

A meeting of Croydon Parish Council was held on Wednesday 18 October 2017 in the Reading Room at 7.30pm.

Apologies: Mr Barnes - attending a funeral, Mr Ralph (IG), Mrs Pillinger (IG), Cllr Smith - on a break

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

Minutes: of the September meeting were agreed and signed.

Declarations of Interest: None received.

Matters Arising and Village Issues:

Implementation Group: Mr Ralph sent a short report on behalf of the IG.

IG Report

I am sorry that I cannot be with you to present this in person but Mrs Slator has been briefed on the following topics to assist any discussion.

1. Possible housing developments:

- Correspondence between the IG and the landowners to the south of the High Street has resumed and is on good terms. This is good news in itself and further contact is hoped for in time for the next IG meeting planned for the 31st of this month.
- A bid for limited development at Portelet remains a possibility though, as yet, no definite decisions have been shared.
- Following the meeting with District Councillors, the IG is commencing the mapping of Croydon Parish (fields and their owners). The current intention is to include the identification of fields by their historic names and eventually for this to be both a parish historic record as well as a resource. Because of copyright rules, a relatively small amount of funding is required for this and I have emailed a breakdown separately to the Clerk about this - a total of up to £90. Judith is leading on this.

2. Croydon e-news service:

This has taken longer to get off the ground than any of us would have wished but I am pleased to say that two successful Mailchimp Test messages have now been transmitted to a limited number and we believe it is ready for full launch. It is being issued as a joint enterprise by the IG and PC and Sue is in a good position to expand on this. It has been designed to closely resemble the village website in appearance (using the same banner and colour) and therefore reinforces the Croydon "brand". Each parish organisation will be provided with a template so that sending a message, or an alert to new information on the website, should be an easy task. Final chance for PC comment.

3. Village clean up morning:

The next one of these sessions is planned for Saturday morning on the 28th of this month (this may in fact be the first piece of e-news to be sent out!), gathering outside Bedlam at 10am. The emphasis will be on a more limited litter pick (as there is less around given previous picks) but more on path edges, bramble cutting from near footpaths and clearing around road signs. PC adoption of this event is required for insurance purposes.

Note: - The Parish Council agreed to adopt this event for insurance purposes.

The IG will send further reports as necessary.

Larkins Road: Cllr Kindersley has contacted the County Council gentleman who has given "guidance" on the speed signs. The information he sent stated that Council should apply through the LHMI plan to obtain permission for the sites, including their speed data. Council cannot obtain data without the signs and Cllr Kindersley has been investigating the next steps required with the gentleman in question, but has not been able to obtain a response yet.

As instructed, the Clerk reported a dangerous dip in the road by Mill Lane junction on Lower Road. Following the report, an e-mail was received from CCC stating that Lower Road would be closed in December from the roundabout to the Bedfordshire border for repair.

Subsequently the following was received from CCC:-Road Number B1042

Closure Start Date Monday 11th December 2017

Closure End Date Tuesday 12th of December 2017

Location of Works 15 patches from approx 0.25miles west of A1198 and 0.5miles west of Tadlow

Register of Electors: No alterations received this month.

Insurance: Council was informed that their current insurers (AON) will no longer be insuring Parish Councils from next year. They have suggested that we transfer to BHIB. Council would like to obtain quotes from BHIB, Came and Co and Zurich to assess the best value before making a decision. Clerk will obtain quotations nearer the time for Council's consideration.

Reading Room Grass cutting: At an earlier meeting Council had been told that the Reading Room Trustees would like to apply for £48-00 to cover grass cutting costs next year. Mrs Walters, Chairman of the Trustees, attended the October meeting and her written request for funding asked for £8-00 every two weeks during the cutting season. Mr Wheeler asked for clarification of the frequency of cut and it was agreed that Council would add the original cost of £48-00 to the precept in January. All in favour.

Reading Room Lighting: A more comprehensive specification has been prepared and sent out for quotations. Council received three quotations and after deliberation, agreed to fund the difference of £350-00 that the Reading Room Trustees required in order to proceed with the work. Clerk had not brought the cheque book to the meeting, so it was resolved that the cheque for £350-00 would be signed out of meeting and delivered to the Chair of Trustees. It was suggested that the Parish Council might be able to claim the VAT on behalf of the Reading room. **Subsequent enquiries discovered that this was not feasible.**

Parking Issues: The problem in Clopton Close has arisen again and criminal damage is involved. The Police have been informed, and both Cllr Kindersley and Cllr Smith have seen the letter of complaint Council received. Cllr Kindersley suggested that as Cllr Smith had been associated with this problem previously, it would be a good idea for her to continue to be involved. Cllr Kindersley said that he would speak to Cllr Smith regarding this. All in favour.

