

## **A meeting of Croydon Parish Council was held on Wednesday 15 November 2017 in the Reading Room at 7.30pm.**

**Apologies:** None received.

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

**Minutes:** of the October meeting were agreed and signed.

**Declarations of Interest:** None received.

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

**Implementation Group:** There were several issues which the Group asked to be raised at the meeting:-

- Location and mapping of fire hydrants - when there was a fire at the Queen Adelaide recently, the Gamlingay firefighters did not know where to locate a fire hydrant. Because of this, the Group felt it would be worthwhile to produce a map with the location of hydrants marked on it. Councillors thought that the Fire Service or Water Board was responsible for periodically testing and checking the condition of the hydrants, but Cllr Kindersley felt that this was no longer the case, due to budget restraints.
- IG spending - did Council feel able to allow the Group to spend up to a delegated amount without going to Council. This was discussed, but for VAT and accounting reasons, it was decided that all purchases would be invoiced to and paid for by the Council.
- Cameras - Council discussed siting of CCTV cameras on the QA sign pointing up and down the High Street. The matter was passed to the Group to discover public opinion. Mrs Slator reported that there were no strong feelings either way. The village is quite spread out, so whilst some properties may benefit, many would not, Cllr Kindersley said that there was also a data protection issue - if you have been recorded on public land, you may ask for a copy of the recording. The scheme was decided against.
- Whatsapp Group - members of the IG have set up an informal Whatsapp group, which is open to anyone to join. Contact Mrs Slator for details.

**Speed Signs:** Cllr Kindersley has been unable to get an answer from Anthony Bancroft-Hall regarding the site for the speed signs, but keeps trying.

**Larkins Road:** It is likely that Lower Road will be closed for the two days of repairs that are planned on 11/12 December. Diversions will be signposted.

**Register of Electors:** No alterations received this month.

**Reading Room Grass cutting:** Council had already agreed to precept for £48-00 to cover grass cutting costs at The Reading Room in 2018. Mr Wheeler asked for clarification of the frequency of cut and a subsequent quotation has been received for £150-00. After discussion it was agreed to precept for this amount, in order to keep the area tidy. All in favour.

**Parking Issues:** Cllr Smith asked Richard Alleyne from SCDC to contact the Clerk about this. As no contact has been made, Clerk will contact him.

**Village Clean Up Day:** This went very well - 14 bags of litter were collected and many paths were tidied and signs cleaned. Well done to all who took part.

**Trees in a garden:** A resident has asked about planting trees outside the boundary of their property. Council stated that all planting should be kept within the boundary.

**End of year festivity:** It was suggested that the Implementation Group again be invited to the Christmas nibbles held after the last meeting of the year. This was warmly received and Mrs Slator will send an invitation to every member of the Group asking for an RSVP to the Clerk for catering purposes. Various Councillors agreed to bring suitable drinks.

### **Verbal Reports from Cllr Kindersley and Cllr Smith:**

**Childrens' Centres:** There are to be a lot of closures and redesignations in order to save money. Cllr Kindersley is very cross about this as the amount of money saved by the closures is equivalent to the

Councillors' wage rise. If just five children go into care because of these closures then the whole saving is wiped out.

**Roads:** There has been a 33% increase in people killed or injured on the roads. It has been suggested that lack of budget to trim trees, mark white lines and repair potholes may be a contributory factor in this rise. Often fire tenders have to go out to cut people out of crashed vehicles, which impacts on their service..

**Local Plan:** The SCDC Local Plan has now been 3 years and 8 months in the making and is still not approved. There are not enough officers at SCDC and those that are there are being asked to do things that they have not been trained to do, or should not be doing. The Local Plan Inspector might consult on 2 modifications to the Plan in November and December. The Plan must be out before March. Bourn Airfield is in the Plan to be develop on with a new village of 5,000 houses, but Councillors pointed out that 5,000 houses have already been built in South Cambs, so is the development really necessary. The good news in that the Inspector is not allowing development in smaller villages as they are considered unsustainable.

