

## **A meeting of Croydon Parish Council was held on Wednesday 22 February 2017 in the Reading Room at 7.30pm.**

**Apologies:** Mr Brown, Cllr Smith

**Present:** Mr Wheeler, Mr Sole, Mrs Slator, Mr Barnes, Ms Newland, the Clerk and one member of public.

**Minutes:** Of the January meeting were agreed and signed.

**Declarations of Interest:** None

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

**Queen Adelaide:** Mr Wenman reported that in spite of a slight snag, which has now been sorted out, the pub could be open in the next few months.

**Implementation Group:** I am sorry that I am unable to be with you this evening in person and to answer any questions though I am sure Sue, and any other IG members present, will be happy to do so. Thanks to Marian for reading this for me.

**Housing update:** After many months of no news, at last there is something to report in connection with the possible development in the field opposite the QA. You may recall that in the run up to Christmas the Housing Group sent a letter equally to the landowners and Hill enquiring whether there was still the intention to develop the site. At the beginning of this month a reply was received from Bletsoes who are acting as agents for the landowners, this confirmed that it is still their intention to bring their land forward for housing development and that active discussions with Hill are continuing.

As I mentioned last month there is a second possible site in the early stages of discussion at the extreme west end of the village. There have already been exploratory contacts with members of the IG and with District Councillors. These contacts have already influenced development thinking away from any open field location and have led to a reduction in the scale of the development. The landowner has expressed a strong desire to commit to significant benefits for the wider community in conjunction with any development. As soon as plans begin to firm up, the intention is to then brief the Parish Council and eventually open up any proposals to wider public comment.

**Display boards:** Following funding approval from your good selves at last month's meeting, I am pleased to report that the display boards have already been delivered. Those closely involved with the selection are pleased with the choice and initial comments from others who have seen them have been very favourable, particularly their stability for such as Art Shows. Safe storage is an issue, and current thinking is that they will be stored either in the shed or somewhere in the church – both locations require clearing! Thanks are extended to those members of the IG who were involved and especially to Val Barnes for leading on this purchase.

**Litter pickers:** Hopefully by the time of this meeting these also will have been delivered. The intention is to make them available for anyone to use at any time. Current thinking is to locate two at each of the following locations 7 Clopton Close, Bedlam Cottages, the shed. Thanks to Elaine Hughes for leading on this.

**Croydon's own e-mail based information system:** Following the communications survey carried out last year, it is pleasing to report that real progress is now being made to launch this important initiative which will help all parish organisations communicate much more effectively with the majority of households. All households have now been invited to submit email addresses to a secure system which will never show anyone's email details, No names and No phone numbers. The intention is to enable occasional information mail-shots to be sent from all of the key parish organisations. Thanks to the Communications Team, and Garth, for their work on this.

**Thermal camera:** Earlier this month the Sustainability Team borrowed an infra-red thermal camera from SCDC under the SPEP programme (Sustainable Parish Energy Partnership). This was used to survey four properties, Valley Farm offices and the Reading Room. The camera clearly identifies where heat is being lost from buildings and, alternatively, where cold air is working its way in to the building. In some ways this was something of a trial run, and now we know more about its capabilities it is intended to borrow the equipment again and offer it to householders.

**Website:** Members of the Comms Team have offered to help support this important village asset. An offer has been made to provide technical help (Keith Buchanan) and help also with editing and proof reading (particularly Judith Pillinger but also other Comms Team members). Outside of the Comms Team, Di has kindly offered to lead with reinvigorating work on the website though we are aware that first of all some important decisions need to be taken about whether to persist with the present website or invest in new one. At the time of writing this debate is continuing.

**Car parking:** Happy to leave to Bridget! I think that's all for now.

**Communications Survey:** Clerk has rehashed the church Welcome leaflet, and this has been passed to Mrs Slator as a possible starting point for the IG's Village Welcome leaflet.

**Hedges:** Mr Brown has cut the hedge for both the landowners at the west end of the village, and a vote of thanks to him for doing this is recorded.

