

## **A meeting of Croydon Parish Council was held on Wednesday 21 March 2018 in the Reading Room at 7.30pm.**

**Apologies:** Ms Newland - family bereavement

**Present:** Mr Wheeler, Mr Wenman, Mrs Slator, Mr Sole, Mr Barnes, Mr Brown, Cllr Smith, Cllr Kindersley after another meeting, the Clerk and two members of public.

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

**Declarations of Interest:** Mr Wenman - QA planning application.

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

**Implementation Group:** Mr Ralph gave a short verbal report:-

**E-News:** The first parish Council e-news was sent round by the Clerk. The e-mail would have gone to 70 houses and 69% of those who received it opened it, although it was doubtful if anyone read it! With the new people moving into Croydon, the Communications Team is going to try and increase the circulation take-up.

**Tuesday Group:** This has around 8 members, but there is room for more! The initial focus is to be Local History, with the idea of eventually providing a village resource. If it goes ahead as anticipated, the Group may require a little funding from time to time. From research it has been discovered that Rupert Brooke stayed in Manor Farm, Croydon and King Edward 1 - 1239 - 1307 (Edward Longshanks) stayed in a manor house (now long gone) near the top of the hill.

**Housing:** Nothing further to report.

The Chairman thanked Mr Ralph for his report.

**Speed Data:** Cllr Kindersley is looking into the procedure to obtain cables across the road to collect speed data and will report to Council when he has any information.

**Lower Road:** The white lines have not been replaced yet - it is hoped that all the white lines will be repainted - the situation will be monitored.

**Flooding in Arrington:** Clerk has obtained and presented a photograph of flooding outside Arrington shop in 1936. It does appear that the problem is on-going, but may have been exacerbated by the Solar Farm run-off.

**Footpath Problem:** More activity has been reported at the site. The Clerk has asked the PCSO to include it in the patrols and the parishioner who did report it to keep a diary of the visits, which might indicate a pattern eventually, allowing the Police to catch the perpetrators.

**Reading Room Trustees:** Apparently are in the process of writing a new Constitution. Cllr Smith will send some information that she feels may be useful. Clerk will pass it on to Mrs Walters. If a Parish Council representative is required on the Trustees, there may be a volunteer.

**Circulation of Agendas:** Following the Clerk's training on the use of Mailchimp, a successful mail shot was achieved. Councillors are happy for future agendas to be distributed in the same fashion.

**Gliding Club:** Minutes of the meeting from both the Clerk and the Club have been circulated to Councillors, who are now aware of the content of the forthcoming planning application. The Club is asking for the following alterations to their planning permission:-

- 1) approval for unlimited aerotows daily (the most aerotows ever undertaken in one day was 56)
- 2) self-launching sailplanes to be allowed
- 3) no aerotows after 9.30pm or before 8.00am (was no aerotows after 6.00pm or before 9.00am)
- 4) Aerotow planes to be a max of 250 Hp - change to aerotow aircraft shall not exceed 70dB(A) Chapter 6 or 75 dB9A) Chapter 10.

**Footnote:** Since the open meeting to Parish Councillors, the times the Club proposed were challenged and have been modified.

## Verbal report from Cllr Smith:

**Crime:** Shed and car crime has risen, and the Co-op in Gamlingay has been targeted twice in three months. The last time the ATM was taken. The Co-op's profits drop by around 10% if there is no ATM. Apparently the possible suspects were released from prison into Bedfordshire, so Cambs Police were not informed.

**Rural Police Stations:** Are all going to be decommissioned - this means that Cambourne will have three PCSOs covering 60 villages between them! Northstowe is not having a Police station, only an ambulance station.

**Park and Ride:** Following increased traffic in Cambridge, the park and ride parking charges are to be dropped. This means the Council will lose around £1 million in parking charges, The City Deal is picking up half of this cost, but Cllr Smith is not sure that this is a lawful use of their funding, and will check.

**Planning:** SCDC is still in danger of designation - they will not be allowed to make planning decisions. In 2 years they have had 31 major appeals, 17 of which have been allowed and 14 dismissed. 7 were officer referrals, 8 were planning committee and 2 were not decided at all. 121,000 houses are being built on appeal.

