

Stow Longa Parish Council

Annual Parish Meeting – Wednesday 15 May 2019

Chairman's report

Meetings

The Parish Council met on 7 separate occasions since the last Annual Parish Meeting.

There was an 73% attendance record by Councillors at those meetings.

We had two vacancies on the Parish Council as there were insufficient candidates at the 2018 election. We asked for volunteers to be co-opted last year and three villagers put their names forward. Adrienne Bonwick and Amy Pearson were duly co-opted to the Council.

We have regular attendance from our District and County Councillors, Cllr J Gray and Cllr I Gardener. We find it helpful to keep in touch with them as it keeps us informed of what is going on in the District and County and also enables us to ask for their support, particularly on highways and traffic issues.

The Clerk continues to publish the agendas and minutes of the Parish Council meetings on the village website and they are also placed on the notice board.

During the period since the last Annual Parish Meeting the Parish Council has dealt with the following issues:

Planning applications

The only significant planning matter in the year has been the application to build further houses behind the two new ones at what was 5 The Lane. We recommended refusal of this application.

Finance

During the year, the Parish Council dealt with its financial obligations including both an internal and an external audit. The results of both of these audits were satisfactory.

The precept has been set at £3,300 for the 2019/20 fiscal year, the same as last year.

One of the major changes in the planning rules is that there is now a Community Infrastructure Levy, payable to the planning authority on any new development with an internal floorspace of over 100 square metres. From April 2013, 15% of the Community Infrastructure Levy revenue collected by HDC will now be passed directly to those Parish and Town Councils where development has taken place. In areas where CIL is collected, the amount of CIL passed on is capped at £100 per existing council tax dwelling per year.

Over the last 18 months the Parish Council has received £10,367.17 for its share of the Levy relating to the two new properties at what was 5 The Lane. We have to spend this within five years, and we are proposing to use a significant amount to help with traffic issues and curbing the grass area opposite the Green. More on traffic issues later.

General Data Protection Regulations

As mentioned last year, GDPR came into effect from 25 May 2018 and all parish councils were required to meet the regulations with regard to the personal data we maintain. It was an inordinate amount of paper work that we had to deal with, and particular thanks go to Amy Pearson and Adrienne Bonwick for dealing with this.

We have also had to update our:

- ~ Financial regulations.
- ~ Standing orders.
- ~ Risk management policy.

Repairs and maintenance

We are still pursuing the possibility of kerbing the area opposite the village cross and are looking ways of keeping the costs down.

We have had ongoing discussions with Cambridgeshire Highways regarding kerbing, repairing potholes and road sweeping.

After about six years of trying, we managed to have a new post box installed. We hope everyone agree that this is in a safer and more convenient position.

The bench on the play area was repaired and painted during the year.

We have the opportunity of acquiring a new bench for the Green in return for making a small charitable donation. The existing one is beyond repair. Hopefully the new one will be in place soon.

We are pursuing a number of issues including:

- ~ Repairing the cross on the Green.
- ~ Repairing and repainting the benches around the village.

Health and Safety

The Parish Council assets are regularly inspected to ensure that there are no health and safety issues. Where necessary, appropriate action has been taken to ensure that any potentially dangerous matters are dealt with.

The play area equipment is inspected on an annual basis by Wicksteed. Some minor repairs were recommended which we undertook.

Parish Council members

Whilst we have a full complement of Councillors at the moment, it is likely that one of us will be moving away from the village in the next year. There will therefore be a vacancy and we will look for a co-optee when that happens.

For the same reason, we will also have a vacancy as Trustee on the Owen Lands Charity.

Finally

I would like to express my thanks to all the Councillors and the Clerk for their support and work over the last year.

I also want to thank other who helps with a range of other work including:

- ~ Planting flowers around the village sign.
- ~ Mowing the Green and organising the rota.
- ~ Speed watch.
- ~ Trustees of the Town Lands Charity.
- ~ Anyone else who I may have missed out.

Stow Longa Annual Parish Assembly May 2019

Report from District Councillor Jonathan Gray

Highlighted below are some of the main areas of my activity and interest in the work of the District Council. I am always available to explain these in more detail and to try and assist residents in any way that I can. Please call me on 01832 710799 or email me at jonathan.gray@huntingdonshire.gov.uk . **Follow me on Twitter: @cllrgray**

1. The role of the District Council

Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) was formed in 1974 by amalgamating a number of Urban and Rural District Councils. **The key services we provide are:**

- Refuse and recycling collections, fly-tipping removal and street cleaning
- Homeless and housing allocations and handling benefit claims
- Leisure Centres
- Managing Country Parks and open spaces (such as Paxton Pits)
- Handling and Determining Planning Applications
- Strategic Planning responsibilities (managing where will homes/businesses be built)
- Environmental Health issues (fly-tipping, noise nuisance, stray dogs/dog fouling)
- Building Control and Local Searches
- Licensing of pubs/entertainment venues
- Running elections and maintaining the electoral register
- Collecting Business Rates and Council Tax on behalf of Parishes/County/Police/Fire & Rescue
- Working with the Cambridgeshire Combined Authority and the Mayor for Cambridgeshire & Peterborough

We also operate in partnership with other Councils to deliver other services – a good example being transport where we help the County Council deliver more for Huntingdonshire residents by offering financial and officer support.

