

## **A meeting of Croydon Parish Council was held on Wednesday 25 February 2015 in the Reading Room at 8.00pm.**

**Apologies:** Cllrs Kindersley and Smith - Meeting at Melbourn, Mr Sole - work issues

**Present:** Mr Martin, Mr Wheeler, Mr Friend, two members of public and the Clerk.

**Minutes:** of the January meeting, previously circulated, were agreed and signed.

**Declarations of Interest:** None received

The written report from Cllrs Smith and Kindersley, already circulated to Councillors, is copied below.

**Council Tax:** Yes folks, that time of the year again. Although at the time of writing neither South Cambs nor the County have officially agreed the Council Tax rise (because it's always a rise..) officer reports so far prepared indicate a 1.99% increase for both Authorities. South Cambridgeshire District Council's medium term financial strategy forecasts that the government grant it receives to deliver services will be cut to zero within five years, with savings in the region of £670,000 needed in 2015/16 to balance the books. Council tax for a band D home is proposed to rise from £122.86 to £125.31. The £2.45 increase is around the same amount as a shop bought sandwich and equates to an increase of 1.99%. The good news is the Council will also continue to provide £1,000 a week for groups to bid for under the Community Chest Grant scheme and a further £85,000 will be provided as funding for the Citizens Advice Bureaux to help support people following the economic downturn.

**Robinson Court Gamlingay:** Thanks to all the residents who came to the drop-in about Robinson Court at Avenalls Way. By the time that you read this the plans should be available for everyone to look at in The Eco Hub. You will also be able to fill in a feedback form which hopefully the architects and South Cambs will take into consideration. The plans are reasonable but it is a shame that they have decided not to re-do the whole road design as the outlay is pretty restricted by where the road currently goes. We also felt that the houses looked a bit bland and characterless. There are substantial concerns about how the narrow Grays Road would cope during the build phase and afterwards when potentially there would be more cars using it which the District Council need to address.

**City Deal:** Now look. We realise that the City Deal is fairly nebulous and has little or no relevance to most of our daily lives and that if you are still reading this paragraph it's because you're trapped somehow. BUT. We are all affected by things such as congestion and potholes and school places and decent affordable housing for our families and the City Deal is going to be - more and more - an important element in the planning for these everyday life issues. The bottom line is many thousands of new homes will be built somewhere locally and many thousands of more jobs created locally and City Deal cash will go some (small) way is dealing with the impacts of those homes and jobs.

The first list of projects has been agreed by the Executive (3 people making decisions always end badly as you will know from Roman history but that's what we've got....). They include Milton Road bus priority, Madingley Road bus priority and Histon Road bus priority lanes, an A428 to M11 segregated bus route/A428 corridor Park and Ride and City centre capacity improvements/cross-city cycle improvements. It was extremely disappointing that no rural cycle ways made their way through the first selection but we are going to be doing our best to get this rectified. There was a lack of understanding that some of us do want to go places to work other than Cambridge City. And while there has been a lot of grumbling that the projects so far don't include enough for cyclists (they don't) there is a lot of planning work to be done and with any luck the Board will wake up to the fact that cycleways do work and are popular. Sort of related to the above - Cambridge Science Park station is now to be delivered by Network Rail and not the County Council so there will have to be a new planning application in the near future albeit substantially unchanged from the previously approved proposal. The collective aim has always been to deliver the scheme as quickly as possible. However, Network Rail and the Rail Executive do not now believe that it will be possible to deliver the station by May 2016, so are aiming for the station to open at the next rail industry timetable change in December 2016. Sigh.

**Barrington Quarry:** The planning application for Barrington Quarry will be heard by South Cambs Planning Committee on March 4<sup>th</sup>. The meeting starts at 10am. As I type the officer report is not yet published but those residents who feel very strongly about may like to attend - the meeting is open to the public.

