

A meeting of Croydon Parish Council was held on Wednesday 13th December 2023 in the Reading Room at 7.30pm.

Apologies: Cllr S Kindersley - unavailable, Mrs Sole - work, Mr Wenman - unwell.

Present: Mr Barnes, Ms Newland, Mr Sole, Mr Wheeler, Mr Buchanan, the Clerk and eight members of public.

Minutes: Minutes of the November meeting previously circulated, were agreed and signed.

Declarations of Interest: Mr Sole - Reading Room trustee.

Matters Arising and Village Issues:

Community reports:

Litter pick signs: Mr Buchanan reported that he has not been in touch with the gentleman who provided the previous signs, but will arrange for two identical signs for the Parish Council, on behalf of the litter pickers.

Speeding and LHI: Clerk enquired about the possibility of the Parish Council purchasing a flashing speed sign without any data to prove its necessity. Clerk's contact at CCC Highways passed the enquiry to a gentleman who deals with LHI requests and he agreed to visit the site this afternoon, and his colleague was also able to attend. We walked from the Clerk's house to halfway round the bend on the entry into Croydon from Arrington. After a discussion he and his colleague have suggested the following:-

- the 30mph speed limit be extended to between the Arrington and Croydon village signs and before the rise in the road
- dragons' teeth to be painted onto the road on the approach to the village, at the Arrington end and at the Larkins Road end of the High Street
- the 30 roundel in the road outside Casa Mia to be repainted
- SLOW to be painted in the road approximately by the current triangular warning sign
- double-sided chevrons to be erected halfway around the first bend into the village
- replace any missing marker posts
- the road would be closed for these works to take place

In discussion afterwards, the officers asked if there would be any evidence that the village would be behind these alterations. The Clerk explained that setting up a Speedwatch group had been on the agenda since January 2019, and although several volunteers had come forward nothing had actually been achieved. She also mentioned the near misses for the residents living in the property on the Arrington side of the bend from speeding vehicles when trying to access their cars. These residents have also lost several cats on the bends to unsafe driving. At one point the High Street residents, fed up with speeding through the village, parked their cars alternately staggered, thus creating a Give Way gate situation, so that drivers had no option than to wait for any approaching vehicle.

The officers said the more evidence that could be added to the LHI would help with the scoring process. The Chairman asked both the Councillors and the public present whether they would like to proceed with the LHI application. The Parish Council will need to make a contribution to the work, should the application be successful - this could be in the region of 10% of the total cost. The vote was unanimously in favour, and Clerk was instructed to start the application process.

Councillors are not averse to the installation of a privately funded MVAS sign, but would like to think that the above measures, if implemented, would be sufficient to slow drivers down.

Lower Road - report from Highways/Police: Nothing heard from either organisation yet. Although there are currently temporary bumpy road signs in place, Council would like to have permanent signs on that section of the B1042. Nothing can be done until the two reports have been received.

Website issues - maintenance/annual contract: The Clerk has had discussions with her website colleague, and it was felt that it would be best to continue with ad hoc maintenance.

It was also suggested that the exact requirements for any problem needs to be listed, which would hopefully prevent some of the unexpected alterations that were made last time. Councillors were happy to consent to this.

SCDC Six free trees: The PCC has obtained permission to plant a further four trees in the new churchyard. One of the tree wardens has offered to take care of the remaining two hazel whips, until the new foraging hedge is incorporated into the churchyard, when the two hazels trees will be added to it.

Follow up information

Gmail address: The last Councillor has not reported that a gmail address is operational.

Gamlingay Division Councillors Report – South Cambridgeshire District Council & Cambridgeshire County Council – December 2023

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!

Corporate Peer Review of South Cambs District Council: This took place in the first week of November and the review results clearly state that the council is in a strong financial position and is a well-managed organisation with an enviable record of delivery - such as being the district with the highest number of visas issued under the Homes for Ukraine scheme. The 4 Day Week is helping the council to retain and recruit planners needed to respond to the Government's own vision for this area in terms of growth.

Best Value Notice and 4 Day Week Trial: South Cambridgeshire District Councillors have agreed the Council will answer up to 80 questions totalling 186 individual requests from Government every week, as the four-day week trial continues. This is a result of the minister at the time, Lee Rowley issuing the council with a Best Value Notice.

