

## **ELMSWELL PARISH COUNCIL**

### **Parish Clerk's Report to the Ordinary Council Meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2021**

- 1 I have been approached by residents of Crown Mill seeking permission to hold a community picnic event on the land fronting Station Road. I have suggested that Councillors might be minded not to stand in the way of any public gathering on open space as long as the prevailing social distancing advice is followed.
- 2 Elmswell Community Enterprise (ECE) continues to make sound progress towards developing the Elmswell Tavern as a community pub. Their advice, following the process of advertising for Expressions of Interest from suitably qualified architects and interviewing short-listed candidates, has led to the Proposal to this meeting at agenda item 13. A structural survey has confirmed that the core building is sound with no problems precluding the planned extensions and a 3D survey has produced measured plans and elevations to facilitate the architectural planning process. Meanwhile a social media presence promoting the scheme is almost ready to go live and the first formal initiative towards public awareness will be a flyer in the July Elmswell Newsletter. The adviser seconded to the project from the Plunkett Foundation continues to advise on the all-important Share Issue which will be launched in September. Promotional initiatives building up to the share offer will include meet-and-greet sessions at the Co-op and presentations to local community groups, to local businesses and to external interested parties. Following discussion with the Cllrs Pallett and Barker who have considerable relevant experience in such matters, it has been suggested to ECE that the tenure of the pub premises might best be secured through a 99 year lease from EPC which will thus present a tangible asset to underpin the Share Issue and yet retain community ownership in perpetuity regardless of the fortunes of the commercial venture. This has found general favour with ECE members and will be developed as a way forward. Input from Councillors is invited prior to a firm public statement on the matter.
- 3 On 27<sup>th</sup> May, Cllr Pallett and I met with Richard Martin of BLI Consulting Engineers on site to discuss the way forward in remediating the damage caused and long term consequences of the incursion by Matthew Homes on to Council's land adjacent to their development site at White House Farm. A detailed viable alternative scheme using the existing ditch network has subsequently been worked-up by BLI and forwarded, via Council's solicitor, to the other side. Meanwhile all work on the offending swale has ceased.
- 4 In discussion with Council's internal auditor, the matter of succession planning inevitably arises given the fast changing profile of the responsibilities delegated, quite rightly, to the Clerk's office as a very active council pursues new initiatives and handles the increasing pressures on existing systems as the number of residents rises inexorably. The recent expansion of the office space has proved to be of real benefit and has, coincidentally, allowed for the service offered to remain safely available without hindrance during the pandemic constraints. Nevertheless, I suggest that Council must future-proof towards the inevitable need for an eventual change so that the posts involved are properly defined and attract suitably qualified and motivated individuals. Elmswell is now of a size where the last residual trace of the Clerk's post being filled by a willing volunteer – even in part – must be replaced by a thoroughly professional appointment. Our monthly agendas regularly

identify issues and initiatives which are at the top end of what might be expected of a Smaller local Authority and the relentless pressures of development suggest that this is inevitable and must be managed if we are to continue to serve our community in what is often considered by others to be an exemplary manner. Hence the Proposal at 18, based on advice from SALC who no longer offer the assessment service which we have used previously.

- 5 On 18<sup>th</sup> June I met with all 3 Ward Members, Cllr Roots and 3 representatives of the developer Endurance Estates under EPC's Pre-Application Protocol to discuss the recent representations to the BMSDC JLP consultation process (as circulated to Councillors) proposing modifications to include land at Eastern Way to be allocated for residential development of 170 houses and land for a primary school. Clearly, this informs any discussion, as currently on-going with SCC, regarding primary schooling provision in Elmswell / Woolpit, itself the subject of a meeting which I am imminently trying to arrange with all parties.  
The Examination of the Plan begins on 21<sup>st</sup> June when this Submission will be considered. If EPC is minded to support consideration of the concept it proposes, there is a chance that Inspector might waive the deadline for further representations, particularly in light of the recent decision to permit the development at School Road which effectively stifles all practical possibilities of a Relief Road which changes the dynamics of the proposals in the draft JLP for development north of the railway crossing, one of which relied upon the Relief Road as part of its supporting case.  
Agenda item 16 refers and is inextricably linked. Given the timescales involved ( we had to beg an extension to the consultation period for the Elmswell primary school site proposal deadline) it might be appropriate to delegate to Clerk, Chairman and Cllrs Roots & Shaw to take forward the general view which emerges from that discussion?
- 6 I have circulated recent correspondence regarding the summary withdrawal of the paper bank service throughout Mid Suffolk. With Council's support, I shall continue to press for a resumption ASAP and on contractual terms which remove the possibility of such a drastic shortcoming in the future.
- 7 Correspondence to the Meeting includes that concerning the suggestion from a resident in the new development at Wetherden Road for road safety signage on one of the estate roads warning of children at play. SCC clearly state that they have no budget and there is a suggestion that T&PC's might step in. Experience suggests that this might not be advisable as it potentially opens the flood gates to similar suggestions which would then have to be assessed and, in a very local context, might be difficult to refuse. There are difficulties regarding the installation of signage on the highway which must, technically, be carried out by certified contractors making a simple job disproportionately expensive. The signs are cheap - £8.95 on line. They can be easily installed in verges on simple wooden posts. If this is pointed out to residents it might suggest a very quick solution to their problem?
- 8 I am receiving suggestions that the 2022 Platinum Jubilee Celebrations deserve to be marked in Elmswell. Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> June recommends itself as 'Big Jubilee Lunch Day'. I shall invite input from the community at large and would like to be able to say that EPC will be supportive. I would appreciate suggestions / offers of support from councillors or otherwise if the general feeling is not favourable.