

**SWAFFHAM PRIOR ANNUAL VILLAGE ASSEMBLY
MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 23rd May 2012**

Present: Mr John Covill in the Chair with 5 Parish Councillors and 10 members of the Public attending.

Apologies: Parish Councillor Steve Kent-Phillips

In Attendance: Karen King (Clerk).
CCC – Cllr David Brown
ECDC – Cllr Allen Alderson

Chairman John Covill welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Approval of Minutes from Meeting – 23rd May 2012: These were approved as a correct record. *Proposed: Geoffrey Woollard. Seconded: David Greenfield. Agreed by everyone present.*

Parish Council Report: (*Chairman John Covill reported to the meeting:*)

- The last year has been relatively uneventful which may not be a bad thing for most of us but does not give me much to talk about.
- After last year's presentation by Katie Child on housing needs etc. we had a draft questionnaire shown to us - most of the members were not very happy with this as the questions seemed to be looking for answers that ECDC wanted and others had been slipped into the middle asking about non parish business.
- After some further discussion a far more satisfactory version was agreed showing that it was worth arguing our case. The councillors then split the forms between them to drop through the villagers' doors. We got one of the highest responses in the area which was gratifying for us.
- The need for affordable housing was identified and indeed I believe there will be a presentation relating to this later this evening.
- It was sad to see the demise of the Depot Road recycling site in its old form as many in the area found it very useful.
- One of the main items concern was the report of chemical smells in the drains on Green Head road we helped those affected to contact the correct authorities and after some time the business was moved. We like to support local businesses as long as they are in an appropriate location for their activities.
- We made an attempt to use new powers given to Parish Councils to get speed limits altered to get the limit on Mill Hill reduced to 30 MPH. However as with most of these new powers there comes a considerable cost and risk of having to go to an inquiry with another £ 10K of costs that made it an unviable proposition.
- We have supported the school in having the fence bordering the V.H. improved so that it complies with the latest safety standards.
- An issue that will affect the village in the future possibly 3 years time will be the replacement of some of the lamp posts with a new design. I believe that one has already been installed due to the old one failing.
- There are now 3 tenants on the allotments on the other side of the bypass one of whom keeps bees.
- We have supported the attempt to get the little chapel in the fen put onto a list of architecturally important buildings as it failed to become a listed building.
- There are moves to set up a system of transport for older people. I understand that Janet Wilmot has kindly offered to liaise with Helen Randall from ECDC to get this set up.
- A note from a meeting of the Parochial Charities they are intending to have the chestnut tree on Town Close the play area felled as it is rotten and likely to become a danger to children playing under it or indeed trying to get conkers off it. A good sized sweet chestnut will be planted to replace it, this should also be disease resistant.
- Most of you will notice that resurfacing is taking place on Station Road the footpath should also be resurfaced though not all the way to the bridge I am afraid.
- The Pound is looking in need of some tidying and we are hoping to get this done soon.
- High speed broadband is being promised to some areas of Cambridgeshire by 2015 I believe there is a site set up so that you can register an interest so that it can be justified to the government. I hope that this will not make the commit to buy button on Ebay even more accessible.

There were no questions for the Chairman.

Parish Council – Financial Report:

Copies of the Parish Council's unaudited accounts were available for information. *There were no questions.*

County Councillor's Annual Report: (*Cllr David Brown reported to the meeting.*)

For me personally, 2011-12 at the County Council has been a very interesting and rewarding year. The year started with Cllr Nick Clarke, the new Leader of CCC offering me the role of Cabinet Member for Children and Young People. This is a role (and challenge) I was delighted to take on and have thoroughly enjoyed throughout the year. Any role

with responsibility for Children's Social care is bound to ring challenges and there have certainly been plenty of those. 2011-12 has seen the County Council introduce a total restructure of how we work in Children's Social Care. This has taken considerable time, effort and resource but I am pleased to say that initial feedback from staff and partners has been extremely positive.

