

## **An extraordinary meeting of Croydon Parish Council was held on Wednesday 7th April 2021 via Zoom at 7.30pm.**

Due to Government advice on social contact and distancing, open Council meetings are suspended until further notice and the required meetings will be held remotely.

**Apologies:** Mr Brown - unavailable, Mr Barnes - unwell, Mr Sole - called out.

**Present:** Mrs Slator, Mr Wenman, Mr Wheeler, Ms Newland and the Clerk.

**Declarations of Interest:** None received.

**End of Legislation for remote meetings:** Due to the pandemic, the Government has allowed meetings to be held remotely over one of the many platforms available. This legislation is coming to an end on 7th May 2021, and will not be extended despite concern from many Councils. Because of this, Council discussed moving the May meeting forward by two weeks, in order to hold it remotely on 5th May instead of face-to-face on 19th May. The Chair proposed that the advertised meeting in May should be moved to 5th May. This was seconded by Mr Wheeler and all were in favour. The Clerk will make the necessary announcements by Mailchimp and on the notice board. The June meeting will be held in the Reading Room with the appropriate Covid restrictions in place.

**Training Course:** The Society of Local Council Clerks is holding a workshop in April, which the Clerk would like to attend, at a cost of £45-00 + VAT. Details of the different workshops were previously circulated to Councillors for their information. Council discussed this and it was proposed by the Chair and seconded by Ms Newland that a cheque for £54-00 should be raised for this. All in favour.

**Zoom:** Council was using the free element of Zoom which meant that there was a limited time for meetings, so has been subscribing to Zoom since July. After discussion it was proposed by Mr Wheeler and seconded by Mr Wenman that, although the Council will not require Zoom after May 7th, the community could use of it until face-to-face meetings are allowed to take place after lockdown ends. All in favour.

As there was no further business, Councillors were thanked for attending and the meeting was declared closed at 7.39pm.

Signed .....

Date .....

# **The Annual Parish Meeting was held on Wednesday 21st April 2021 via Zoom at 7.30pm.**

**Apologies:** Mr Sole - away, Mr Wheeler - under the weather, Mr Brown - away.

**Present:** Mrs Slator, Mr Barnes, Ms Newland, Mr Wenman, Cllr Williams and one member of public.

**Declarations of Interest:** None received.

## **Reports:**

### **Croydon Police Report**

I have searched through crimes from April 2020 to April 2021 there have been a total of eight crimes reported in that period.

- 35/18351/21 28<sup>th</sup> March Lower Rd, attempted business break
- 35/17929/21 27<sup>th</sup> March dangerous dog report, victim was bitten whilst out for a run. Crime is currently under investigation.
- 35/16656/21 21<sup>st</sup> March between 20:00 – 05:00 Queen Adelaide theft from vehicle. Tools taken.
- 35/6377/21 31<sup>st</sup> January 2021 Lower Rd 18:55 -19:15 attempted break of containers at location.
- 35/82661/20 5<sup>th</sup> December, High Street, criminal damage to a vehicle wing mirror pushed or kick off.
- 35/57569/20 24<sup>th</sup> August, High Street theft of caravan
- 35/47893/20 20<sup>th</sup> July 30 lambs taken from grazing field
- 35/27915/20 27<sup>th</sup> April Lower Rd, workshop broken into.

There have been 10 Road Traffic Collisions on Lower Rd in the last 12 months.

## **County Councillor Sebastian Kindersley - Annual Report 2021**

### **Foreword**

The last twelve months have been the strangest of all the 22 years I have been a Councillor. Life, personal and communal, has been dominated by the Covid virus but, at the same time, every effort has been made to 'keep things going'. The County Council has continued to function and most of its scheduled meetings have taken place, but by Zoom or Microsoft Teams.

The two major issues that have taken up most time in the past 12 months have been East West Rail and South West Cambridgeshire.

I chair CamBedRailRoad and over the last 3 years we have promoted a proper assessment of a Northern Approach into Cambridge alongside East West Rail's ideas. We have pushed EWR away from a Bassingbourn route and have most recently persuaded EWR that a station north of Cambourne is the way forward. EWR is currently consulting on a preferred route that runs from North Cambourne through the South Cambridgeshire countryside to Shelford with a 7km embankment 80 metres wide and 10m high which will have a considerable impact on all our lives. Now working with Cambridge Approaches we continue to press for a fair assessment of the Northern Approach most recently with a meeting with the Rail Minister.

Another threat to this area comes in the form of proposals from a West Sussex speculative development company Thakeham which is proposing to create a new town sprawl of 25,000 homes between and encompassing the villages of Shepreth, Melbourn, Meldreth, Whaddon, Bassingbourn, Wimpole, Orwell, Barrington and Foxton. The new town, dubbed 'South West Cambridge,' would be half the size of Cambridge and would profoundly change the

hinterland of a multitude of villages and eradicate the rural nature of much of South Cambridgeshire.

The developer has missed the deadline for the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan's 'Call for Sites,' in spite of having spent the past two years preparing its scheme, during which time it will have been fully aware of the South Cambridgeshire Planning process. It now proposes a late submission in the Call for Sites – promised by Easter but still awaited. I am part of the South West Cambridgeshire Action Group and you can see our campaign at <http://www.swcag.org.uk/>

At the time of writing, there seems to be the possibility of a return to 'normal' in the next few weeks but we do not yet know if the new normal will be like the old normal or whether certain procedures will be changed indefinitely. My main report follows below and contains no surprises as I have been reporting to Gamlingay Division Parish Councils every month and keeping in touch as necessary between meetings.

I stand for re-election this May and – whatever the result - I would like to thank parish councillors and clerks for their work for the local community and to say how much I have enjoyed working with them.

### **Keeping you informed**

It is all too easy for councillors to become engrossed in their work on committees and lose touch with the people they represent. That is why I attend monthly Parish Council meetings, and provide all residents with up-dates online as appropriate. I quite understand that not everybody shares my political perspective nor my interpretation of national developments but I have tried to engage constructively with any residents who have raised issues with me.

Full details of the County Council structure, committees and meetings with reports can be seen on-line at [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk). Full Council meetings are web-cast.

### **1. The political balance of the Council**

The political composition of the 61-member Council now stands as:

35 Conservatives, 16 Liberal Democrats, 7 Labour, 2 St. Neots Independents, 1 Independent.

The Council has seven decision-making committees. with a Conservative majority on each committee and every Committee chaired and vice-chaired by a Conservative. The committees are:

Adults	Children and Young People	Commercial and Investment
Economy and Environment	Health	Communities and Partnerships
Highways and Community Infrastructure		

The overall political and financial direction of the Council is in the hands of the General Purposes Committee comprising 15 members. This is chaired by the Leader of the Council who is also the Leader of the Conservative Group.

In addition there are several more smaller committees covering, for example, Planning, Audit and Accounts, Constitution and Ethics, Pensions, Staffing Appeals. All the committees are chaired by Conservatives except Audit and Accounts, which is chaired by a LibDem.

### **2. Council officers and Council offices**

The Chief Executive, Gillian Beasley, is shared with Peterborough as part of the policy of reducing back office costs and several other senior posts are also shared with Peterborough. The trend of recent years to reduce council staff, has continued. The CCC HQ building, Shire Hall, has been closed and emptied prior to being re-developed for other purposes, and the County Council will move to new buildings in Alconbury Weald, probably from September 2021. The new buildings will be more economical to run but, being on the western edge of the Council area, there will be increased travel costs and time for staff, and more road pollution.