Notices of this type have been issued to three other local government bodies this year - but for concerns such as an unrealistic budget, significant governance weaknesses and major cultural problems. None of these apply to South Cambs which is in a strong financial position and is acknowledged to be well run and high performing.

A three-month trial of a four-day week for desk-based staff began in January this year as the Council tried to address critical recruitment and retention issues facing local government. These issues are particularly acute in South Cambridgeshire due to the strength of the local economy and high cost of living. Following independent analysis which showed performance was generally maintained, with nine areas showing substantial improvement on the previous year, that trial was extended until the end of March 2024 to assess recruitment and retention benefits over a longer term.

The Council has maintained its full opening hours, so they are at least the same as before the trial, and now stays open to the public later on Wednesdays.

The Best Value Notice requests the Council provides the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) with extensive data on a weekly basis for the next six months. This covers staffing, costs, service delivery, performance and resident feedback.

At an Extraordinary Council meeting last month councillors heard that staff turnover and staff sickness was down, and recruitment had seen clear benefits with almost 100 new staff joining the Council this year. The performance of services across the board during the trial was encouraging – including in the waste service, which has recently joined the trial and is seeing more than 99% of bins collected on-time every week. Thanks to the improvement in recruitment, the amount expected to be spent on agency staff cover this year is hundreds of thousands of pounds lower than it would otherwise have been. SCDC has received strong support from other local authorities across the political spectrum, including all five Suffolk district councils, Central Beds and SCDC's partner in Shared Services Cambridge City Council. At a recent Audit Committee the Council auditor, Ernst & Young, advised they had no concerns about the 4DW trial.

The Leader of SCDC, Bridget Smith, would be delighted to attend Parish or Public meetings to answer questions about the trial so please do take her up on this offer!

Parking Enforcement in South Cambs: New Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) powers in South Cambridgeshire will be given to Cambridgeshire County Council following

Parliamentary approval. Earlier this year an application was submitted to the Department for Transport (DfT) to enable Council Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) to issue Penalty Charge Notices for the majority of on-street offences such as parking on double or single yellow lines. Previously only the Police could do this.

Benefits are expected to include increased compliance with parking restrictions which in turn would improve traffic flow, road safety and lead to a reduction in obstructive and dangerous parking. It will also support economic growth in the district.

Following the decision by Government, the CPE scheme in South Cambridgeshire will officially come into effect on 19 December. To give people notice and a chance to find a more suitable parking place, information has now begun to be placed on vehicles that are parked in some areas where parking is in the greatest demand, such as commuting and shopping areas.

A Warning Notice will be issued to people who continue to park where there are restrictions throughout January - this looks like a parking ticket but there is no fine attached. Penalty Charge Notices will be issued from 1 February which will mean a fine of between £50 and £70, depending on the severity of the offence.

South Cambs Finances: The latest audit is being signed off at a time when the vast majority of councils are behind on the audit due to big problems with the capacity of the auditors we are required to use. The joint planning service (Cambridge City and South Cambs) is reporting that its spending is close to budget - whereas this time last year it was £250,000 over. We were assured that this was due entirely to the benefits of the 4 Day Week trial which has meant that we have recruited into a significant number of planning roles which had been notoriously difficult to fill and very expensive to use agency staff to fill.

Shared Prosperity Fund: South Cambs will receive over £1m from this government scheme to allocate as grants to business and community schemes. We are currently discussing how big these grants could be (probably up to £100k) and what sort of schemes we should be targeting.

Cambridge 2040: Cambridge 2040 is Michael Gove's vision for significant employment and housing growth in Greater Cambridge. There was not much in the autumn statement about it other than fairly modest sums of money for retrofitting water efficiency into existing houses and some money for enhanced planning services. We think we know that there is £3m to set up a Cambridge office to work up the scheme. There was mention of a possible Development Corporation but we have no reason to believe that this is definitely the route they are taking. They will obviously need to consider it as one of a number of delivery models but there are many reasons why it is not the best. There is a small amount of money over 2 years which will go to the joint planning service.

Oxford Cambridge Pan Regional Partnership Conference: The annual conference took place in Milton Keynes last month with over 250 delegates. The focus is on economic development and environmental enhancement across the region. Bridget leads on the environment and is determined that there will be a focus on large scale environmental schemes in the short rather than long term. These will include the development of the Forest of Marston Vale with the concept of a large scale community forest for the region.

