

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of Fen Ditton Parish Council held on Tuesday, 20th May, 2014 at 7.30 p.m. in the church hall of St Mary the Virgin

Present:

Sixteen members of the public including five councillors; PCSO Coppard; District Councillor Robert Turner and Richard Moore, headteacher.

Chairman: Cllr Charles Jones, vice chairman

1. Apologies

Vince Farrar Laurice Sues

2. Minutes of the previous Annual Parish Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14th May, 2013 were approved

3. Councillor introductions

The Chairman welcomed the clerk who had commenced her employment in November 2013 and introduced Jenny Parr; Geoff Peel; Carolyn Jaiyeola; and Laurie Woolfenden

4. Chairman's Report

Cllr Jones reported that there had been a number of significant plans submitted by the County, City and District Councils including Chesterton Sidings, Marshalls WING development and the extension of the cycleway. Extensive responses had been made to all applications. There continue to be concerns regarding the traffic through Fen Ditton. The Council submitted a scheme for traffic management on High Ditch Road after consultation on the Council's web site.

The chairman reported that Fen Ditton Recreation Ground Trust had been wound up at the beginning of 2013

The Chairman thanked the previous clerk, Margaret Starkie for her four years of service to the village and all the volunteers who helped with the annual tidy ups.

5. Financial Report

Geoff Peel reported that the winding up of the Recreation Ground Trust had resulted in a savings in the insurance premium and that the balance left in the Trust had been transferred into the Parish Council bank account.

The Council had received £44697 s.106 from the Blue Lion development for Community facilities and public open space which could be used to pump prime a project such as development of the recreation ground facilities.

Increased costs included in the budget are due to an increase in the hours of the clerk some of which is offset by a contribution from Marshalls for the work on the WING development plans.

The agreed budget gives a favourable Band D council tax with other parishes

6. District Councillor's Report

Council leaders, businesses and the University of Cambridge have welcomed a Government announcement to back a City Deal which could unlock one £billion of investment for the Greater Cambridge area.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer announced at Parliament in his Budget statement today, Wednesday, a grant of up to £500 million through a "Gain Share" Deal.

The Deal aims to secure hundreds of millions of pounds of additional funding for investment in transport infrastructure to support high quality economic and housing growth over the coming decades.

It follows more than a year of negotiations with central Government by Cambridge City Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council, Cambridgeshire County Council, The University of Cambridge and the Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough Enterprise Partnership.

Members from all three Councils will consider the details of the proposed Deal.

In addition to funding for transport, the Deal would see the three councils (Cambridge City, South Cambridgeshire District and Cambridgeshire County Council) pooling some of their own separate funding and powers, and working even more closely than now. This would allow for the creation of a single strategic vision for the future of the area covered by Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire.

Partners were invited to negotiate a city deal in autumn 2012

Councillor Martin Curtis, Leader of Cambridgeshire County Council, said: "We welcome this news today and will now be looking carefully at the detail. But it could be a real game changer, moving the economy of Greater Cambridge and the wider County towards becoming a real economic powerhouse. The improvements will see a step change in transport infrastructure that will create jobs and boost the local economy. The success of this will also be felt outside the Cambridge area so all our communities benefit."

Councillor Tim Bick, Leader of Cambridge City Council, said: ""People trying to find a home and people spending an ever longer time in traffic are offered hope for the future with the result of this lengthy negotiation. Our otherwise stunningly successful local economy is in danger of being held back. This big extra infrastructure investment will speed the delivery of much needed housing developments outside the city and strengthen public transport and cycling options inside the city. The commitment by the three local councils for fully joined-up decision making over planning and transport policy enables real leadership for the area."

Councillor Ray Manning, Leader of South Cambridgeshire District Council, added: "We have worked really hard with our partners to negotiate a deal on the right terms for our communities, and the news today moves us a step closer to unlocking up to a billion pounds of investment. This funding could prove to be a vital piece of the jigsaw in delivering the roads and transport links needed to support thousands of new jobs being created, as well as much-needed high quality housing for the area."