### **3. What the Council provides**

Social services to children and young people, older people, people with mental health problems, physical and learning disabilities;

Planning of school places and some support for schools (although the funding for day-to-day running comes from central government); Coordinated Early Years provision, nurseries etc.; Libraries;  
Road maintenance; road safety measures;  
Growth and wider development issues;  
Trading standards; waste disposal and recycling centres.

The former responsibility for overall transport strategy is gradually being taken over by the Combined Authority.

#### **4. The key issues faced by Cambridgeshire County Council: reduced funding increasing costs increasing demand Covid paralysis**

The reduction in general grants from central government has continued except that some extra money has been made available for Covid measures. The Local Government Association, a cross-party organisation, has been ringing alarm bells recently about the greater financial burden placed on local councils and several have become insolvent. County Councils have the flexibility to increase tax levels (see below) without having to call a referendum. The demand for services is increasing as the proportion of the population needing adult social care support increases. Although the total number of under-fives is not increasing at the moment, the severity of need of an increasing proportion is placing greater demands on a hard-pressed service. The general pattern is for the cost of providing services to rise above general levels of inflation.

#### **5. Council Tax**

The government has again capped the levels by which local councils can increase tax for 2021-22: 3% over two years towards Adult Social Care and 1.99% towards other services. Cambridgeshire CC has decided to limit the social care increase to 1%, followed by 2% next year and 1.99% for other services.

So, for the coming year 2021-22, the total 2.99% increase will cost a Band D household an extra £54.22 per year. Over 60% of households in Cambridgeshire are in the lower bands A-C. In round figures, every 1% brings in about £3 million to the Council

Since capping was introduced in 2014, the Council has not made use of the full flexibility allowed by central government. As a result of the compounding effect of those decisions, the Council's income is much less than it would have been.

#### **6. Services for older people**

More and more people are living longer and, in the main, healthier lives. When they do become dependent, the cost to the Council is very considerable. The Council's aim is to enable more people to live longer at home and be supported there rather than going into sheltered accommodation. The policy of 'Transformation' is based on a significant reduction in personnel together with higher expectations on the voluntary sector and an assumption of a willingness on the part of beneficiaries to accept new ways of being supported. While there is obviously merit in trying to find new ways of providing services, there can be no disguising the fact that provision will get worse for some and this is a matter of great concern, both locally and nationally.

#### **7. Transport and Highways**

Road maintenance and footpath repair are the most frequent source of complaint from residents.

The impact of the decision by the County Council to reduce the drain clearance process was cruelly exposed by the recent flooding incidents across the County.

The work on the new A14 is nearing completion, and this produces knock-on effects on the rest of the road system. Highways England is responsible for the maintenance of motorways and trunk roads but most A and B roads are maintained at the expense of the local authority which is designated as the 'Highways Authority'. The Highways Authority receives a grant from central government towards those costs.

Proposals are coming forward for the dualling of the A428 from the Black Cat roundabout to Caxton Gibbet. The proposed new road does not go through the Gamlingay division but residents definitely use it!

## **8. Education**

All Cambridgeshire secondary schools are now 'academies' which means that the Council has no jurisdiction over them. The disruption of the last few months has caused the suspension of Ofsted inspections and of conventional examinations so it is not possible to make a comment on the success of Cambridgeshire schools against national benchmarks. Only a small minority of primaries have become academies.

The County Council retains responsibility for the 'well-being' of children in academies though it has no formal role in intervening if things go wrong. Central government grant to Cambridgeshire improved in 15-16, and has been maintained. A 'National Funding Formula' published in September 2017 was a small move in the right direction. Costs in schools have increased at a higher rate. Independent researchers confirm that, in real terms, funds available to schools have been cut by 9% since 2010. .

The major topic this year, as last, is that funding for children with special needs has not kept up with the demand. The 'High Needs Block' in Cambridgeshire now has a deficit of £28 million, and a similar pattern is seen in other counties so this is a national problem.

## **9. Climate Change**

The County Council, in common with many others, is beginning to take this seriously and is beginning to develop a Strategy to reduce energy consumption. The particular problem for Cambridgeshire is the massive expansion of housing and population. Cambridgeshire is, mainly, an attractive place to live and though house prices are rising, they are good value compared with the London area. A rapidly increasing population puts pressures on many services which use energy but I am sure we will see new ideas coming forward.

## **10. Combined Authority**

Since May 2017 there has been a 'Combined Authority' for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough with James Palmer (Con.) as Mayor. The combined authority comprises: Peterborough City Council (a unitary authority), the district councils of Huntingdonshire, Fenland, East Cambs, South Cambs and Cambridge City, and Cambridgeshire County Council.

The Mayor has a Cabinet comprising the Council Leaders from all the constituent councils, i.e. five Conservatives, one Labour and one Lib Dem, and there is also a scrutiny panel.

Some people claim that the introduction of a Combined Authority makes it unnecessary to have County and District Councils as well as parish councils and perhaps one of the layers of local government could be pruned to save costs.

The Mayor has also been offered greater scope by central government in order to 'level up' to the Metro Mayors in the North of England. This means adding adult education and the development of a university in Peterborough among other projects as well as oversight of strategic housing development. The next Mayoral election will be on May 6<sup>th</sup> 2021.

## **11. The future for local government services and the implication for communities**

a. It is now becoming increasingly clear that the structure and funding of local government as we have known it for many years has changed and will continue to change. Central government has been decreasing its grants to local councils with the expectation is that services will be 'transformed' and local groups - parish councils, voluntary groups – will have a bigger role in supporting those people in the early stage of needing help.

b. The County Council has continued to make savings in its procedures and in increasing income. For example, it has set itself up as a property company and is trying to sell off some of its land holdings for housing. Plans for moving HQ offices out of Shire Hall in Cambridge to a new building in Alconbury Weald are coming to fruition.

## **12. National uncertainty**

It is probably not an exaggeration to say that we face, as a country, greater uncertainty than most of us can remember in a lifetime. It is already becoming apparent that the process of Brexit will be much more complicated than previously claimed by national politicians. We frankly do not know what the implications will be for the country economically nor for us, the general public, in our everyday lives. Problems for fishermen, farmers and for some industries are emerging.

Climate change, still disputed by some, appears to be confirmed as an international trend with local implications for changes in our daily pattern of behaviour.

And then we have the recovery, we hope, from Covid. If the vaccination programme continues to go well, we may be safer but we do not yet know what the impact will be on many aspects of our social and communal lives.

### **Sebastian Kindersley**

County Councillor Kindersley also included his monthly report for April:-

#### **Gamlingay Division Councillors Report - District County Council - April 2021**

The Gamlingay Division comprises the Parishes of Abington Pigotts, Arrington, Barrington, Croydon, Gamlingay, Guilden Morden, Litlington, Hatley, Orwell, Shingay-cum-Wendy, Steeple Morden, Tadlow & Wimpole. This report is /for all Division Parish Councils but please be aware that it will include items that may have little or no relevance to your particular Parish. Apologies in advance!

**Shop Local:** As lockdown recedes we are asking residents to 'shop local' wherever possible. The lockdown has had a massive impact on the local economy. We now need to help local businesses to get back on their feet – shops, pubs, Post Offices, potters, firewood suppliers, garden centres – every business that we have in our villages small or large.

