

A meeting of Croydon Parish Council meeting was held on Wednesday 16 July 2025 in the Reading Room at 7.30pm.

Apologies: Mr Wenman - unwell, Mrs Sole - away on business.

Present: Mr Barnes, Mr Buchanan, Ms Newland, Mr Sole, 4 members of public, Cllr Williams and the Clerk.

Minutes: of the June meeting were agreed and signed.

Declarations of Interest: None

Co-option: The clerk had sent both candidates the information regarding standing for co-option. Only one candidate attended the meeting. It was proposed by Mr Buchanan and seconded by Mr Barnes that Geoff Mason be co-opted to the vacancy on the Parish Council. All were in favour. Mr Mason took his place with the Council and signed the Declaration of Acceptance form. He will return his Members' Interests form within the 28 day period.

District Cllr Heather Williams' verbal report to the meeting:

Potholes: I have been reporting every pothole I find and hopefully, they will all be repaired eventually.

Four Day Week: Finally, the full Council will be getting a vote on 17 July whether to continue with the four day week, that has now been operating for several years. Many of the reports received are not giving a true picture of the results. Have the Key Performance Indicators improved? Again, difficult to judge as there was a change of software and change of process. A report only published on 15 July is expected to be voted on at the full Council meeting on 17 July. I have decided to read it through completely, however long it takes, before the meeting. The Residents' survey indicated that there is only 12% support for the Four Day week. There is a possibility that it could be stopped in the future. Officers are doing their best in a difficult situation which is not of their making.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Williams for her report - there were no questions.

Matters Arising and Village Issues

Community reports: The Strolling Fayre on 13 July was a great success and in excess £1500 was raised. This will be split between the church and the Reading Room. Thank you to everyone who organised, donated to, worked on the day, attended the event and cleared up.

Conservation Project: The volunteers are having their best year yet. With the addition of the mower, and the strimmer which Council donated, the ground work is complete and beginning to pay off with lots of different flowers visible in the new churchyard. Well done to all involved in this. The volunteers are working their way towards a silver award, having already attained a bronze award.

Archives: The last items for archiving are being scanned by a volunteer and will be returned in due course. When the clerk has amalgamated all the papers, these will be taken to Ely to be stored.

PROW Hierarchy survey: Several villagers who are interested in local footpaths have been assisting with this, and feel that the grading given to Croydon's footpaths is inadequate. All except one of the footpaths have been graded D, the least of the grades for maintenance by CCC. The footpath graded C is the Clopton Way, which is an ancient track and needs preservation. It was suggested this should be moved to a B grade at least. All the other footpaths should be raised to C as a minimum, as they are needed to avoid walking on dangerous roads. When the information for the survey has been sent to the clerk, she will complete the survey and send it in.

Footpath Maps: Whilst sorting the papers for archive, the clerk discovered an original map and wrapper from when these were first printed. This was on A3 size paper in colour, and Mrs Sole has offered to make some copies from the pdf files the clerk sent her. As Mrs Sole was unable to attend the meeting last night, it is not known how she is getting on with this.

Defibrillator: One of the long-standing volunteers is unable to continue with monitoring the equipment, so a replacement is needed. The monitoring is once a week and if there is a problem then the clerk is notified. Volunteers can also give the kiosk an occasional clean too. Mr Buchanan volunteered to fill the vacancy, and Mr Sole would also be prepared to cover it.

Appointment of a new clerk - update: The potential clerk will be attending the August meeting and meeting with the councillors. Following this, various decisions need to be made, possibly regarding an appointment etc.

Local Highway Improvements Panel: The clerk had intended to present this to the Panel for council, but due to unforeseen circumstances was unable to do so. The Highway Officers read out the 500 word bid, which clerk had sent to them. It is now a case of wait and see.

Public Survey - Government Reorganisation: The information on this was received the day after the last meeting. The deadline to return the survey is 20 July. It was suggested on the survey that the questionnaire was completed during a meeting, but the Chairman decided against this. One of the councillors offered to scan the questionnaire in and send it to others for completion, for return to the clerk before 20 July

Generic Email Address: It was decided at the meeting in June that council would move to a gov.uk email address, the preferred option being "@croydonparishcouncil.gov.uk".