**Grabbers and Hoops:** Clerk has attempted to purchase these but the price for the litter pickers does not apply to any of those currently advertised on Amazon. Clerk e-mailed Mrs Hughes for guidance, but has not received a response yet.

**Notice Board:** Replacement of the old wooden board was discussed, but it was felt that the evidence from the Communications Survey showed that few people looked at it more than once a week. There is a notice board outside the Reading Room for information, if required. Clerk will ask a friend to quote for a piece of bent aluminum or stainless steel which could be fixed to the back of the board and cover the top, to prevent ingress of water into the board. If this would not be too expensive, Council would consider a repair to the board.

**Clopton Close Parking:** The sign stating "Residents' Parking only" has finally been removed and parking spaces are to be marked in the lay-by, which is now available for anyone to park in.

**Reading Room Improvements:** Mr Brown has put a paving slab underneath the new keycase to prevent the transfer of mud into the Reading Room. A vote of thanks was made to Mr Brown and recorded for this improvement.

**Mr Smith:** A letter has been received from Mr Smith regarding his grandparents, Samuel and Emily Lee. Mr Smith is in his eighties and would like to discover as much as he can about them and possibly put a memorial to them in the churchyard. Mrs Barnes, who researched the history of the names on Croydon War memorial, has been in touch with Mr Smith already. Clerk has also made some enquiries, which might be useful. Mr Wheeler asked for copies of the photographs, which Clerk will forward to him.

## **Report to the Parishes from Cllrs Kindersley and Smith (previously circulated)**

**West Road & Planning in General:-** How sad it is to have to report to you that the Planning Committee at South Cambs voted 7 to 5 in favour of granting permission for 'up to' 29 houses at land south of West Road/West of Mill St. Despite vociferous, dogged and intelligent protest from residents, the Parish Council and us the Committee approved an application which was almost identical to one they had previously rejected unanimously. So what had changed?

As you know the Council cannot demonstrate a rolling five year housing land supply. As a result any of the Council policies which seek to restrict housing growth are effectively in abeyance and this includes village framework lines. So a site such as West Road which has been repeatedly rejected by South Cambs suddenly finds itself viable - as far as Trinity College and its advisers are concerned, in any case. And this situation is being repeated in many villages across South Cambs.

Incredibly frustratingly there are already planning consents issued for around 10,000 homes in South Cambs – nearly half the housing allocated by the Local Plan (which is still being examined by the Inspector). In fact the issue is not that South Cambs cannot issue consents fast enough - it is that the development industry isn't building them out. And why would it? If the five year issue is closed by actually building homes the development industry loses an amazing opportunity – which it has enthusiastically grasped with both hands – to lodge applications for huge numbers of homes in a completely unplanned and unsustainable way with no need to go through the bother of demonstrating to an Inspector at Inquiry the necessity or benefit of a land allocation let alone the bother and expense of time-consuming public consultation. The development industry is not going to build houses while it thinks it still has a chance to get further consents.

Only 482 houses will have been built in the past 12 months in South Cambs when the expectation was for 975. Developers locally are also experiencing serious emerging problems of

recruiting construction workers as the effects of Brexit start to be felt. As far as the future is concerned we are predicting building only 9 dwellings per week where we need to achieve 18 per week. If we take into consideration the 1500 shortfall which has caused the 5 year housing land supply deficit we actually need 25 per week to make up shortfall. Grrr.

Anyway back to West Road. This site – if it is developed – will make some small contribution to the village. Firstly there will be 12 affordable homes, of which the first 8 must be offered to Gamlingay connection people first. There will be £35k for improvements to the Old Methodist Chapel, £30k towards the relocation of the tennis courts and Bowl's Green, £35k to new play equipment at the Butts and £10k to a feasibility study for the provision of cycle link along Mill Hill to Woodview Farm Shop. £92k will go to early years education provision, £128k to Primary provision and £18k to the medical centre. Good to have these infrastructure contributions but – what a price to pay, especially for those residents who had every expectation that this site would never come forward for housing.

