

ELMSWELL PARISH COUNCIL

Parish Clerk's Report to the Ordinary Council Meeting 16th September 2019

1 As suggested, I have looked into the detail regarding the triggering of the proposals for a re-routing of Elmswell Footpaths 11 & 12 which crossed the Bacon Factory site and proceeded across the railway line to Hawk End Lane. These are subject to re-routing to accommodate the housing development and, under Order following Public Enquiry, diversion as a result of the Network Rail Anglia (NR) Level Crossing Reduction Strategy. The diversion works will be undertaken by NR funded within a budget of £1.3m under a s106 agreement, by Taylor Wimpey (TW). NB, if the works come in under this figure, the residue goes back to Mid Suffolk for affordable housing and I will be looking to ensure that this is hypothecated to Elmswell, particularly if a CLT is established, and specifically towards any emerging scheme on the Greene King development site. Such are the difficulties in dealing with NR, and Council has experience of this, that the footpath through the estate is now open, but access to the land beyond the TW site is blocked by a gate welded by NR. A compound area has been made available to NR and access agreed, but, despite the joint efforts of TW and MSDC, progress is slow. A 'trigger point', clearly, no longer applies.

2 I attended, on 18th July, a seminar at Laxfield led by the Housing Delivery Manager of Homes England, Francine Peck, who administers the Government's Community Housing Fund. The funding is available for both capital and revenue expenditure in relation to community led housing such as is proposed on the Greene King site at School Road. It is made available by bid within timed allocation slots and I shall maintain a watching brief as and when any tangible progress emerges towards an Elmswell scheme.

3 Cllr Osborne is now the 4th signatory to the Co-op bank account. On a related matter, towards securing a Barclaycard for official Council purchases, an application process was begun on 20th June. Following much filling-in of forms and the painstaking provision of all Councillors' personal details, the realisation of a flexible friendship seems imminent, as per a recent telephone marathon with the bank.

4 I have had to provide figures to VOA for the 2021 revaluation of Non Domestic Rates as applied to the Elmswell cemetery. This requires the generation of figures regarding the land available for interments in future years. My rule of thumb is that we should always have a 50 year 'supply'. I project that we currently have space to accommodate demand for the next 308 years, meaning that a review is due in 2277. I have marked the file accordingly.

5 Our weekend caretaker is having to relinquish the post to accommodate new weekend hours in his day job. I have identified a good candidate as replacement and would thoroughly recommend him to Councillors, Agenda item 15 refers.

6 I draw Councillors' attention to the increase in pay across the board, as contractually required in the case of clerical staff to be in line with the National Joint Council for Local Government Services (NJC) and as agreed by Contract to be pro rata for non-clerical employees. The increase was 2% for the Clerk, 4.6% for the Assistant Clerk and the non-clerical staff. This reflects a rationalisation of the pay scale Spinal Column Points by NJC. The increases are backdated to 1st April.

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7 Together with Cllr Pallett I have attended on site at Wesley and for the first Site Meeting proper on 14th August to receive the initial formal Progress Report, as well as a further meeting on 3rd September to deal with specific points relating to possible Contract Variations. There is nothing which needs to be brought to wider attention at this stage and progress is within the timescale provided by the Contractor, ie with an anticipated completion by the end of March. The first invoice is now raised in the sum of £35,440.70 net and we await details of the relevant valuation calculations before authorisation.

8 The consultation leaflet re the Greene King site proposals, as circulated to Councillors in draft for comment, was distributed with the September Elmswell Newsletter. A display comprising the material therein, plus further information, was exhibited at the ElmsFest day and now stands in the foyer at Blackbourne towards securing more signatures of support. It will be on show again at the LukesWood Apple Day on Saturday 21st September from 2.00 – 5.00pm. Councillors are welcome to join me there and I would appreciate any offers of support for a Saturday morning display at the Co-op. I have invited Jo Churchill MP to visit the site as she might, under current circumstances, have more time than might normally be the case for constituency matters. A visit on 18th September seems possible in which, once confirmed, the Press might show an interest.

9 As a new round of CIL bids opens, I have liaised with Mid Suffolk officers regarding funding for 2 projects which would seem to fit appropriate profiles. Cllrs Schofield and Roots have been looking at a partial re-equipping and overall refurbishment of the play area at Blackbourne, where the safety surface is deteriorating. Meanwhile, the proposals for more storage, office space and improved ventilation at the Chamberlayne Hall, which were held in limbo pending the realisation of the Wesley scheme. It seems that a considerable element of the QS estimate of £81,616.00 for these works might also be available from the CIL pot. I shall pursue both possibilities towards being in a position to present costed options to Council.

10 My thanks to all of the Councillors who have pointed out the typographical error whereby Appendix B shows, at lines 4 & 36, duplicate payments to ICO of £35.00. Only one payment has been made and the total will be adjusted accordingly. This is manually inputted data which does not affect the totals to be formally Noted at Appendix E.

11 I attended on 13th September a study visit to the Lamarsh Lion community pub in Essex at the invitation of the Plunkett Foundation with whom I have registered Council's interest in relation to the possible acquisition of the Greene King site at School Road. It was instructive to hear the situation of other groups trying to save what is often the last vestige of community in their villages and encouraging to note the network of support available through the Government's 'More Than A Pub' campaign and the Plunkett Foundation. There are 106 community pubs across the UK, some established as long ago as 2003. No community pub has ever had to cease trading, although 3 have been sold back into the private sector and continue to be run as pubs. At Lamarsh (population 180), the Lion has been very successfully open for 18 months and is actively seeking to expand.

Peter Dow
15.09.2019