Village Clean Up Day: See IG report

Verbal Report from Cllr Kindersley:

Superfast Broadband: This is not as superfast as was hoped - please contact Connect Cambs Sarah.Marsh@cambridgeshire.gov.uk to report any problems.

Childrens' Centres: There are to be a lot of closures and redesignations in order to save money. Bassingbourn will close and the service will be delivered via Cambourne. 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. There are much bigger cuts to come elsewhere - one person receiving 45 hours assistance per week now only receives 14 hours per week. Outreach does not work. Cllr Kindersley tried to get a Children's Centre in Gamlingay, but Bassingbourn was created instead. There is no bus link between the two villages and there is no outreach in Gamlingay. The Eco-Hub is quite useful for the community to meet in.

Redundancies: There have been 11 redundancies from County Council.

SCDC Planning: There is one principal planning officer left and pre-advice applications are being returned. Appeals are being lodged as planning applications are not being decided. SCDC is in danger of going into special measures. There is no proposal to hire another planning officer at present.

Bus Services: SCDC is reviewing bus services, but as it does not run or fund them it is a waste of time and money.

SCDC IT: Is in danger of collapse. There are two positions being advertised for full time IT technicians at £17,000 per year. This is not a realistic remuneration.

Parking: As both Cllr Kindersley and Smith received the complaint letter, Cllr Kindersley will discuss the matter with Cllr Smith to see what can be done.

E-mailed Report from Cllrs Kindersley and Smith:-

County Council Budget: Over the last six years Cambridgeshire County Council has delivered £215 million of savings while still providing "good quality services" (although many residents appear to take issue with this description!) and over the next five years we face a further £100m of pressure on budgets.

Delivery of £31m of savings for 2017/18 is on track, and the Council is now working on plans to deliver further savings in 2018/19. The Budget process has started with a £37.5 million gap between the money it receives from the government, from council tax, business rates and the income it makes – and the amount it needs to spend on services.

These pressures are not ‘things happening to other people elsewhere’. In addition to predicted changes to the rules surrounding Dedicated Schools Grant the County is facing a sharp increase in the number of older people needing care, increasing numbers of children needing home to school transport and increased numbers of vulnerable children needing protection.

There are of course projects to earn the Council money – eg taking advantage of the failing Local Plan in South Cambs to develop housing projects on land the Council owns as the Council is doing in Litlington. With breath-taking hypocrisy this approach is described as “generating £7.2m in income to protect front line services” but fails to mention the massive increase in Councillor allowances to nearly £1m pa.

Last year Cambridgeshire approved a five-year business case to invest almost £2m from a Transformation Fund into a suite of technological approaches which are already delivering savings as well as improved outcomes - such as improving the application process and delivery of Blue Badges to people who need to keep independent. Again - with more breathtaking hypocrisy - the Council intends to “take a strong message to Government, that historic underfunding of large rural counties cannot continue, with our Fairdeal4Cambs campaign.” without mentioning that for the last two years the Council has failed to take the Council Tax increase permitted by Government of 2% which would have delivered £10m into front line services this year.

You cannot go whining to Government about being underfunded when it is your fault for not taking the opportunity to increase your income via Council Tax. It is not clever or funny.

Planning & Buses: Not a normal combination but bear with....

Following previous mentions in the Gazette you’ll be aware that South Cambridgeshire District Council cannot demonstrate it has a rolling 5 year housing land supply. The result of that is any policy which seeks to restrict housing is effectively in abeyance. We’ve mentioned the impact of this not least on villages such as Gamlingay, Orwell and Barrington and the numbers are mounting in a really scary way as South Cambs continues to flounder. We have 3975 consents granted because of lack of 5-year supply; appeals lodged or able to be lodged: 959; at least 508 pending decision making a total of 5442 homes. The applications continue to arrive.

The Local Plan inspector continues to inspect so we have no Local Plan currently. The Planning Department is completely and utterly swamped with work that it cannot manage on any reasonable basis. Staff are demoralised and stressed. Parishes face desperately bad planning applications that they don’t want, which are not planned for and which are in some cases going to completely change the village. Applicants face unacceptable delays. Pre-application advice – which is paid for – is being refunded as being too little too late and so on. All very bad news. So you would expect every effort from South Cambs’ administration to do what it could to invest in more planning help; using resource wisely and effectively to target this mounting disaster.

But no. Instead, the District Council voted to spend up to £50k on a “review of district bus services”. At first glance this might not seem to be a bad idea but public transport is the responsibility of the Mayor, the County Council and the Greater Cambridge Partnership. So what will a review achieve? Well, it will line the pockets of yet another consultant and keep a few council officers busy for a while but will it result in one single extra bus journey? The answer is no. Rural buses need subsidies not reviews and reports. This is quite clearly an ill thought out vanity project.

