

A meeting of Croydon Parish Council was held on Wednesday 21 June 2017 in the Reading Room at 7.30pm.

Apologies: Cllr Smith - City Deal meeting; Cllr Kindersley - late arrival as at another meeting

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

Minutes: of the May 17 meeting were agreed and signed.

Declarations of Interest: None received

Matters Arising and Village Issues:

Queen Adelaide: Mr Wenman was pleased to report that the Wood Grill at the Queen Adelaide opened on 20 June. Around 50 people attended and a lot of those ate there. There are still a few wrinkles to be sorted out (no garden furniture!) but there will be an official opening of the Wood Grill at the Queen Adelaide when everything has been dealt with.

Implementation Group: Apologies that there will be no IG representation at this month's meeting and we would be grateful if this brief progress report could be read out to the meeting.

IG Report

Housing: There is no progress to report in relation to the site near the centre of the village. There has been no communication to the IG from the family involved. Both the agent and Hill have been contacted but neither has any new information. The PC will recall that an earlier letter at the turn of the year received a positive response and consideration is now being given to sending a second letter seeking further clarification.

-A second potential site at the west end of the village has been reported previously. There has been very open dialogue with the IG in regard to possible developments on this site which has included a meeting with District Councillors. To begin with a quite substantial development was being considered but this has now been very much scaled down. The owner feels there are significant hurdles being placed in the way of small developments and, now that we have the District Council elections and the General Election out of the way, the IG together with the owner would like to meet with Sebastian and Bridget to explore whether small developments of the kind the village indicated it wanted are in practice more difficult to achieve.

Village Grass Cutting: The IG has been in contact with Cambs County Council about grass cutting at Clopton Close as it had been allowed to grow very tall. We have been told that CCC are planning for only three cuts per year and the dates of these cuts are available on the CCC website. In fact the website shows the cutting plan for the coming month or so but it does not show dates beyond that. As you know this grass area was cut by the village working party on the most recent Tidy Up Day and we are trying to get information from CCC about future dates so any cutting by the village can be done in the large gaps between CCC's own cutting dates. In the meantime it is pleasing to see that some Clopton Close residents are now cutting the areas in front of their properties which is good to see.

Village email information system: This has been a very long trail from the start of the original village surveys but, in the absence of any other volunteers, myself and Garth have now picked this up and are having a go at getting this up and running. First task is to get some familiarity with Mailchimp and this we are now doing. We are hoping to launch during the (this!) summer.

Footpath from High Street to Larkins Road: This path could provide a valuable alternative to walking down Larkins Road but it runs diagonally across a field which is routinely ploughed and sown with the result that, given Croydon's notorious sticky clay, it is impossible to use for much of the year. There is support within the IG for this to be moved to run around the perimeter of the field and some initial enquiries are being undertaken and the results of these will be reported to the PC in due course. Thank you.

Malcolm Ralph and Jonny Firth – Implementation Group Co-Chairs

Reading Room Trustees: All the information required has been received from the Trustees. Based on information from a comparison website on the saving to be made, with the current use the Reading Room is getting it could be around 100 years before the most expensive quotation expenditure is

recovered. Council agreed to wait for further clarification from the Trustees before deciding whether to give their support to the eco-lighting scheme.

Larkins Road: CCC Highways sent a comprehensive reply on the best way forward in the attempt to obtain a speed limit on Larkins Road. A response from the Police is awaited, and when this is received a decision will be made on the next steps.

Speed Sign: Mrs Slator will ask the Hatley Clerk for a figure for the hire of their speed sign and the original cost. Clerk will look into the cost of a new sign and check for the legalities involved with the Highways Department

Security Cameras: Mr Wenman suggested that two cameras be placed on the QA sign, one pointing each way, to monitor the High Street, in the hopes that this might act as a deterrent. The suggestion has been handed over to the Implementation Group to determine public opinion but there is nothing further to report at present.

Deer Signs: After much discussion it was decided to send a donation of £80-00 to Hatley PC for the purchase of deer signs to prevent killing/injuries to the many deer roaming across the area. This was a majority decision.

Correspondence:

Electoral Register: Circulated to Councillors for their information.

South Cambs Parish Councils' Conference: An invitation from Jason Ablewhite for one member of the Parish Council to attend a meeting at the Headquarters in Hinchingsbrooke Park on 11 August to discuss issues of concern in their village. As it is a working day, no Councillors are available to attend.