**County Council Budget:-** Oh dear. The political parties at the County Council have again failed to set a Budget which means a long debate on Valentine's Day and no promise of a resolution even then. No doubt you'll hear the outcome of this before next month. The Chief Finance Officer's report is based on 0% Council Tax increase and 2% increase for Adult Social Care only so that may well be what you get in your bills. It makes it very difficult to get more cash out of the Government when we won't even take what the Government allows us to in terms of an increase of 1.99% which barely even covers the cost of inflation on the Council's costs.

**Education in Gamlingay:-** It's no surprise that a complex situation such as that relating to education in Gamlingay changes as time moves on and consultation feedback, legislation and a host of other influences are brought to consideration by those involved in the process. Since we wrote our last note on this two issues have been clarified. Firstly it seems that the actual mechanism of 'merging' the schools is not recommended as being too complicated so the structural change that will need to be seen through will, technically, be the closure of one school and a change in status of the other. Again, the final name of the Primary School once seen through and located on the Village College site has not been formally agreed – there will need to be a name that sensibly works for all.

**Robinson Court:-** The tenders for the works have been done and by the time you read this we should have appointed a contractor. They will be invited to meet residents soon after appointment.

**LEADER Funding:-** This is a reminder to farmers and businesses in Gamlingay and Hatley that Bridget chairs the Greensand Local action Group which gives out EU funding under a programme called LEADER. Obviously this is now time limited but until we are completely out of Europe there is £1.6 million up for grabs. This is to support new and existing businesses, farm diversification and tourism (including B & Bs). Grants are generally 40% of total eligible costs so if you have a project please look at the BRCC (Beds Rural Community Council) website for further details or ring Bridget.

**Your Bin Round IS Changing:-** We can now confirm that the new rounds have been finalised and will take effect from Monday 27 February. As a result of the new rounds, most households across the district will have a change to the day that their bins are collected, to the sequence in which the bins are collected (the order in which blue and green or black bins are collected), or the time of their collection.

A leaflet detailing the bin changes, which includes a spring 2017 collection calendar, should have been delivered to every household in the district. The information is available on our website at [www.scambs.gov.uk/bin-changes](http://www.scambs.gov.uk/bin-changes)

**Health Matters:-** South Cambs is to become a dementia friendly employer by trailing the Dementia Action Alliance. Once we know more we will tell you how it is going. If we remember.

**Art Project for people who do not get out and about much:-** The South Cambs Health Partnership has had a number of meetings to discuss how we can tackle the debilitating problem of loneliness and isolation in our villages. It is acknowledged that loneliness is an increasingly serious issue which has many consequences including significant numbers of unnecessary appointments to GPs' surgeries. Forward Gamlingay are planning to undertake a pilot project to see what can be done at a very local level to address this problem. The project will take the form of a 5 week 2 hour art course based at the Eco Hub. It will definitely NOT require people to be any good at all at art. It may actually be an advantage if you have no experience. Dave and Helen from the Art Barn will be running the course which will just be good fun, suitable for anyone and as much about making friends as about making things. We shall be delivering some flyers around to houses where we think people who may be interested live but if you or a friend or relative would like to know more please get in touch. The course will be free and light refreshments will be provided. If you would find it difficult to get to the Eco Hub we have a lovely volunteer willing to drive you there.

**Minor Highway Bids:-** Local residents and the Parish Council presented their scheme for the extension of a footway along Everton Road to the Beds border (where the current footway starts!) to the Minor Highways Panel last month. Feedback from the Panel seemed positive so let's hope it makes the list – it's a good project that will benefit many people now and in the future. Presentations from other Parishes including Orwell hopefully will also make it.

**Housing:-** Whatever concerns we may have about South Cambridgeshire District Council becoming an open market landlord we must offer congratulations as it has been shortlisted for a Chartered Institute of Housing award. Ermine Street Housing rents homes in the private sector to generate income to support Council services and SCDC also set up the Housing Development Agency with Cambridge City Council to deliver 250 social homes each year. South Cambs is one of the top three performing councils for re-letting homes and has exceeded customer satisfaction targets for repairs.