Ironically one of the arguments put forward for doing the work was to tackle rural isolation. £50k will go an awfully long way if given out to village groups to run projects such as the Connect Cafe in Gamlingay which targets people experiencing loneliness. In fact, it would allow it to run for 100 years.

More Rubbish: From 11 December, residents will no longer need to use paper caddies as part of their recycling routines. Instead, used paper should be placed directly into blue wheelie bins. It will still be recycled. Residents can keep their caddy following the change, and use it however they wish.

Alternatively, the caddies can be recycled if taken to a household waste recycling centre. They should not be placed in wheelie bins. This is odd because I have placed my caddy in the wheelie bin and it has disappeared at least 4 times over the years but apparently thousands all at once would contaminate the system what with being hard plastic.

Schools National Funding Formula: As everyone knows, Cambridgeshire schools have been very underfunded and the County has lobbied for years (alongside many organisations not least the Schools

themselves!) for better funding. The recent announcement from HMG readjusts the Formula and adds various new elements to it. For Cambridgeshire it is relatively good news but not as good as we had been hoping for. The impact on individual schools varies according to size and location but we welcome the fact that the government is at last distributing money on a rational basis; which is long overdue and has previously been rejected by both Labour and Conservative governments. The government's funding for schools increases in total cash terms as more pupils enter the system (i.e. they have protected the cash value of the per pupil unit) but what they have not done is to increase the cash amount per pupil to allow for inflation in school costs. So, in what most people would call 'real terms', schools are slightly worse off but, as far as Cambs is concerned, not as worse off as we might have been!

Does your home leak money? New easier to use compact thermal imaging cameras are available now from South Cambs, to borrow free of charge for the purpose of locating where heat is leaking out of your home. Ideal for taking action on insulation issues and draught proofing. To book, call 03450 450 063 or email reception@scambs.gov.uk. The cameras have an operating manual accessible online and brief training sessions are available provided free of charge.

A14 Community Grants: The A14 Community Fund has been launched by Highways England, offering up to £10,000 to not-for-profit organisations for projects relating to the transformation the new road will bring to the area. Projects can range from environmental schemes to arts and heritage events or employment and skills schemes. The fund's focus is to bring communities closer together, reflecting the lasting impact the scheme will have on those living along the A14 corridor. Full details can be found at www.cambscf.org.uk/A14.html. You can also keep up to date about the progress of the road scheme by signing up for email alerts at www.highways.gov.uk/A14C2H

Grants: We were delighted to support a successful grant application by Hatley Parish Council for £1,000 towards play equipment on the Green and look forward to seeing the equipment in place. Possibly using it, too... The road between Hatley and Gamlingay has now had Deer warning signs placed on it to remind drivers that there is a huge local herd of deer (including many white ones) which travels across the road apparently all the time - please be aware, especially with the earlier evenings.

Cambridgeshire's Innovate & Cultivate Fund: Up to one million pounds of funding is available from Cambridgeshire County Council to help amazing people, do amazing things, for others in the county. This money is allocated to groups for small grants of £2,000 - £10,000 which help deliver Council priorities locally - helping innovative ideas to grow.

More than £170,000 has already been allocated from the fund, with successful applicants to date including a group supporting parents of children with disabilities and another which supports people with learning disabilities to move into employment. Organisations and local groups looking for further information can see full details at the Innovate and Cultivate website:

<http://www.cambscf.org.uk/icf.html>. The scheme is split between Cultivate - small grants of £2,000 - £10,000 aimed at encouraging local networks where people help themselves and each other and Innovate - larger grants of up to £50,000 for big projects with big ideas that demonstrate an innovative approach within one of the seven funding priorities for Cambridgeshire.

Greater Cambridge Partnership: The newly named GCP (it was the City Deal) is holding a Big Conversation over the next few weeks – might start by asking who comes up with this drivel. They are asking people what they know of the GCP - generally very little, and what they like about the GCP - not a lot in many cases. It is a real shame that this sort of thing did not happen two or more years ago in order to engage people in the whole process and to make them feel that they were part of it rather than victims of it. There is a new website which is a great improvement so do have a look at that - in particular the proposals for a busway from Cambourne to Cambridge and a new park and ride site somewhere along it - currently the preferred options are on the Dry Drayton Rd at Scotland Farm or at Madingley Mulch. The last official meetings were very challenging due to the 49 long and complex reports which were issued a week before. The proposals to put a busway along the M11 are currently on hold while we await the outcomes of a load of deliberations from Highways England on whether to do major works at Girton Interchange so that people can get on and off in any direction and also on whether to make the M11 a SMART motorway. What does that mean you may well ask - well it will be a combination of using the hard shoulder when it is busy, putting in gantries to hold variable speed control signs and maybe even having bus only slip roads on the P and Rs.