During lockdown many of us turned to local providers who really stepped up - to prevent shortages and to provide home deliveries. Many adapted to providing an online or take-away service – innovating to help us all. It would be such a shame to take local businesses for granted. They have had to work against the odds to support and keep our community safe. Now, we need to use them as they try to rebuild.

Would you consider, wherever possible, spending money with local businesses? Food, drink, gifts, candles! Having your hair cut, getting the dog groomed – all of the above! Without support our independent local businesses may not survive and to lose them would be very sad for all of us.

The next few weeks will be critical. With vaccines offering a light at the end of the tunnel, we all need to continue doing the right thing for a while longer. Whatever your plans for enjoying the easing of lockdown, please consider shopping local.

**A 428 Dualling:** Details of the final route for the A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet upgrade have now been published. We all know that this new road should have been put in place years ago and it is increasingly dangerous and congested. However, we do have some concerns about the proposed scheme. It is sadly lacking in walking and cycling infrastructure and there is a lack of clarity around how much environmental enhancement will be associated with the new route. Just mitigating for damage is now far from being acceptable. We also remain underwhelmed that some footpaths running from the new Wintringham Park development into the countryside will be 'rationalised' which is Department for Transport code for 'Extinguished'.

**East West Rail:** East West Railway Co has at last announced detailed routes for the new railway line from Bedford to Cambridge, including the route alignments that they prefer. Publication deadlines mean we have not had a lot of time to absorb the extensive papers yet but we will be scrutinising these plans carefully to assess what impact they will have on our local communities and see what the benefits to our area can be. EWR now agrees with CamBedRailRoad (chaired by Sebastian) that Cambourne Station should be on the A428 and not in Caxton.

SCDC has supported the building of a new line from Oxford to Cambridge and beyond because we do need more east-west connectivity, and a new railway can undoubtedly provide the backbone of better and more sustainable transport across the region. In particular, when Cambridge South Station is completed, East West Rail will be key to the ongoing growth of the Cambridge Biomedical Campus.

However, it is vital that this new line contributes fully to the move to zero carbon from day one and that arguably means that the line should be designed to be electrified or hydrogen powered

Many thousands of residents of Cambridgeshire are potentially affected by the routes being consulted on and we would encourage everyone to participate in the consultation. The fact that it includes 7km of a 10m high embankment from the Eversdens to Shelford is an example of why we are not – as yet – welcoming of these plans.

**Traffic, untaxed cars and speeding:** There have been an increasing number of reports in Gamlingay of un-taxed parked cars - especially in West Rd and Mill Street - please report these on either the .Gov website or on the Cambridgeshire Police website. The pandemic has obviously reduced car use considerably but we are beginning to see a return to pre Covid traffic levels and disappointingly an increase in speeding traffic especially in Church St and Church End. Sebastian has been in touch with the Police Sector Commander asking for visits both during working and outside working hours to monitor vehicles and it is incredibly frustrating that nothing has happened so far (at time of writing) other than a PCSO turning up without the right forms.

**Holly Walk Lights:** We know there are a pair of lights in Holly Walk that are not working and now know that there is a problem with their power supply. We shall keep you posted on when they will be repaired.

**Remote Meetings:** It just beggars belief that the Government cannot find a way to allow the continuation of remote council meetings for County, District, Town and Parish Councils. Moving to remote meetings has allowed all of us to protect our councillors, our officers and the public which is surely just as important now as it was 12 months ago. The mileage and environmental impact of driving to meetings which could just as easily – if not more easily – be held remotely is a nonsense. On top of this we have seen increased participation from members of the public in our meetings many of whom may not have been able to attend meetings prior to the pandemic and it would be awful to now have to tell them they cannot participate from home and can only do so in person. To add to the lunacy it now appears that having told us that the ‘remote meeting’ ship had sailed, government is now going to ‘consult on this’.

**Combined Authority Climate Change Commission:** The report of the CPCA Climate Commission has now been published and we wait to see how many of the recommendations are accepted. It is indeed ambitious but makes the point very strongly that we are past the point of being able to choose not to do things to protect the environment. One of the key points that will affect us all is prioritising sustainable travel (electric, cycling, walking) over road schemes when considering new investments. They also said that new homes had to be built to higher energy efficiency standards and older homes had to be improved so that they use much less energy. The commission also noted the huge significance of the Fenland Peat area and the opportunities to stimulate farming methods which would sustain the peat and stop it drying out which releases vast quantities of carbon into the atmosphere. SCDC is supporting the UNESCO Fen Biosphere project which will protect this nationally significant asset.

**Combined Authority Housing Programme:** Right back when the Devolution Deal was signed by the previous administration at SCDC there was a £100m pot of money for affordable housing which we were led to believe would hugely benefit our district with our very high house prices. The reality is that very little of this money has gone to S Cambs (most has gone to East Cambs and Peterborough) and now the government has pulled the plug on the fund with £45million still to be allocated. Their main concerns were around the ‘value for money’ from what had been spent so far. The position now appears to be that the government will be controlling any further money for housing spent through the CPCA (with no guarantee that there will be any more) thus making a bit of a nonsense of why we have a Combined Authority at all.

**CAM Metro:** If you read the local Cambridge Press you will be aware of the Mayor’s plans to build a Metro at a cost of between £2bn and £4bn. It has been very difficult to work out where this huge sum of money is to come from but finally we have seen a report that says that the bulk of it will come from something called ‘land value capture’ from building a number (we think between 5 and 7) of new garden villages in S Cambs and Huntingdon. Now the CPCA is not a planning authority and so can’t determine where such development will go if indeed they go anywhere. So instead of giving us any certainty over how the CAM Metro can be funded we are now even more confused.

**SCDC 5 Year Housing Land Supply:** Those residents who joined the West Road Action Group a few years ago will recall that the application for 30 houses on 'Land to the South of West Road' was allowed by the planning inspector because at the time (pre to 2018) SCDC did not have a 5 year housing land supply and that made it very difficult to refuse planning applications. Quite soon after May 2018 a 5 year housing land supply was secured but there have been concerns that Covid might have slowed down the building of new homes. The very good news is that the Greater Cambridge area (S Cambs and Cambridge City) has a land supply of 6.1 years – so hurrah and hopefully no more opportunistic and unsuitable planning applications will get through.

**South Cambs COVID Recovery - Community Chest Grant:** South Cambs have earmarked a £30,000 Covid recovery grant fund as part of their Community Chest funding. This is specifically designed to help local community groups and Parish Councils resume/restart community activities which have been difficult or impossible during the pandemic.

The eligibility criteria for the Community Chest Grant scheme have been temporarily amended to allow applications for grants of up to £2,000 for Covid recovery related projects and initiatives. Previously, few could apply to the scheme but for the next eight weeks - up until 10th May 2021 - it is open to all Parish Councils as well as community groups, with applications being considered at the May 28th Grants Advisory Committee meeting. Applications are therefore invited from Community groups for projects or initiatives designed to mitigate the effects of the Coronavirus pandemic and aid recovery.

For further information or details on how to apply see :

<https://www.scambs.gov.uk/community-development/grants/community-chest-grants> and if you have any questions, please email: [Community.Chest@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:Community.Chest@scambs.gov.uk) for further guidance.

**Safer Community Funding:** The Community Safety Partnership between South Cambridgeshire District Council, Cambridgeshire County Council, the Police, Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service, the NHS and the Probation Service, meets together to tackle local crime and anti-social behaviour. We want to encourage residents to take ownership of some of these local issues to create local solutions – and there is funding and support available to help you do this.