2. The key issues facing HDC

- Ensuring the Combined Authority delivers the promised benefits for Huntingdonshire.
- Diversifying our income so that we are at less risk to changes in national government policy.
- Rebuilding our systems around the principle that you, the resident, are the most important aspect of our work and activity, as well considering what staffing structure will best deliver this.

3. The Structure of the Council

- There are 52 elected Councillors (or 'Members'). 6 of these sit on the Cabinet and make the majority of decisions. Others either scrutinise the work of the Cabinet or are involved in making individual Planning or Licensing decisions. Being a Councillor is a voluntary position: whilst many Councillors are retired, some (like me) have full time jobs. I find this breadth of age and experience is helpful when considering issues.
- The political affiliation of Members is currently: 30 Conservatives; 10 HDC Independent Group; 7 LibDems; 4 Labour and 1 Independents. The 'HDC Independent Group' replaced the LibDems as the official opposition after last May's 'All Out' election.
- The paid staff (or 'Officers') of the Council are led by our Managing Director, Mrs Jo Lancaster.

4. Council Tax

- The District Council element of your Council Tax bill has risen by 2.6% to £142.16 for a Band D property for 2019/20. Initial views around the 'Fairer Funding' review into Local Government funding suggests it will not be very fair to Huntingdonshire! We therefore believe that a funding gap of £1.4m will need to be closed by 2023. (This has increased from £0.9m last year). The Conservative manifesto in last year's elections proposed a 'double lock' principle of Council Tax not rising faster than either the State Pension or local average wages: this year's increase matches the State Pension rise – keeping our share of Council Tax affordable for all.
- We continue to restructure the Council for the 21st Century - Improving your experience of dealing with the Council for residents remains our top priority: for example, we have recently launched our online 'portal'.
- We have established a trading company to protect existing CCTV services, and work with a private partner to market this service more widely, however, this has taken more time than anticipated to reach this point.
- We remain among the lowest of Districts and Boroughs in terms of tax levied per household (over 85% of other similar authorities charge more than we do), even though we have a wider than average range of services.

5. My responsibilities at HDC

In addition to the work I do for the Ward of Kimbolton, in Huntingdon I continue to sit on the Council's Cabinet, with specific responsibilities for Finance and Resources. This covers setting and monitoring the budget, managing the Council's Estate and ensuring that the Council is running efficiently and effectively. As a Councillor with more influence than most, I try to use that position to bring balance, co-operation and professionalism to what we do, as well as speak up for smaller villages and ensure that the views of all residents – not just those in towns – are heard. **I am a strong voice for you in the heart of the District Council.**

6. Some specific issues we are currently addressing

- The Combined Authority creates significant additional workload for HDC's Leader, who sits on the Mayor's Cabinet. We are clearly lobbying hard on behalf of Huntingdonshire, and the CA & Mayor face a number of challenges in terms of priorities and delivery.
- Construction continues to be on target for the 'new' A14. The duelling of the A428 Black Cat to Caxton, which is part of the Cambridge to Oxford corridor, will now start in 2021.
- The Local Plan looks likely to formally adopted by the Council at our AGM in May. If so, this is a significant achievement. It will end the 'tilted balance' in favour of development, whilst many other authorities in growth areas are struggling to reconcile their plans with the Government's ambitions.
- Our commercial and corporate strategy continues to evolve with a further purchase of industrial premises in St Neots this year, and more recently the town's cinema and leisure complex. HDC now owns more than £43m of commercial properties, with income from rents helping to reduce Council Tax. This investment in the health of the UK economy brings the resilience to our budget we want to achieve.
- We are also bringing forward plans to invest in private sector housing, in order to protect and increase the supply of private homes for rent as reasonable and trusted landlords.
- We are working on the development of HDC land within Huntingdon and St Ives for retail and housing opportunities.

7. Specific work I am doing as your Ward Councillor

- I regularly provide help and advice to residents and the Parish Council. Planning enforcement issues and disputes have regrettably been active this year across the Ward.
- I now have 8 Parish Councils across the new Kimbolton Ward, so I apologise that I am unable to make all meetings. However, I do my best to keep informed on matters specific to your village and to provide support and advice to your Parish Councillors.
- I continue to lobby for vital and valued services in rural areas – which already have considerably less Council 'spend' - to be maintained. For example, we continue to supply a fortnightly green bin collection for garden and food waste all year around for free – no neighbouring authority now does this.
- In response to local concerns around Policing and security, I have lobbied our Police and Crime Commissioner, and continue to work with and advise local people.