**Vacant Property:** There are enough vacant properties in Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire to house the entire social housing waiting list of either council. Almost 3,000 homes are standing empty in the area, according to the latest Government figures. Both councils currently have thousands on their waiting lists for social accommodation, with some going many years before they are housed. Despite measures such as an option of charging an extra 50 per cent council tax on homes left vacant for two years or more, and the Council's empty homes strategy, backed by £150 million of investment and grants to councils to reward them for bringing long-term vacant properties back into use much more needs to be done. The good news in South Cambs is long-term vacant properties have fallen from 714 to 576 - but this is the number of homes in one of the District's larger villages. If you have or know of a vacant home could you think about how it might be brought back into use to benefit us all?

**West Road Action Group Gamlingay:** Please sign up to WRAG (West Road Action Group) if you think that opportunistic unplanned development between Mill Street and Wotton Field should be fought to the bitter end. Some people have written to the Master of Trinity College to ask the College to withdraw the application with no luck. We now await a Planning Application by Endurance Estates so that we can see exactly what is being planned. At this point the Parish Council will implement their large scale planning application policy which will include a public meeting and lots of opportunities for the community to have their say. If you would like to join WRAG please contact Bridget.

**Mental Health Support:** Mind in Cambridgeshire writes: 'We need your help to understand the experience of people who need support with their mental health who live in rural areas of the county. In particular, we'd like to know how easy it is for you to get the support you need. Please take a few minutes to complete this survey. All responses are confidential':

[https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Mind\\_in\\_Cambs](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Mind_in_Cambs). More about what Mind does and how you can help:  
<http://www.mindincambs.org.uk/>

**Pot Hole App & Roads & Gritting:** There is a brilliant free new phone App available called Fill That Hole. It locates where the hole is, allows you to send a photo of it and automatically notifies the relevant authority. Whether they then do anything about it is another matter. Sebastian has had a guided tour of the rotten road surfaces in Blythe Way and will be adding this to the list of other rotten road surfaces in the village eg at Green End. However, we all know the current financial situation at the County Council so please don't expect miracles! We've been lucky with the cold weather so far this winter but did you know that - when it comes to gritting - it's not just chucking stuff on the road and hoping for the best? Advanced technology enables a specialized operation that differentiates the rate of salt spreading according to local conditions, and advanced weather forecasting provides more reliable guidance on appropriate times for the gritting lorries to run. County-wide there are 37 gritting routes with a fleet of 40 lorries (three spare), two quad bikes for gritting cycle paths (all in Cambridge except Hardwick and Coton); one collective run costs about £30K.

**Croydon Solar Farm:** We had lots of complaints about lorries from the solar farm driving through the village, damaging the road verges and spreading mud all over the road and especially on Croydon Hill where passing traffic is treacherous at the best of times. We have taken this up with Highways and the enforcement team at South Cambs. The latest update is that Push Energy has agreed as a good will gesture they will reinstate the verges on Croydon Hill to a satisfactory standard on completion of the project. They expect to vacate the site before the end of March 2015, and will ensure this is done before they leave.

**Police Matters:** Our PCSO, John Coppard, has been very visible of late in all our villages and we are most grateful for this. He has been following up a number of interesting leads and we look forward to hearing the results of his efforts in due course. Please do ring the police immediately if you see any suspicious behaviour in particular anything that looks like drug transaction but also if you see things like motorbikes on the playing fields which do huge damage and cause a lot of work for the Parish Council and football club. There has been an increase in burglaries of late in particular entries through back doors which involve cars being taken as well as phones, tablets, keys etc.

The next Cambourne Area Police Panel Meeting will take place at 7:30 pm on Tuesday 24th February 2015 at Melbourne Village College, The Moor, Melbourn, SG8 6EF. The Police have asked "if you would canvas your parishioners with a view to identifying any policing concerns that they wish tabling at the meeting". Please send any responses to [jon.capes@cambs.pnn.police.uk](mailto:jon.capes@cambs.pnn.police.uk)

In recognition of the fact that some Parish Councils meet on Tuesdays and have been unable to attend recent panel meetings, we are implementing a rotation (Tuesday through Thursday) commencing with our June meeting which will allow every Parish to attend at least two meetings per year.