**Local Enterprise Partnership:** This covers Cambs and Suffolk and has a budget of £500 million. The Mayor has taken over the control of this and will therefore decide where the funding is spent. Cllr Smith and the Lib Dems are concerned that he may try to take over the Greater Cambridge Partnership next, and are writing to all MPs in the area about their concerns. They feel the Mayor focuses on East Cambs.

**Consultation on A428:** The information in the booklet is incorrect in a very important section. There are three routes to choose from and their narratives have been mixed up. There is only mention of the building cost of each route, nothing about the associated cost of the farmland that would have to be purchased for them.

**Park and Ride:** The £1-00 charge is to be removed, as there are 17,000 less vehicles using the Park and Ride car parks. It is hoped that the cost can be recovered from the Greater Cambs Partnership. It might be more sensible to go for a congestion charge to raise the lost revenue.

**SCDC:** Due to the shambles at SCDC the Council may lose its designation. If this happens. then it will cease to be a Planning Authority and the Government will take over the planning for the district. This is very close to happening.

**Planning:** A number of applications are being won on appeal because the planners are not deciding them in time. A Parish Council can ask for Plans to go to Committee but the rules on this have changed. Cllr Smith reported that in the last 12 months she has not had any request she has made for this approved. She is currently investigating this further.

**TV:** Anglia TV will be broadcasting live from Gamlingay on 14 December from 6 - 6.30pm. It will be worth watching.

**Sustainable Villages:** Cllr Smith gave us a different view of sustainability. She was recently in Longstowe, which has no new development as it is deemed an unsustainable village, having only a pub as the village facility. However, the average age of the residents is 63, there are no affordable houses in the village for young families to rent and no smaller properties for older people who no longer require larger houses to move to. Is it a dying village?

#### **E-mailed Report from Cllrs Kindersley and Smith:-**

**Children's Centres:** The County Council has now met and agreed the 'redesignation' (i.e closure) of a large number of Children's Centres, saving the County £1m. Some very impressive speakers - notably the director of Romsey Mill children's centre; a retired County Council social services officer with decades' experience of children's centres; chair of governors at Homerton Early Years Centre; and the headteacher of Caldecote Primary School - made compelling arguments about the dangers of the proposals. Expert opinion really does make you sit up and listen. In addition to these a petition with over 4,000 signatures was presented.

The argument was made that outreach work will step in and fill the gap. This is what we were told when Gamlingay lost out to Bassingbourn when Children's centres were first being planned. With a very few noble exceptions Gamlingay has not benefitted from anywhere near the same level of service. So I do not believe that the outreach model has any hope of success. There only needs to be five children taken into care across the county as a result of the failure to provide these services for the saving to be completely wiped out.

Extraordinarily the County Council's leadership has now appointed five "Area Champions" - one Councillor from each of the Districts. The point of these new posts (each paid £5,000 a year!) is

unclear. We already have area champions – they are called Councillors. A councillor is elected to stand up for their area and help people get the services they need. This appears to be creating a whole new layer of paid people with no obvious benefit to the public.

At a time when the leadership of the Council has voted itself an enormous pay rise this is all a very poor show.

Meanwhile as the County Council's budget cuts intensify, so the burden on parish councils and residents grows. County Highways has nowhere near enough funding to do what might be reasonably expected of it, and new rules have been put into place to protect officer time. Aside from the 'Local Highways Initiative' scheme, whereby parishes and other 'third parties' compete for partial funding of small schemes like parking restrictions and traffic calming, any other new scheme not on the County Highways work list requires 100% third-party funding. All projects require Highways approval, because the highway network is public property.

To begin a conversation on third-party funding, a deposit is now required, with two possible categories: a project requiring design and consultation (£500 deposit) or a project that needs no design or consultation (£250). These are non-refundable deposits, but are credited against schemes that go ahead. Please make use of your county councillor to help obtain initial guidance.