As a member of Cabinet, wrestling with the Integrated Plan for the next 4 years has taken up considerable time. Cambridgeshire faces significant demographic challenges as a rapidly growing County. The County Council is keen to position Cambridgeshire to take best advantage once the economy improves. This means investing in areas such as superfast broadband, roads and footpaths, and new infrastructure to deal with the bottleneck caused by the Ely Level Crossing junction. At the same time we are addressing pressures on school places and rising demand on services for vulnerable adults and children in the County. All this at a time of severe pressure on public finances, which means we need to continue to deliver savings across the Council. This necessitated a rise in Council Tax of 2.95% but as a Cabinet we believe our budget will deliver for the benefit of the people of Cambridgeshire.

Locally I have been involved in a number of issues on behalf of residents, both as a group and as individuals. Work continues on the Burwell Masterplan, where I represent the County Council on the Working Party. We have seen numerous improvements to roads, footpaths and drop kerbs in my area, and work is scheduled to start on more soon. The South Neighbourhood Panel has met frequently, with problems associated with speeding cars and anti-social driving at Bottisham Village College recurring themes. I have also intervened on behalf of a number of individuals experiencing problems, such as housing, bullying at school, problems with neighbours.

There have also been some truly memorable moments on the less formal side. The County Council holds the operating licence for the Duke of Edinburgh Awards and I had the privilege of being presented with our licence by HRH Prince Philip at St James' Palace. I also presented awards at a number of events, including to foster parents and carers, to Children in the care of the County Council and to school Governors.

Questions:

John Covill asked if the better Broadband would include smaller areas. Cllr Brown replied that he was trying to get this speeded up.

Geoffrey Woollard asked for the latest on volunteer fire service, e.g., Swaffham Bulbeck lost or Burwell lost or the two combined? Cllr Brown replied that he did not have the figures with him but the Fire Service was actively trying to recruit volunteers and had a proposed business plan for the future. GW asked Cllr Brown to support the retention of both fire services.

District Councillor's Annual Report: (Cllr Alderson reported to the meeting).

Council Tax 2012/13: Council tax increased by 2.95% this year. Relates to £3.99 per year on a band D property, 7.67p per week. Accepting the Governments freeze grant again this year would most probably result in a budget gap of £273,000 by 2014/15, equivalent to an estimated 6.7% increase on a band D property. We are trying to set a balanced budget for the next 3 years. Also told to expect a nearly £1million increase in the new waste contract in 2015.

Newmarket Recycling Centre: Many residents from the District use this facility. When it closed for several weeks, then re-opened under new management with a charging schedule for some items, there was concern that it would lead to an increase in fly-tipping in the area. Thankfully so far this has not happened.

Unauthorised Traveller encampments: There has been none of note in the Ward during the last year.

The Swaffham Bulbeck Youth Bus: This is on the Denny every Tuesday. Following a visit I was pleased to see it was very well run. In good daylight evenings it shares the facilities of the Sports Pavilion.

Tourism: The 'Visit Ely' website proving to be a valuable information tool for anybody intending to visit Ely. Ely's market continues to be popular with all pitches taken.

Housing: The average property cost in the District is £197,212 according to 2009 Land Registry figures. The District's housing list register stands at 1446. The 2011-31 additional affordable homes plan shows a need for 264 homes per annum.

Last year there were 65 completions in the District, of which 18 were under the Government's 'first buy' shared equity scheme.

An element of affordable housing is generally provided on open market housing sites that are built by developers - 30% north of district, 40% south of district - through Section 106 agreements.

Other affordable housing schemes are also brought forward by Housing Associations and Charitable Institutions generally on what are termed exception sites.

Ely Rail Crossing: The A142 through Ely carries 15,000 vehicles per day including 1200 HGV's, leading to long queues at the level crossing near the Station as the existing underpass has a height restriction.

It is proposed to build a new by-pass from the A142 that will cross the river and railway line and join up with Angel Drove. In a consultation 80% of respondents chose this option, called the Southern Link Road. It is proposed to commence by 2015 following more information gathering and funding being available.

Council priorities for 2012-15:

- *Business Growth* - to ensure the commencement of the Southern Link Road by 2015. To meet with the District's top employers on an annual basis to support job creation.
- *Housing* - to implement a policy to prioritise people who work in the District for affordable housing.
- *Leisure* - to approve a model for leisure facilities across the District by 2013.

