

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF FOXTON PARISH COUNCIL

HELD ON MONDAY, 6th FEBRUARY 2012 AT 7.45 p.m.

PRESENT

Dr Oakley, Dr Grindley, Mr Bore, Mr Barnes, Mr Elliott, Mr McCreery, Mrs Macintyre, Mrs McFadzean and Mr Sutton

County Councillor Susan van de Ven

IN ATTENDANCE

8 members of the public

APOLOGIES

There were no apologies

Dr Oakley welcomed all to the meeting.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

All Parish Councillors have received a dispensation from the SCDC Standards Committee to permit them to discuss, without prejudice, matters concerning Foxton Recreation Ground Trust of which they are all trustees and thus have a personal interest. There were no other declarations of interest.

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

One amendment was needed. On page 72, at the end of the first paragraph of the Finance Report, the following sentence should have been included:

“These proposals are in line with CPALC recommendations.”

Dr Oakley proposed that, with this amendment, the Minutes of the previous Meeting, held on Monday, 9th January, be signed as a true record. Mrs Macintyre seconded the proposal and all were agreed.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Visitors' Questions - Caxton Lane Houses

The clerk reported that she had received a telephone call from the District Council in response to FPC's letter expressing concern about the problems with damp in the Caxton Lane cottages. She had been told that the problems were not due to a lack of damp courses, but to drainage problems and soil being above the damp proof course. Doubt was cast at the meeting about this explanation and, if the planned improvements were not effective, the clerk was asked to write a further letter to SCDC.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

As Dr van de Ven had sent a message to say she would be late in arriving, her report was deferred until later in the meeting.

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

In Mrs Robert' absence there was no report.

PARISH PLAN UPDATE

Mr Hockley had received three quotations for printing the Plan and recommended that from Esson Print. Dr Oakley proposed that the Esson Print quotation be accepted by the council and all were agreed. Mr Hockley also said that it was proposed to hold the launch of the Parish Plan on the evening of Monday, 12th March.

REPORTS FROM THE WORKING PARTIES

RECREATION AND AMENITIES

Mr McCreery said that the Committee had met on 6th February (*before the present meeting*) when the following matters were considered:

1. Recreation Ground

Three quotations had been received for the additional tree surgery and scrub clearance work. The group recommended acceptance of the cheapest quote, which was from the company (Town and Country Tree Services) that had carried out work earlier in the financial year. *All councillors were agreed to accept this quotation.*

The Play Area Improvement Group had submitted ideas for use of the hard standing area and these would be considered along with the submission from the Football Club. A quotation for improving the ball wall area with an all-weather surface was considered to be far too expensive. Other ideas would be looked at.

The group were investigating the cost of increasing the height of the existing training light columns and perhaps adding an additional column. Planning permission would be required.

2. Play Area Improvement Group

A letter had been circulated round the village advising that the plans for the improved play area would be on display in the window of the Village Hall entrance until 11th February and that a coffee morning would be held on Saturday 11th February from 10.30am to 12.00 noon in the Village Hall lounge for those interested or wishing to comment on the project. Any donations would be gratefully received.

3. Grass

The group had received five quotations for the next three years grass cutting contract and was recommending continuing with CGM, the council's current contractor. *All were agreed that CGM's quotation should be accepted.*

4. Foxton Woods

The dog litterbin had been installed and was being used to overflowing. Mr McCreery had contacted Sarah Shepherd regarding the emptying of the bin.

5. South Cambridgeshire District Council

The District Council was carrying out a survey of open spaces and their use in parishes in the District: the group would be completing a response in the near future.

Matters considered at the present meeting

1. War Memorial

The clerk reported that she had heard from Stagecoach's insurers who advised that work could go ahead on repairs to the War Memorial steps, but stipulated that the contractor's invoice should be submitted directly to them together with a letter of satisfaction from the council. The clerk had forwarded a copy of this letter to W Mead but as she had not yet received the acknowledgment she had asked for would telephone the firm to ask when they would be commencing the work.

2. Salt

The clerk was requested to write to the site operatives at the Car Wash site on the A10 next to the level crossing reminding them that the salt bins were for use on pavements and roads and not on private property.