Grants of between £50 and £500 are currently available to improve community safety as well as improve cohesion. Apply before 30 September 2021. Voluntary groups, charities, parish councils and enthusiastic individuals can apply for funding for anything from printing leaflets or posters, hosting a website, buying equipment for a Speedwatch group, litter picking, creating a community garden or accessing training. For further information, please contact Linda Gallagher: 07376 901 019.

**Micro-asphalting in Gamlingay:** County Council officers have advised that the micro asphalting that was planned for Greenacres, Beechside, Plane Tree Close, access road to Almond Drive, Maple Court, access road to Cherry Grove and Crab Apple Way that was postponed to next year will now take place this year after all – so that's very good news. Further details for arrangements will follow.

**Minor Highways Improvement Bids:** Gamlingay Parish Council has been awarded £15,000 by the Minor Highways Improvement Panel at Cambridgeshire County Council towards the £78,890 total cost of connecting the existing footpath at Mill Hill up to Woodview Farm Shop. This will provide a 1.8m wide path that will hopefully allow many more pedestrians, buggies and dogwalkers to access Woodview safely and sustainably and – who knows – may form part of a longer path to Potton one day. (Most of the remaining cost is met from developer contributions.)

Wimpole Parish Council has been awarded £3043 towards the £5043 total cost of buying moveable speed monitor cameras for use in the Parish as part of WPC's efforts to reduce speeding through the village and Litlington Parish Council has been awarded £2487 towards the £5187 total cost of implementing improvements to existing lining and signage in the vicinity of South St to emphasise the existing one way system. Steeple Morden Parish Council has been awarded £15,000 towards the £17152 total cost of implementing further



speed limits with 40mph buffer zones on three approaches to the village as SMPC's efforts to reduce speeding through the village.

Congratulations to all the PCs for their sterling efforts! (Sebastian sits on this Panel but OBVIOUSLY cannot vote on applications from his Parishes!!)

**New future for the 127 bus:** I am delighted to advise that the long-running Cambridgeshire County Council-subsidized 127 bus, serving Melbourn, Meldreth, Whaddon, Kneesworth, Bassingbourn, Litlington, the Mordens and Royston, starts anew on April 6th as the number 17, running on a commercial basis by operator A2B. The launch of the 17 service follows close working between local councillors with Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire council bus officers, exploring ways of strengthening key rural bus services for a wider area. A new feature of the 17 will be a stop at the Royston Gateway shopping centre on journeys in and out of Royston. The bus is fully accessible, can accommodate folding bikes, and runs on a Euro 5 emissions standard.

The timetable has been simplified to every two hours at repeating times for ease of remembering and regular familiarisation. Due to lack of use, the 0805 journey will not operate on Saturday mornings and the 1815 journey will be discontinued. No fares have changed and all concession cards are valid exactly as before. There will be some fare changes at a later date to encourage usage including a new range of weekly monthly and all-day tickets for adults and children.

New timetables are on the bus and at [www.a2bbusandcoach.com](http://www.a2bbusandcoach.com).

**Thakeham and South West Cambridgeshire update:** Sebastian highlights "In the past month, the South West Cambridge Action Group has met with parish council representatives of the nine directly affected villages and with our MP, and have held a public meeting. The developer, Thakeham, has at the time of writing still not submitted any application to South Cambs District Council. Nevertheless, we have focused our meetings on sharing information about how national development channels work – meaning channels that would over-ride local decision-making. We've put all this together into a presentation which is available to download from our website, [www.swcag.org.uk](http://www.swcag.org.uk). Please get in touch if you'd like to join our email updates list: [info@swcag.org.uk](mailto:info@swcag.org.uk)."

Your Councillors are here to help you. Please do not hesitate to contact County Councillor Sebastian Kindersley on 01767 651982 or [skindersley@hotmail.com](mailto:skindersley@hotmail.com) or write to the Manor Barn, East Hatley, SG19 3JA with any comments, questions, problems or complaints. We hope we can help but if we can't we are likely to know someone who can!



## **Petersfield Annual Report - March 2021**

### **Pupil Report – Responses from pupils from Reception to Year 6**

Following a year in which the very unusual circumstances of Covid have continued, we asked pupils to give their views about remote learning. In addition, we asked children – some of whom have been in school throughout the lockdowns – about their experiences from the 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021 when school again opened fully for all pupils to attend learning on the school site. They reported the following:-

#### **What were the advantages of remote learning?**

- During remote learning we had timetables with our virtual lessons set out. It was good having the time slots for lessons so our day was organised. We liked seeing our teacher on the screen and the technology allowed us to see the board he was working on really clearly. It was good having the mute button because it meant that we could hear really clearly, and we could use the 'virtual' hand or the chat box to answer or ask questions. It was nice to be learning at home with family and pets.
- The virtual animal experience funded by FOPS
- Being able to be flexible with time
- I got to see my pets and family more
- Playing games with brothers and sisters
- It helped me get better at typing

- I got to using a computer more
- I got a longer lunchbreak
- I learnt how to use Teams well
- Seeing my friends in the Teams lessons
- I had more space to work
- It was good starting a bit later as we were more alert.
- We especially enjoyed maths online.
- We enjoyed learning with our teacher, then after this we could do the work independently and not rely on any adults.
- I did some exciting experiments with my family. I made an exploding volcano.
- I enjoyed the 'Live' lessons, especially playing Bingo and playing Reading Eggs on the computer.
- It was good to see our friends during our lessons, it made it feel more normal.

#### **What are the advantages of being back in school?**

- Although remote learning worked really well, we were all really excited and happy to be back in school! We have been able to spend time with our friends in class and play with them at break times. Microsoft Teams was good but seeing our friends and teachers face-to-face is much better. In class, it is easier to ask questions, especially if we think of them later in the lesson. We don't have any technical issues like losing sound or the screen freezing when we are the real classroom! Most of all, we had missed being able to talk and have discussions in groups and as a class – it is really good to see the people in my class listening when I talk and being able to ask me questions.
- Getting to see my friends
- We can socialise and talk more
- I am less distracted at school and I can concentrate better
- I can do partner work
- I have more opportunities to laugh and smile
- It is easier to learn using the working walls (displays in school)
- It is easier for parents
- There are no technical glitches
- I get more fresh air time
- I get more exercise time
- I get my teacher in person teaching us
- In school, I have a new role play area that is a Library
- I am enjoying using our sand pit and mud kitchen.
- I can use all the equipment in school, there is more than what we had at home.
- We have had some fun DT, Art and PE lessons which have been better than online

#### **Headteachers' report:**

Since our last report in March 2021, school has continued to provide education and support to our pupils, families and communities despite three lockdowns. In November, we continued in school but in lockdowns one and three, school remained open only for vulnerable and critical workers' children in line with the national response to Covid-19. As you can see from the children's responses, remote learning has developed at pace throughout the last year. The skill sets resulting for pupils, parents and staff are particularly noteworthy and are the result of significant hard work and commitment throughout this year. We are very grateful to everyone for working together to best meet the needs of our pupils throughout what we know has been a challenging and exhausting year.

Wellbeing, continues to be a whole school priority and we were delighted to feature in the Cambridge Independent Newspaper following the pupils' work in the autumn. Bishop Stephen's Lent challenge has also tasked us with reflecting on hope and working together to make a difference.