Grahame Nix, Chief Executive of the Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough Enterprise Partnership, said: "We are pleased that the strong support that local businesses have shown for the Greater Cambridge City Deal has been recognised by Government. The City Deal will deliver real benefits for the local area, providing the support it needs to enable economic growth both now and in the future. The LEP looks forward to working with partners further to deliver these important improvements to infrastructure and housing."

Sir Leszek Borysiewicz, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, said: "This is great news for Cambridge. We look forward to working with our partners to deliver housing and transport improvements that will help us to innovate and sustain economic growth, while protecting the features that make Cambridge such an attractive place to work, study and live."

Plan for new jobs and homes to be submitted to Government

A plan to provide 22,000 new jobs and 19,000 much-needed new homes across South Cambridgeshire up until 2031 is to be submitted to the Government for independent examination.

Councillors voted to submit the plan to the Secretary of State – which would see a new town built north of Waterbeach, a new village at Bourn Airfield and a major extension to Cambourne – at South Cambridgeshire District Council's Full Council meeting today (Thursday 13 March). At the meeting, councillors heard how the range of opposing views submitted during three extensive rounds of public consultation had shown that it is not possible to prepare a plan that has complete consensus, but all comments had been taken into account to help prepare the best plan for the area as a whole.

The Council will submit the plan to Government around the end of March, and then the

Secretary of State will appoint an independent planning inspector to carry out an examination of it. This will include holding a series of public hearings, which are anticipated later this year. The plan also includes 900 homes built in six of the district's larger villages which have the best services and public transport links:

Comberton – 90 homes opposite the Village College

Gamlingay – jobs and 90 homes at Green End Industrial Estate

Histon & Impington – new gateway to the villages through revitalisation around the Busway stop and 25 homes in Impington Lane

Melbourn – 65 homes on land to rear of Victoria Way

Sawston – 200 homes on part of the Dales Manor Business Park, 80 homes between Dales Manor Business Park and Babraham Road, and 260 homes south of Babraham Road to the east of the village.

Willingham – 50 homes on land east of Rockmill End

Proposals to meet local people's housing needs requested by Great and Little Abington parish councils have also been put forward as part of the plan after public consultation in the villages gathered support.

The three small sites will include both market and affordable housing. A total of 47 homes in Great Abington would be built on Linton Road and on the corner of the High Street and Pampisford Road. Another six homes would be built at Bancroft Farm, Church Lane, Little Abington.

Councillors also agreed to include Graveley Parish Council's proposals for six homes on Toseland Road if the parish council confirms them later this month.

The 5,000 new homes proposed in the draft plan are in addition to 14,000 homes already committed to in locations mainly on the edge of Cambridge and at the new town of Northstowe.

During the public consultations over 37,000 comments were submitted. The 7,400 comments made in the latest round of consultation last year will be considered by the independent planning inspector who will decide whether the plan is sound and deliverable.

Cllr Pippa Corney, South Cambridgeshire District Council's cabinet member for planning policy and localism, said: "The consultations over the last two years have shown us that it is unrealistic to expect to prepare a plan that has complete consensus as we have received views on all sides of the debate. But this is a good plan which will mean that the new developments will have the services and facilities that they need as well as providing the best opportunity to provide high quality public transport links with Cambridge and the surrounding market towns. "Although an independent inspector will have the final say on whether the plan is sound, we have tried to listen to what everyone has said before agreeing what we believe is best for the area as a whole. We have had to make some tough choices, but what is clear is that housing is much-needed to support jobs being created here, and to provide homes and a good quality of life for children growing up in the district.

"It is good that so many people have had their say as the consultation as the responses we received will be provided to the inspector as part of the Local Plan we submit to Government. This will give the inspector the opportunity to assess independently all the arguments put forward."

Further information:

Larger strategic sites:

North of Waterbeach (new town) – 8,000-9,000 homes, 1,400 of which by 2031.

Bourn airfield new village – 3,500 homes, 1,700 of which by 2031.
Cambourne West – 1,200 homes, all by 2031.