Finally, I would like to thank the residents of Stow Longa for the privilege you gave me last May of electing me to the new HDC Kimbolton Ward. With 12 villages, 8 Parish Councils and a Village Meeting, it is the largest number of PC's that a single HDC Councillor covers – but one that I am very proud to be responsible for!

STOW LONGA PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL PARISH MEETING – 14th May 2019
Report by Cllr Ian Gardener, County Councillor

Outlined below are some of the main areas of my work on the County Council. I am always available to discuss County Council issues with residents or Parish Councils and to try and assist with the issues. I can be contacted on 07970 613498 or by email at Ian.Gardener@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

The make up of the County Council remains the same following the By -Elections in Soham North & Isleham & Trumpington .The Conservatives hold 36 seats, Liberal Democrats 15, Labour 7 and the Independents 3

The new Alconbury and Kimbolton seat covers 30 villages and 24 Parish Councils From Hail Weston in the south, to Great Gidding in the north and out to the County Boundary in the west and the A1 in the east excluding the villages of Southoe & Grafham .

I currently sit on the Highways & Infrastructure Committee and I am the Vice- Chairman of the Pensions & Planning Committee's. I also sit on the Fire Authority where I am the Vice Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny committee

The County Council are relocating from Shire Hall In Cambridge to a new Civic Hub at Alconbury Weald. This will be the Hub of the Hub and spoke model for our offices across the County. All other offices will be existing office space.

Smart Energy Grids will provide renewable energy to facilitate the charging of buses,cars and freight and allow for the selling of surplus energy to local customers via power Purchase Agreements. The sites where Smart Energy Grids are being implemented at are St Ives, Trumpington & Babraham Park & Ride Sites

The County Council has agreed a Plastics Strategy, which is aimed at reducing/removing the Councils use of Single Use Plastics. The Council will influence its supply chain provision of goods and services by setting standards on plastics via procurement.

At the end of 2018 Cambridgeshire Fire & Rescue Service was named as one of the best two performing Fire & Rescue Services of the 14 inspected. The inspectorate found that the service was GOOD across the entire inspection process and is now held as an example to other authorities.

With regard to East West Rail there are 5 proposed routes for the line between Bedford & Cambridge, two of which are to the north of Sandy. The preferred route is the route via Sandy & Bassingbourn as it avoids the route of the Mayors Cam Metro between Cambridge & St Neots

Ofsted undertook an unannounced two week inspection of Children's Services in January and their report highlighted the fact that the County Council had put the foundations in place to deliver positive change and a much improved service.

To protect services within Cambridgeshire the County Council agreed to increase its proportion of Council Tax by 2.99%, plus an additional 2% for Adult Social Care. This increase is to protect services within Cambridgeshire. No Libraries are being closed in fact 3 new libraries are to be built and 2 new replacement mobile libraries are being delivered.

On completion of the A14 work is expected to commence on the duelling of the A428 between the Black Cat & Caxton Gibbet. The route will be the orange route , with Option C for the Black cat roundabout, which will allow a continuous flow of traffic in both directions.

As your County Councillor I will work with the Parish Council & Residents to address the issues that affect them, such as future Local Highways Initiative Bids .

Cllr Ian Gardener

County Councillor Alconbury & Kimbolton Division

Stow Longa Town Lands Charity Statement to the Parish Council Meeting 15th May 2019

Key Points

The balance of the account to date is £4,506.13.

Additionally, a previous Trustee holds Barclays shares belonging to the Charity but in her own name; however, the shares certificate is lost and the task of recovering the shares for Charity remains outstanding.

If you are – or you know of - someone who has either fallen on hard times or needs financial help because of illness or other incapacity, please get in touch with us and we'll see how we might be able to help.

As reported last year, our tenant farmers Martin & Jane Eayrs gave us notice that to terminate their tenancy with us in September 2018, citing uncertainty over Brexit as the reason. We were able to renegotiate a new agreement with them, albeit at the much-reduced rate of £200 PA. Although significantly lower than previous, it must be accepted that the land in question can be used for very little else and the Trustees therefore felt we had very little choice other than to accept it.

Summary of Income and Expenditure

As a registered charity, we are required to submit a statement to the Charity Commission annually. Details for the financial year ending 31st Dec 2018, and submitted on 4th January 2019 are:

- Income: £1,167
- Spending: £0

New Trustees required

2019 marks the end of the four-year tenure for the current Trustees. For personal reasons, I have decided not to stand for a further term.

I would like to thank my fellow Trustees for their support in running the Charity.

Jim Humfryes, Chairman
Swifts House, Kimbolton Road, Stow Longa
Tel: 07818 568923
Email: jim.humfryes@gmail.com
15th May 2019