Merchant Navy Day: This has only been commemorated since 2000, but for the past two years has been the focus of Seafarers UK nationwide campaign to raise public awareness of this country's reliance on seafarers and shipping. Councils have been asked if they would like to fly a Red Ensign on 3rd September in support of this. Croydon does not have a flagpole but Mr Wenman has a flagpole bracket which he is prepared to donate to the Reading Room, if they would like to fix it to the building so that a flag can be flown when required. Clerk to contact the Chairman of the Trustees to see if they would like it.

Scams Awareness Month: July is Scams Awareness Month 2017 and correspondence was received to highlight the campaign, which is led by Citizens Advice, working in partnership with organisations such as Trading Standards and the Metropolitan Police; the link to the Scams Awareness Month 2017 page on the Citizens Advice website is:

https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/campaigns/current_campaigns/scams-awareness-month/scams-awareness-month-2017/

Parking Concerns: Concern was raised by High Street residents regarding possible blocking of their access with overspill parking from the QA. Council felt that the situation should be monitored as nothing has happened at present.

Speeding in the village: A local resident had a narrow escape when going to post a letter. He was on the road opposite Pantiles when a van came along, quite fast, and didn't want to wait for him to walk to safety. The grass verge there has been eroded away by traffic and there was a parked car on the other side. After discussion Council are considering speed controls.

Report from Cllrs Kindersley and Smith

Thank You: I was both delighted and honoured to be returned as your County Councillor on May 4th – thank you to everyone who supported my re-election and I promise to continue to work hard on your behalf. The new Gamlingay Division on the County Council is very different with six new Parishes added in the South West (the Mordens, Litlington, Abington Pigotts, Tadlow and Shingay-cum-Wendy) and others nearer Cambridge moving into other Divisions.

I will continue to be on the Planning Committees at both CCC and SCDC as well as returning to the Fire Authority which I used to really enjoy and which is important for Gamlingay (which has a brilliant team down at the Station!).

The disappearance of UKIP means that the Conservatives have taken control of the County Council. With one exception not a single opposition Councillor has been appointed to any post in the County - which does not bode well for the future. Committees have been reduced in size and there's a clear view that local government by consensus is not part of the plan.

At South Cambs you can give your views on the future of the District by visiting www.scambs.gov.uk/letstalk where there is a summary of the main issues facing us which will be used as the basis for the Council's future planning – but be quick, it's a short consultation.

Annual Report to Parish Councils: Many people are not able to come to the annual meetings of the Parish Council so here's what I based my annual County report on to the AGMs (with thanks to SVDV). Most of our reporting over the last 12 months has again necessarily been about declining public services & struggles to protect bare essentials. Ours is one of the most affluent parts of the country, but not without deprivation.

We have the ability to raise revenue to provide services yet are stuck in a quest to keep council tax down, exacerbating other severe pressures. This year council tax was again frozen, rejecting a 1.99% rise and saving a Band D household 42p per week. This isn't getting us very far in running essential services. Many vulnerable people are inadequately supported and deprivation gaps persist. The 2% social care precept rise is welcome but falls far short of what's needed.

The council is shedding services that it isn't legally required to provide. This year it stopped providing transport assistance to 16-18 year-olds, even though they are required to be in education or training. Sixth form colleges say that their intake from less affluent areas has reduced. Pot holes are measured in millimetres before the OK to fix them and we are developing new vocabulary to describe grades of wear and tear. Ruts are not pot holes! Pavement deterioration continues.

Council reserves are low and borrowing is high. This year the council reversed a decision to cut winter gritting; the roughly £600K required to do this was taken from reserves – the service cut had been made after last year's council tax freeze. This necessitated re-acquiring gritting lorries and drivers within the space of one year. The Council's financial position has been hit hard by central government policy to withdraw Revenue Support Grant, which will be at zero in two years' time. It is difficult to meet the rising costs of an aging population and other demographic changes without this support. There are questions about new responsibilities that may accompany the retention of Business Rates in 2020. The County Council will be required to help fund the new Mayoral layer of government, while giving up key strategic powers to the Mayor.

Unsurprisingly, the council is looking at new ways of generating revenue, including as a housing developer. It is unable to plug gaps in infrastructure brought about by unplanned speculative development – and yet has itself become a speculative developer – even locally, at Litlington.