Planning committee: It used to be the case that if a Parish Council or a local member disagreed with a planning officer about whether an application should be refused or approved it would go to the Council's planning committee. This was useful as it allowed parish and district councillors to voice their

views as well as applicants and other people. This has all changed and now the planning committee is reserved only for large planning applications or for those that are extremely contentious. We are fed up having our requests for applications to be heard by committee rejected almost as a matter of course.

Business support: We were delighted to attend the first meeting of Gamlingay Business Hub. There was a great turnout of people running businesses of all sizes and we have high hopes for how this organisation will grow and develop to ensure that Gamlingay continues to be a place to work as well as to live and play.

Are you paying Council Tax when you don't have to? There is evidence that many people are paying Council Tax when they do not have to. If you or another person in your house is suffering from a mental impairment then they should not be paying any Council Tax. This can include learning difficulties, mental illness or dementia. The affected person must be living alone or with one or 2 other people. There is a very simple form which you can get from South Cambs, fill it in and ask your doctor to sign it. Contact Bridget if you need any help with this.

A505 Odsey Junction: Work has started on installing illuminated No-Entry signs on the A505 between Baldock and Royston. It is hoped that when installed these will reduce the number of cars that turn onto the wrong side of the dual carriageway.

The bizarre nature of Highway development means that the signs have to be on different posts if they have lights on top so the new posts have to be installed at every location - but at least the work is being done.

Scrapyard at Ashwell & Morden Station: County Council officers, Parish, District and County Councillors met with the operators of the site and discussed a way forward to ensure that the business at the scrapyard can continue with as little disruption to residents as possible. A number of points were agreed including much more regular liaison between the Parish Council and the operators and we hope now to have a really positive relationship going forward. Please contact Sebastian if you have any questions about this or if you want to raise any issues.

Planning at Little Heath Gamlingay: Gamlingay Parish Council has been objecting to further planning applications at Little Heath on the grounds that cumulative development is likely to cause significant and demonstrable harm to the countryside, character and form of this small hamlet. South Cambs have now started issuing refusal notices for applications at Little Heath as a result of the Parish Council's solid arguments.

School Crossing Patrol: County Officers have agreed to Sebastian's request to have the need for a School Crossing Patrol (aka 'lollypop' crossing) at Waresley Road/Church Street re-assessed in response to a parent raising concerns about the crossing and the number of children now using it. Results are expected shortly - but the hardest part of this is likely to be finding someone to recruit.

New Rights of Way - Wimpole Estate: After what seems like a millennia County officers have now written to say the changes to various Rights of Way across the Wimpole Estate have now been agreed with the relevant Director. The next stage is for the County Council and National Trust to finalise the finer details within the Creation Agreement for the new public footpath linking into Wimpole and these discussions are ongoing. Once agreement has been reached then the Orders will be sealed by the county solicitor and subsequently advertised for four weeks in the Cambridge News. The four week period allows members of the public the opportunity to comment, make representation or object to the Orders. Once this period has ended and as long as no objections are received then the National Trust and Wimpole Parish Council will be in a position to undertake the works required to implement the new routes on the ground. This will include the timber footbridge at Cambridge Road Wimpole and other culverts and bridges being moved within the Estate.

Correspondence

Hatley PC: A letter of thanks for Croydon PC's donation towards the deer signs was received.

Rural Oscars: Nominations are being sought for local businesses that go "above and beyond". Council was not able to recommend a nomination for Croydon.

News from SLCC: One of the members was asking for recommendations on the best place to deposit Council money for a good return. One Clerk replied stating that their Council used a company that participated in a business enterprise offering the possibility of profit, by buying shares or bonds. Council agreed that following the Iceland debacle, Croydon PC was not willing to take this sort of risk and will consider a safer, lower return deposit account for the Solar Farm funds..

Town and Parish Council Development Plan Consultation: Information of this has been circulated to Councillors electronically.

Police Panel: This coincided with Council's meeting, so no-one was available to attend.

Remembrance Sunday: The Rector has suggested that the Act of Remembrance at Croydon War Memorial will take place between 12.15pm - 12.30pm. If Councillors are able to attend, please be there from 12.15pm and wear warm clothing.

Finance:

Bank Statement: Current account stands at £16,854-09.

Items for next agenda: Trees in garden

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

As there was no further business the meeting closed at 8.29pm.

Signed

Date

Draft Copy