

## **ELMSWELL PARISH COUNCIL**

### **Parish Clerk's Report to the Ordinary Meeting 21<sup>st</sup> October 2024**

- 1 Council's policy is to only work with an Internal Auditor for 3 consecutive years so as to avoid over-familiarity or complacency. Accordingly, we have not renewed our agreement with the excellent Dave Crimmin and the Proposal at 13 is that we engage Heelis & Lodge whose principals, Heather Heelis and Lynne Lodge, have both previously undertaken the role at Elmswell. They are both appropriately qualified and have wide experience of providing independent audit services for our sector. I would recommend them.
- 2 The Internal Control examination by Cllrs Brown & Hancock, as agreed at 24.09.15, is scheduled for 6<sup>th</sup> November. Suggestions as to anything specific which might deserve their attention are welcome.
- 3 The BWMA meeting of 23<sup>rd</sup> September agreed to transfer £140,000.00 of accrued Blackbourne & Wesley letting fee income to Council with a recommendation that £80,000.00 be dedicated to the Community Pub project and the rest split towards supporting the Crown Mill play areas and the replacement doors at Blackbourne.
- 4 Three Tenders for the Elmswell Tavern project have been selected to be subjected to clarification towards the identification of a designated Contractor. The raw figures proffered at this stage bode well for the eventual Contract sum being within the available funding.
- 5 I have attended on-line meetings organised by Community Action Suffolk dealing with Affordable Housing and Community-Led Housing. There is wide acceptance of the difficulties posed by the insistence at higher levels that Right To Buy is generically sound idea, but a hope that recent Government changes might allow that there are serious problems inherent in the policy which have caused a degradation in the practical provision of affordable homes since its inception in 1980. There is also an apparent glut in the number of 'affordables' built by housing developers as required under s106 arrangements but for which many Registered Providers (RP's), such as Housing Associations, are unwilling to take under their management. Meanwhile, our professional advisers are advising on the site value of the plot to the rear of the Tavern based on rental only, ie no shared equity, and a house-type mix that maximises the return on any proposed sale to an RP.
- 6 In conjunction with Cllr Mansel I am working with BMSDC Public Realm towards refining a two-site scheme for play provision at Crown Mill extending to cover a younger age-range. In the meantime, I have 2 designs to hand and a third promised which will be referred to the T&FWP towards a firm proposal to Council.
- 7 With thanks to Cllr Brown, we have 2 firm quotations for the work to level, drain and seed the areas of Turners' Field which will be dedicated to sports recreational use. We are seeking a third and, in the meantime, working with the emerging Elmswell Community Football Club and the Amenities Association towards grant funding from Suffolk FA taking account of current negotiations for ECFC to agree a Lease on the EAA land at Grove Lane which will allow the autonomy that the footballers need to qualify for grant aid in their own right towards developing the club.

Meanwhile, the contractor who also cuts and bales the Green Cemetery and various areas managed by ElmsWild has taken on the Conservation Field which has had many years of wild overgrowth removed as the beginning of a management regime to encourage a wider variety of species in a general amenity / walking area.

- 9 On 14<sup>th</sup> October Cllr Pallett and I met with Bethany Taylor, our BMSDC Communities Officer, to update and liaise on the initiatives which are benefitting from our collaboration with District. We confirmed the positive outcome of the first stage of securing Tenders for the Tavern project and enquired as to further support for specific elements of the scheme through their Social Enterprise Support initiative. We also asked for guidance towards obtaining funding to allow a repeat of the very successful Wesley Winter Warmer events and towards taking further, with Wesley Ukes, a scheme to bring young schoolchildren and older people together through the medium of music.
- 10 I attended with Cllr Pallett a BMSDC / T&PC liaison meeting at Wesley on 17<sup>th</sup> October. The Chief Exec., Arthur Charvonia, Leader of Council Cllr Andy Mellen and Chief Operating Officer Tom Barker spoke to address matters which included the position regarding Devolution, The Mid Suffolk Strategic Plan, the relatively healthy position in Mid Suffolk's finances with a current reserve of £33m, healthy income from Gateway 14 and no current account losses on CIFCO, accepting that the latter does show a sizeable drop in asset value on the Balance sheet. The changes to Planning law are in a state of flux under a new government administration with the possible revisiting of a Strategic Plan approach which may include Regional Spatial Strategies and Structure Plans should the overarching catch-all of NPPF be reduced in scope. The uplift in housing delivery targets means that Mid Suffolk must look to deliver 753 units p/a rather than the existing target of 535 and there is pressure to increase the proportion of affordable homes. The need to develop infrastructure to match new populations is noted as being paramount in discussions as these targets increase.
- 11 The Poor's Land Charity meeting of Trustees attended by myself and Cllrs Burch, and Pallett representing EPC and held on 14<sup>th</sup> October discussed the extra burden presented to some in the community by the changes to the Government's Winter Fuel Payment. It was agreed that a co-operative initiative undertaken jointly by the Charity and EPC might help by advertising assistance through the Council office to those wishing to test their eligibility for the allowance and to make an application as appropriate.
- 12 I have circulated to Councillors further correspondence regarding the possible loss of the village notice board at School Road. It now seems that the problem is otherwise resolved and that our facility remains safe.

**Peter Dow**  
**20.10.2024**