- *Waste* – to submit a bid for funding to DCLG by August 2012 to retain weekly collections of waste and enhance recycling rates.

Note of Committees and other bodies involved with.

Questions & comments:

Fly-tipping: Geoffrey Woollard thanked Cllr Alderson and Mr Mark Mehaffey for being particularly diligent and helpful in resolving the problems and asked that thanks be passed on to MM.

Housing: John Chalmers asked what is the definition of affordable housing? Cllr Alderson replied “*all housing is unaffordable but affordable is less unaffordable than most*”.

Cllr David Brown left the meeting at 8.05pm

Community Land Trusts-Affordable Houses for Local People (Land at Lower End): *(Adrian Dickens reported to the meeting):*

Adrian started by giving a brief summary of his personal background and a brief outline leading up to the current ownership of the field on Lower End explaining that he was concerned that the land would be bought by a land banking company that would sell it off in small parcels. As a consequence the land was bought by himself, Nigel Dickens and Sir Michael Marshall. Adrian noted that over time it became apparent through surveys carried out that there was a need for affordable housing.

To take this forward and ensure any affordable housing was kept for local people the forming of a Community Land Trust was put to the meeting. Further explanation provided as a written summary by Emma Fletcher of Hill Residential, acting as adviser to the owners - copies provided:

The recent housing survey identified a need within the village for more affordable houses for local people. Furthermore, there was good local support for a small scale development of such houses on the land opposite Rogers Road, known locally as the "Dencora field". As a result, East Cambridgeshire District Council asked the landowners of the Dencora field to consider providing land to support such a scheme as part of their overall proposals. The landowners, who all live locally, are willing to support this in principle provided that any houses would be in keeping with the village and could be allocated preferentially to local people or people with strong local connections. Unfortunately, government policy for affordable homes operates on the basis of a national bidding system with points earned based on criteria such as homelessness and lack of employment. This would mean that anyone in the country could bid for an affordable home in Swaffham Prior and would be successful if they accrued enough points. However this drawback can be overcome to ensure that any new affordable houses can be preferentially allocated to local people through forming a body known as a Community Land Trust.

Community Land Trusts are non-profit, community-based organisations run by volunteers to control the allocation of low cost houses to ensure that they comply with the Founding Trust and are offered to local villagers preferentially so that they stay for use by local people in perpetuity.

Consequently, the landowners of the Dencora field are interested to explore whether the village would like to form a CLT, which would ideally consist of a few respected members of the local community. Consultations are still at an early stage but, should any affordable houses be built, the role of the CLT would include meeting in the village from time to time to put forward new tenants for any vacant affordable housing and to administer the trust.

Questions & comments:

- John Chalmers asked if there were any time restraints or pressure to have affordable housing? Adrian Dickens replied not specifically but momentum present now through surveys.
- Paul Latchford asked how many people would be needed to form a Community Land Trust. AD replied 3-5.
- Pat Cook asked what the 'local' boundaries would be. AD said this would need to be determined but perhaps Swaffham Prior and surrounding villages.
- John Covill asked for reassurance that the CLT would dictate the criteria. Cllr Alderson confirmed that the CLT would own the land and there would be no interference.
- Geoffrey Woollard asked to commend Adrian & Nigel Dickens and Sir Michael Marshall for buying the land. GW added that he would like to see more homes for local people especially young people from the villages.
- Cllr Alderson reiterated that managed by a Community Land Trust houses would stay within the community. AA also noted avenues of funding for a Community Land Trust, noting ECDC would be very supportive.

There followed general discussion on the merits of affordable housing and the setting up of a Community Land Trust. Everyone was asked if they were interested in volunteering to get involved with a Swaffham Prior Community Land Trust, to please contact Adrian Dickens and come along to a meeting on Tuesday 19 June at 7.30pm in the Village Hall.

The Chairman thanked Adrian & Nigel Dickens and Sir Michael Marshall for purchasing the land and their interest in the village.

Report for School: (*Roz Chalmers reported to the meeting*).

Roz referred to the excellent display of pictures, photo's and reports on the School's activities for everyone to see. Roz also told the meeting that a lot of money had been spent on the School with new windows installed and thanked the Parish Council for its contribution and help with the new boundary fencing.