FINANCE

Mr Sutton gave details of the bank accounts as follows:

Deposit Account	£14,207.80
Current Account	£54.34
Standard Life Bank	£30,344.92

Mr Sutton said that £8,498 of the council's reserves was designated as restricted funds.

Mr Sutton proposed the following cheques for payment:

Foxton Village Hall (hire of Meeting Room 9/1, Lounge 17& 25/1, and pavilion 23/1)	£44.50
D Salmons (Village Warden duties, January)	£90.00
Cambridgeshire ACRE (annual membership renewal)	£30.00

Mr Bore seconded the proposal and all were agreed that these payments, totalling £164.50, be made and that £165 be transferred from the Deposit Account to the Current Account.

PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT

Dr Grindley reported as follows:

Notice of Appeal:

Mr B Cooper	Application No. S/0931/11/O for outline consent for single dwelling at 2 Hall Close
-------------	---

Planning permission granted:

Mr and Mrs Bailey	Application No. S/i868/11 for a replacement garden room at 20 Barrington Road. Several conditions
-------------------	--

Meldreth where the footfall justifies this). Dr van de Ven said this was of course “courting time” but it was also the most opportune time to get spending priorities on the radar.

3. Application forms to join the Rail User Group were now on-line and at the Meldreth Booking Office.

4. A significant stretch of the A10 footpath between Foxton and Shepreth had now been patched up.

5. The County Council’s proposed budget would be voted through on 21st February. Dr van de Ven said that a useful and constructive aspect of the CCC’s political process was that the main opposition group, of which she was a member, produces an amendment to the proposed budget setting out what it would do differently. This would be scrutinized in a public meeting prior to the vote, which would take place on Friday, 10th February. While the political reality was that the amendment stood no chance, it could start conversations. The main headlines in the proposed budget were as follows with an amendment to be published tomorrow.

- a) Council tax rise of 2.95% over the Pickle’s Promise.
- b) Capital borrowing plan for highways of £90 million over three years, which she said would not astonishingly improve roads but would manage what was now in existence. Deterioration of the network due to chronic underfunding was a deep-rooted problem.
- c) Capital borrowing for a new rail station at Chesterton (Cambridge Science Park) which had cross party support locally and nationally. There would be a return on investment within a relatively short period of time due to incorporation of the project in the next long-term rail franchise.
- d) Capital borrowing for a £29 million by-pass at Ely, to allow the closure of the level crossing where regional freight lorry traffic was currently log-jammed. This was favoured by the administration over a much cheaper and viable improvement to the existing underpass. The difference in cost was £13 million and there would be no return on investment. A range of contributions to the cost of the project was anticipated but would fall short of the total cost. Network Rail’s expected contribution would be about £1 million.
- e) Continuing £1 million per year expenditure for the Guided Bus contingency fund should the contractual dispute with Bam Nutall (not expected to be resolved for some years) be unfavourable to the council (risk was between £50-£80 million).
- f) £20 million budgeted for superfast Broadband, speeding up the work being carried out by the telecoms industry.
- g) Continuing withdrawal of all bus subsidies (£2.5 million over three years) and investment (£1.5 million) in the new “Cambridgeshire Future Transport” project. (*See Briefing Note below*)
- h) Bikeability - the budget was promoting free cycle training. In fact this was by simply not levying an administration charge of £15 per head for high

quality cycle training (that is fully funded by government) as it had been doing this year.

- i) Adult Social Care was facing tremendous continuing underfunding issues on a scale that was quite difficult to fathom. *A Judicial Review regarding funding of disability care packages was heard at the Supreme Court on 8th-9th February that could have massive implications for every local authority.*
- j) In Children's Services the funding of rural children's centres was being cut back and outreach work would be affected.
- k) Academies top-slicing had caused a serious funding shortfall for those schools remaining under local authority control leaving CCC about £3 million short.

Dr van de Ven then gave a report on bus transport, which is given in full below:

“Cambridgeshire County Council’s bus consultation, subsidy cuts, and what next

A year ago, Cambridgeshire County Council made national news for its decision to cut 100% of bus subsidies.