**Street Lighting and so on:** County Council-owned street lights in residential roads in selected villages are likely to be switched off between the hours of midnight-6AM from the start of the new financial year. Where the council has invested in a Central Management System, new street lights can be controlled on an individual basis, and parish councils can pay to illuminate any lights they want kept on during these hours. This awkward exercise is symptomatic of the extreme financial position in which the council now finds itself, endeavouring to save money in ways that don't seem logical. Of course this assumes you don't live in a village currently suffering the worst excesses of Balfour Beatty's streetlighting project. I see from a text to BB that I advised I was inundated with complaints from Haslingfield on NOVEMBER 18<sup>th</sup> and here we are on February 16<sup>th</sup> and no further forward. Parish Councils have written to the CEO of the County repeatedly complaining and still - nothing. And yet the local paper reports that a new section of the City is to be 'done' shortly - WHY?

**Children's Centres:** As you may be aware from the re-configuration consultation, the County Council have decided that some services from the 19<sup>th</sup> of January will be charged for. This includes Stay & Play, Let's get Physical and International group. This is across all Cambridgeshire Children's Centres and is not a local decision. The charge will be £2 per family per session (£2 per child if with a child minder). Vouchers for these sessions will need to be purchased in advance and they will be on sale from the Children's Centre Office. If a family would meet the criteria for Free School Meals, whether or not they are claiming them, they will be entitled to free vouchers. There may be some other exceptions so please do ask.

**Congratulations - Community Chest Grants:** Congratulations to Gamlingay & Hatley PCC, Gamlingay Post and Longstowe Parish Council for getting grants of £1000 each from the last pot of Community Chest Funding this financial year. Hatley need money to install a disabled loo at the church, the Post need computer equipment and Longstowe need new notice boards.

**Minor Highways Improvement Bids:** We were delighted that the speed limits along Lower Road in Croydon are to be extended so that there are no longer the numerous changes that exist at the moment - Bridget made a presentation to the Minor Highways Panel on behalf of the Parish Council. Also welcomed is the extension of the reduced speed limit along Hurdleditch Road in Orwell which will increase safety for children going to school. Schemes in Arrington and Barrington are on the reserve list this year so might make it....

**Superfast Broadband:** A certain amount of concern in particular from Gamlingay and Longstowe about the positioning of the green roadside cabinets being installed by Openreach to connect existing copper lines with the faster fibre broadband network. Changes in legal regulations mean that planning consent is not needed for cabinets and Openreach is not required to consult on the process. The siting of a cabinet is complex: it has to be located safely on public land, within 50 metres of the existing cabinet, with access to power and avoiding underground services - so now you know!

Valley Court business park at Croydon is set to benefit from superfast broadband after receiving a £20,000 grant from the connection voucher scheme, a programme run by the government to help small businesses connect to the superfast broadband network. The cash will be used to install a dedicated broadband leased line at the park, providing speeds of over 30Mbps.

Grants of up to £3,000 are available to individual businesses, but firms at the park applied for pool funding to secure a larger sum. Businesses have until the end of March to apply for a grant. See [destinationdigital.info](http://destinationdigital.info) for more details of the scheme.

**Road Closure - Lt Gransden Lane:** The County writes: There is a section of main carriageway in Little Gransden Lane that has now been identified for replacement. This is a very narrow lane and hence for the safety of our workforce and the safety of other road users we have had to arrange for this temporary road closure. The road closure will commence Monday 2nd March for 4 weeks until Friday 27th March. It is planned to remove the road closure over the weekends.

**Bus Service 75 (Wrestlingworth - Orwell - Cambridge/Trumpington P&R):** The tender process takes approximately 4 months and final timetables will be dependent on the costs of bids returned. Further information will be available around April 2015. All existing services will remain in place until a new service commences as an alternative. The timetables have had changes made so please check 'Working with the Community' page at [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/cft](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/cft). email: [cft@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:cft@cambridgeshire.gov.uk); tel: 0345 045 0675

**Gamlingay Area Designation:** Gamlingay Parish Council has decided it would like to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan (NP) for the area. It has applied to the District Council for the parish to be designated as a Neighbourhood Area supplying a map of the area to be designated, and a statement explaining why the area should be designated. The Planning Portfolio-holder has now agreed this so the Council can proceed with the Neighbourhood Plan.