Swaffham Prior Youth Club:

No report received.

Burwell Tigers Football Club: (*The Clerk read out a brief report*).

The 2011-12 season has seen the Tigers Football Club grow even bigger. There are now 15 teams of boys and girls playing football every weekend.

Our Swaffham Prior ground has been used this season by our Under 6's, 7's, 11's, 12's, 13's, 14's and 15's! So the pitches have had a lot of use. Without the ground at Swaffham Prior there is no way our club would have grown as it has. We have over 250 children playing for Tigers now so we see this as a success in itself. Add to that the fact that 4 teams reached Cup Finals – 2 were victorious, along with our under 15's who won their league we feel we are heading in the right direction.

This year we managed to expand and finish off the car parking area. We have spent money on the pitches but we could do with them being rolled on a regular basis so if anyone in the village knows of anyone who could help please let us know. If any other group in the village would like to use the field also please let us know.

Village Hall Management Committee: (*Mike Carrington reported*)

- Made more profit than last year despite bookings being slightly down.
- There are plans to completely refurbish the kitchen in the Summer.
- New web-based accounting system set up. Also new Village Hall website with quite a lot of business coming through this. The VHMC would like to promote more wedding party business.
- There was no Village Feast this year but the Autumn Show will be bigger and better than ever.

Copies of the VHMC accounts were available. There were no questions or comments.

Swaffham Prior Cub and Scouts: (*Tim Doe, Amanda Parton and Scout Troop members reported to the meeting*).

- Unfortunately the field had suffered 2 or 3 incidents of vandalism with tiles smashed on the shelter causing approximately £350 worth of damage. Repair works have been carried out.
- The toilet block at the field is virtually complete. Trees and hedges were planted but have suffered some damage from rabbits.
- A donation was received to buy a purpose-built kitchen container.
- Members now include 20 cubs, 20 scouts and 3 young leaders. Also the Beavers section started 18 months ago now has 16 members. There were great achievements with 4 Cubs getting their Queens Silver Award and 1 Cub managing to achieve every badge. Scouts took part in an 'Incident Hike' run by Cambridge University and won the event and received a shield.
- Two leaders are moving out of the area so recruitment of new people is very important and an advert will be put in the Crier.
- New leaders/helpers include Nathan Wrench, David Cane and Rachel Marsh.
- The group carried their first Remembrance Sunday Parade, marching from Town Close to the Church. This went very well. They also attended the St George's Day Parade.
- Everyone got involved with putting on a Gang Show and this was held at the Village Hall and went very well.
- Looking ahead, visit to Germany to be arranged. Putting on another Gang Show. Taking part in Remembrance Sunday Parade and attending various camps. There continues to be a need for a more permanent 'home'.

Tim finished by thanking everyone in the Village for their support and again asking for anyone wanting to get involved to contact him.

Questions & comments:

David Almond asked who ran the Youth Club and if this might be an option for the Scouts to use. There followed some discussion on the possible use of the Youth Club building and Tim explained that this had been suggested.

John Covill said that the Troop was a credit to the village and everyone involved should be congratulated for all their hard work. Everyone agreed.

Parochial Charities Accounts:

No report. Copies of accounts provided.

Open Question Time:

Pat Cook of the W.I. said that the daffodils planted around the village many years ago now needed topping up and asked if there were any young people in the village who could help with this. Roz Chalmers suggested this might be something the Scouts/Cubs/Beavers could help with.

John Chalmers told the meeting that a new lamp post had been installed outside his house that was higher than the old one causing it to shine directly into a bedroom window. There was some general discussion on the type of light used and Paul Latchford explained more about CCC's PFI project to make changes to the type of street lighting in the village as part of a rolling programme for all parishes. The Clerk said she would forward to JC a copy of the details. PL also confirmed that he would be attending a CCC meeting about these changes.

There was general discussion about the provision of better Broadband services. JC explained some of the difficulties of providing the Community Based Broadband, RaSPS noting one of the main problems as being financing. JC encouraged everyone to sign up for RaSPS.

Meeting closed at 9.30pm