This decision was made without consulting bus users or even bus operators, and was immediately followed by an application for Judicial Review. The application was withdrawn only when the council made it clear that it would conduct a retrospective consultation, which ran from September – December 2011.

In July the council lost its £5 million bid to the Local Sustainable Transport Fund on direct account of its subsidy cuts, and was instructed by Department for Transport not to include any Community Transport component in its next bid – a refusal by the Transport Minister to plug holes on the council's behalf.

In August, the council was cited in the Parliamentary Select Committee's report *Bus Services after the Spending Review* as the most draconian in England in its elimination of bus subsidies.

In January 2012 the council published the results of its retrospective bus consultation, which confirmed that the people who will be most affected by withdrawing bus subsidies are the disabled, the elderly and those needing to get to work. Of those affected, 37% have no other means of transport at all. Only 3% of respondents supported the withdrawal of subsidies.

In January the council also announced proposals for continuing with the planned phased withdrawal of all bus subsidies (£2.7 million) and simultaneous investment (£1.5 million) in new transport arrangements, under a project called Cambridgeshire Future Transport.

Cambridgeshire Future Transport and the Duxford Pilot

What Cambridgeshire Future Transport (CFT) means is vague, but in its one year of life so far (conceived as it was in the same week as the 100% bus cuts decision) it has aimed to set up profit-making mini transport franchises. The cost of CFT so far has been £160K, covering the set-up of the 'Local Links' minibuss brand, as of December 6th based on a pilot basis in Duxford. Journeys can be booked through this website <http://www.cambridgeshirelocal.co.uk/>.

The franchise model is supposed to hinge on pooling multiple types of transport need: a home-to-school or SEN contract that has the local vehicle doing school journeys, or a health transport contract taking people to hospital or the local surgery, or a commuter shuttle to the local rail station. At other times of the day the vehicle could be taking non-working people shopping or young people to youth club. Problems: 1) different sized vehicles needed for these purposes 2) if vehicle too small can't accommodate need 3) if vehicle too small can't get enough paying passengers to create adequate income.

At Duxford, the cost of a ride to the rail station was initially set at more than the cost of parking at nearby Whittlesford station. The NHS has so far refused to engage with CFT and thus there is no health transport structured into the Duxford pilot. The Special Educational Needs transport contract upon which the Duxford pilot is designed does not come into play until February. For most of the day the Duxford pilot will not take bookings for individual journeys, only group journeys. So the pilot has started with no legs to stand on.

Indeed, in the Duxford pilot's first seven weeks, only one passenger used the pilot. She travelled on three occasions from Sawston to Whittlesford Station. As the route had not yet been registered, no charge could be made.

Half a dozen other pilot ideas in Cambridgeshire have failed to get off the ground. No serious market research or transport needs assessment has preceded any of these attempts. The next pilot is set for West Huntingdon, officially 'end of January.'

What to do with bus subsidies

A fundamental principle that the council's leadership has slowly come to terms with is that in parts of the county, some level of transport subsidy is necessary. But there are contradictions in what the council proposes to do next: the franchise pilots are to be run at nil cost to the prospective franchisee – all costs are covered by Cambridgeshire taxpayers. Building on a period of total public subsidy, the franchise model then seeks to make profitable businesses where no commercial operator has managed to do so. Apart from anything this experiment is speculative and risky, in the face of urgent transport needs of those who will be left stranded by discontinued subsidized bus services.

Bus subsidies will be withdrawn in phases, six monthly, with the first set to be identified at March 6th Cabinet and to be implemented September 2012. Once subsidized services are identified for withdrawal, the council's CFT team will 'engage with local communities' about their transport needs. This will be challenging – many people will want their buses retained.

Also on March 6th, a list of subsidized bus services that are nearly commercially viable will be identified by council officers and bus operators, with a view to adjusting them, taking out the non-commercial bits and retaining the commercially viable sections of the route. It is not clear how many currently subsidized services fall into this category but indications are that this will be a slim component of future transport provision. Subsidized buses are regarded by the council as inappropriate and out-of-date in terms of rural transport provision.