**SCDC and Cambridge City planning:** Are amalgamating, but unfortunately the IT in use is not combined with City yet. There are plans to review the Delegated Scheme (Planning Officers).

**Switchboard:** Only 12% of calls are being abandoned now, which is better than the 24% last year.

**Local Plan:** The consultation on the Local Plan is now closed and there is no news on the adoption.

**Libraries:** CCC wants to charge for the use of computers in libraries - 30 minutes free and then charging. It will cost £19,000 to implement this system change, which is far more than charging will recoup. Cllr Smith has contacted the Mayoral Office about this and has waited 8 weeks so far for a response.

**Affordable Housing:** SCDC has a budget of £100,000 for this and is to be the delivering Council. The Mayor seems to be focused on East Cambs.

**Citizens' Advice:** The bureau in St Neots turned away a lady from Gamlingay.

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

**Sebastian's Pothole Primer:** There has been a great deal of local concern about potholes. We too share the frustration, anger and vehicle damage that so many residents have experienced.

1) Why so many potholes?

I'll start with some background. Every year all roads across Cambridgeshire are assessed by a complex piece of kit that measures the underlying state of the road and its substrate. When compared against set criteria Highways identify what roads need to be resurfaced in the Transport Delivery Plan. Matched with government directives the overarching focus is predominantly on the major road network.

2) So what? Where are potholes in all this?

Essentially, potholes form when both the upper layer of the road is poor and the substrate is poor as well. Highways try to 'rebuild' A and B roads so that much faster traffic is not exposed to dangerous conditions. Village roads are considered 'slow' and therefore don't get as much funding. This means that potholes form because the underlying road condition is always worsening.

3) This is boring. My Council Tax is always going up - spend some of it on potholes.

Hard to believe but your Council Tax has been falling in real terms. Because inflation is greater than Council Tax increases (which for Cambridgeshire County Council have been 1.99% or zero over the last four years) the amount you pay in real value terms is dropping. Unfortunately costs, salaries, pension contributions etc have all been rising so the 'buying' power of CC is reducing. The County Council is also making cuts of £37m this year, having already cut upwards of £220m.

4) So there's no money - what's new?

It's not just that there's no money - it's also that what money there is has reduced and is prioritised to A and B roads.

5) But some potholes get done...

Yes. There is a budget for potholes which the Highway Supervisor has to allocate across the very worst potholes across South Cambs. The County Council only repairs potholes that have reached the

required depth/width/danger level – these ‘intervention levels’ have steadily got bigger over the years – in other words potholes have to be deeper, wider, more dangerous to get done this year than in previous years. This is why some get done when others in the same stretch don’t. The bottom line is that there is not enough cash to pay for all potholes.

The Highway Supervisor has exhausted his budget for this financial year and I suspect (although I can’t confirm) that he is borrowing against the next year’s budget. He is firefighting.

6) Well, Church Street/Shingay Road/the street where I live is a disgrace...

Yes it is. As many of you have highlighted some village streets are in a particularly bad way. You’ve been busy reporting this online (and please keep this up as it is the most effective way to report both for you and for the Engineer). At a meeting with County officers I asked them to drive down various bad roads including both Church Streets in Gamlingay and Guilden Morden so they could appreciate the problems. Their response is as follows: “I am afraid to say unless the Highway Officer comes across any discretionary money for resurfacing in next year’s reactive maintenance budget it will be a case of him judging it compared to other sites within his area to see where he can best spend his patching budget.”

7) Well, I pay my road tax - why aren’t we using it on roads?

Road tax was abolished in 1937 and replaced by Vehicle Excise Duty. This is a tax on cars, not roads, and it goes straight into the general Treasury fund. Lobby your MP!!

8) Next year the roads will be better though. won’t they?

Nope. Well, very unlikely. Some years ago Cambridgeshire secured £90m to take an ‘asset management approach’ to road maintenance as encouraged by Government. For this loan to be used for road maintenance it was moved from the Council’s revenue account to its capital account and at the same time any existing revenue spend on road maintenance was reduced which of course made setting the council tax easier (ie with no increase for four years).

