to represent the PC on the Trustees. Councillors were sympathetic to this and as no volunteer came forward, this item will be put onto the January agenda. Mrs Horsford is searching for any historical documentation she may have which may contain a Reading Room Constitution.

Community Awards: Mrs Slator felt that James Turner, who runs the oil co-operative in the village, should be nominated for this.

E-mailed Report from Cllrs Kindersley and Smith:-

The Local Plan: It is hard to believe that nearly 4 years after our draft Local Plan was submitted to the planning inspector that we are still talking about it as an unadopted draft. However, South Cambs' is now a record breaker having been in inspection for longer than any other in the country - ever!

To make matters worse the Leader of the Council took it upon himself to issue a letter to all our parish councils to tell them that everything was going well, that the planning inspector was in agreement with the fundamentals of the plan and that its adoption was only a few weeks away. Unfortunately he forgot to consult with the Inspector before releasing this and she has taken huge umbrage and given the council a 5 star telling off for 'jumping to conclusions'. Whether this will jeopardise the final adoption of the plan or the length of time to final completion is unknowable but it was not a good idea to annoy the person on whom so much rests for securing the planning future of South Cambs.

We've mentioned before the utter lack of leadership at South Cambs when it comes to the Local Plan. This was underlined when the Leader – having had a ticking off from the Inspector - then made officers apologise to her – despite his name at the end of the letters.

The upshot is that until the plan is adopted we continue to be deluged with unwanted planning applications all over South Cambs - currently a haven for unscrupulous developers (not all we hasten to add) after a fast buck.

Council Tax reduction for people with serious mental impairment: We wrote a short piece a couple of months ago highlighting how many councils are not advertising the fact that some people are completely exempt from council tax due to mental impairment. In order to be exempt you must be in receipt of one of a number of benefits (this includes attendance allowance) and either be living alone or

with one other person. You must have a doctor willing to countersign a simple 2 page form to say that you have a severe mental impairment. This can include dementia and learning difficulties. This exemption is NOT means tested. South Cambs have these forms but you have to be very clear about what form you want when you contact them. We have had people told they were not eligible because they had savings which is not true but was probably due to a misunderstanding about what they were applying for.

On this subject, there are many people who are not receiving benefits they are entitled to either because they are not aware of what their entitlement is or they are put off by the complexity of the whole process. We refer in particular to Attendance Allowance, Carers Allowance, Housing Benefit and council tax relief. If you are a carer - which just means that you are responsible for someone's health and wellbeing on a regular basis and not necessarily that they live with you - then you may be entitled to Carer's Allowance (which does restrict the amount you can earn) and also to an annual lump sum to help you to cope with being a carer. There are a number of other benefits associated with being a carer such as getting free access to some places if you are accompanying the person you care for.

If you need support with caring for an adult contact Carers Trust <https://www.carerstrustcpn.org> and if you are caring for a child you should join Pinpoint <https://www.pinpoint-cambs.org.uk>

You must always tell your GP if you are a carer; at the very least this will get you a free flu jab.

Finances worsen: The County Council's finances for the current year continue to worsen. The People & Communities Directorate is now projected to be £5.562M overspent compared to last month's projection of £4.388M. The Economy Transport & Environment Directorate is now expecting to have balanced its spending by the end of the year, but is currently overspent by £1.6M on waste services, though this is likely to be partly offset by underspends in some other areas such as concessionary bus fares and street lighting. The street lighting underspend of £384,000 is useful financially, but is in fact penalties clawed back from the contractor for poor performance.

Budget preparations: County Council committees have been reviewing initial proposals for cutting spending and increasing income. It appears that one set of proposals, for raising more charges on adults receiving social care, is already likely to be shelved. The council needs to cut £37.9M from its budget for next year, in addition to addressing the current level of overspending. Committees have received proposals for achieving these reductions, but even if all these were to be agreed, £2.738M of savings are still to be identified.

Shire Hall move: A County Council working party is still working on proposals to move the council's HQ out of Shire Hall in Cambridge which is expensive to maintain. Options it is developing for alternative new premises are Alconbury and Northstowe. With the new Mayor having proposed to review local government arrangements in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, however, it is not clear that there will continue to be a County Council.

Robinson Court: Bridget attended the November Drop In with the developer of Robinson Court and the South Cambs project manager. A few people popped in but generally everyone was happy with the way the project is progressing. The issue of contractors' cars being parked in the road has been resolved and the houses are going up at a rate of knots. We are still awaiting details of when the extra car parking bays will be installed in Gray's Rd and in Avenells Way. The site manager Jonathan is extremely helpful and very approachable so please do contact him if you have any concerns.