A positive change is the County Council's relatively new public health responsibility, which brings greater awareness of health and wellbeing in the general population, and of inequalities. This has positively influenced some decision making. However budgets there are being cut there too. The council has a role in scrutinizing health services, and this has provided understanding of staff recruitment and retention issues related to cost of living – this is playing out in other sectors too. Let's hope for a better 12 months.

Robinson Court Redevelopment Gamlingay: Bridget attended the drop-in session for residents affected by the redevelopment of Robinson Court at Avenells Way. In attendance were the developers Taylor French, South Cambs and the architects who have done the design. In all, about 10 very pleasant people gave up their time to speak to everyone for 2 hours - and they brought cakes which made it even better.

Bridget had delivered, the day before, an FAQ sheet to all 52 properties most affected. This was to ensure that everyone was well informed before the drop in. There were a number of questions about the provision of extra parking spaces - which is in hand and which we will tell you more about once we have all the details. Everyone was delighted that the build is only going to last between 12 and 15 months and that a monthly drop in will be arranged to iron out any issues which crop up. Everyone was also given contact details for the site manager who will be on 24 hour call (poor man!).

Our sense was that the great majority of people were very pleased with the way things went and we thank those who rang Bridget later to say how useful the session was and how much happier they now feel. We shall be sending out regular letters to the 52 houses as news arrives and these will also be put on the Parish Council website. Thank you to all of you who attended and to all the experts.

Housing at Robinson Court: Many people have made enquiries about housing at Robinson Court – and this also applies to the affordable housing at Green End and West Rd when it is built. To be considered for any properties, you first need to make an application to South Cambs and have your level of housing need and priority assessed (we call this a housing needs band). The quickest way to make an application is on-line at www.home-link.org.uk. If you are not online you can call the Council on 03450 450 500 to ask for assistance registering over the phone.

If your application is accepted you will be banded as A,B,C or D. Certain people will not be accepted onto the housing register. These include those who are not eligible for social housing due to their immigration status, people who have an eligible immigration status but are not habitually resident in the UK, and people who are guilty of unacceptable behaviour that makes them unsuitable to be a tenant.

So now you've been accepted and you have your banding. You can now look at the adverts and decide whether you are interested in any of the properties. You express your interest in the properties by making a bid for them. Only people who have bid for an advertised property can be considered. You will be able to get assistance with bidding if you need it - please contact South Cambs for more information.

To be considered for an advertised property, you need to express an interest in it, known as making a bid. You can bid for 3 properties every week. You can bid for homes on our website, by the automated phone line or by text. The quickest and easiest way to bid is through the website (www.home-link.org.uk) You will need to have your log in reference, memorable date and password to log in. You will have set these up when you made your application. If help was needed registering and the applicant has no internet access the available properties will be sent out in a newsletter and bidding can be done by phone.

When bids are considered for advertised properties, the successful bidder will usually be the person who has been in the highest band for the longest period of time.

Manor Rd & Murfitt Way: We are very concerned about the state of the footpaths around Manor Rd and Murfitt Way and the lack of proper parking on Murfitt Way. We have asked the County Council to look at the footpaths and hopefully repair them and we have asked the District Council to see if there is any way of creating some new parking bays in Murfitt Way in order that people don't have to park on the grassed areas. Nothing happens quickly in the world of Councils so don't get too excited but we shall keep you posted about any developments.

Blythe Way: The road and footpaths have been a cause of grave concern for years in Blythe Way and we have asked the County Council to consider resurfacing the whole area. There are also parking issues which we are looking into. The parking bays are reserved for residents of Blythe Way and their visitors and are not for general parking. We accept that the lack of signage making this clear means that issues have arisen. We are hoping that the District Council will put in some new signs pretty quickly and also clarify where general parking is and is not allowed. We have also asked them to look into cars being parked/dumped long term in the parking area behind Stocks Lane as this is also not allowed.

Heath Road Leak: You may have noticed the return of what appears to be a water mains leak on Heath Rd. The Parish Council has reported this to Anglian Water who are claiming it is a natural spring (despite the longest dry spell for years) but we recall that this happened a few years ago and after much toing and froing it did turn out to be a leak. We shall keep you posted.

Bins & Rubbish: We had reports last month that the bin men were chucking the paper caddy contents into the main blue bins before emptying them into the lorry and that this was not the first time this had been witnessed. We were also told that the bin men ground Mill Street to a complete halt one Wednesday when they arrived much later than usual on top of which parents could not walk children to school on the pavements as the rubbish collection outside some of the cottages completely filled the pavement. We have had an apology and have been told that the paper should not have been chucked in with the rest of the rubbish. Please let us know if you see this happening again.

