

ELMSWELL PARISH COUNCIL

Parish Clerk's Report to the Ordinary Council Meeting 19th November 2018

- 1 It is my suggestion and firm recommendation that Council changes its Internal Auditor every 3 years to avoid any suggestion of over-familiarity and to invite fresh eyes on the finances & procedures which can bring forward suggestions for improvement. In support of the proposal to appoint Heather Heelis of Heelis and Lodge as our new Auditor, I can confirm that I have used Heelis & Lodge previously both for Elmswell and other Councils and found them to be very sound. Heather is, herself, a Parish Clerk and has a good grasp of the real management issues we face as well as the finer points of Governance & Accountability. The fee scale of the obvious alternative, the IA service offered by SALC, would put Elmswell in the £600.00 fee range. I have no doubt that the service from Heelis & Lodge, at half that fee, will be competent and efficient.
- 2 The process of registering a property as an Asset of Community Value is now well tried and tested, in particular in relation to public houses in rural communities. In conversation with the BMSDC officer who deals with this it was suggested that the Planning application at the Railway Tavern site might be an appropriate juncture at which to put down a marker against any further applications which might threaten the viability of the pub. Other than administration there is no cost to the Council.
- 3 As we move towards discussions regarding the 2019/2020 budget and precept, it is worth noting that the changes for dog / litter bin emptying for the financial year 2019/20 have been revised. One of the drivers for this is the gradual alignment of such charges across both authorities and, in this instance, Mid Suffolk are having to bring their charges up to the Babergh level. The effective p.a. increase for EPC to find is £5.00 per litter bin and £6.00 per dog bin. We have 18 dog and 23 litter bins, netting out at an increase of £205.00. The current year's charge was £1,350.00. The proposed increase is, therefore, 15%. I am aware that, as this was traditionally a service funded by district & borough councils, some Councillors like to be kept abreast of the drift towards transferring costs down to town & parish council level.
- 4 Cllr Jane Storey has residual Locality Budget funding and I have suggested to her that there are certain projects at Elmswell which might benefit, across a range of possible expenditures, being: a ceiling mounted projector in the Chamberlayne Hall, a ceiling mounted projector screen in the Olympic Room, bowls gatherers for the bowls green and various stages of the QS services relating to the Wesley project.
- 5 Appendix C4 shows CIL income of £18,464.50.00 which is our first 'automatic' payment of 15% of the CIL money collected from qualifying developments commenced in the parish between 01.04.2018 & 30.09.2018. It relates to developments at Mulberry Farm (DC/17/05409) and at St John's House (DC/18/00367). Meanwhile, Wetherden PC have been in touch to suggest that Haughley and Elmswell might be interested to look with them at the possibility of funding from the District-wide pot of CIL monies for schemes of potential joint benefit. These would have to be the subject of bids within the constraints of the '123' list which defines appropriate areas of expenditure. A meeting is called for 14th January. Councillors are invited. I shall attend, and I will keep individual Councillors posted on request. Any suggestions as to appropriate schemes welcome.