Road safety campaign: The county's Road Safety Partnership has launched a new campaign to remind drivers of the 'Fatal Four' contributors to the majority of serious road traffic collisions: inappropriate speed, driver distractions, lack of a seat belt, and alcohol or drug impairment. Fire and police vehicles will display circular 'pictogram' artwork illustrating these. The number of people killed and seriously injured on Cambridgeshire's roads rose by one-third last year.

Road safety statistics: A question has been submitted to the Full Council meeting on 12 December about deaths and serious injuries on our roads. Cambridgeshire was the worst performing authority in the East of England for road deaths and serious injuries in 2013-15. Between 2015/16 and 2016/17 the number of people killed or seriously injured on Cambridgeshire's roads rose by one-third, from 293 to 384. From a downward trend in 2005-12, the numbers now appear to be on the rise again. The latest available 12-month total to the end of June 2017 gives a total of 408, an increase of 43 per cent compared to 2015.

Nationally the increase between 2015 and 2016 was eight per cent, suggesting that the local rise is disproportionate. This is possibly slightly affected by the move to a new methodology for

assessing serious injuries, but this is insufficient on its own to explain the disproportionate increase. It is clear to me that this must be an urgent focus of action for the county council and its partners.

Strategic bus review: The Mayor and Combined Authority have agreed to spend up to £150,000 on a strategic review of bus provision in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

Trains to Brighton: A major redesign of Thameslink rail services means that from May 2018 there will be services from Cambridge to Brighton, and from Peterborough to Horsham, both serving Gatwick. From 2019 there will be Cambridge to Maidstone East services as well. Details of stopping patterns and frequencies are still being worked on.

Elections: Having had more elections this year than any of us wanted we are going to have District Council elections in May 2018. We have mentioned on a number of occasions that the Ward Boundaries are all being changed in an attempt to ensure that all councillors represent roughly the same number of people. However, we are cutting the number of councillors by 20% so we are on average going to get 20% more people to represent. Gamlingay along with Hatley, Arrington, Croydon, Little Gransden and Longstowe has been a 2 member ward for ages with Sebastian and Bridget being your District Councillors. It is now to become a single member ward and the smaller villages are being split between the Mordens (Arrington, Hatley, Croydon) and Caldecote (Little Gransden, Longstowe).

If anyone would like a postal vote and is not able to request one from South Cambs then Bridget has a few forms available.

Household Crime: This month's Crime report showed 13 household crimes in this area - 1 in Longstowe and 1 in Little Gransden. Christmas is always a bad time as criminals target houses full expensive and brand new Christmas presents. Take every care to lock your doors, windows and garden sheds and to make sure that car keys and handbags are hidden away at night. If you see anything suspicious call 999 straight away.

We are delighted to have a new PCSO having not had one for a long time. His name is PCSO Alex Giltinane based at Cambourne Police Station.

A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet Upgrade: From 6 March to 23 April 2017, we were consulted on proposals to provide a dual carriageway on the A428 between Black Cat roundabout and Caxton Gibbet and to improve the Black Cat roundabout. This consultation was to seek your views on a range of route and junction options at an early stage of scheme development. Since the consultation, we are told that Highways England have continued to develop the scheme by incorporating feedback and carrying out technical assessments and surveys. They now say that they have recognised the need to incorporate potential changes from the A1 East of England Strategic Study and this will require further analysis to fully understand the implications for the A428 scheme. This means that it has not been possible to announce the preferred route.

We will be updated on progress and next steps early in the new year when hopefully they will share as much detail as possible. The engagement with all affected landowners and stakeholders is ongoing and they will hold a further formal consultation following the announcement of the preferred route. This will give you another opportunity to share your views and continue to help shape the scheme.

Will the Government finally allow us to build council houses again?: Last month, the Government announced extra funding for affordable housing, suggesting that it would enable us to start building council housing again. In the end, the policy was a small extension of existing efforts. While an extra £2 billion going into the national pot for affordable housing sounds good, it will produce at most 15 houses per year per council - no help for the thousands of people on the housing list in South Cambs.

The new Combined Authority has recently got significant, and welcome, money for housing. This is specifically for affordable housing on new commercial developments, effectively a subsidy to developers to improve their 'viability'. But 'affordable' rents are pegged to rental rates in the wider market, so they are becoming more and more unaffordable.