We have a trusted handyperson scheme to help tenants with small jobs around their home and a warm homes strategy to tackle fuel poverty and condensation while making people more comfortable in their homes. The Council currently owns, manages and maintains a stock of 5,500 homes.

But. Feedback from Council tenants is not always as rosy as this picture paints. While it is true people contact us to sort a problem out rather than to say how lovely everything is there are significant issues within our housing stock – and the people who have to live with those issues (damp being a popular one) are understandably unhappy. So let's hope this Award (if SCDC wins) helps the Council push forward faster on improving the 5500 homes we own.

**Apprenticeship Levy:-** The government's new 'apprenticeship levy' is a levy on UK employers to fund new apprenticeships. It's due from all employers with an annual pay bill of over £3 million – who will have to put 0.5 per cent of their pay bill into the fund.

If you're a school that's run by the council, whether as a community school or a 'voluntary controlled' school, the pay bill that matters isn't yours, it's the county council's as they are the employer of your staff. So even the smallest local authority schools in Cambridgeshire will have to pay 0.5 per cent of their pay bill to the Government.

However, if you're an academy or a voluntary aided school, it might be a different story. If the trust that runs you is too small to reach the £3 million pay bill threshold, you won't have to contribute to the apprenticeship levy, even if you're the same size as (or even bigger than) the next door local authority school that does. And that doesn't seem fair.

There are a lot of other changes to education funding going on this year which will increase or decrease the cash going to individual schools. The government is short-changing schools by not inflation-proofing the grant it gives them (bad news). On the other hand, the government is proposing a national funding formula (good news) whose effect has been to move money away from relatively well funded urban areas into rural areas. On the third hand, they have increased the deprivation component and reduced the lump sum that goes to all schools, so some small rural schools serving non-deprived areas will see a loss. In the Gamlingay area locality out of 17 schools one will be unaffected, six will be better off and TEN will be worse off. Grrrr.

So it's a complicated picture of swings and roundabouts, not just a slide. But it seems wrong that all local authority schools, however small, will have to pay the apprenticeship levy, while the same rules won't apply to some large academies.

**Cambourne West:-** South Cambs agreed the planning application for millions of pounds of new facilities and 2,350 new homes at Cambourne last month – for good or bad. Why do you care? Because increased housing in Cambourne directly impacts the traffic in the surrounding villages and all those houses add up to a dent in our housing targets (which is a Good Thing). We had included an expansion to Cambourne in the Local Plan – the strategy that guides development in the area – as it was assessed as one of the best locations to deliver high quality and well-connected new homes.

Over £45 million pounds of investment in facilities – including an athletics track and funding towards a new swimming pool are included with two primary schools and a second secondary school, Sports pitches and play areas, Shops and community space, extension to the existing doctors surgery, offices and light industrial employment areas, redesign of the Caxton bypass and Cambourne Road roundabouts and 705 affordable homes.

Annoyingly £8.7 million from the developer agreement has also been allocated for improving the public transport links between Cambourne and Cambridge. The money is planned to be added to funding available through the Greater Cambridge City Deal. Absolutely zero, nada, rien has been offered to address the traffic implications for Gamlingay, Arrington, Longstowe, Croydon and all the other villages who have to bear the traffic which won't be going to Cambridge.

Potholes:- Cambridgeshire County Council paid out £166,000 in pothole-related claims for the last year data is available. This is considerably less than the cost of repairing them faster. What a world it is we live in.....

**Pressures on A&E and the NHS:-** There is a great deal in the news about the pressure on the NHS with delays at Accident and Emergency departments, and concerns about cancelled operations. Some coverage has mentioned the impact of cuts to local authority budgets. It is not always obvious how the two are linked, so here an attempt to explain it!

Cambridgeshire County Council has responsibility for providing Social Care services – supporting people to live independently in their own homes, or in some cases in residential care homes or sheltered housing. The demand for social care services grows every year as our population ages, and more people need help with the everyday tasks of life: getting up in the morning, doing the shopping, washing, cooking etc.