The original plan was to use the loan over 5 years. There were significant improvements in the state of the roads as measured in the annual survey in the first two years. However in 2015/16 it was decided to spread the loan over 10 years, and the annual spend was reduced by some 60%. The state of the roads has now deteriorated year on year.

We’re now 6 years in and the annual spend is down to £4.3 million with a final £3.1 million spend in 2021/22. After that there is no more money, we will still have a £90 million loan to repay and I reckon that our roads will be worse than they were when this program started. Much worse.

9) This is outrageous - who do I blame? Health & Safety? Red tape? The EU? Trump? I need answers - I’m going to write to someone.

There are three groups of people to blame. Firstly -Cambridgeshire County Councillors adopted a political position in the ‘70s and ‘80s of always being the lowest taxing Shire authority in the UK. It is still the third lowest. So we start at a much lower base than nearly everyone else – but a pothole costs much the same to repair in Guilden Morden or Gamlingay as Carlisle or Truro – and Cambridgeshire is the fastest growing area in the UK. Secondly, national politicians look to savings from local government over and above every other part of Government. Unlike Government which can run debts of billions of pounds County Councils cannot go into debt by 1p. And lastly, we live in a democracy so ultimately we get the level of services we vote for!

10) Huh. That’s right - blame the people. Anyway, I’m glad I’m not the Highways Team...

Indeed. I would say that I know officers of the County Council find it incredibly frustrating that lack of funds prevent them from doing the brilliant job they would like to do – and you and I find it incredibly frustrating that it’s the roads we use that suffer.

11) Well enough whining - what now?

We continue to campaign for better funding for roads and transport in all the Parishes in the Gamlingay Division. So it somewhat sickens us that even though the County Council has decided this year to increase the Council Tax to the maximum permitted that extra money will be going into the reserves - the County Council’s bank account - where it will remain in case of a ‘rainy day’. I don’t know what you think but I think the rainy day is here.

**School Update - Gamlingay Village Primary School:** Because of the delay in processing of the planning application for the Primary School there is a consequent delay to the planned re-homing of the Primary school on the GVC site. Although Coulsons – the contractors – have already mobilised they are very unlikely to be able to hand over the school to the Trust before half-term in the Autumn. This is partly because what was a £2m project planned to last 34 weeks is now a £3.8m project to be delivered in the same time. The difference is because it was agreed that the entire former GVC

building should be renovated along with the building of the proposed extensions to make it suitable for primary aged schoolchildren. Gamlingay is getting an entirely new School building but of course it's important to understand that the school that will be in the new building on the former GVC site is actually the same school with the same staff (plus a few extras as required) and the same management as is currently on the First School site.

It has been agreed that the pupils who would all have moved into the new school buildings will remain on the First School site until the beginning of the Spring term 2019. There is plenty of room for everyone - and they would then start the New Year 2019 in their new school building. The First School became a full primary school in September 2017 and recently announced that to more accurately reflect its status it will formally change its name to Gamlingay Village Primary School from September 2018.

When that happens the First School site and buildings will be surplus to the needs of the Trust and it is the intention of the Trust to transfer ownership back to the County Council – there is a complex process that allows the Dept of Education to interfere but we hope this will not happen.

As mentioned before we are ambitious to use the First School building as an Early Learning Centre for the relocation of current providers should they wish to. This would concentrate pre-school and wraparound services on one site although each setting would be independent both physically (eg with separate entrances) and corporately. It is envisaged that there would be two or perhaps three settings. The County Council – which has the responsibility for ensuring there is adequate provision for all 0-18 education - has already commissioned a feasibility study to show how the First School buildings can be converted into suitable premises for a number of pre/early learning settings.

The Victorian original building is currently used by the school. However, as an old building it presents a wide range of challenges. It is also listed. It is likely that the day will come that it will no longer be suitable for any kind of educational use. It would appear suitable for residential conversion – there are already two flats in the part that was the old Headmaster's House. It could be that any developer might wish to re-instate Gamlingay's Pyramid - the steeple that once stood on the school's tower! But that is some way off!