Despite the challenges, we have continually adapted to facilitate our regular events and opportunities in school and we have even found silver linings to the disruption as virtual

events mean parents who are working or grandparents in distant places can, for the first time, attend virtual events such as the Christmas performance, Mothers' Day celebration and Headteachers' Awards Collective Worship. Please do look at the '[Latest News](#)' on the homepage of our school website [www.petersfield.cambs.sch.uk](http://www.petersfield.cambs.sch.uk) to find out about the learning and extracurricular opportunities we continue to provide at Petersfield.

As a school, we continue to be responsible 7 days a week for the Covid Track and Trace process in our school community. We also continue to work very closely with Cambridgeshire County, schools across the County and the local community as we strive to meet the needs of all children and families through initiatives including the Winter Grant Scheme.

As soon as the County approved Risk Assessment allows, if you have any spare time, we are always looking for volunteers to support the children's learning e.g. listening to readers, helping in the library, supporting the wider curriculum etc. Our grateful thanks for the donations of skills, time, resources and money that have continue throughout the last year. The ingenious ways to work virtually and adapt to Covid restrictions never fail to impress us and to continue to inspire and support the children. If you feel you may have the relevant skills and the time to do this work or if you have any suggestions as to how we can access funding sources, please do contact the school office, in the first instance: [office@petersfield.cambs.sch.uk](mailto:office@petersfield.cambs.sch.uk).

If you wish to contact us or find out more, please do not hesitate to do so by coming into school once we reopen, and in the meantime, calling 01223 207382 or emailing [office@petersfield.cambs.sch.uk](mailto:office@petersfield.cambs.sch.uk). We look forward to welcoming you. Best wishes for your continued health and well-being.

Chair of Governors and Co-Headteachers

Linda Meredith, Laura Penrose and Rachel Peachey

### **Croydon Reading Room April 2021 - Diana Walters**

It has been a difficult year for the Reading Room. We have had a few Zoom Meetings but there has been little activity other than me applying for Grants, sorting out the electric bill and getting a new meter and tariff.

The Reading Room is now fully registered as a Charity with the Charity Commission (Number 1185668) This has really helped applying for Grants The Web Site has made a good job of maintaining the profile of the Reading Room. Our neighbours, Sam and Laura, have continued kindly cut the grass as have other villagers, but perhaps we need a rota to help out. Bookings and regular use ceased again in March when The Reading Room closed due to the National Pandemic.

We have applied and received some grants to support us during this time. Wear and tear is an ongoing feature requiring constant maintenance and help. We are still attempting to raise funds to build better porch with disabled access, a loft for the storage for Village Documents, a store room attached to the building, a bigger food hatch and doors out through the chimney (to be dismantled) to a patio area suitable for a few small outside activities. Percy kindly did the plans 3 years ago year and the church is interested in the shed for storage.

We are very grateful for the Parish Council's support in this matter It really helps (letter attached) and their ongoing payments have been well received. We still hope to clear up the moat, which could be such a lovely area in time. The smell continues to be quite bad at times. We will need the support of Mr Farrer and The Fresh Waterways Trust, fingers still crossed. We hope 2021/22 will be a productive year in the long run..

Covid 19 has effectively closed the Reading Room for now, but we should re-open to a degree on 17th May and more so on the 21st June. I personally have been working long hours and have another grandchild (and another in June!) so my time has been divided and I feel The Reading Room has not had the attention it deserves, but I hope to announce a start date the improvements soon.

My thanks to all the Trustees, and the continuing interest of the Parish Council, whose support is always welcome. We welcome interested Villagers to come to our AGMs and welcome all feed back & ideas. I wish all of you good health & safe passage during his difficult period.

Diana Walters - Trustees Chairman, Bookings Clerk and caretaker;  
Secretary - Janice Horsford  
Treasurer - Chris Elsley  
Frank Sole Valerie Barnes Judith Pillinger

### **Community Group report:**

Thank you for the invitation to report to this meeting. I have had coming up to nine years of continuous involvement since the first Community Led Plan public gathering in 2012, however, this evening I need to let you know that I am standing down from any leadership role and therefore, this is my final report of this kind. This statement has not been drafted jointly with any other party so represents my personal take on the community landscape in this Parish and its future. I will, of course, continue personal involvement in various local matters but purely as an individual member. To avoid confusion, I should say that, as long as I am needed, I shall be continuing as a Churchwarden and member of the PCC (Church Council).

I absolutely must place on record my sincere gratitude for the support of the Parish Council throughout this long period, and particularly when members might well have felt, no doubt with justification, they were witnessing a certain amount of blundering about, and for which I am happy now to apologise. I would like to extend particular thanks to Sue as PC Chair and nominated PC link person, also to Garth as PC Chair in earlier days, and wider to Sebastian, Bridget and latterly Heather as District and County Councillors for their very strong and most invaluable support. Thanks also to all past and present members of the various incarnations along the way – Steering Group, Implementation Group (IG), Community Group (CG), and latterly to Judith as Co-Chair.

As you all know, the original CLP questionnaire and Report threw up a wide range of topics, concerns and community desires and, as is usually the case in the real world, good progress has been made with some items and very little progress, or none at all, with many others. Two of the strongest signals coming from the community were for better communications, improved community cohesion (apologies for the modern parlance), and more community based activities. I think there can be little doubt that particularly through the WhatsApp and e-News systems much has been achieved in these two directions. The Village Clean-Up days have improved our local environment with less litter and brambles over pathways, and the recently re-invigorated First Tuesday meetings now provide a vehicle for monthly community gatherings with the potential to range across the full breadth of topics of interest to individuals and groups. To my mind the biggest failures have been an inability to deliver more affordable homes in Croydon (for rent and shared ownership) and even the smallest amount of community land for any kind of play area. Both of these were very strongly supported in the CLP and significant efforts should continue until success is finally achieved.

Getting a little more into the detail, since the report of the IG Co-Chairs to the equivalent of this meeting last year, the PC has been kept informed about the morphing of the more formal IG to a looser style of Community Group. This change was felt to be timely given that more than five years had elapsed since the original survey questionnaire and resulting CLP, also because the Covid restrictions had so severely disrupted IG activities.

So what has been achieved? The level of community cohesion and information exchange has changed beyond recognition, as has the increase in community activities. The monthly First Tuesday meetings are much invigorated, the Community WhatsApp Group and the e-News system are lively and flourishing. The First Tuesday meetings have attracted significantly larger numbers with one meeting topping 30 Zoom attendees; the WhatsApp

Group has grown to a membership of 63 and includes several new arrivals to the parish; e-News is received by over 70% of households and with an opening rate generally around 70% and with a high of 80+%! The PC is itself, of course, a frequent e-News user for distribution of meeting and other notices. Several new interest groups have emerged including for, Trees (stimulated by joint Tree Wardens Maggie and Judith), Local and Church History, and a Village Sign. These are in addition to the previously existing Churchyard Conservation initiative and the Birding Group.

It is my personal view that there is now little, or no, need to retain an overarching formal Community Group. The monthly First Tuesday meetings (whatever they are called) are the embodiment of a community group and long may they continue and flourish. These monthly meetings, combined with easy communications through WhatsApp and e-News, should ensure that new initiatives (eg Village Sign) and other interest groups are able to emerge easily and naturally. Established activities can easily be scheduled through WhatsApp and e-News messaging, for example, the next Village Clear- Up day (**note now scheduled for Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> May**). To my mind the one loss from the removal of a overarching group might be when occasions arise for which the PC feels it would benefit from some advice or comment from the community, but in these cases calls can easily be put out for people to come forward, or alternatively individuals known to have a particular interest could be invited to respond.