In Cambridgeshire the proportion of the population over 80 is growing fast, and it is the increase in this age group which is particularly responsible for the increase in demand for social care services. Over the past 5 years dramatic cuts to the budget of the County Council have seen grant from central government reduced by 54%. This reduction has meant long term freezes in how much we pay to the companies who provide care, who then have not been able to recruit staff, and many are now unwilling to take on the most difficult cases, often elderly people with dementia.

So there are now regular occasions when elderly people (often with dementia) are admitted to hospital, then cannot be discharged because they are not fit to go home alone, and there is no care available to support them either at home, or in residential care. These patients are stuck in hospital. They do not want to be there and the hospital doesn't want them to be there, as they are taking up a crucial bed. They have no-where to go.

It is this the bed-blocking which is causing so much misery. The impact on A & E is that patients are brought in to hospital, but there are no beds available. Ambulances are kept waiting at the hospital, as the patient inside cannot be taken up to a ward, as there is no bed. The ambulance cannot leave until the patient is admitted, as if no bed is found they will need to take the patient elsewhere. Ambulances stuck waiting outside hospitals are not able to attend to other urgent calls, and those needing an ambulance wait longer.

Planned operations are cancelled, as there is no bed available for patients to be taken to post-operation. The waste in this situation is enormous. Hugely expensive operating theatres with all their fantastic well-qualified staff sit around as they cannot do their jobs - due to a lack of bed space.

It doesn't have to be like this. Central government have cut the funding to Cambridgeshire County Council, but they have also given us the option of raising more money locally to invest in local services. We could raise Council Tax (via a Social Care precept) by 4% (a cost of an additional 45p a week for the average household) which would raise £5 million across the County. This money would be used to fund those care homes and staff so badly needed to unblock the idiotic situation we find ourselves in - and worse - that some of the most vulnerable people in our community find themselves in. The Budget meeting is on February 14<sup>th</sup> so we will advise next month of what happened. Fingers crossed.

#### **Correspondence:**

**Community Awards:** One invitation for a Councillor to attend the Awards Evening has been received. Ms Newland is interested in attending and will confirm with the Clerk if she is able to go. Clerk has also been asked to supply a photo of the IG's activities, or if nothing is available, a photograph of the village.

**Defibrillator:** Cllr Smith has not managed to send a photo of the AED in Gamlingay yet. Clerk has received an e-mail with details of AEDs for external use. The one advertised is from PRimary Care Supplies Ltd and suitable for both adult and paediatric use - it costs over £1349 + VAT. Mr Wenman said that it could be sited on the exterior of the QA, once it was open. This offer was welcomed by Council, as the QA is in the centre of the village.

**Information Commissioners Office:** An e-mail was received via the Clerk's association suggesting that all Parish Councils need to be registered with the ICO. Mrs Slator volunteered to read the copious information supplied on their website. Clerk will contact both our County and District Councillors for advice on this, ready for the March meeting.

**Parish Elections:** Information was received from SCDC that officially there will be 4 year elections in all Councils. Croydon's next election will be in 2018. Previously larger local authority elections were

staggered, where half the Councillors were elected every two years. This new ssystem has been implemented for cost cutting.

**Bin Days:** There has been a lot of publicity over the bin day changes. SCDC has amalgamated with Cambridge City Council in a cost saving exercise.

**Muddy Roads:** There was a complaint from the village that there is a lot of mud on the High Street. Clerk will consult District and County Councillors for advice on where this complaint should be directed.

**Website:** A quote of £300 has been received from Mrs Walter's daughter for setting up the village website, maintenance and training on its use, which is £100 more than was originally mentioned. Councillors felt that further discussion on the style of website was needed, and a firm specification established before obtaining three quotes, which Council is obliged to do when spending public money.

**Finance:**

**Bank Statement:** Had not arrived.

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

**Date of next meeting:** Wednesday 15 March 2017 in the Reading Room, starting at 7.30pm.

As there was no further business the meeting closed at 8.27pm.

Signed .....

Date .....

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