There is no change of any kind envisaged at the Fitness Suite; nor to the MUGA. The primary school has a number of commitments to ensure that traffic levels are kept as low as possible in and around the new building and we will be working closely with the Trust to ensure that these are managed and met. A small element of footpath along Church Lane has to be widened as well. At our request the County Council will also re-assess the need for a Lollipop person at the Cross once the new building is open.

The First School playing field is an important feature of the village and as such it has already been registered as an Asset of Community Value (in March 2017) by the Parish Council at Bridget and I's request. We very much doubt that residents would be supportive of any change to the use of the playing field other than as open green space. This will become more important as the development at Green End starts up. Obviously the new pre-schools will still need open green space too.

The provision of education in Gamlingay has a very bright future. The delivery of an (almost) brand new school building and a pioneering project to deliver an Early Learning Centre within the village is an exciting prospect – which will benefit your children, grandchildren and future generations of Gamlingay people.

**Cherry Trees:** The cherry trees at the First School were removed as they had reached the end of their lives largely because of disease. The Education Authority had them inspected and asked for their removal on safeguarding grounds. Obviously, the Governors were obliged to act from an insurance perspective. I don't suppose they were happy about it either. There were funds put aside for replacement trees but that was put on the back burner when the further changes to education in Gamlingay started up again. My understanding is that the cherry trees were paid for by men returning from WW2 who pooled their discharge payments, and I suggested that perhaps the Parish Council might like to consider replacement trees on behalf of the people of Gamlingay. As the plans develop for the First School site I hope this will be kept in mind.

**Carers:** We are often asked to advise people about where to get good quality care for their relatives so it is great that Anne Hutson is in the process of setting up a Carers' Brokerage Service for Gamlingay which will link people wanting to care with people requiring care. This will hopefully address the problem of there not being enough really good carers to meet the rapidly increasing need. Anne's aim is to support people to become self-employed carers, paid a good wage for doing a

good job and to link them with people needing care. If you are looking for a carer or are interested in talking to Anne about becoming a self-employed carer please contact Bridget and she will pass on your details.

**Taxi Licensing:** S Cambs has recently completed a consultation on taxi and hackney carriage licensing which might have adversely affected those companies doing private hire. The reason for the review was to ensure safeguarding of both passengers and drivers which has become more of an issue of late. We were very pleased to have been able to pass on the views of some of our local drivers and so get the proposals amended in such a way that they are still able to carry out their business effectively.

**Crime:** Crime trends move up and down with the current increase being in car crime - damage and thefts. So please be vigilant and ensure your car is locked up and alarmed. If you see anything suspicious report it straight away and always record registration plates of suspicious vehicles.

**Careers Support:** You may recall that Forward Gamlingay sponsored a couple of Young Enterprise and Careers days at Stratton School as a means of benefitting young people from Gamlingay and Hatley. The aim was to raise awareness of the vast range in jobs available to them these days many of which did not exist only a few years ago and also to help them to experience what work may be like. The project was undertaken on behalf of Forward Gamlingay by Cambridge based Form the Future who have now made a u tube video of the work they did at Stratton:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=96wLwEK7FUc>

**Bins:** Some residents, who have assistance with putting their bins out and putting them back are experiencing a rather fractured service at the moment. Please do report any failures to [refuse@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:refuse@scambs.gov.uk) or give us a ring and we can do it for you.

**Robinson Court:** Work on Robinson Court appears to be progressing well with almost complete houses now appearing. We have had quite a few calls from people interested in applying for the rental houses. You will need to be registered on South Cambs Homelink site - this can take a bit of time so get in early. We will let you know as soon as the houses and flats are likely to be released.

Remember, they are only for people currently living or working in the village or with close relatives living here. If you are a neighbour of the development and are experiencing any issues, do not hesitate to get in touch with the site manager Jonathan or us.

**Before and After School Care:** We have been corrected about the statement in our last report that there was now no out of hours school care in the village. Pat Jenkins has reminded us that the Montessori has been providing before and after school care for a number of years now. Sorry, Pat.

**Campaign against Library Computer Charging:** At a committee meeting on 13 February, the County Council decided to proceed with proposals to increase income from libraries. This includes the proposal to charge for use of the library computers, which are currently free for all users, after the first half hour. The software needed to manage the new charges itself costs £18,800. There will also be the additional costs of staff training and time.