Avenells Way & Blythe Way: We hope the residents of Avenells Way and Grays Rd are as pleased as we are with the hard fought for ramp which has been installed at the end of the Church St footpath. This will make it much safer for people walking and on scooters. Bridget was very pleased to be able to help the marvellous lunch group to get a grant of £370 from South Cambs for a new freezer. This will allow them to prepare food and to bulk buy when ingredients are cheaper. More and more people attend the lunches which are nutritious, delicious and very sociable.

Just to be completely fair to all our older residents Bridget completed a grant application for the Blythe Way residents as well for £200 from the Wind Turbine Tithe Fund to beautify the area around the day room with lovely plants. Thank you to the Wind Turbine Directors for awarding this money which will make a huge difference.

Connect Cafe: Well done to the Eco Hub and especially to Emma for organising the Connect Cafe which runs every Friday morning. There are more people of all ages attending every time we see it. It is

just what we needed - the opportunity to meet new people over a cup of coffee and a piece of cake – please do considering coming along!

New mobile Phone Mast and Mobile Phone Reception: Residents of School Close, Green End and Fairfield have been contacting us about the new mobile phone mast which has gone on the RH Wales site and which most people think is hideous and highly obtrusive. This is the response from Enforcement:

“I have attended the site and confirm that the mast is correctly sited as per the submitted plans and of the correct height. The development was subject of a planning notification, S/1728/16/PN, but does not require formal planning approval as it has deemed consent as per Part 16 of The Town and Country Planning (general Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015.”

Even more annoying is that since we got 4G we seem to have lost what little signal we had. We are chasing this up.

New Mayor elected for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough: Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is one of six regions of England which held elections for newly-created combined authority mayors, whose remits will cover multiple local authorities in mostly urban areas. The Mayor's main responsibility will be to decide the region's economic strategy and many will have powers covering other areas such as transport and housing. He will also lead the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough combined authority devolution deal. The new Mayor, James Palmer, has made commissioning a new spatial plan for the area one of his main priorities for his first 100 days in office.

Verges in Steeple Morden: I have asked the County Council to either cut the verges in and around Cheney St/Village sign and Russell Close or to let me know why the County feels they are not County responsibility. This is an area of land that previously appears to have been cut by South Cambs as a favour.

Cambridge North: The Cambridge North railway station opened in May located close to Cambridge Science Park. The station connects to the Cambridgeshire Guided Busway and provides an interchange with Park & Ride and local bus services. It serves southbound fast services to Cambridge and London King's Cross; northbound services to Ely and Norwich and semi-fast services to London Liverpool Street via Cambridge and Bishop's Stortford, and stopping services to London King's Cross via Cambridge and Stevenage. Just in case you're in the area...

Superfast Broadband in Hatley: Grrrrr. Openreach have investigated and it appears that there is a BT systems issue that means whilst one resident can successfully order a neighbour is told they cannot, even though the network is there and ready. At first we thought the network didn't have enough capacity which would have been worrying, but we now know it's a problem with BT's data systems that is currently being worked on and should be resolved within the next week (aka 'months').

Water Shortage: As I write this the rain is lashing down and the wind is tearing up the garden but Anglian Water are currently encouraging us to save water. Since July 2016 there has been low rainfall and the water in our aquifers (natural underground water reservoirs) and rivers that they use to supply your water has dropped below average.

This is important as 60% of the water supplied comes from underground sources, which remain at below average levels. From January to April 2017 rainfall has been 50% - 70% below the average for this time of year. The Met Office long range weather forecast has also indicated that the next few months are likely to continue with above average temperatures and below average rainfall. As they say “We continue to monitor the situation closely with clear plans in place to make sure we're fully prepared, should the dry weather continue through the autumn and next winter.” In the meantime, we are encouraged to save water to help preserve supplies.

So now we know why it's raining so hard.

Community Chest: We were delighted to support the applications not only from Gamlingay but also for Croydon Reading Room's installation of Eco lighting (£1k). Also awarded grants from the Gamlingay Division were Barrington PC's upgrade of footpath to riverside meadows (£1k) and Steeple Morden Bowls Club's replacement windows and fire escape doors. (£1k). Do YOU have a project that might benefit? Get in touch.