CAPALC membership: This was declined originally, but does give access to many documents not available elsewhere. The cheapest membership available for Croydon in March 2025 was in the region of £180-00, but if Data Protection were required, it would be another £50-00. It was proposed by Mr Sole and seconded by Mr Mason, that council would join CAPALC. All in favour.

Parish, community and local projects, initiatives, activities and points of contact: The Chairman thought it would be a good idea if all the organisations currently operating in the village were listed, with a point of contact for each one. This would be very useful for people who are moving into the village, and probably others living locally. He volunteered to try and compile something in time for the next meeting.

District Councillor's Report for The Mordens Ward SCDC - July and August 2025

4-day week made permanent at the council

On Thursday 17 July, the Lib Dem administration voted to make the council a permanent 4-day week employer. This means residents will be paying 37 hours for 32 hours work each week, every week.

I voted against making the 4-day week permanent. Since the very beginning back when the idea was first raised by the Lib Dem Cabinet in 2022, I have consistently opposed the 4-day week as I do not think it is fair or right that residents working hard 5 days a week are being forced to pay for council staff to have a fully paid day off every week. In the context of rising council tax and rents, this has become increasingly unacceptable, as I do not believe it is right that residents are paying the council more - but getting less.

The reports considered by councillors were clear. Resident satisfaction with council services was down across the board since the 4-day week trial began, and just 12% of businesses expressed support for the trial. We now know that over 150 process changes, such as automating services and cutting down on meetings, have been implemented by the council during the trial, reinforcing the report's own admission that "the analysis cannot prove that 4-day week working was the direct cause" of any performance changes. Given that the council has employed 97 more staff during the 4-day week - a 15% increase - when staff have reduced their hours by 13.5%, I remain unconvinced that any performance changes should be attributed to the 4-day week alone.

I have scrutinised the administration's proclaimed savings from the 4-day week trial since the beginning. As a result of our recent information request, we now know that the council has spent more money on agency staff during the 4-day week than before the trial began. I also raised the fact that costs such as the national introduction of weekly food waste collections - which will require two extra bin lorries and crews as a result of the 4-day week - were not included in the costings. Consequently, I am not convinced that the proclaimed £400,000 saving is accurate at all.

Furthermore, the reports clearly showed that 1 in 3 staff are still having to work over 4 days a week in order to get their work done - proof that the 4-day week does not work. Motivation has declined since its peak, as shown in the staff wellbeing survey, implying that burnout is setting in and people cannot sustain such intense working to fit their work into 4 days a week.

Although the administration has decided to make this permanent - despite 77% of residents and 88% of businesses not supporting it - I will continue to fight against this shocking waste of taxpayers' money.

Update to council's 2024/25 accounts

It was pleasing to see the council approve its 2024/25 accounts after several frustrating years of audit delays. Some of the previous years will now not be audited as it is deemed unrealistic that the council can catch up. There is an audit plan now in place for the 2024/25 accounts and I hope this will see us begin to report in a more meaningful way. It's really important that councillors are able to scrutinise and ask questions about up to date accounts and audits to clarify how the council is spending taxpayers' money and to ensure that council services are appropriately resourced.

In scrutinising the accounts document on the council's Audit and Corporate Governance Committee, I also requested additional commentary to ensure the document contains clear explanations of any large variances in the figures. I am grateful for the hard work of the finance department at the council for getting us back up to date.

Local Government Reorganisation update

At the most recent full council meeting in July, the administration stated that its preferred option for our area regarding Local Government Reorganisation was a Greater Cambridgeshire unitary, consisting of Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire.

I am disappointed that the administration declared its position before the public consultation on Local Government Reorganisation closed. In my view, this risks ignoring the results of the public consultation - which I believe is very important as it is essential that we listen to our residents on a matter of this magnitude. This process will change the way residents interact with their council across England for decades to come. Therefore, I believe it is inappropriate to state a position before finding out what residents have to say about it.