We have designed so much of the modern world around the internet. You need to go online to apply for many benefits, to get a bus pass, to get on the housing list, to search and apply for a job, or just to buy some everyday goods. Charging for computers goes against the core mission of libraries to provide free and equal access to information. The government's own strategy commits local authorities to provide free wifi and computers in all libraries. So, the Council must deliver this. There are other ways to raise much-needed funds for libraries. Search online for the petitions against these new charges (ironically).

**School Cleaning & Catering:** CCS has provided a good service to schools over the years. The introduction of Universal Free School meals for younger children made the market very attractive to commercial competitors. This put pressure on CCS who lost a number of profitable contracts. So instead of investing into the business so that it provides a profitable service the County Council has simply given up and decided to close it by the end of the year. Utterly wet.

**Does the Mayor Care about South Cambs?:** In another blow to our confidence in his rule, the Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, James Palmer (current salary £84,500) has removed the Leader of South Cambs from his role in charge of affordable housing. There seems to be some disagreement about housing strategy for the county - and the person who was supposed to be championing the needs of South Cambs is on the losing side.

There are already signs that the mayor is not prioritising the housing crisis in South Cambs. In a report just published, the Combined Authority has revealed that East Cambs (home of Mayor

Palmer) is getting £925k to support affordable housing this year whereas South Cambs, which is far larger and with much higher housing costs, is being given £829k.

When the Combined Authority was created a year ago, we were promised that South Cambs would get about 70% of the affordable housing funding provided by central government, simply because it meets the criteria for priority funding. However, the Mayor is clearly politicising this and we cannot just depend on 'criteria' and 'process' to defend us.

**District Council Budget:** South Cambs District Council has agreed a budget for the next year and set its financial forecasts for the medium term. The future, while not dire, will depend upon reserves - which have built up to a healthy £11million - being drawn down over the next five years to a level of £2.5million - just to keep services going.

The Council is also taking part in a Fairer Funding Review which looks likely to result in a large proportion of local business rates being collected by the District but diverted to the County Council to plug the social care gap across Cambridgeshire.

SCDC is struggling to build council dwellings at the rate they are sold under Right-To-Buy, made even harder by the fact that the government takes 70% of the receipt of each dwelling sold. Residents may also be interested to learn that SCDC no longer receives any government grant and may in fact become a net contributor to government coffers under new funding rules.

**Cambridgeshire Autonomous Metro:** The Mayor's Combined Authority has approved spending of £600,000 to develop an outline business case and options appraisal report for a 'Cambridgeshire Autonomous Metro'. The Mayor had promised a light rail system, but an independent report suggested this was not the best solution.

The preferred option as set out by the consultants is an electric powered vehicle which operates independently without tracks or rails and can be run on and off road on busways. It would entail about 31 miles of new busways, and nearly four miles of tunnels under Cambridge – one underground section from Madingley Road to Mill Road, and another from Mill Road to Cambridge North station. The price tag for the project would be around £1.5-£1.7bn.

**Park and Rides:** The £1 charge for using the Park and Rides will be binned from April 1<sup>st</sup> - April Fool's Day, which appears sometimes to be all year round. The Chair of the Greater Cambridge Partnership said: "Parking should be free at these important transport interchanges, to encourage people to get out of their cars and use public transport" - a piece of the blindingly obvious which took them 4 years to struggle to. This change in charging is partly funded by the Greater Cambridge Partnership (City Deal) having to pick up half the bill which means that £530,000 of its money won't be spent on anything else. There have been a number of additional, but overdue, improvements made at the sites in recent months hopefully to make it easier for people to access the bus services. Almost 100 new cycle lockers have been installed to enable cyclists to securely store their bikes and further lockers will be installed in the coming months. There is also no longer a need to queue at a machine for a travel ticket, as passengers can buy all their tickets from the bus driver - as all buses now accept contactless payments as well as cash.

**Little Heath:** Despite the -6 degree temperature many Little Heath residents came together at the Hub to discuss the future of the road, or rather the road's surface. We intend now to survey everyone at Little Heath to ascertain the level of support for doing something to mend the road and/or setting up a Resident's Association. Residents told us that their primary concerns were around damage to cars, companies not wanting to send their delivery vehicles down the road and response times for emergency services i.e. ambulance and fire service.