**Planning at South Cambs:** Planning continues to be a real issue for many residents. Most recently an Appeal for a live/work unit at the old GPO building in Arrington was granted – an appeal made because the District Council had failed to determine the application within the time permitted. This is happening more and more. In the financial year 16/17 South Cambs spent £250,000 on appeals. This year we are heading to double that figure and there are several very long appeals yet to come. At the same time all the speculative applications – nearly all outline – will start lodging the very detailed reserved matters applications and the Planning Department will simply collapse. It needs substantial investment right now.

**Teaching & Recruitment:** Teach in Cambridgeshire is holding a Secondary Recruitment Event on Thursday 11th January 2018, 17:00-19:00 at St Peter's School, Huntingdon. The event is designed for secondary trainees to network with secondary schools in Cambridgeshire regarding possible posts and upcoming positions with two workshops; Applying for a teaching post & What sort of school do I want to work in?

There will also be the opportunity for delegates to opt for mock interviews to enhance their application experience. This event has been a great success in the past with many trainees being offered interviews/positions at the event itself. Please contact [www.teachincambs.org.uk](http://www.teachincambs.org.uk)

The School Admissions Regulations 2012 require local authorities to publish annually information regarding proposed changes to school admission arrangements. The Annual Consultation of Admission Arrangements in Cambridgeshire will take place between 1 November 2017 and 15th December 2017. <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/admissionsannualconsultation>

**Parliamentary Boundary Review:** The Boundary Commission for England has now released revised proposals for our parliamentary boundary and viewable at <https://www.bce2018.org.uk/>

The key changes that affect our patch are that Bassingbourn, The Mordens and Melbourn wards are still proposed to move into a new constituency, renamed Letchworth & Royston, and this constituency now includes Meldreth ward as well. You may have read in the press that the new parliamentary boundaries are going to bring the border between South Cambs constituency and Royston Rural Constituency almost to our door.

**Little Gransden Airshow:** Bridget was delighted to be able to accept a cheque for £500 from the organisers of the Little Gransden airshow to buy new equipment for the Forward Gamlingay run Youth Club and Youth Cafe. She said "It has been a few years since we had any money to replace our equipment so this is a very welcome gift which will benefit the 60 or so young people who attend the Youth Cafe each week". Next year will be the 100th anniversary of the RAF so we are expecting an even more exceptional event.

**A428 Local Liaison Forum:** The members of the A428 Local Liaison Forum (LLF) which is involved in consultation with the Greater Cambridge Partnership (The City Deal) about the proposed Busway into the City from Cambourne agreed to create a separate Western Orbital LLF. This body will scrutinise and comment on plans for a busway along the M11 to the west of Cambridge and a very controversial new P&R at Hauxton and Harston. Despite having had a 'makeover' from the City Deal into the Greater Cambridge Partnership there is still a lot of unhappiness in the villages along the A428 with plans to put a busway through the green fields and the greenbelt. We are expecting a very glossy (and expensive)

consultation brochure on the final proposals any day now and hope that even though we are some distance away that, as users of the route and any P&R that you will engage with the consultation.

**Community Chest Grants:** This month we were very glad to support Hatley Parish Council's successful bid for website development from the Community Chest. These grants are for voluntary and community groups, charities and parish councils who can bid for up to £1,000 for improvements to community facilities, repairs to historic buildings/monuments/memorials, tree and hedge planting schemes, equipment and materials and project start-up costs. Grant applications are accepted at any time, until the funding runs out, and can completely or partially cover the costs of a project, equipment or work. Decisions about which projects are awarded funding are made every month.

For application forms and full details about the fund, plus guidance on eligibility, visit [www.scambs.gov.uk/communitychest](http://www.scambs.gov.uk/communitychest)

**Tenant Repairs:** We have had a few complaints about the quality of repairs to council housing of late and also that some houses suffer from prevalent damp which the repairs service are unable to fix. If you have any concerns about work which has been done or which you are struggling to get done, please get in touch.

