

## **ELMSWELL PARISH COUNCIL**

### **Parish Clerk's Report to the Ordinary Council Meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2020**

1 Councillors, BWMA members and some user groups have taken the opportunity to view Wesley on a number-limited pre-arranged tours which are now being offered to wider public access. Meanwhile, there remain several minor snagging issues which make slow progress under the all-pervading constraint of coronavirus. An official complaint is now accepted by BT who received the initial order for a 'phone line connection in July and have still not managed to do the job, hence no Wi-Fi which is a serious constraint. The coffee machine and ancillary kit will be commissioned this week and it is to be hoped that service can commence early in November, although the table tops (legs have arrived) and chairs are delayed and please see above for the reasoning. There has been a very good response to the advertisement in the Newsletter for coffee shop staff and Cllr Roots has agreed to lend her experience to the interview process.

2 The new rear access to the Tavern pub is now secured and gated. The smoking shelter has been replaced as part of the agreement to annexe some of the pub garden land for Wesley use.

3 Cllrs Pallett and Barker met on 25<sup>th</sup> September at Wesley with Jo Churchill MP together with, by video link, Arthur Charvonia, BMSDC Chief Executive Officer, and Cllr Suzie Morley, Leader of MSDC. The background to the development of the community facilities in Elmswell was detailed, stressing the community cohesion which allowed efforts to be concentrated towards far-reaching benefits together with details of the proposed way forward in terms of the Community Land Trust and a Community Benefit Society to realise the village's aspirations for affordable community homes and a community pub respectively. Written details with back-up documentation were promised and a draft document to this effect was before a meeting with myself and Cllr Pallett when we hosted officers from MSDC Community Development & Grants team on 12<sup>th</sup> October, touring both Blackbourne and Wesley with the aim of impressing upon grass-roots officers and relevant Team Leaders the considerable strides made by the community of Elmswell in preparing for the burgeoning population and the subsequent social pressures. This is thought to be good groundwork in seeking District-wide CIL monies in the very near future as the expansion of land at Blackbourne suggests an opportunity for further facilities improvement.

4 The Chamberlayne extension is ready for the roof cladding and there have been no major problems, with practical completion possibly some 3 weeks away. The electrical works have presented the opportunity to rationalise the existing office supply and to replace the forest of extension leads and Wi-Fi routers / junction boxes which currently dangle about the place with safer and more efficient hard-wiring back to source. The access to the roof voids has allowed the installation of a substantial cable directly from the main fuse board to the car park towards the stated intention of providing electric car charging points, this in conjunction with BMSDC and benefitting from their local tie-in with EO Charging of Stowmarket who are currently working on the installation at Wesley. The intention to improve the ventilation in the hall by providing electrically controlled roof lights has been snagged by the realisation that the existing sheet metal roof is likely to need replacing within a very few years and that, clearly, it would be ill-considered to install the new units in a fast deteriorating roof. I have made an approach to MSDC for a CIL grant from their general fund towards the works.

5 The refurbishment of the fenced play area at Blackbourne is complete and my thanks to Cllrs. Root and Schofield for their input in specifying 3 new pieces of kit. The entire cost of some £33k is covered by neighbourhood CIL grant. Thanks also to Mark Manning at Messrs Uniseed Engineering who, taking advantage of the opportunity that the main works presented, removed the slide in its entirety for some necessary specialist restoration to the stainless steel and refitted it, a substantial job and all at no cost.

6 I advise that Council changes its internal auditor every three years so as to avoid any tendency to overfamiliarity encouraging a less rigorous approach. Heelis & Lodge have provided an excellent service for the past two years and I would be happy to work with them for the 2020-2021 audit, as proposed as agenda item 17.

7 A recent break-in to one of the outside stores at Blackbourne caused little damage or loss but pointed up the need for better external CCTV coverage – the recent installation at Wesley points up the shortcomings of our existing system. I would suggest that, as and when we secure the funding for the Chamberlayne ventilation, we extend that project to cover the works which become the more pressing as use of the facilities is set to increase in line with our population.

Peter Dow  
Clerk to the Council  
18.10.2020