

ELMSWELL PARISH COUNCIL

Parish Clerk's Report to the Annual Council Meeting on 16th May 2022

- 1 I attended with Cllrs Pallett and Shaw on 27th April a meeting with Greg Dodds of Orwell Housing as part of the joint initiative with Elmswell Community Land Trust to find an appropriate Registered Provider to work with the community to build and manage the proposed properties using the capital funding that they can attract from the government body, Homes England.
We have worked well with Gregg and with Orwell in the past on the exemplar scheme at Clay Field as well as at Laurel Court.
We identified clear advantages in working closely with ECE on the pub redevelopment. Orwell are now looking at the concept plans for the site as previously worked up by BCR Infinity Architects, as published in the village consultation documents.
As a tentative framework suggestion it was agreed that a long-term lease on the land might be a way forward in satisfying Orwell's funding providers as well as providing a return to EPC covering, at least, the cost of borrowing the site purchase sum.
We have made Orwell very aware of the immutable condition that there should never be a Right to Buy (RTB) or Right to Acquire. They can work with this, but, again we have voiced reservations regarding recent central Government hints that RTB could be encouraged in new statute.
At this very early stage all concerned agreed that there are firm possibilities in terms of moving forward with Orwell but, clearly, no commitment on either side has been made and there is a considerable amount of work to be done towards establishing any firm proposal towards a first-stage feasibility study.
- 2 I attended an on-line seminar hosted by Community Action Suffolk on 28th April entitled, 'Village Halls Doing Things Greener'. Although Elmswell clearly ticks many of the 'green' boxes in terms of heat pumps, solar PV, EV charging etc, there are areas of interest as yet untried. I made contact with an interesting and experienced architect regarding the possibility of community heating shared by the proposed affordable houses on the Tavern site and the refurbished pub itself and now have some lines of enquiry regarding the possibility of wind turbine power generation at Blackbourne and the chance of local investors in any such scheme enjoying subsidised electricity over a 25 year contract period.
- 3 I attended with Ward Members and officers from BMSDC & SCC a walk-through of the route of the proposed Elmswell – Woolpit community path. We were able to identify the serious engineering pinch-points at the almshouses, A1088 and the A14 bridge which inform a detailed proposal based on SCC's earlier assessment which puts a total build-cost at some £740k. Delivery is difficult given the need for developer input under s106 and the lack of any central funding pot. The scheme is now more clearly identified and defined. Discussion will move on to specific areas of difficulty / concern when various options, including alternative routing, may be considered.
- 4 I was invited to discuss on-line on Friday 13th May with the Chief Planning Officer and Cllr Mansel as Ward Member the reasoning behind and consequences of the lack of conformity between the Minuted Committee decision and the subsequent Decision Notice re Condition 10, highways mitigation of Reserved Matters ref DC/18/01246, Land East at School Road.

- 5 I was pleased to have once again been given a clean bill of health following the Annual Internal Audit carried out for the first time by Dave Crimmin, as previously agreed by Council. The 2 points raised have been or are being addressed and do not impinge on the positive findings in all relevant areas.
- As with previous auditors, Dave Crimmin carried out, free of charge, an examination of the paper trail linking bookings made for facilities at Wesley & Blackbourne and eventual banking of the correct fees with BWMA together with the operation of BWMA under its Constitution and the Association's Heads of Agreement with EPC. All was found to be in order.
- We are now, effectively, running an SME with 3 key cost centres and some 20 employees. The healthy and business-like picture which the audit reflects is a credit to my assistant, Ann Brett who juggles bookkeeping with HR, purchasing and line-management duties whilst always presenting a personable face to staff and to the many public and business enquirers we have to the office day-to-day.
- 6 I attended on 11th May with Cllr Brown at the new Borley Crescent development site with the Orbit site manager and their Senior Constructions Manager to address the concerns expressed by residents of Blackbourne Road regarding potential overlooking at the estate boundary. It was agreed that any mitigation measures might best be talked-through individually with households concerned and that I should put them in touch directly with Orbit to that end and I have done so.

Peter Dow
Clerk to the Council
15.05.2022