

ELMSWELL PARISH COUNCIL

Parish Clerk's Report to the Ordinary Council Meeting on 16th January 2023

1 Cllr Hancock has agreed to help pursue the possibilities of a wind turbine at Blackbourne at the far boundary of the new 6 acres of community land. The idea was mooted some time ago but central government legislation via NPPF has effectively barred any onshore provision until recently when a technical consultation on changes in this regard was launched to be concluded by 8th April. It seems likely that any proposal would be required to prove community support but that such schemes might include the possibility of financial benefits through local billing. The next step would be a feasibility study for which grant aid may be available via the new MSDC Climate Change Manager. Any such initiative would come before Council once firmed up.

2 The Elmswell Tavern is now closed for trading pending the refurbishment scheme. Without the facilities to offer food it is clear, in current trading conditions, that there was little likelihood of avoiding financial loss. Trading over the 10 months of community management produced a small surplus of income over expenditure. The extension of the share offer deadline to May allows for continued progress towards realising funding to a level that will underwrite the re-launch as a successful community-led business.

3 On 10th November last year Cllr Pallet and I met on site with Bloor Homes representatives and their agents to discuss the forthcoming closure of School Road. We were able to convince them of the folly of suggesting that New Road could handle two-way HGV traffic and they agreed to seek SCC Highways agreement to a one-way system using Cooks Road. This arrangement was duly published in the Newsletter and through other appropriate outlets. There has recently been the suggestion from Highways that this does not have their agreement and the insistence that we revert to all traffic using New Road. I have been involved in considerable correspondence including with Ward Members and HGV operators in trying to have SCC resile from their position. The SCC position was confirmed at a meeting with the Developer on 13th January. Cooks Road is deemed to be unsuitable by officers for one-way routing and all traffic will be signed down New Road. I had previously confirmed to the Developer prior to that meeting the points which had been raised to me by concerned councillors and residents alike. For the avoidance of doubt that EPC tried its best to represent the community view that was presented to us, I copy those points below.

- 2 HGV's cannot cross in New Road. It is not wide enough. If 2-way working were to be countenanced there would have to be traffic control at either end to ensure no such conflict.
- Any such traffic control would have to work on a possibly lengthy one-way constraint whilst the unit traversed the road to past the Co-op which would then result in backing up beyond the Co-op. Backing-up at the Co-op has serious implications for the safety of the crossing gates given the very common abuse of the box junction.
- Many of the perceived problems relating to the school parking are due to clear abuses of the existing constraints. These can be managed out by enforcement.
- The perceived problems at the school maintain, as elsewhere, for just 2 brief chaotic windows each weekday.
- For 3 weeks, ie 25% of the proposed closure period, the school is closed.
- Resident & casual kerbside parking will have to be curtailed in any case which immediately reduces the school parking problem.
- A crossing patrol should, in any case, be in place at the Cooks Road / New Road / The Street junction which will, in any circumstance, have to handle at least twice the normal throughput of HGV traffic.

4 On 13th January I attended a meeting at Wesley with MSDC & SCC officers together with all Ward members to discuss the recent presentation made in November of last year by Mid Suffolk of plans approved by Cabinet for 50 houses on their site at School Road. The resulting uproar from residents before, during and after the consultation event, and the attempts by EPC and Ward members to encourage a reasoned review of the proposals are well documented. Community aspirations for the site towards encouraging a serious re-think of primary school provision in the village have been the subject of meetings since January 2022 with SCC Education Planning officers and MSDC. The village's commitment to an affordable homes project at the Tavern site and the possibilities that this presents for an exemplary community scheme formed part of the discussion. The original proposition is now on hold having been called in for review by the MSDC Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Committee. This acknowledges the fact that the Cabinet members who promoted the 50 house plan were not in possession of the full facts of the situation with regard to other options regarding the site. I have undertaken to inform the process with details of Elmswell's proposals and the educational projections are to be firmed-up by SCC towards a re-appraisal, hopefully supported by the O&S findings.

Peter Dow
15.01.2023