South Cambs Hall: Like most local authorities South Cambs now encourages hybrid/home working which means that large offices are no longer needed in the way they were. We have therefore moved all of our staff onto the first floor of the Cambourne offices and are converting the ground floor as space for businesses and community groups to conduct their businesses and hold events. It is hoped that this will encourage new start-up new business as well as helping existing businesses through a programme of support events as well as networking. The new space will be open on 24th April 2024.

Could you be receiving benefits that you're not aware of?: South Cambridgeshire District Council is making a big push to raise awareness of benefits entitlement. It's estimated that around 25% of benefits go unclaimed. Here's an easy-to-use on-line Benefits Calculator: <https://entitledto.co.uk>

Old Shire Hall: The old HQ for the County Council was to have been converted into a hotel by property developers Brookgate. They have now withdrawn from the deal on financial grounds so work has re-started on finding a use for the building in Cambridge.

Childminding: Are you interested in working in a profession which would enable you to work in your own home and continue to care for your own children, whilst providing quality care for children of working parents? If so Registered Childminding may be the profession for you. To help with starting your childminding business the Government are currently offering a grant of £600 towards your set up costs. We hold regular information evenings about childminding which are free to attend. If you are interested in finding out more please e-mail childminding@cambridgeshire.gov.uk for more information or call 01223 714657.

Quality of Life Overview: The most recent Quality of Life research for the County shows that South Cambs residents have the highest mean happiness out of districts (7.43 v 7.25); that 86% of residents are concerned by Cost of Living increases (average 86%); 82% concerned by climate change (average 76%) and 48% concerned by investment and jobs (average 52%).

South Cambridgeshire has the highest levels of satisfaction with registration services (87% satisfied), waste management (85% satisfied) and street lighting (81% satisfied) compared to other districts; and the highest levels of dissatisfaction with road and pavement maintenance (84% dissatisfied), services for children with SEND (52% dissatisfied) and services for older or vulnerable people (43% dissatisfied) compared to other districts.

Flooding on the A1198: Since time immemorial there has been a continual flood at the junction of the A1198 and Flecks Lane in Shingay cum Wendy so it's great that the works to alleviate this have now completed - apologies for the disruption whilst the works were ongoing.

Road Repairs: Litlington Road in Steeple Morden will be surface dressed in 2024 as part of the Carriageway Improvements project; and Hay Street in Steeple Morden will have a Gripfibre Micro Asphalt treatment. (There are only 6 projects scheduled in the whole of South Cambs.)

Reporting helps fix our roads: Having completed repairs, protection, and renewal treatment on more than 163,000m² of footways across Cambridgeshire this financial year (the equivalent of 130 Olympic size swimming pools), the focus is now implementing our winter maintenance strategies to protect against the harsh weather conditions and keep the network safe and moving.

We carry out regular inspections of roads and footways in our network with our available budget, but issues may come up between inspections. If you spot an issue, you can report a highways fault quickly and easily online. Report non-emergency issues via the online system including flooding problems and water pooling on roads or pavements (e.g. overflowing drains and gullies, street light faults, potholes, traffic signal faults, overgrown vegetation (including hedges and grass), and information about roadworks.

Funding available for legacy projects: Highways England has launched a £2 million initiative to support communities around the A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet improvements scheme; to maximise the wider benefits of the A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet improvements for local communities, the environment, and the local economy. Grants are available for not-for-profit groups including schools, charities, community groups, and environment and heritage groups.

The two funds available for applicants are the Community Fund exclusively for local community groups and not-for-profit organisations across Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire near the A428 scheme providing small-scale investment (up to £15,000) for community initiatives; and the Social Value Fund available for not-for-profit organisations e.g. local authorities and schools and supporting development of initial ideas and concepts, match-fund initiatives and deliver medium-scale investment (from £15,000 to £200,000) to community assets.

Parents are being called on to foster Cambridgeshire teenagers: The Cambridgeshire Fostering Service is asking parents whose own children have flown the nest to consider fostering vulnerable young people. In Cambridgeshire, there are currently more than 400 young people aged 12-18 who, for reasons beyond their control, are unable to continue living with their birth families. These young people would benefit hugely from the invaluable experience of people who have raised teenagers and supported them on their journey to independence.