It is my understanding that Maggie and Judith will continue to lead with organising the First Tuesday meetings, and currently Sue will continue to be the formal PC link.

As a parting gift to all residents, particularly newer ones, and all interested individuals and groups, I am attaching (not for the first time!) the 2015 Appendix of Results which underpinned the Community Led Plan. I believe most of its findings remain relevant and therefore, hopefully, will inform future thinking, efforts and progress.

Sincerely, thank you all once again.

Malcolm Ralph

Formerly Co-Chair of IG, CG (and probably the SG but I can't remember that far back!)

***The 2015 Appendix of Results is to be found on the website - [www.croydon-village.co.uk](http://www.croydon-village.co.uk)***

### **Chair of the Parish Council Report April 2021 - Mrs Sue Slator**

In last year's report I wrote that, due to Covid 19 our last face to face meeting was held on the 19<sup>th</sup> February 2020, unfortunately we have not met in person since. From June 2020 we have successfully moved to holding meetings via Zoom. A number of people from the village have joined us at these meetings.

Membership of the Parish Council has remained constant, this year.

### **Covid 19**

Covid 19 has had a big impact on the village community, with many people working and doing school work from home. The benefits of the WhatsApp group & the village email system soon became apparent. We were able to use these channels to share important information from SCDC and elsewhere. It was excellent to see help being offered where needed with shopping and other matters.

Our Clerk was actively involved in supporting those shielding (confidentially) when needed. Despite Covid 19 the Council continued to work on various issues:

#### **Planning**

Not surprisingly, a smaller number of applications have been considered this year and council made comments as appropriate.

#### **Housing Needs Survey.**

As previously reported Hastoe Housing Society is investigating the possibility of a small affordable housing development in Croydon. They have been in contact with landowners, but no conclusions have yet been reached.

### **Website**

The new website will be launched shortly and has both Parish Council and village content.

### **Defibrillator**

A fully automatic AED (Automated External Defibrillator) has been purchased and is in the process of being installed in the redundant phone box in Clopton Close. Access to the AED is only via a 999 call, when the ambulance service will provide an access code, if appropriate. We will, when it is sensible to do so, arrange training in its use. In the meantime, please watch the training video on the Defibrillator page of the web site, when it is launched.

### **Community Benefit Fund**

The fund stands at £20424.54. No further payments are due from the Solar Farm, so this fund is finite. The funds are available for the use of the community including Parish Council projects. Details of how to apply and the criteria for grants can be found on the Policy page of the website. This year the purchase and installation of the AED and the development of the new website have been supported.

### **Tree Wardens**

Two members of the community have volunteered to be joint Tree Wardens for Croydon. They will be pursuing various projects in liaison with SCDC but have already coordinated the planting of two new trees in Clopton Close.

### **Problem Parking in Arrington**

The NT at Wimpole reduced the numbers using the official car park and prevented its use for those wanting to walk the public footpaths. This led to severe parking congestion in Arrington, at times blocking access to Croydon.

It was agreed that Arrington, Croydon and Wimpole PCs should tackle this problem together. Following a consultation by CCC, it has been agreed that yellow lines will be placed initially along Church Lane from the A1198 through to the church. Further measure will be considered if necessary.

### **Training.**

I attended the virtual Local Councils Conference in October 2020. Its main focus was on how local councils were managing Covid 19 and to learn from others experiences.

Zoom has brought some unexpected benefits. Our MP Anthony Browne is holding quarterly Parish Council Forums where local topics can be raised. Useful briefing on EW Rail and the proposed Thakeham development have been given. The Cambridge Shared planning service is also hosting quarterly training on aspects of planning policy.

The Clerk and I both completed online training in Gypsy, Roma & Traveller (GRT) Culture followed by attending a GRT Inclusion workshop. All councillors will be invited to attend the course in the coming year.

### **Implementation Group.**

At the end of 2020 it was proposed that the Implementation group would become the Croydon Community Group (CCG), to better reflect its objectives. This has developed into a looser structure the background of which can be read in the previous report.

### **Thanks**

Many people contribute to the life of the parish and we are grateful for all your support.

Thank you to Malcolm and Judith, the Co-chairs for their work with the Implementation/Community Group.

Special mention to Malcolm for his many years of work and support from the Community Led Plan, the Implementation Group and latterly the Community Group. We are very grateful for all the effort you have made to the benefit of the community and the difference you have made.

Thank you to Judith & Maggie for restarting the Zoom Tuesday group and becoming Tree wardens.

We are grateful to George who has maintained the old website while we developed the new one.

Thank you too, to the Reading Room trustees for maintaining the Reading Room despite being unable to open this year.

Thank you to all the Parish councillors and to our County and District councillors who have been very supportive this difficult year.

A major thank you to our clerk Marian, who has been exceptional keeping up with the huge volume of information for distribution this year. Marian has also been invaluable to setting up our Zoom meetings and ensuring we kept up with all our duties despite the change of circumstances.

Finally, once again I want to thank everybody who has stepped up to support neighbours and the community spirit which has developed over this pandemic.

#### Parish Council Finance:

The Clerk gave a brief outline of the AGM accounts which are quite straightforward. The Chair agreed them and Mr Wenman endorsed them and there were no queries or objections to them from Councillors present.

## Croydon Parish Council Accounts April 2020 - March 2021

Receipts		Payments	
Precept	£3,400.00	Insurance	£367.17
SCDC PPE grant	£100.00	Additional insurance - war memorial	£17.91
Interest - NSI	£158.22	Reading Room rental - PC	£182.00
<b>Total Receipts</b>	<b>£3,658.22</b>	Reading Room rental - IG	£26.00
		PPE for Church and Reading Room	£99.31
		Churchyard Maintenance	£500.00
		Auditor	£40.00
		Subs to SLCC Association	£67.00
		RBL wreath	£17.00
		Trees for the village	£106.46
<b>Restricted Funds</b>		Clerk - salary	£1,210.00
<b>Community Benefit Fund</b>		Clerk - petty cash	£54.52
Balance to date	£22,161.32	Clerk - IT allowance	£25.00
Website - part payment	-£440.00		
Defibrillator and associated items	-£1,455.00		
NSI Interest	£158.22		
	<b>£20,424.54</b>	<b>Restricted Fund</b>	
		Website developer (part payment)	£440.00
		Defibrillator and associated items	£1,746.00
		<b>Total Payments</b>	<b>£4,898.37</b>
<b>Balances at 31 March 2021</b>		<b>Balance at 31 March 2020</b>	<b>£29,243.45</b>
Investment Account	£22,135.42	add receipts	£3,658.22
Bank Account	£5,867.88	less payments	-£4,898.37
less unpresented cheques	£0.00		
<b>Total</b>	<b>£28,003.30</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>£28,003.30</b>

The AGM accounts as presented to the meeting will be posted on the new website and the notice board.

### **District Councillor's AGM Report 2021 - The Mordens Ward**

I would like to start my report by thanking all residents for the way they have supported each other during this pandemic, it has been a very challenging time for us all but hopefully the end is nearing and we can meet together in person once more.