So what? Well - Communities have always been consulted in the planning process whether it be during the creation of planning policies or the assessment of planning applications (that are assessed against these policies). However, many groups have felt that this engagement is not meaningful giving them only a minor role in shaping where they live and work.

The Government responded to this by allowing communities to prepare their own planning policies and site allocations in the shape of neighbourhood plans. Through this tool they can actually create policies themselves which have real power as planning applications and appeals will be assessed against them. Furthermore, through the introduction of neighbourhood development orders, communities can actually grant planning permission for the types of development they want to see in their area. This could be on a single site for something such as affordable housing or it could be a blanket planning permission across a wider area allowing changes of use to go ahead in order to bring vacant units back into occupation.

**Haslingfield Traffic:** Through traffic - quite a lot of it speeding - has always been a problem for Haslingfield so delighted to see the first of the 20mph signs going up. This hopefully will go some way to make the village environment safer and nicer for everyone. It may also discourage drivers from rat-running thru the village and - if they must - not going at a million miles an hour.

### **Matters Arising and Village Issues:**

**Reading Room:** The paperwork has been sent off - awaiting its return.

**Recruitment Leaflets:** There has been a little interest, and the current vacancies may at last be filled.

**QA:** No further news on a projected opening date - at the time of the meeting there is no news on the planning application to site a house in the QA grounds..

**CLP:** The Chairman welcomed Mr Ralph from the Community Led Plan; he hopes that the meeting on Saturday 28 February from 10.30am - 12.30pm to display the key findings will be well attended by the village and, following their comments, the final document can be prepared and circulated.

**Solar Farm:** Mrs Slator asked to address the meeting with her report. Over the past few weeks, Mr and Mrs Slator have met with representatives from the Planning Department, Highways Department and Mr Duke, one of the landowners; Mr Duke said that the roadway for access to the solar farm has planning approval. According to both SDCD and CCC Highways it does not. The plan Push Energy had showed the road as "proposed agricultural access" and Jamie Kelly of Push Energy was told back in August 2014 that CCC Highways would not grant permission for this road. CCC subsequently instructed Push Energy to place large concrete bollards at the junction of the road with Church Lane to prevent its use, until the matter is rectified. SDCD Planning Department have looked at the site and have concerns about drainage and ditches being inadequate.

The roadway has been constructed, apparently, to allow UK Power Networks 24 hour access to the site. The roadway at the top of Croydon Hill onto the site has a gate which is closed at night. Council resolved to contact UK Power Networks and inform them that the roadway is unauthorised and must not be used. All in favour - Clerk to action.

Mr Martin commented that the development needs landscaping and is now much smaller than the second application. It is thought that this is because of the archaeological significance of part of the field in which panels were scheduled to be erected. He also mentioned that there have been more power cuts in the village since the installation commenced.

### **Correspondence:**

**SDCD Article 4:** Responses sent.

**Bobby Scheme:** Request for funding - Council resolved not to support this.

**Barclays:** A change to the terms of the banking agreement notified.

**Register of Electors:** Update received.

**Electronic Correspondence:** All circulated - nothing raised.

### **Planning:**

**West Cambourne:** Council's comments sent in.

### **Finance:**

**Bank Statement:** Balance at 30 December is £3663-14

**Precept:** An acknowledgement for the precept of £2250-00 has been received.

**Investment Account:** Balance is £1749-50.

**VAT Repayment:** £228-03

**Litter Bin:** It was agreed that the Topsy 2000 bin would be ordered from Glasdon, and sited at the entrance to the footpath by the notice board. The cheque will be signed when the purchase price and delivery cost is confirmed. Clerk to action.

**War Stocks and Bonds:** From 9 March the Government will no longer be paying interest on these, so the face value will be sent to Council. Clerk to action the process.

**Items for the next agenda:** None put forward

**Date of next meeting:** Wednesday 18 March 2015 in the Reading Room starting at 8.00pm.

As there was no further business the meeting closed at 8.40pm.

Signed .....

Date .....