Edge of Cambridge:

NIAB 3 site – not to increase the number of homes on the NIAB development but to make sure of a high quality development at an appropriate density

Near ARM, Fulbourn Road – a small area of employment land as an extension to Peterhouse Technology Park (along with 2 other small areas in City Council's area).

Cambridge Northern Fringe East/proposed Cambridge Science Park Station area – redevelopment following joint area action plan being developed (SCDC and City Council).

Cambridge Airport site:

Airport itself not planned for development during the plan period. Held in reserve for possible development after 2031 if it becomes available (SCDC and City Council).

Two parts of the original Cambridge East site coming forward as planned;

Marshall's Wing development north of Newmarket road – 1,200 homes (SCDC),
and

North of Cherry Hinton for 110 homes (along with land in City Council's area, for a total of 350 homes).

Smaller local sites:

Comberton: 90 homes opposite Comberton Village College which will deliver local benefits of a much needed football pitch and changing facilities and also community car parking that is also available as overspill parking for Comberton Village College

Gamlingay: jobs and 90 homes on a brown field site at Green End Industrial Estate

Histon & Impington: new gateway to the villages through revitalisation around the busway stop and 25 homes in Impington Lane

Melbourn : 65 homes on land to rear of Victoria Way

Sawston: 540 homes in total - 200 homes by redeveloping part of the Dales Manor Business Park, 80 homes between Dales Manor Business Park and Babraham Road, and 260 homes south of Babraham Road to the east of the village.

Willingham: 50 homes on land east of Rockmill End

Parish council led proposals:

Great and Little Abington Parish Councils: 53 homes on three small sites

Graveley Parish Council: six homes on Toseland Road

The sites listed are in addition to the 14,000 homes already committed to in locations such as the edge of Cambridge and the planned new town of Northstowe.

Budget agreed to meet tough savings target

Councillors have agreed a budget to meet tough savings targets following a third successive year of 25% cuts to grant funding from government.

South Cambridgeshire District Council approved the budget at a meeting of Full Council today (Thursday 27 February) with leading councillors presenting the report warning that there are no easy answers to meet the savings needed as all the low hanging fruit had already been picked.

Over the last four years around £5 million of efficiency savings have already been delivered by the Council and the latest reduction to funding from government now means further savings will be needed equivalent to over £20 for every band D home in the district.

Councillors approved absorbing almost 90% of the reduction in funding by finding savings of £300,000 in 2014/15 and another £790,000 in 2015/16 – equivalent to over £18 per average band D home. A proposed 1.99% increase in council tax was also agreed – equivalent to £2.40 a year for band D properties.

To minimise the impact of cuts to grant funding the Council is set to invest an initial £7 million pounds in a housing company which will generating an income to spend on Council services residents want and need.

The Council's five year business plan presented to councillors at the meeting showed that government grant funding is expected to be almost totally withdrawn before 2020 meaning a more commercial approach to generate income from investments will be vital to keeping services going.

To deliver the necessary savings in 2014/15 the Council has already agreed to redesign some of the blue bin collection rounds, along with moving to monthly green waste collections during the winter months. The changes will have minimal impact on residents as during the winter most people are not cutting their grass and data shows the amount of garden waste being collected halves.

To generate more income, changes to trade waste services provided by the Council are also proposed. This will help them be more competitive with private sector firms operating in the district as well as increase the amount of waste companies are recycling.

To deliver the savings needed over the last four years, the Council has already modernised IT systems for staff, which saved thousands of pounds, reduced senior management posts and brought the Council's contact service back in-house saving £250,000 per year.

Cllr Simon Edwards, South Cambridgeshire District Council's deputy leader and cabinet member for finance, said: "As we have already delivered around £5 million of efficiencies there are no easy answers for us to balance the budget. The continued major cuts to our government grant means we are having to make really difficult decisions now, but more importantly we are looking at least five years into the future as plans need to be in place for when our government grant is totally withdrawn. By making smart investments now, which will deliver year on year returns, we will make sure we are in as good a position as possible to minimise the impact of the cuts.