When you foster for the Cambridgeshire Fostering Service you will receive generous allowances and carer perks, an individualised training programme tailored to your needs, round-the-clock support, and a dedicated, skilled and experienced Supervising Social Worker. Visit the Cambridgeshire Fostering website or call 0800 052 0078.

Older Adults Social Inclusion Grants: Cambridgeshire County Council is opening up grant funding for services, clubs and activities that support older adults (over 65) with emerging care or support needs to be socially included in their community, more physically active and as independent as they can be and examples of grants include building-based services (day centres); community-based activities (providing opportunities for social interaction, such as lunch clubs, wellbeing walks, knit and natter groups); hospital discharge support (with a view to regaining independence) and some Community Transport funding.

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/council/communities/caretogether/older-adults-social-inclusion-grants>

Cam Vale Bus User Group meeting & 17 bus service Update: After local lobbying for the case, the Mayoral Combined Authority has agreed to keep the number 17 bus funded for another year. It has also recommended that ways of encouraging passenger uptake, including optimizing connections with the 26 bus connecting Royston to Cambridge, should be pursued.

Rugby Cement Charitable Foundation: Many good causes in and around Barrington have benefitted from grants from Rugby Cement over the years. The wider community can also apply. Feedback is currently that not many organisations are doing so - so if you are involved in a community project which could benefit (anything from a community lunch to building a hospice!) then please get in touch.

Your Councillors are always ready to help. Please do not hesitate to contact County Councillor Sebastian Kindersley on 01767 651982 or skindersley@hotmail.com or write to the Manor Barn, East Hatley, SG19 3JA District Councillor Bridget Smith (Gamlingay Ward, SCDC) is on 07729 836449 or Cllr.BridgetSmith@scams.gov.uk

Correspondence:

Electoral Register alterations: New Electoral Register received, which Councillors perused.

Highway Events: Nothing specific locally, mainly Christmas light switch-ons in towns

East-West Rail drop-in: Clerk attended this and as usual, nothing could be answered by the representatives present. Clerk did obtain maps of the current route of the southern approach to Cambridge, along with a nice glossy Route Update Report booklet of the reasons why the more expensive, intrusive and detrimental to the environment route was chosen.

From page 104 of the 152 page booklet:-

Approach to Cambridge Station

Following the feedback from the 2021 consultation, and through the ACP (Affordable Connections Project), we've carried out more work to reassess both the northern and southern approaches to Cambridge. Our analysis shows that both approaches are technically viable, and the northern approach has some merits. For example, it now has an estimated lower cost due to work we've done to optimise its design.

Our preference, however, remains a southern approach because it better achieves the benefits predicted through the Theory of Change by serving the Cambridge Biomedical Campus, which is an unparalleled centre for life sciences of global importance. As a result, the southern approach is more likely to unlock the constraints on the Cambridge economy, create jobs, attract investment and deliver growth in the national interest.

Cllr Lentell's report - SCDC extraordinary meeting: Councillors decided not to include this in the minutes, as it was felt to be too contentious.

Reading Room funding requests: Further to the November meeting, Councillors had resolved to give a grant, the amount to be decided at the December meeting. Mr Buchanan reported that he has spoken at length of the Chair of the Trustees and explained to Council some of the reasons why the funding has been requested. The new Lemon booking system offers a lot of functionality and avoids the Trustees having to chase unpaid accounts. One councillor thought the booking system was too complicated. Mr Wheeler would like to see some evidence of other pricing systems before Council makes a decision. Mr Buchanan has

found a broadband deal available for approximately half of the amount requested by BT. However, the Reading Room is in a contract with BT until May 2024, after which a change of provider could be made. Mr Buchanan will continue his dialogue with the Chair of Trustees to see if a mutually agreeable financial arrangement can be reached.

Rough Sleepers: Clerk had sent in Council's response to this, as requested by SCDC.

Any subsequent receipts:

SCDC: Cost of living grants available - the poster advertising this has been added to the village notice board.

Stay Well Grants: Small grants for individuals who are struggling to pay their fuel bills this winter are available from Cambridgeshire Community Foundation.

<https://www.cambscf.org.uk/funds/stay-well/> They can also be contacted by phone on 01223 410535.

