

ELMSWELL PARISH COUNCIL

Parish Clerk's Report to the Ordinary Council Meeting 21st January 2019

- 1 I attended the latest SALC Clerk Information Workshop on 20th November along with 26 other Clerks where the formal sessions are usually overshadowed by the group discussions on matters of immediate import, in this case the forthcoming elections and the County-wide problems with an unresponsive and inadequate service from SCC Highways. Larger councils such as Elmswell have the choice to augment the lacklustre Highways service with regard to problems on our roads and pavements by undertaking work from our own budget. Smaller communities do not have that flexibility unless they precept for works which they have, as has Elmswell, already been 'paid for' by the community in their County Council precept. The long-awaited arrangement whereby Highways officially sanction minor works carried out by T&PC's is still in abeyance.
- 2 The Chairman and I met with John Pateman Gee, Area Planning Manager for Development Management Services at Babergh Mid Suffolk, on 22nd November. This was at his request as he seeks to assess the situation regarding Elmswell's aspirational Relief Road project in light of related development proposals. He was impressed with the progress that has been made in respect of professional input and the existence of costed engineering plans for a scheme. This will inform BMSDC's current negotiations with third parties where their proposals might be related to the identified route. I have since been in touch and it does seem that the meeting has allowed some positive progress.
- 3 As Council's delegated member of the Fox Bowls Club Management Committee, I attended the Club's AGM on 22nd November. It is clearly the case that the Club is now firmly established and, having taken over a less than ideal situation with regard to over-winter preparation of the green, the hard work of the members has managed to pull the playing surface round to a high standard. There is an extremely positive, outward-looking community spirit amongst the membership whose numbers are growing rapidly to allow at least 3 teams to be registered next season. This was demonstrated by the unanimous agreement of a grant from Club funds of £500.00 towards the village's Wesley project. From Council's point of view, the adoption of a community ownership basis for all of the capital items of equipment necessary for the maintenance and running of the facility has been painlessly effected and stands the community in good stead should there ever be a recurrence, however unlikely, of the incumbent Club wishing to summarily leave the village lock, stock and barrel.
- 4 I have suggested that Cllr Mrs Storey might consider various possible schemes for support from her Locality Budget. Consideration is, consequently, to be given to a couple of capital acquisitions at Blackbourne and towards part-funding the professional fees related to the Wesley project, all in the sum of some £4,275.00.
- 5 The Chairman and I have been in discussion with the Community Speed Watch volunteers who are keen to continue their regular forays with the speed gun, which has resulted in many Police interventions towards safety on our roads, but who were looking to give up responsibility for the management of the Speed Indicator Device which flashes speeds to drivers and can provide figures related to traffic speeds and density. Accordingly, it was agreed that this aspect of the continuing campaign to discourage speeding in the village should be taken on by the Village Warden, backed up by the Blackbourne Caretaker and administered from the Clerk's office.

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6 We are notified annually by SALC of the NALC publication of new pay scales for clerks and other employees. This was delayed for the 2018 / 19 year and was not a straightforward uplift across the board given the NJC (National Joint Council for Local Government Services) decision to reconfigure the spinal pay structure so as to accommodate the National Living Wage. Effectively, this skewed the rise in favour of lower-paid employees who received some 2% uplift as opposed to the general 1% rise further up the pay grades. The result is the back-dated payment of the increases from April 2018 as shown in Appendix B of the published monthly accounts (A4 pink sheet) and the accommodation of a further 1% across the board in the budget figures for 2019 /2020.

7 Wetherden PC called a meeting on 14th January to discuss the possibility of co-operative bids for CIL funding where appropriate. It was clear, from what the BMSDC officers in attendance said, that Community CIL might be better attracted for bids which are for facilities extending benefits beyond the host community. This will inform a meeting I have arranged with the relevant lead officer in relation to CIL funding for the Wesley project, given that several of the current Wesley user-groups draw membership from outside Elmswell.

8 There is a Stowmarket SNT Liaison meeting scheduled for 15th March at 10.00am in the Police Station at Violet Hill Road. I usually attend these meetings and will gladly share transport if any Councillor wishes to come along.

9 The new seat at Crown Mill now bears a plaque marking the co-operation between EPC and the Elmswell Gardening Club in funding its provision and installation. A photo-opportunity is arranged for Friday 25th January at 2.30 to which Councillors and Gardening Club members are invited to mark what has proved to be a popular move with a piece in the Elmswell Newsletter.

Peter Dow
20.01.2019