Via a new virtual world I have continued to represent you at South Cambs District Council and will continue to do so, the most recent of meetings being of the planning committee which lasted for over 9hours! As parish councillors will be aware, we are due to soon return to in person meetings, a little earlier than many would have liked including myself. I have made the decision, after discussing the potential impacts of this with my family, that I will attend physical meetings at the District and Parishes but this is not an easy decision for councillors to make and I will fully respect if others do not feel able to.

### **Thakeham Housing proposal update**

There has not, at the time of writing this report, been any official submission by Thakeham to the District Council. Thakeham have claimed a delay in their submission time due to covid but that they will be submitting proposals in the call for sites for the next Local Plan. Many people such as myself have been looking at what methods the developers have to pursue this project. My research has shown that Thakeham have no option at present but to go through the normal local planning process, I have made it clear also that this proposal should receive no special treatment. This has been supported by South Cambs Director of planning who has also stated that he is unaware of any mainstream mechanism, other than the local plan process, that would enable the delivery of these proposals. Chris Pincher, Minister for Housing, has confirmed in a response to a written question in parliament about Thakeham that "Should an application for planning permission come forward it will be dealt with in the usual way". Government have also confirmed that they have no plans for a New Town in South Cambridgeshire. As a member of the Planning Committee and a voting member of the council on the Local Plan it is crucial that I do not pass any judgement or comment on my own personal views of this proposal if I am to not become pre-determined and thereby lose my vote. I believe that the best meaningful way I can serve residents is to ensure that I am able to vote when the time comes.

### **Local Plan**

It has been stated that the next stage of the next local plan will be starting around the Summer/ Autumn of this year. I would encourage all to respond when the consultation opens as this document really does have an impact on our villages and lives. It will state where and how development should take place. There will be many areas from of policy that will be consulted on such as environmental, layout, scale, design and affordable housing provision etc, along with a special strategy that will dictate where the majority of development will be happening over future decades.

### **Financial position of the SCDC**

The year ending March 2018 accounts were signed off just before Christmas 2020 (these accounts were due to be signed off back in the autumn of 2018). Work has begun on the audit for the 2019 year end accounts and it is likely that the council will not be on time with its accounts reporting until the 2022 year end. Though there are no financial penalties for Local Government bodies filing late accounts, there are extra external auditor costs being of 6 figure sums for the 2018 accounts and likely additional costs for the future years that are delayed. It is of deep concern for myself and many others that the District council will take so long to get on time with its audits, I continue to raise this at meetings and along with questioning the officer resources available given this and staff turnover have been sighted as the reasons for many delays along with resources issues from the external auditor.

The budget for 2021-2022 was agreed in February. There were elements that I welcome for example the resources towards homelessness prevention and supporting businesses and communities through the Covid recovery. However, on balance, there were too many elements that I was uncomfortable with and therefore voted against the budget. Below are some of the reasons as to why I voted against:



The accumulative borrowing figure on the four-year forecast is nearly £420m – this is a 95% increase in the Council’s debt over the four-year forecast, a rate that I personally believe is unsustainable given the limit the council has set itself is £511m (though this can be exceeded in the short term).

There is a budget gap of nearly £6m with over £4m intended to be filled with growth. The Budget pressure figures forecast were significantly lower than the actual figures that we were comparing it to, so am concerned this is not overly realistic.

The council continues to increase its commercial investment portfolio, under its £340 million investment strategy. The Council has entered into financial Limited Liability Partnerships with Hill Group and Balfour Beatty to the sum of £140 million as part of the investment strategy. As these desions are taken with the press and public excluded I am legally limited as to what I can say, however I can say that I did not support this and my main reasons are that I believe there are real issues of conflicts of interest as the partnerships will be looking to develop land and will be applying to the District Council for planning permission. While this is Legal, I fear for the perception of this given a recent report from an independent planning advisory service from the Local Government Association spoke of a “Lack of Trust” in planning at South Cambs. I do not feel that these partnerships will restore that trust and at the same time it is a lot of money, taxpayers and future loans that will be needed to fund this project to be investing.

### **The environment**

The District Council has recently published its Doubling Nature Strategy, and Im pleased to say that on environmental issues at South Cambs there is rarely a time where there is not cross-party support. On such an important issue its important that we put any other differences aside and all play our part to help in solving this problem. I am looking carefully, while the next local plan is being developed, as are others at the real implications’ development is having on our water. It has been an incredibly difficult year for flooding and yet there are also rivers that completely dried up last summer.

### **Planning**

It has been another difficult year for planning at South Cambs, when writing this report 90% of my case work is in relation to planning. No one at the moment is benefitting from this situation, the residents, the parish councils, the applicants, or the officers. This year has seen an embarrassing situation with the District Council affectively having to take itself to court to quash its own decisions, and this cannot carry on.

As part of the Planning Advisory Services report a group has been formed, of which I sit on, to try and implement the recommendations, a link to which is below. I hope that we will be able to find ways to improve this service but I do believe that the key reason as to why planning is in a pickle as one council called it at a planning meeting, is a lack of planning officers. I will continue to raise this and while I’m pleased that this year much of the previous years near £1m budget cut has been restored, we need the rest of it and more if residents are to get the service they deserve.

[Appendix A - Peer Review Final Report 2020.pdf \(modern.gov.co.uk\)](#)

At the budget meeting I proposed an amendment that saw a reduction in councillors allowances and communications budget to enable the long term employment of an extra planning enforcement but unfortunately this was voted down as there was not considered a need for it, below are the case figures which I believe show why it is, full stats are available at

[Appendix 1 - Cases received and closed 10 Feb 2021 Committee.pdf \(modern.gov.co.uk\)](#).

Month – 2020	Received	Closed
2020 - YTD	473	190
2019 - YTD	615	641
2018 - YTD	670	651
2017 - YTD	602	563

As your District Councillor I am on the following committees:

- Audit & Corporate Governance Committee
- Civic Affairs Committee
- Climate & Environment Advisory Group (Substitute)
- Full Council
- Employment & Staffing Committee
- Grants Advisory Committee (Substitute)
- Licensing Committee (Substitute)
- Planning Committee
- Scrutiny and Overview Committee (Substitute)
- Anti - Bullying Task and Finish Group (Chairman)
- Planning Committee Development Group

I also have responsibilities as the Major Opposition Group Leader, I sit on the Greater Cambridge Partnership Assembly, and I am a substitute on the Combined Authority's scrutiny and overview committee.

### **Political Balance of South Cambs District Council**

The Current Political Balance of SCDC is:

- |                     |    |                                             |
|---------------------|----|---------------------------------------------|
| • Liberal Democrats | 27 |                                             |
| • Conservative      | 11 |                                             |
| • Labour            | 2  |                                             |
| • Independent       | 1  |                                             |
| • Vacancy           | 4  | (Due to resignations of 3 Lib Dems & 1 Ind) |

Cllr Heather Williams

SCDC The Mordens Ward

Tel: 07885 774 775

Email: [cllr.williamsh@scamb.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.williamsh@scamb.gov.uk)

Website: <https://cllrheatherwilliams.co.uk>

### **Village Matters**

#### **All Saints' Church, Croydon cum Clopton**

#### **Report to Croydon Parish Council (Virtual) AGM - April 2021**

Thank you for the opportunity to report on the condition of All Saints' fabric and other matters.

Last year's report painted a downbeat picture. All Saints' was closed for services due to Covid restrictions, the Chancel remained roped off due to the risk of a collapsing floor falling in to the Downing Crypt below, and to top it all some very disappointing news on the grant front when just before Easter 2020 the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) closed its doors to new applications due to emergency funding measures being required to save projects already underway but where footfall had collapsed. At the time of writing this fund has not yet re-opened for new applications. You may recall there was one chink of light towards the end of last year's report that attention was turning towards attempting to cobble together some funds from smaller organisations.