**Green Bins:** It is a couple of years now since South Cambs stopped collecting green bins every two weeks during the winter and started to collect them every 4 weeks from December to February. It appears that due to the new combined collection service this has meant that some villages have had even fewer collections than agreed with some monthly collections stopping in November. Please let us know if you have been affected.

**Murfitt Way Gamlingay parking:** Parking in Murfitt Way has been problematic for some time with a number of people having to park their cars on the grassed areas. After much prompting, the council has now identified a way of creating additional hard standing which we hope will reduce the need for people to park on areas which are either for play and recreation or just to make the setting of the houses look nice. This work should be carried out before Christmas (with a bit of luck).

**Community room charges:** We are very lucky in Gamlingay to have 2 community rooms attached to our sheltered housing schemes. These are obviously primarily to benefit residents of the housing around them but are also available for other people to hire. A review is currently underway to look at the hire charges for people outside of the sheltered housing schemes and also at how better use could be made of these very nice facilities. As always, it is a case of use it or lose it.

**CV Writing:** Forward Gamlingay ran a CV writing drop-in event last month which was to help people wanting to improve their CV and consequently their job opportunities. They are planning next month to do a similar session but for people wanting to up their online presence on sites such as Linked In. Keep an eye on the Eco Hub and PC websites for further details.

**The Greater Cambridgeshire Local Enterprise Partnership Funding:** There is a significant amount of grant funding available from the GCPLEP for businesses - both large and small in rural areas like ours. This also includes start-ups. We ran a funding breakfast event last month which was well attended but if you were not able to go and would like to know about accessing funding for your business, please do talk to Bridget or take a look at the GCPLEP or Greensands LAG websites.

**Mobile Phone Reception:** Sebastian has been chasing O2 about the poor reception in Gamlingay – and many thanks to all those residents who have shared their experiences. The Executive Relations dept has now responded and this is what they say: “Our network engineers have carried out an extensive investigation and done testing in 10 postcode areas in Gamlingay village. The town is mostly served by one mast with a small amount of coverage coming from a different mast. Our engineer had no problems making calls, or with call quality, at any of the locations. Where there was 3g and 4g coverage the data signal was also good. At a couple of the post codes there is only good 2g coverage but this applies to only two sectors being served from the two masts. Our engineer only experienced one dropped call all day and he was testing for around six hours. Some of the testing was carried out on a drive through the village so the results for service outside of the car can be expected to be 4-5dB better. We can't guarantee coverage indoors as this can depend on many factors such as thickness of walls or location of rooms.

#### ***Why has the service deteriorated so badly?***

As I've explained, our engineers have been unable to detect any deterioration. The main mast site serving Gamlingay was upgraded at the end of last year but we haven't found any evidence of deterioration being caused due to this. To the contrary, we're finding improvements as call blocking has now gone away. Another nearby mast was upgraded in July which changed the coverage footprint in

the wider area but this mast didn't serve Gamlingay anyway so isn't seen to have affected service there.

***Are there any plans to improve it and if so what are the timescales?***

Our only current plans near this area, for which we don't have a set timescale as yet, is an upgrade to a mast further south but it's 5.5 kilometres away so is unlikely to serve Gamlingay.

***If there are no plans what is the process for customers to be released from their contract?***

At this stage, because we haven't identified any specific service issues, we can only suggest that the individual customers in question report their problems direct to customer service so that diagnostic tests can be carried out. If the results suggest it would help, we may look at tilting the aerial of the main serving mast to face more directly towards the town. Please be aware though that such actions would only be considered if it didn't impact negatively on more customers than it helped.