In response to this at the meeting, I expressed my concerns that a Greater Cambridgeshire unitary may simply become an urban extension of Cambridge City - drowning out the concerns of residents living in rural South Cambridgeshire. It is for this reason that I believe future unitary authorities should have a better balance between urban and rural populations to ensure all voices can be heard. Additionally, I raised concerns about the quality of representation for residents. If the new authorities are as large as the government is planning, councillors will have huge geographical areas to cover and a very large number of residents to represent, changing the relationship between residents and their councillor. On this point, I am concerned that this could become a barrier for working people to be a councillor alongside their job.

I supported the council's move to consider the three remaining proposals for the future of local government in our area because I believe it is important to see the business cases and the public consultation responses first, and then use this information to decide which arrangement will be best for residents. However, I do not support the administration's premature decision to declare a preferred way forwards before we have seen all this information.

Motion to consider equestrian needs and to encourage rural exception sites

I was pleased that all councillors voted in support of my motion to recognise the valuable economic and social contribution of equestrianism to our rural district, and to therefore ensure that the needs of equestrians are considered alongside other non-motorised transport users, such as cyclists or pedestrians.

I have become increasingly aware that the needs of equestrians are not always met in new active travel schemes, but it is important to ensure things like bridleways remain within our district's rural character and are not subject to urban sprawl. Connecting the bridleway network by ensuring that shared pathways are inclusive of equestrians is also vital for highway safety, preventing horses from being sandwiched between cyclists and vehicles on busy roads.

I was also pleased that all councillors supported our motion to ensure the council takes every opportunity to defend including rural exception sites in future planning legislation. Rural exception sites play a vital role in ensuring affordable housing is available for local people on the edge of villages to ensure residents can live within their communities. I will be writing to the Minister of State for Housing and Planning jointly with the Leader of the Council to impress the importance of rural exception sites in our district.

New England Farm update

Here is the update that I have received from officers regarding the New England Farm planning application in Tadlow:

With regards to an update on the application 24/04320/FUL for Change of use from agriculture to residential, formation of landscape bund, the erection of five static caravans and hardstanding, at New England Farm, Tadlow. The application was withdrawn on 29th April 2025 following email from planning officers outlining concerns with the application and requesting further information. The applicant was notified that as this application was retrospective, resubmission including the details requested by officers would need to be received by 27th May 2025. No application was received within that timeframe and the compliance team were made aware. The latest update I have had regarding this application is that the case is on hold as the owner is appealing the Enforcement Notice.

Pothole Patrols

Many of you will have seen I am continuing to run regular pothole patrols in our area to ensure we get our roads fixed as soon as possible. Please do visit the reporting page on my website and follow the link to report potholes near you to the County Council, or please do get in touch and I can report it for you.

From my own reporting, I have already received countless emails confirming repairs will be done - so this is working. It has been great recently to see road repairs in places like Tadlow High Street, which has really made a difference to the residents living there. Together, we can work to get our roads fixed as I truly believe we in rural areas deserve as much investment in our roads as the City.

Apply for a grant from the Rural England Prosperity Fund

I am encouraging local businesses and communities to bid for funding from the Rural England Prosperity Fund, where over £350,000 is available for capital projects. Applicants can apply for up to £50,000 each, enabling micro to medium-sized businesses, social enterprises, sole traders, charities, farmers, rural community groups and higher or further education institutions to make a big local impact. Applications are open from 24 July 2025 until 24 August 2025. More information is available on the council's webpage. Please do get in touch if you have any questions or if I can be of any assistance.

Grants for community groups and parish councils

If you are from a local community group or parish council, I am encouraging you to make the most of the council's available grant schemes. The GrantGrabber service helps you search for available grants - all in one place. For further information on receiving a grant for a community project from the council, please visit the grants webpage.