"There is no doubt this is a challenging period for all local authorities but we are absolutely committed to doing all we can to continue to provide the services people most need as well as maintaining the quality of life we all enjoy in South Cambridgeshire."

7. County Councillor's Report

Cambridgeshire Council Tax The county budget of over £750 million for 2014/15 involves huge savings of £38 million for this year over last and many services will need to be cut or reduced; even though the Council has already saved £128 million in the last three years. This is because the government has cut its funding to the council by 20.9 per cent (£29.9m) over the next two financial years nearly. In addition it has a huge debt of hundreds of millions of pounds which is costing the council £6 million a year in loan repayments, its aging population is adding £9

million worth of costs every year and inflation is adding another £11 million each year. . As a result it has had to increase council tax by 1.99 per cent to help protect frontline services. Cambridgeshire is one of the hardest hit authorities in the country and is also still one of the lowest funded for education in the UK whilst having the fastest growing population. This means the Council is seeing more and more demands on its services – especially for those who are the most vulnerable - as more people need them or are living longer and require more expensive care services. This follows savings of £42 million in 2012/2013, and £32 million in the last financial year (2013/2014).

The City Deal. The government has taken control of the City Deal and at £500 million its £200 million short of the amount the councils wanted for transport - so most of the money will go to support the big housing developments proposed along the A10 and A428. South Cambs, the City and Cambridgeshire wanted to use future taxation from Cambridge growth to borrow £700 million for roads, cycling and public transport projects. They got from the Chancellor a £500 million grant in three tranches over 15 years subject to strings that nobody understands fully yet. The first tranche of £100 million is further divided into £20 million slices in each of the next five years and it cannot be carried forward from one year to the next. This means the councils no longer have the risk of borrowing the money but the Treasury now has control of the purse strings. They also wanted the current government limit on debt to build affordable homes raised for Cambridge and South Cambs because of the reluctance of private housing developers to provide affordable housing. This was refused. The only wish the councils got was a promise of government money to support focusing training programmes on those skills needed by employers. As to affordable housing the county is thinking of offering its land and using university money. This has not been envisaged in the Local Plan and will mean it having to be reviewed in 2019. The City Deal does mention the development of exception sites for affordable housing, but this is already accounted for in the Local Plan.

Changes to the way the county is managed Next month a committee system replaces the cabinet style management which is not suited to there being no overall political control and will give all councillors the opportunity to take part in be responsible for the policy and management of the council. On the experience of other councils that have adopted the committee system it should introduce more transparency and not lead to additional costs.

Changes to Highway Maintenance The new council has dropped the current reactive approach to highway maintenance which has been found to be failing and expensive and will be returning to having a rolling maintenance programme. However, this cannot be done overnight. The current criteria for footpaths which is based on footfall which favours the city is also being reviewed.

8. **Crime Report**

PCSO Coppard reported that there had been forty seven crimes in Fen Ditton in the passed year and seven individuals caught. PCSO Coppard informed the meeting that he continues to note illegal parking in the village.

9. **Report from representative of Fen Ditton Primary School Report**

The Head reported that there had been rapid growth in numbers from 147 two years ago to 167 currently and it is anticipated that the numbers will rise to 175 in the next year. There are currently 6 classes and a number of new teachers. There had been structural improvements at the school with a new foyer to improve safety and refurbishment of classrooms. There continue to be issues of parking despite the installation of bollards. It is hoped that there will be more bollards in the future. A travel plan is being put together which will hopefully assist with dealing with the many issues. There continues to be a strong Parent Teacher Association

who continue to work hard for the school. The school has a choir which will be singing at Ely Cathedral before the end of the summer term.

10. Report from representative of St Mary the Virgin's Church

No report had been received.

11. Report on Recreation ground Report

Fen Ditton Recreation Ground Trust had been wound up at the beginning of 2013. The RoSPA inspection had been carried out. In time the play equipment would need replacing.

Thanks to Mark Easterfield the firework show continued to be a success. The recreation ground continues to be well used with a cricket team, a colts cricket team and two football teams.