This year, we are very pleased to be able to report a much brighter picture. All Saints' has recently re-opened for services (though not yet with an established pattern) and last year's disappointment with the NLHF has perhaps been shown to be a mixed blessing. The sudden closure of this key national grant stream for historic buildings was a real moment of crisis but with quick reactions, and in some ways ahead of the pack, the PCC turned to several small grant bodies and charities with a view to accumulating sufficient funds simply to be able to take on the most urgent tasks. In the event, commitments were received from four of these smaller organisations, totalling £17,900, though two of these were set at 50% and targeted at specific tasks so presenting challenges around finding top-up funds and of coordination across different work packages. The contributing organisations in question are

Cambridgeshire Historic Churches Trust, The National Churches Trust, Allchurches Trust and The Garfield Weston Foundation.

In parallel, the PCC very much supported by Caroe Architecture, was applying pressure on Historic England to make a significant financial contribution as a funder of last resort. These efforts finally bore fruit in May 2020 when HE offered £25,000 towards £27,000 of works coming from a government Covid Recovery Fund. Thus a total of approaching £43,000 has been raised, though with a requirement for the parish to contribute up to £5,000, though hopefully it will turn out to be a little less than this figure. While this is well short of the original £130,000 bid to the Lottery, in fact it is more closely targeted and in many ways puts far less demands on the local community.

What works are to be undertaken? The key item, as many in the parish already know, is to avert the collapse of the Chancel Floor. To enable this has required regaining an entrance into the Downing Crypt under the Chancel for the first time in around 150 yrs. The accumulated smaller grants contributed to this re-opening (as well as to other weatherproofing repairs). As might be imagined this was a daunting but very exciting achievement and a public presentation has already been given on how this was done and what was found within. If anyone who missed the presentation would like to know more then please make contact on 07801 434603. This is clearly only the beginning of an extended story and this work has already spurred the formation of a Croydon History Group - if anyone is interested in joining this new group contact Geoff Mason 07770 300185 or Tom King 07563 372122. The HE grant will cover all but £2000 of the cost of inserting an emergency support structure within the Crypt. It is important to note that this is only a holding measure while movement monitoring and other investigations take place over at least a two year period before eventually (hopefully) permanent repairs can be undertaken. The remainder of this grant will be spent on repairs to at least two of the south facing windows which are already propped against collapse. The final strand in this series is the launch of a two-year movement and crack monitoring programme designed to cover all major areas of the building and it is the results of this, it is hoped, will inform future needs. It is important at this point to register that local people are to provide the labour to carry out the actual measurements, so again, if anyone is interested in hands-on involvement, perhaps someone starting out in construction, architecture or structural engineering, or simply with an interest in old buildings, then please do make contact.

Moving outside in to the churchyards, many will have noticed how well maintained and sympathetically managed are the cut areas and for this we must once again thank Michael Norie for his careful dedication to the task, and also thank the Parish Council for continuing to contribute to the cost of this maintenance on behalf of the community. We are very happy to report that the initiative, linked to the Wildlife Trust, to improve nature conservation, wildflowers and increase biodiversity in both parts of the churchyard is continuing. Hopefully during this Spring and Summer people will be able to begin to see the benefits through a good show of meadow flowers and other plants and insects. Some additional small trees have also been planted towards the far end of the new churchyard. Both parts are open to all to visit and perhaps sit, and enjoy these areas of calm and quiet beauty. Thank you to Judith and Maggie for launching this initiative and to the small team who are working on it. The west boundary near the Tower has been trimmed back as was required in the most recent survey, grateful thanks to Peter for leading on this; and grateful thanks also to Simon and Catherine King for maintaining the trees on the south boundary.

In this strangest of times, even with some enforced closures and times when no services have been permitted, the PCC in Croydon together with Felicity have worked hard to continue to reach out through Zoom and You Tube as well as other means, for example, the Christingles delivered to every door, the outdoor Nativity Trail (thank you to Parsley, Norie and Ralph families), and the stocked Foodbox which remains just inside the church for anyone who needs it. If anyone has any difficulty with these means of communication, or feels a need to speak with anyone, then please contact either Felicity or one of us.

You all know by now that no report of this kind can avoid the dreaded topic of finance, but for once even here there is better news. Particularly at a time when no fundraising events have been possible, church parish finances across the country are under strain and some will be fatally wounded and church closures will follow. You should already know, that Croydon PCC has put in considerable efforts to inform people, of all persuasions and none, that the survival of their parish church depends on the local community being willing and able to pay day to day running costs as NO outside help of any kind is available to cover these. A campaign was launched in Croydon to try to put the survival of All Saints on a firmer footing. It is a great relief to be able to report that regular monthly donations have now risen from an unsustainable low of only four households to more like fifteen households and all are using the very easy to use national Parish Giving Scheme. This is a fantastic increase which needs to be celebrated. We are not totally out of the woods so even a few more joiners would make a huge difference so do please get in touch no matter how small the amount; this can now be done on line and in private. Finally thanks to everyone who helps in any way, particularly Percy for his support on all matters fabric, all who support fund raising events when they can return, the cleaning and flower rota volunteers and everyone who contributes in so many ways, thank you.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this report.

Malcolm Ralph and Carol McGeoch - Churchwardens

### **Village Spring Clean**

The date for the village Spring Clean is now 1st May. There are several requirements from Council's new insurers which will have to be complied with, and the Clerk will send these to the organisers before the date. The Risk Assessment will also be checked.

### **Website and Defibrillator:**

Information will be reported in full at the next meeting.

### **Bank Statement:**

The Chair screen shared the bank statement for to the end of March. The cheque for the village trees was presented and the balance in the current account at the end of the year stands at £5867-88. The Clerk reported that the first instalment of the precept - £2070-00, has been received.

### **Planning outcomes:**

Brickyard Farm:

Replacement dwelling - refused

28 High Street:

Certificate of lawfulness for a proposed detached outbuilding within the rear garden - refused

### **Remote meetings:**

The Clerk attended a workshop run by SLCC today and heard that the Government was reconsidering the continuation of remote meetings, after a great deal of concern from all areas of local government. The petition was being discussed on 21st April and the decision is likely to be announced by the end of April. Clerks attending the workshop were advised to make contingency plans for forthcoming meetings - Croydon has already moved the May meeting to 5th in order to hold it remotely. If the petition is successful, further meetings may continue to be held remotely.

### **SLCC Training:**

The Clerk reported that the workshop was intense, but well worthwhile attending. One of the trainers was in Somerset and another just off the M25. The M25 trainer reported that already before the training started she had dealt with live ammunition of the Chairman's drive (election year), HS2 protesters lying the road to stop the lorries and lorries dropping loads on the road. Her training was about her typical day and the difference between an emergency and a crisis! Thankfully here it is quite different! (so far).

The Chair thanked everyone for attending.

**Date of Next AGM:** Wednesday 20 April 2022 in the Reading Room at 7.30pm

**Date of ACM:** Wednesday 5 May 2021 at 7.30pm via Zoom

**Date of June Council meeting:** Wednesday 20 June 2021, possibly in the Reading Room.

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

As there was no further business, the meeting closed at 8.15pm

Signed .....

Date .....