Potholes in Guilden Morden: The state of Church Street Guilden Morden is quite something to behold. Some work has been done to repair some potholes but the entire road is in need of a complete overhaul. I shall be pressing forward with this.

Parking Problems: In February the Police launched a web-site where you could register complaints about parking. As promised they have taken the information and have run the first two crackdown days.

During the operation the PCSOs were deployed only to the places where parking was a problem. However, it was clear a lot of the parking being complained about wasn't necessarily illegal. This is due to some confusion about the difference between a Highway Code Rule and the rules established by the Road Traffic Act. Without getting too technical, there are some rules in the highway code which are 'should not' and some that are 'must not'. Only the latter can be legally enforced.

However this anti-social parking that breaches the highway code was of concern so rather than take no action letters explain how to park were left on offending vehicles. Police issued a combined ticket/letter total of 200 over two days – and these crackdown days at unannounced intervals throughout the year will continue.

Please continue to use the web-site to report concerns if parking is a problem in your road.

<http://tinyurl.com/SouthCambs-Parking>

Parking issues in Arrington: Firstly SCDC has agreed to put in some new signage to help at Clifden Close. Secondly the National Trust has responded to our concerns about the proposed development and parking locally with the following:

“Because the trail is aimed at existing park users we therefore hope that the issues of vehicles parking within Arrington village will not get worse as a result of the implementation of the proposed trail. We do however recognise that parking within the village is a concern to the local community. Because this is a public highway we cannot implement or propose any measures as part of the proposed application for the multi-use trail. A colleague at Wimpole has however initiated contact with Highways to discuss the parking issues at Arrington and also on Oddy Doddy Lane adjacent to where the route crosses over the road. We intend to discuss with Highways the options for deterring vehicles from parking in these two locations..”

Affordable Housing at Litlington: It was somewhat embarrassing to attend my first meeting at Litlington to find the County Council is taking advantage of the five year housing land supply debacle at South Cambs to propose building houses outside the village framework. However, residents seemed accepting of the presentation made by the relevant officer and a further public consultation meeting is planned.

Specials: Ever thought of becoming a Special with the Police force? Like the regular colleagues they work alongside, Specials are sworn in by a magistrate and have the same powers by law, including power of arrest. They must commit a minimum of four hours a week to their duties.

Often employers will support their staff in volunteering as Special constables through our Employer Supported Policing (ESP) scheme. It is a partnership with benefits for all involved – the employer, member of staff and the police service – and helps increase public safety and confidence. For more information on becoming a Special and how to apply, visit: <https://goo.gl/FnZxFO>

Monitoring at Barrington: Many concerns from Barrington residents about the impact the trains running into the quarry is having in terms of noise, vibration and so on. Images of serious cracks in people's homes were distributed at the recent PC meeting.

Monitors have been installed in some properties but it is vital that those with concerns let the County Council (as Planning Authority) know of any impact the trains are having as without the full picture the County cannot do a full job.

There will be a CEMEX Liaison Group Meeting on July 12th 6.30pm in the village hall when County Council reps, Environment Agency and CEMEX bods will be there so that might be a good meeting to get to.

Planning:

Brickyard Farm S/1121/17/FL: Application to build a replacement dwelling further back from the road has been approved.

Reservoir at Manor Farm S/1989/17/PN: Notification received, but no paperwork.

Finance:

Audit: The accounts have been sent off to Littlejohns for audit.

Solar Farm: After an enquiry by the Clerk, an e-mail was received to say that the third instalment has been paid. This should appear on the June bank statement.

Bank Statement: At the end of May, the current account stands at £10408.02.

Grasscutting: Following controversy about the legalities surrounding Parish Councils giving grants for churchyard grasscutting, Clerk approached fellow clerkswithin the SLCC for their opinion. The most helpful response stated that, as per Charles Arnold Baker - 10th Edition - Chapter 25, Appearance of Village, para 25.2., a Council may give a grant under Section 137. A £400-00 grant towards the church grass cutting was therefore agreed unanimously by Council. The cheque was raised and signed, and will be delivered by hand.

Reading Room Rental: As the invoices for last year have not been presented for payment yet, Clerk was instructed to contact the Chairman of the Trustees to see if she could expedite the process.

Items for next agenda: Cones on Lower Road - Mr Barnes will check CCC website.

Date of next meeting: Wednesday 19 July 2017 in the Reading Room, starting at 7.30pm.

As there was no further business the meeting closed at 8.10pm.

Signed

Date

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