**Sheen Farm Litlington:** The County Council has now reviewed its Sheen Farm scheme in the light of all the comments received and have made a number of welcome changes. The site boundary offset to properties on Royston Road increases from 2m to 4m meeting the request made by neighbours. The size of hedgerow to eastern boundary is increased and the parking layout adjusted to increase garden size and reduce impact of parking on street scene and a number of flint/brick walls added to locations as requested by SCDC Landscape Officer. Most importantly in recognition of the increase in the number of units from 16 to 22 and the need for affordable homes the County proposes to increase the number of affordable dwellings from 9 to 11 so the present scheme now has only one less affordable home than the original 'exceptions site' proposals. As proposed before the County's offer to transfer a long lease of the Recreation Ground frontage land stands.

**Gamlingay Village College:** The planning application for the 'new' Gamlingay VC has now been the subject of a public meeting and will be debated by the Parish Council shortly. The move of all school years onto one site has caused concern relating to traffic levels. The number of pupils at 420 is less than the 500 envisaged when the school was initially built, and residents have highlighted that recently traffic would have been minimal owing to the low pupil numbers.

A segregated in and out system for drop-off is not being promoted as both the Police and Education Authority's experience is that this is far too dangerous – the only accident to a child in Cambridgeshire so far took place on one of these accesses. The level of parking proposed is higher than strictly required – and those spaces will be available to Gym users as before.

It's not a perfect application but with any luck feedback will make improvements and the school buildout will be complete by September 2018.

**The Three Tuns Guilden Morden and Other Pubs:** A very impressive set of presentations to a packed public meeting in Guilden Morden showed just how important local people consider the reopening of the pub to be and how much effort the Action Group is putting in. It was brilliant to hear the experiences of the team who have just re-opened the Hare and Hounds in Harlton. Out of 90 community-owned pubs not one has failed. The current situation at Guilden Morden is that the property is on the market as a pub (albeit closed for 3 years) and pledges of financial support are now being sought.

## **Correspondence**

**SPEP:** Circulated electronically to Councillors..

**Taxi Consultation:** Circulated to Councillors. Mrs Slator expressed an interest in the consultation and has taken the information to investigate further..

**Remembrance Sunday:** Thank you to all who were able to attend the Act of Remembrance. It is always difficult to estimate the time that this will take place, so thank you for your patience..

**Local Plan:** An update was received, which had already been circulated to Councillors. Council is always kept well informed of developments by Cllrs Kindersley and Smith.

**Winter Health Pack:** CCC is offering a free Winter Health Pack for the elderly in the village. It contains information on staying warm and well, a recipe card, a tea bag and useful contacts. Councillors felt that, fortunately, this was not necessary for Croydon.

## **Planning:**

### **Five Stables - Application number S/3050/17/FL**

Change of use of Land to Garden. Erection of a single storey extension, detached double garage and new associated private access road. Approved.

**Finance:**

**Bank Statement:** Current account stands at £16,724-09.

**Deposit Account:** Council decided to deposit the bulk of the Solar Farm money in the existing Deposit Account. As this has not been used for many years, Clerk will make enquiries regarding its use, and a cheque for an amount to be approved by Councillors will be raised at the next meeting.

**Precept:** The letter setting out how the precept is arrived at and the frequency of payments was received for Councillors to comment on. After perusal, Council was happy with the current arrangements and the precept will be set at the January meeting..

**Royal British Legion:** An invoice for £17-00 was presented for the Royal British Legion Poppy Wreath. It was resolved that, in pursuance of the power conferred by Section 137 (4) (a) of the Local Government Act 1972 and being of the opinion that the expenditure satisfies the requirements of that section, the Council approves the payment of the sum of £17-00 in respect of a wreath for Remembrance Sunday. All in favour, and a cheque for this amount was signed and will be posted.

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

**Date of next meeting:** Wednesday 20 December 2017 in the Reading Room, starting at 7.30pm.

As there was no further business the meeting closed at 8.35pm.

Signed .....

Date .....

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