

ELMSWELL PARISH COUNCIL

Parish Clerk's Report to the Ordinary Council Meeting on 15th January 2024

- 1 I now have on file the Order from SCC introducing the prohibitions of waiting at Elmswell School and on Cooks Road adjacent scheduled to come into effect on 8th January for an experimental period of 18 months. Objections can be lodged for the first 6 months of the Order being in place. EPC has had input to this and feedback is invited as and when the restrictions bed-in.
- 2 I have secured £1,500.00 from Mid Suffolk in grant aid towards encouraging the 'Winter Warmer' initiative at Wesley. This has allowed for a reduction in cover price and for donations to the various music groups who have agreed to play during the 4 sessions of the programme. The grant will largely be used against usual Wesley catering purchases, but the Proposal at Agenda item 16 gives flexibility to make payments for the entertainment which has characterised the sessions thus far and which now seems to be an integral feature of the events, designed to encourage as diverse a spread of community participation as possible.
- 3 For information, the 2nd part of the BMSDC Joint Local Plan is triggered by the adoption of the 1st part in November of last year. This involves a 'Call For Sites' process whereby landowners can make submissions of sites which they would like to be considered for residential development and, therefore, inclusion in the final Plan. All submissions are assessed within parameters set for consideration for inclusion in the Plan and, in the meantime, such sites have no enhanced Planning status nor any promise of such.
- 4 We were advised by BMSDC in December that the cost of emptying our 19 dog bins & 23 litter bins would increase from £1,797.86 to £2,898.00 pa. This advice was withdrawn as it did not have Member approval. The revised notice is for a 2024 / 2025 total of £2,247.22 which represents a discount on the actual cost price to BMSDC which is £7,350.
- 5 I attended an on-line meeting hosted by Suffolk on Board on 9th January to discuss community transport including the Government BSIP – Bus Service Improvement Plan – which has allocated Suffolk £3.6m over 2 years. Our current taxi-bus service is in the mix for grant aid from the scheme and evaluation is currently under way with a view to funding allocation to some of the 64 applicants. The Elmswell- based initiative which continues until Easter was mentioned as an exemplar, but there does seem to be a dead weight of old-school thinking which assumes that community transport is 52 seater diesel charabancs, questionable timetabling and the need for a profit beyond simple community benefit.
- 6 The arrangements for dedication of memorial trees and seats at the cemetery would benefit from review. Given the sensitivities of cemetery-related issues, I prefer that substantive changes are considered by Councillors, rather than just the Clerk, before coming before Council for ratification. Hence the proposal at item 15 for a consultation group to work with me in considering proposals for modification of the Rules.
- 7 The Precept figure as proposed at Agenda item 12 represents a sum that will require an increase of 5% on the parish council element of the 2024/2025 Council Tax bill. Unusually, there has been no uplift in the Tax Base since the indicative figure was published and on which discussion has centred.
- 8 There is a second chance to help plant the shelter-belt hedging along the boundary of Turners' Field, our new land at Elmswell. On Saturday next, 20th, the Lukeswood / Elmswild volunteers are hosting another session from 10.am – 4.00pm and the invitation is open to all to turn up well booted and with a spade and plant some more hedge.

Peter Dow
14.01.2024