12. Report on Highways and Transport

The problems of parking in High Ditch road are being considered by the Council who continue to try and find solutions that are a problem and/or reported to the Council by parishioners.

The plans for the A14 had been examined by the Council and comments regarding access to local roads from the A14 had been raised with the planners.

13. Report on Conservation

Tree Works - The Council considers all Tree Preservation Orders from SCDC because Fen Ditton is in a conservation area and therefore the PC will have to agree or reject applications to remove or prune trees. The Council has considered four TPOs during the past year. Alan Alderson, the Tree Warden, was informed and advised on some. None were deemed contentious and all were approved.

Village Tidies – Two village tidy-ups are held during each year, Spring and Autumn, and this year 70 bags of rubbish were collected including various discarded items such as damaged bicycles, hub caps, a tent, a scooter and various metal artefacts. Teams pick from the eastern end of High Ditch Road to the end of Green End including the meadows, and from the southern end of Ditton Lane to the A14 access on Horningsea Road, including Musgrave Way, Filly Lane and the eastern footpath to the Recreation ground. Picking is also done on the Recreation Ground and along Wadloes footpath.

The PC would like to say an enormous thank you to all the volunteers for their hard work and a very special thank you to Laurie and Mark Woolfenden for their organisation of these events and for providing very welcome and tasty refreshments for all. Residents who pick up litter as they go about their daily business were also thanked– litter continues to remain a problem but their efforts make an enormous difference.

Verges – The PC is currently exploring ways in which it can protect and enhance the verges within the village. Inconsiderate parking is causing damage to verges on Horningsea Rd, High Street and Church Street: the PC continues to seek a solution to this problem.

Planting on some verges within the village has been discussed at the recent PC meeting – the PC is awaiting clarification from CCC as to whether it needs a licence to do the planting.

Ditton Meadows – The owner of the illegally moored boat at Ditton Meadows was served with an eviction order – the unsightly vessel was finally removed by the Cam River Conservancy last week.

14. Report on Cemetery

Interments

There have been four interments in the last year and one double plot reserved.

Cemetery tidies

A group of volunteers meet twice yearly to tidy up the cemetery although they also frequently tend the plants, seed areas and keep the weeds down in between the "official" dates. We

usually hold the tidies in Spring and Autumn and at this year's Spring Tidy 18 volunteers helped remove the Sticky Weed along the boundaries, tidy up areas of the southern boundary and removed weeds from the area just inside the gate. As was decided last year, we also sowed grass seed in the area on the right, just inside the gate – this should help with our constant battle to keep the encroaching weeds at bay and will also allow for spring bulbs and primroses to continue to thrive there.

The tidy ups also give us the opportunity to assess the long term maintenance, planting, and development of our cemetery provision. A few ideas for enhancement of the cemetery are currently being explored and any changes agreed will be put to the PC for approval or otherwise.

The committee would like to say a very big thank you to all our volunteers for their hard work, with a special thank you to Laurie and Mark Woolfenden for arranging these events and for providing some very welcome and tasty refreshments!

Our volunteers strive to maintain space for future burial plots while encouraging wildlife – this seems to have been achieved by the number of butterflies, birds and bees populating this quiet corner of the village. Visitors and bereaved relatives often comment on how pleasant and well-kept the cemetery is.

If you are interested in volunteering or would like information on reservation of plots, please contact Sarah Smart, Parish Clerk.

15. Report on Planning

Eight planning applications had been considered during the year which was more than usual. In general applications are approved by South Cambridgeshire District Council. There has been a significant amount of consultation as a result of Marshalls WING application. A survey has been carried out into the needs for affordable housing on exception sites within the green belt. The response had been from sixty five houses out of three hundred which demonstrated a need of six to ten dwellings.

16. Report from representative of Elizabeth March Foundation

The Foundation awarded a grant of £100 to a young person from the village in 2013. The income from COIF shares was £98.54. A small balance has been built up which is available to help future applicants. Only the income may be used for grants. The valuation of COIF shares (£1,153.94 in 1994) is now £2,131.46 so the capital is steadily increasing. Applications are welcomed, which are treated in confidence, for small grants to help with training or further education purposes, including specialist equipment needed when starting work. To qualify for a grant the young person must be under 25, have lived in Fen Ditton for at least two years and have attended local schools.