Council housing is more genuinely affordable, but government is failing to enable councils to build their own housing. Last year saw the lowest number ever of houses build for 'social rent' (the classification that includes council houses), just 5,380 for the whole of England.

Autumn Budget 2017: Plans announced in the Budget for new homes and infrastructure identified the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford arc to be made a national priority. Its world-class research, innovation and technology can help the UK prosper in a changing global economy. The establishment of Cambridge is acknowledged as one of eight new Tech Nation hubs, as part of an expansion of the existing scheme. As such, transport links along the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford corridor will be improved by:

Completing the rail link between Oxford and Bedford, and Aylesbury and Milton Keynes by 2030, setting up a new East West Rail Company to speed up work on the rail link between Bedford and Cambridge, £5 million to help develop plans for Cambridge South Station (at Addenbrookes), building the Expressway road between Oxford and Cambridge and - most alarmingly the commission also calls for several new towns to be created - between Oxford and Milton Keynes, and Bedford and Cambridge - from smaller scale garden towns of around 10,000 homes through to new city-scale developments of up to 150,000 homes. Eeeek.

New Stadium for Cambridge City in Sawston: At its November meeting South Cambs planning committee granted planning permission for a new stadium for Cambridge City Football Club in Sawston.

The previous planning permission was overturned at judicial review on a technicality. Although it is derelict land (a former tip for Marley's) the site is in the Green Belt. And although recreational use is allowed use of Green Belt land, the planning policy hurdles are still huge. The committee voted by 8 votes to 2 in favour of the development because of the very special circumstances. Those were predominantly the improvement of the site, with open parkland, the Club's pitches, and of fulfilling the shortfall of recreational space in the village.

The petition presented at the meeting showed that there is widespread backing for the proposal in the area and from a majority of Sawston residents. This is a fantastic result for the village of Sawston and for the whole district. It is great that the Club is back on track to getting a new permanent home.

Forward Gamlingay Employability Drop in Sessions: Forward Gamlingay has now run 2 drop in sessions for adults and young people wanting to get work or change their jobs. Help with CVs, letters of application, job searching and maximising your professional on line presence have proved very helpful for a number of people. We are delighted to learn that these sessions will continue to run in the New Year.

Planning: In year 2016/17 South Cambs spent £250,000 on Appeals. The council estimates it will be £500,000+ for this financial year due to the many 5 year land supply Appeals. This creates a number of problems. If we continue to lose appeals then we risk being 'designated' which mean that we have our powers as a planning authors taken away from us and applicants can go straight to the government planning inspector to have their applications decided. So there is a great disincentive to refuse applications both because of the cost of appeals but also because the risk of losing appeals could have the disastrous consequence of designation. The frustration of this for us as local councillors and for our parish councils is that it is nigh on impossible now to get controversial applications taken to the planning committee meeting at which we and supporters and objectors get to have our say. Most decisions are now made behind closed doors by civil servants.

Green End: The Green End Site has been on the market now for quite some time and finally we know that a developer is interested in buying it. Representatives from Campbell Buchanan came to a public meeting at the Eco Hub to present their early thoughts and very draft plans. We are encouraged that this is the company responsible for The Maltings which I think we all agree is a very successful and sensitive development in the heart of the village. The feelings at the meeting were that the outline plans which had been approved by South Cambs were, to put it bluntly, awful, and that there needed to be a lot more work done to make this a development which would create a really good place for people to live. There was a lot of discussion and the Campbell Buchanan Reps went away with a lot to think about and a lot of ideas. It is really important to engage early on in the process with developers in order to ensure that we get what is best for Gamlingay and we are pleased that they share this view.

New website for those seeking jobs in early years childcare: Cambridgeshire now has its own website for job vacancies in early years and childcare. eycJobs tries to address recruitment challenges faced by providers. It will bring together vacancies, careers advice, and support and information for providers on recruiting and retaining staff and can be found at <https://www.teachincambs.org.uk/eycjobs/>.

Hoarding : Do you know anyone who is a hoarder? Hoarding is a serious and complex issue that goes far beyond simple untidiness. It is a recognised mental health condition requiring careful treatment. Hoarding is a widespread issue affecting between 2% and 3% of the population - approximately 1.2 million people in the UK.

