

ELMSWELL PARISH COUNCIL

Parish Clerk's Report to the Annual Council Meeting of 18th May 2020

- 1 Work resumed on the Wesley site on Monday. I have visited the site and it is fully & properly signed and marked-up for working with appropriate distancing. There have been difficulties surrounding the home-working / furloughing arrangements at the various agencies involved, but Cllr Pallett and I have chased and consulted towards being ready for the resumption and with particular reference to external works together with issues relating to the heating / hot water system. There can be no firm date for completion as yet given uncertainties in the materials supply chain but it seems unlikely that circumstance will allow any formal opening soon enough for the practical completion date to pose a problem.
- 2 The Railway Tavern is closed. We have met with the Tenant who has raised no consequential issues and who has welcomed the removal of the ivy from the main building as an immediate measure to prevent its further damaging the structure. The residual ivy is intertwined with wiring / guttering / roof structure and can best be removed as and when refurbishment is undertaken. The important aim, of stopping the growth continuing, is clearly achieved. I have had some minor roof repairs carried out on problems revealed by, or resulting from, the main works.
- 3 contractors have walked the main site with me and have site plans towards quoting for remediation / clearance works so that we can accurately define the boundaries and present an assessable view towards taking forward the stated aims of an affordable housing site and a refurbished pub premises linked in with the Wesley facility next door. Once cleared it is proposed that the main site will be fenced to prevent public access but with an area adjacent to the existing car park temporarily surfaced and retained to allow more parking which can service Wesley as and when needed.
- 3 Current circumstances have slowed the process of refining a proposed Contract for the extension works at Blackbourne. Discussions continue. Meanwhile, I have re-opened the MUGA, with suitable warning notices re distance, based on Government advice and best practice elsewhere but the play areas and youth shelter remain closed. The bowls green is, as elsewhere, now accessible to members and I am working with them towards a safe modus operandi. Their voluntary maintenance efforts, alongside those of the Cricket Club and of Cllr Burch on the tractor, have ensured that the green spaces and play areas have remained properly managed. The Caretaker and Village Warden are furloughed, but the latter, Kevin Knock, undertakes regular weekly litter-pick walks around the village on a voluntary basis. Use of the greenspace at Blackbourne grows by the day and seems by my observation to be sensible and compliant with advice. The exception being, inevitably, a small number of dog walkers to whom rules do not, apparently, apply and who seem to have no problem with the idea that young children and dog faeces should not mix. I am now leaving the car park open during the day and locking overnight if there are no cars remaining. The office remains open all weekday mornings and afternoons as necessary.
- 4 Through the Clerk's office, we continue to support the volunteers helping to sort out individual problems arising during lock-down. Grant aid is secured to allow the payment of purchases of essential items where personal circumstances mean that funds are temporarily unavailable. There have been 4 referrals from Mid Suffolk to the volunteers group and Government-backed food parcels have been provided as appropriate. Following guidelines and local good practice, the play areas and the youth shelter remain closed but the MUGA is reopened with signage requiring safe distancing.
- 5 The Council's Internal Auditor was asked to inspect the structure and processes of the BWMA as a separate exercise when attending to carry out this year's audit. Some minor recommendations regarding the Constitution document ensued and these will go forward to the Association's AGM. A random inspection of various random letting transactions through the whole process from a booking in the diary to payment validated by Bank Statement threw up no anomalies.

6 Various cyclical maintenance tasks at Blackbourne have been telescoped into a couple of weeks' work rather than spread over the summer as the dovetailing-in with bookings would normally allow. The attempted break-in to the Scouts' storage units in the grounds maintenance equipment compound next to the bowls green caused some £400.00 worth of damage. All repairs now effected resulting, incidentally, in an improved facility. The 2 youths apprehended at the scene have been invited to write a letter of apology. Agenda item 26.2 refers.

7 If any Councillor wishes to take further the suggestion that '30mph' stickers are made available to households in the village, do be in touch towards a Proposal to a future meeting. Agenda item 26.3 refers.

8 If any Councillor wishes to explore further the approach by an adjacent householder regarding the possible purchase of land at Blackbourne to allow garden expansion do, please, be in touch. Agenda item 26.1 refers.

9 Given the rather restrictive nature of the on-line meeting, it might be helpful to point out that I have had a Proposal from Cllr Barker that Cllr Pallett should be Chairman of Council for the coming year and a Proposal from Cllr Edmonds that Cllr Barker be Vice chairman of Council for the coming year. Other Councillors are available and other Proposals invited.

10 A reminder has gone to the other side's solicitor regarding the conveying of the land at Blackbourne which is proposed to be gifted to the community. There seems to be no problem other than the deleterious effect of, 'current circumstances.

11 I have received notice of a Panning Application ref. DC/20/01654 for the erection of a front porch extension & conversion of the garage to additional living accommodation at 18, Oxer Close. It will be noted under Any Other Planning Business at Agenda item 32. It would be helpful if Councillors could take a look on line prior to the meeting towards a consensus view on whether or not an Extraordinary Meeting would be justified to discuss the matter or, if there are concerns, whether these might be reflected within powers delegated by the meeting.

12 I have an Apology for Absence from Cllr Burch. The Zoom invitation will be triggered tomorrow, Monday morning and I shall open the meeting space at 6.40 pm to allow Councillors to be admitted for a prompt start at 7.00pm. Thus far the requests for an invitation other than Councillors & Ward members amount to 1 from the Council's Tree Warden.

Peter Dow
Clerk to the Council
17.05.2020