Where do existing Community Transport providers fit in?

When the council made its bus subsidy cuts decision in February 2011, it suggested that Community Transport providers might help fill the resulting transport gaps.

Community Transport providers, which are listed on the council's website (<http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/transport/around/communitytransport/>), include organizations like Cambridge Dial-a-Ride, volunteer community car schemes like Foxton car scheme, and larger organizations like Royston and District Community Transport which coordinates both volunteer drivers with their own cars, and mini-bus transport with paid drivers, to provide lifts for people who cannot access public transport. 66% of Royston and District CT's lifts are health-related – so journeys to Addenbrookes or the local surgery. The Care Network helps to coordinate and develop new community car schemes. Council support for this work is questionable: earlier this year, £50K of Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) government funding for the Care Network's development of new community car schemes in South Cambridgeshire was held back by the County Council in its banker's role, for diversion to a new high speed Broadband project.

The Council has invited Community Transport providers to come and talk to them about taking part in the CFT franchise endeavour, but it has not approached Community Transport providers as to what support they need to build upon the services they provide.

Community Transport providers have not yet seen any of the two £258K government grants for Community Transport which have been passed to the County Council for dissemination – again in its banker's role. Those funds are being retained by the County Council for CFT.

Conclusion

A fundamental shortcoming of Cambridgeshire Future Transport is that it does nothing for parts of the county that have no subsidized bus services to begin with. Bus subsidies have been removed over the years, prior to the 100% cuts decision in 2011, and rural transport provision is patchy. CFT only deals in a systematic way with the withdrawal of remaining bus subsidies. It is structured upon random remnants of a historic collection of bus subsidies. In no way does it take a comprehensive view of Cambridgeshire transport needs, something which is badly needed.

Subsidized bus services in Melbourn County Division: (Substantial bus service withdrawal in 2003.)

The 139 bus connecting Foxton, Shepreth, Meldreth, Melbourn and Royston was withdrawn in the April 2011 subsidy cuts.

The 128 Charter Travel bus connecting Shepreth, Meldreth and Melbourn to Royston for late morning shopping and well used by pensioners is one of the affected services. The 31 Meridien bus connecting Great Chishill and Heydon to Cambridge, which is used by students and working people, is one of the affected services and one of the most prominent in the public consultation response.

The council's full report on bus subsidy cuts and Cambridgeshire Future Transport: <http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/CMSWebsite/Apps/Committees/AgendaItem.aspx?agendaItemID=4839>

CORRESPONDENCE

The clerk summarised the correspondence received in the past month, which is given in full below:

- 1) SCDC Standards Committee newsletter with Localism Act 2012 update and advice to parish councils on action needed.
- 2) NALC publication entitled "How to shape where you live: a guide to neighbourhood planning". *Passed to CG*
- 3) Letter from Cambridgeshire Age UK enclosing poster promoting knowledge of how to stay warm.
- 4) Publicity material from Glasdon and FLP Sport.

VISITORS' QUESTIONS

Mr Bentinck asked how the improvements to the cycle path were progressing.

Dr Van de Ven said the path did not feature in the County Council's publication including maps of Cambridgeshire cycle paths. The County Council would be willing to put in a narrower path, providing it would not be used by pedestrians. This would cost £1/2 million per kilometre.

Mr Howard reported that arisings from recent tree cutting on the Recreation Ground had been left in place and were being used for dens etc.

Mrs Macintyre said that the debris would be removed when the next bout of tree work was carried out.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mr Barnes suggested the council send a letter of congratulation to the Queen on the occasion of her Diamond Jubilee, but, after some discussion, the proposal was not adopted and instead it as suggested that a tree could be planted to commemorate the jubilee

Mrs Macintyre said the Mr Salmons was worried about the lack of white-lining in the middle of the road at Vicarage Corner. Dr Van de Ven said she would look into this matter.

DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

It was confirmed that the next meeting would be held on **Monday, 8th March 2012** at **7.45pm** in the **Meeting Room** of the **Village Hall**.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.42pm.