People who display hoarding behaviours excessively collect items such as newspapers, books, clothing, and in some cases rubbish, rotten food and animals, resulting in unmanageable amounts of clutter. This in turn can cause serious health problems, structural damage, pest infestations and serious risk of fire.

Since 2014, over 50 households in South Cambridgeshire alone have had assistance from the Council. In more serious cases, it can sometimes lead to emotionally distressing enforced clearances. If you discover someone displaying hoarding behaviours, you can find help and practical advice at www.helpforhoarders.co.uk or contact South Cambridgeshire District Council on 03450 450 063. Alternatively you can contact the Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service on 0800 917 9994 or <http://www.cambsfire.gov.uk> and visit the 'home safety' pages.

Community energy fund plugged in: South Cambs has set up a £55,000 grant pot to help community buildings across South Cambridgeshire become more energy efficient and reduce energy. The Community Energy Grant Fund will allow community groups to bid for funds from March next year.

Organisations will be invited to bid for funding for initiatives ranging from insulation and lighting and heating controls for community buildings, to the installation of electric vehicle charging points.

The new scheme will provide £55,000 each year for parish councils, charities, voluntary groups, sports and social clubs and not-for-profit organisations. The maximum yearly grant will be £3,000 per organisation to make sure that the fund is distributed across a wide range of projects throughout the district.

The scheme will be funded from the business rates it retains from new renewable energy generation sites within the district so it can return some of the benefits from large-scale renewable energy sites to the community.

Happy Christmas

Finally may we take this opportunity to wish you all an extremely Happy Christmas and a Peaceful and Prosperous New Year!

Correspondence

Local Plan: The Leader of the Council issued a letter to all our parish councils to tell them that adoption was only a few weeks away. Unfortunately he did not consult with the Inspector before releasing this. As Leader of the SCDC Liberal Democrats, Cllr Smith has written to Parish Councils explaining what had happened, and that Cllr Topping should have apologised to the Inspector and not left it to his staff to do this.

Community Champions: Cllr Smith has complained that £5000 of public money is being paid to a Conservative Councillor to be a Community Champion, when this task is already being successfully undertaken by other Councillors, without benefit of an extra £5000. Cllr Smith may have something further to report at the January meeting.

SCDC Cleaner Communities Scheme: South Cambridgeshire District Council is developing several community led initiatives to promote and support community litter picks, street sweeping, re-use and recycling throughout the district, which will supplement the Council's own programmes. The Council will provide vehicles/self-propelled cleaners and training to interested parties. As the IG is already undertaking litter picks, the information has been passed to them and they will apply direct to SCDC if they decide they would like to take part in the pilot scheme.

Electoral Register: The register for 2017-18 has been received. It is available for inspection from the Clerk, by arrangement. Copies may not be taken.

Wimpole Farm Dementia Group: This is a group for those in the early stages of dementia, memory loss and their carers who have a background or interest in agriculture. Get involved in farming activities with time for a tea break and a catch up. To find out more about the group and how to join please contact Care Network on 01954 211919 or admin@care-network.org.uk

Local Council Development Plan: For details please go to:-

https://gallery.mailchimp.com/2a27dfdab651dc08bb89bb30f/files/07ce839d-bf2f-46d8-b37a-3d0f6db2af54/01_Local_Council_Development_Plan.pdf

If you wish to comment, please contact diane.bayliss@cambsacre.org.uk

Planning: None received

Finance:

Bank Statement: Current account stands at £16,374-09.

Deposit Account: Council discussed the level of funding from the Solar Farm that is held on the village's behalf in the Community Benefit Fund. It was resolved to deposit £10,000 into the Investment Account with the National Savings Bank. A cheque for this was signed and the Clerk will send it off after the Christmas postal rush.

SLCC: Following very useful information obtained this year from other Clerks in the Society, Council agreed to fund Clerk's annual membership of £59-00 to the Society, and a cheque for this was signed. Clerk thanked the Council for their support with this.

External Auditor: Littlejohns has been appointed as the external auditor for Croydon Parish Council for the 2017-18 financial year. It appears that as Croydon Parish Council has neither income nor expenditure exceeding £25,000 then they are an exempt authority and will not have to pay any audit fee.

Internal Auditor. Council was in agreement that the Clerk approach Mr Daniel Locke to ascertain if he would be prepared to undertake the internal audit for 2017-18.

Items for next agenda: None put forward.

Date of next meeting: Wednesday 17 January 2018 in the Reading Room, starting at 7.30pm.

As there was no further business the meeting closed at 8.02pm.

Signed

Date

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