We were most grateful to Jason Gore of J and D Plant Ltd for advising us of the options for improving the road service and of the likely costs. The ownership of the road is complex and it is most unlikely that the County Council will agree to accept any responsibility for repairs.

## **Correspondence**

**Toilet Hire:** Council discussed the pro-forma it has received regarding the hire charge for toilets for the Car Show. The company suggested that if Council did not take up their offer the facility would not be available. After discussion it was decided to obtain quotes for one cubicle and one disabled cubicle. Mrs Slator suggested that more local companies should be used, rather than one from Sussex. Clerk to action.

**GDPR:** Or General Data Protection Regulations. SLCC will be sending further information to Clerks as it becomes available..

**Electoral Register:** Changes circulated to Councillors.

**Insurance:** Clerk has contacted three companies and is awaiting quotations from them.

**SPEP newsletter:** Circulated to Councillors.

**Tour of Cambridge Team:** Circulated to Councillors - not relevant to Croydon.

**SCDC:** Glossy brochure entitled Your Place, Our Plan received and distributed to Councillors.

**Election Paperwork:** Nomination papers were completed by those present wishing to stand for election again.

**Delivery of Forms:** Clerk was prepared to deliver the candidates' Nomination Papers to SCDC as she works on Cambourne, but was informed by an Electoral Officer that the candidates needed to agree to this. All candidates were in favour.

### **Verbal report from Cllr Kindersley**

**Potholes:** The Dragon (patching machine) is not as good as was first thought. Cars driving over recently patched potholes had lumps of asphalt and tar sticking to their tyres. Highway maintenance is a hot topic at the moment - there are only 1100 reported potholes in the whole of Cambridgeshire - not too bad really! Cllr Kindersley is blaming County Council administration because money is not being spent in his parishes; only spent on A and B roads. Anyone using the A1198 will know there are many potholes between the top of Arrington Hill and Longstowe, and that is an A road. Highways are really important as most residents of Cambridgeshire use them on a daily basis.

**Pothole Compensation:** This can only be claimed if the pothole has not been reported to the Council. It was noted that the numbers of killed and seriously injured has risen in the county, and a contributory factor could be lack of highway maintenance - white lines, potholes, lighting etc. Bourn PC has a difficult junction where the Broadway meets the A428, and desperately needs some white lining there.

**Speed Cables:** Councillor Kindersley will try and get this sorted out. Apparently, there are unauthorised cables appearing on roads and are monitoring the traffic for the Oxford/Cambridge rail link.

**Bassingbourn:** It was reported that Bassingbourn Barracks site will become a new town with a rail link to be decided. It may link with Sandy or Hitchin.

**Planning:** *Mr Wenman left the meeting at this point.*

**Queen Adelaide: S/4480/17/OL**

The application is an outline application for three houses on the ground behind the car park at the Queen Adelaide public house.

Comments from the IG were given: 7 members of the housing sub-group visited the site and discussed the applicant's plans. In principle small developments are supported, but felt that there are issues with the site. It is outside the village framework, it needs a better balance, and the site should be considered as a whole. Traffic generated along with parking from the public house could be considerable. The affordable housing is positive.

Council discussed the plans and agreed to the development in principle. The following response was returned, after consultation with, and agreement from Councillors:-

Council agrees to the development proposal in principle. However, there was concern over congestion with an access through the restaurant car park. Council's preference would be for the access to the proposed site via the old High Street (the sub-station road) and across the rear of the public house, thus avoiding the customers' cars parked at the restaurant.

Parking congestion is already such that vehicles are seen reversing into the narrow High Street and also parked with wheels on the footpath, and that without the proposed changes this can only get worse.

The layout of the site should be reconsidered as it was felt that the proposed position of the detached house was much too far back on the site, almost into the countryside.

**Finance:.**

**Bank Statement:**

No statement has been received as no transactions have been made.

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

**Date of next meeting:** Wednesday 18 April 2018 in the Reading Room, starting at 7.30pm.

As there was no further business the meeting closed at 9.05pm.

Signed .....

Date .....

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