17. Report from representative of Quy Fen Trust

During the year a payment supplement received from Natural England in respect of difficult sites ended on the 31st January 2013 upon completion of its five year period.

Local contractors (Chris Butler, Bill Watts, and Bernie Flack) continued the programme of fen maintenance, including weed wiping, topping, and hand-pulling of ragwort. We fight the ragwort and thistles every year, but we are not making much progress; the fen being a SSSI with very severe spraying restrictions.

Further work was planned to shore up another section of the cut this spring, and also plant some willows but the floods have delayed this until the summer.

Three large trees were planted at the Fen Ditton/Horningsea end of the fen, with a further three more due for next year. The trees were locally sourced through Barcham Trees.

Alan Taylor continued his excellent work as Fen Warden and has indicated that he would be

happy to continue the role.

The local PSCO John Coppard has been invaluable in his support particularly working to discourage unsavoury characters using the fen.

Four owl boxes (2 Little Owl and 2 Tawny Owl) were made by Graham Beckett from plans obtained from The Owl Trust and were put on site by Graham and Bill Watts.

The Fen Trustees agreed to put £200 into each of the village funds held on their behalf by the trust - the balances are £1227 Stow cum Quy, with £850 in both the accounts for Fen Ditton and Horningsea.

During the year a new trustee was welcomed – Martin Lester, who works for the National Trust at Wicken Fen, as the trust's environmental expert.

Fen Trustee Andy Clarke has agreed to construct a website on behalf of the trust and hopes to have it up and running by April.

18. Report from representative of Willy's Almshouse Charity

There is little to report and a much quieter year compared to the previous year with no tenant changes and little in the way of alarms or emergencies - the most serious incident being an occupant getting locked out of her Almshouse late at night due to a faulty lock.

Fortunately the village rallied round and the incident was dealt. Thanks to all who helped. There has not been that much excitement in Church Street since VE night.

There have been comments about the parlous state of the front fence of the Almshouses which consists of wire, plastic mesh and industrial piping..

Pre-war the Almshouses had some rather attractive iron railings of which we have a photograph and The Trustees are seeking listing building consent to reinstate these.

It is intended therefore to install these railings once funds are available and they will not only restore the Almshouses original appearance but enhance their curb appeal until well into the next century.

At the last meeting of the Trust it was resolved that roles of some Trustees needed to be redefined as they were at some variance with the trusts constitution.

Financial Report

In 2013 the trustees refurbished no.4 at a cost of £20,000 but received a 5k grant and a 10k interest free loan from The Almshouse Association so only had to find 5k from funds. The loan repayments are £1050 per year

The Trustees also contributed £ 2500 to the family of the tenant of no.8 to install a state of the art heating system.

All three almshouses have had substantial refits in recent years and are up to a modern standard.

19. Report from representative of Townlands Estate Charity

Townlands Estate Charity

Not a lot has changed since the last report. The Trust have a new tenant for the grazing who has more horses, but having other fields in the village the tenant moves them around so the field does not get over-grazed.

The Trustees have again agreed to the two rowing clubs having Osier Holt for the University and Town Bumps. These two events make up most of our income for the year.

The Trustees are looking into updating the stables at the end of Green End, but there is a problem with asbestos in them. South Cambridgeshire District Council have given permission to get rid of the asbestos free of charge, but the problem is getting someone to help remove it. This is being looked into but if anyone is prepared to help the Clerk should be contacted

Townlands Parochial Charity

Nothing at all has happened this year. No one has come forward who needs help financially. If anybody knows of anyone needing financial help where the statutory authorities cannot help, please get in touch with the Clerk or one of the Trustees

20. Any other business

It was noted that there is much going on in the surrounding area and that the Council will be working hard to maintain the village appearance and the community spirit.

Thanks were given to all who had attended.

The meeting ended at 9.00 p.m.

Chairman