SLCC - update on PC funding for places of worship: As part of the Lords Report Stage of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, the government made an amendment to the Local Government Act 1894 with the aim of clarifying that there is nothing to prevent local councils from funding churches and other places of worship. SLCC wrote to the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to seek clarification around what funding can be used for, whether it applies to town and community councils in Wales and if it applies to all faiths.

DLUHC responded reiterating that there is nothing in the 1894 Act prohibiting parish councils from funding the maintenance and upkeep of churches and other religious buildings should they wish to do so; that the new amendment clarifies that the Local Government Act 1894 does not affect the powers, duties or liabilities of parish councils in England under any other legislation; that it applies to England only; and that it does not limit funding to any SLCC with the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) has long campaigned for a change in this legislation. We interpret the amendment as confirming that parish councils can continue to use existing specific powers in respect of church property, but it remains less clear is whether it creates a power to fund any maintenance or improvement works relating to affairs of the church or an ecclesiastical charity. Neither is it clear if S137 of the 1972 Local Government Act can be used for such work.

CCC - Budget briefing: Cambridgeshire County Council has published its business and financial proposals for 2024-29, and these can be viewed at the following link - [Document.ashx \(cmis.uk.com\)](#).

An open discussion event will take place on 11th January 2024; details on how to attend can be found at:-

Cambridgeshire Matters - Business Plan and Budget Proposals for 2024/25 ([govdelivery.com](#))

Circulated to Councillors:

SCDC Parish weekly agendas/e-bulletin

Cambridgeshire Matters

Anthony Browne's weekly updates

NHS newsletter

GCP planning committee notification

CCC unpaid carers event

CPRE - Friends of the Cam

CPRE - drought update briefing

Finance

Bank statement: Balance in the current account at the end of November was £5625.06.

SLCC annual subs: Further to the resolution at the previous meeting, the Chairman proposed, and the councillors endorsed, the payment of £76-00 for the Clerk's annual subscription to the Society of Local Council Clerks, and a cheque for this amount was raised and signed.

Change of bank account category: Mr Barnes and the Clerk have spent some time on the phone with Barclays, trying to understand their procedures. It appears that the Community Account that Council has held for many years is not correct for a Parish Council and the

account is to be changed to a Local Authority account. Council has just been asked, for the third time, to supply details of the authorised persons on the Barclays account. The paperwork was prepared and the two signatories checked and signed as requested. Clerk will send it Signed For this time, in order to have proof of delivery. The appointed third signatory will hopefully complete the process required in order to sign cheques in the near future.

Bank mandates: On one of the recent telephone calls Barclays said that in order to speak to the Clerk without involving a signatory, a mandate to allow this to happen could be put into effect. However, in order to implement this, it will require a call from a signatory to action!

Precept: Clerk reminded Councillors that a spreadsheet with the finance for the year to date would be sent round in December, so that suggested amounts for when the precept is set in January could be determined. Please come to the January meeting with your ideas.

Barclays - confirmation of cheque signatories: Awaiting confirmation.

Planning

Proposal: T1 Cedar - Fell. Reason: Clay shrinkage subsidence to applicant's property
Site address: South House 34 High Street Croydon
Reference: 23/1438/TTPO

This application was withdrawn and replaced with:-

Reference: 23/1454/TTPO

Site address: South House 34 High Street Croydon Cambridgeshire

Proposal: T1 Cedar - Fell. Reason: Principal cause of clay shrinkage to Neighbouring Property Number 32 High Street (applicant's property).

After discussion, Council had no objections to the proposal.

Proposal: Construction of two grain stores

Site address: Manor Farm Croydon

Public Access links:

<https://applications.greatercambridgeplanning.org/online-applications/PLAN/23/04496/FUL>

<https://applications.greatercambridgeplanning.org/online-applications/PLAN/23/04497/FUL>

Council discussed the proposal and it was proposed by Ms Newland and seconded by Mr Buchanan that there should be no objections to the erection of the grain stores. One of the tree wardens asked if the response might include a suggestion that some large individual native trees could be planted somewhere on the farm, for biodiversity. Chairman stated that this could be included but it would only be a suggestion and does not form part of the planning process.

Items for next agenda: None put forward

Next meeting: Wednesday 17 January 2024 in the Reading Room at 7.30pm

As there was no further business the meeting closed at 8.25pm, after which festive nibbles and drinks were enjoyed by those present.

Signed Date