Thank you for reading my report. If I can be of any assistance, please do get in touch. I wish everybody a lovely summer as I know many people are going away, but while council business may quieten down I will still be here to help with any matters.

Cllr Heather Williams

SCDC The Mordens Ward

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Correspondence

Electoral Register: This was circulated to councillors - three additions.

PKF Littlejohn: In line with the AGAR regulations, the clerk has sent the Exemption Certificate to the external auditor, and an acknowledgement has been received. All financial information is on the website, and as much as possible is on the notice board.

Planning Application Process: "Following on from feedback from the recent electronic survey, it was mentioned in the feedback that the planning application process was not easy to follow. We are developing a dedicated area on the website for parish councils, but as the interim, please see attached a PPT on the application process, along with other hopefully useful information. We hope you will find the information helpful. If you have any comments on the attached, please contact:

Rebecca.smith@greatercambridgeplanning.org"

Council received the above email, along with a 19 page document to help understand the planning process.

Cambridge Approaches - News update: The clerk had scanned the update and discovered that the Government has just allocated £2.5 billion to the scheme. However, this amount is not sufficient to build 4 new stations and upgrade two others, and the line does not serve Cambourne!

The full report can be seen here: - [News Update June 2025](#).

Highways Maintenance report: "Cambridgeshire County Council has responded to a request by the Department for Transport (DfT) for local highway authorities to produce detailed transparency reports on maintenance activities to secure additional funding. Under the new requirements, 25% of the £500 million additional maintenance funding from Government for 2025-26 is contingent on authorities publishing reports by the end of June 2025 demonstrating compliance with best practice criteria. The

reports must detail five-year maintenance spending comparisons, network condition statistics, pothole repair estimates, and planned maintenance activities."

The figures are not being reproduced here, but details of the report can be found at:-

- Cambridgeshire County Council's report and more information can be found here:
<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/highways-transparency>
- Department for Transport: [Highway maintenance funding: guidance for local authorities - GOV.UK](#)

Local Wellbeing Support: This charity contacted Croydon PC as they do not get many referrals from this area. Their offer for support is outlined below:-

Would You or Someone You Know Benefit From Wellbeing Support?

Care Network Cambridgeshire's Wellbeing Service offers free, short-term support for adults (18+) in South Cambs who may be struggling with confidence, isolation, illness, or low mood. Our friendly team can provide one-to-one support and match individuals with trained volunteers who can offer companionship through phone calls or accompanying them to access the community. Support is tailored over 6-8 sessions, helping people regain independence and feel more connected.

If you or someone you know could benefit, making a referral is easy - just visit care-network.org.uk/wellbeing or contact us at wellbeing@care-network.org.uk or 0330 094 5750.

Circulated to Councillors:-

Water Resources update
CPRE Trustee - selection
Cambridgeshire Matters
TMC Road works and events
CCC Planned Maintenance Report system update
ACRE newsletter
ACRE campaigns
Clerks E bulletin
Way 2 go - road safety
Waterbeach Waste Education Newsletter
ICS newsletter
Combined Authorities newsletter

Any subsequent receipts

Downing College: The clerk received, via the village website contact form, information from the Head Gardener at Downing College regarding tours of the grounds and a cream tea.

The information is reproduced below:-

Hi, I am the Head Gardener of Downing College and live locally. At Downing we are now hosting gardening events like Garden Tours with cream teams. It would be great if you could share with the local residents as I know our founder of the college had a lot of connections and history with the local area.

<https://www.dow.cam.ac.uk/garden-days> Please email me if you would like any more information.

Many thanks, Jack

Finance

Bank statement: The current account balance at the end of June was £10546-59.

NSI signatories: Following the return of the new signatories form, a further form was received, which has again been completed and will be returned with a letter from Council, which was requested by N S and I.

Items for next agenda:

Gary from ACRE re: affordable housing
Artificial grass at the war memorial

Next meeting: Wednesday 20 August 2025 in the Reading Room at 7.30pm

As there was no further business the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and declared the meeting closed at 8.47pm.

Signed

Date