

“New Homes Bonus

Last month I reported on my question in Full Council how the County is intending to engage with local residents to decide how to spend the £789,300 which we’re getting for the New Homes Bonus. That is what government expects them to do. I have yet to receive the promised written reply. You will remember that the District Council just stuffed their £800,000 in their pockets. Now I notice from next week’s County cabinet papers that the County is going to trouser their money, too. For now.

Local Transport

The County’s decision to eliminate all bus subsidies has now reached an interesting point. The annual bus subsidy is £2.7million and was to have been removed in four years. The first set of cuts has already taken place.

Now the County has been hit with a judicial review, which claims that the County has failed in its statutory duty to consider the needs of the vulnerable. Also, working through an opaque set of organizations called Core Solutions Group, Cambridgeshire Transport Delivery Group, Cambridgeshire Future Transport and the Transport for Cambridgeshire Partnership the County is working to combine the transport budgets of Health and Education and create a micro-franchise scheme for entrepreneurs to take over where bus companies withdraw services.

Liberal Democrats on the County Council have insisted from the start that a root and branch survey of transport needs should take place and alternatives be ready for when bus subsidies are cut. The County has now decided that the proposed October cuts will not take place but will form part of next year’s budget.

We are trying to work with bus companies and other interested parties to find solutions. But at the moment the future of the 31 is assured until April 2012 at least. As you can imagine, Meridian are not happy bunnies.

Highway Programme Funding Allocation

The County’s cabinet decided this month on the budget for small highway improvements. The annual budget for South Cambridgeshire this year is £50,000. The proposal is that in future the maximum amount the County would contribute per project would be £5,000 with an additional contribution from parish councils of £1 per elector with a maximum of £5,000.

For this year the decision as to which projects would succeed is to be taken by the South Cambridgeshire Traffic Management Area Joint Committee who will try to tackle some of the backlog. From next year it would be “assessed and prioritised by a panel of county councillors drawn from each area.” I spoke at cabinet on this subject and received the answer that the Area Joint Committees would be “reinvigorated”. I have now been told that I was quite right with my suggestion that our Area Joint Committee is likely to be abolished. Addenbrooke’s staff might be interested in that use of the word “reinvigorated”.

Protected Roadside Verges

In Cambridgeshire we used to have many hay meadows with native wild flowers in them. Changes in farming practices mean that these traditional meadows have been lost. Now road verges represent the largest area of unimproved grassland in the county and provide a refuge for a wide range of species including some that are considered to be rare and scarce.

	<p><i>County Highways have nominated 57 Protected Road Verges, of which 38 form part of County Wildlife Sites and 2 form part of SSSIs (statutory designed sites of national importance). One of them is on both sides of Mill Road in Fowlmere. They were all protected with a cutting regime suited to the kinds of plants at each site. In our part of the world we are talking about chalk grassland, so cuts should take place in April and September/October.</i></p> <p><i>Now the County has decided that it can no longer afford to give these verges special attention. The grass will be cut three times a year, just like everywhere else. In most places the cuts will be a metre wide. Where there is a potential visibility problem for motorists the cuts will be wider.</i></p> <p><i>This is sheer vandalism. Many of the verges were already deteriorating and in a few years' time they won't be worth protecting at all.</i></p> <p><i>I have discovered that the cost to the County of changing the cutting schedule for protected verges is £6,500 for a full year. I should very much like your support in protesting against this penny-pinching decision."</i></p> <p>It was agreed that the Clerk would write a letter of support regarding the specialised cutting of protected verges. Cllr Stone to supply the Clerk with the information needed and the Clerk will copy him into the letter. Cllr Stone to supply the Clerk with a map of the verges and Cllr Wragg to look into this further.</p> <p>Street lighting to go on the next Finance meeting agenda and check insurance issues. Cllr Wragg suggested taking a look at the lights lit on evening.</p> <p>Cllr Roberts commended Cllr Stone on his efforts re the bus subsidy cuts and thinks his early intervention had great effect.</p>	<p>Clerk/Cllr Stone / Cllr Wragg</p> <p>Finance Comm</p>
8.	<p>UPDATE ON THE VILLAGE HALL: Cllr Wragg had an e-mail from Michael Bates re the offer from KWS about the donation towards a kitchen. The VH are also applying to the Big Lottery fund for £26,000 to replace all doors and windows. Mr Bates asked if the PC agree to use the £2000 set aside for the VH to pay for new kitchen windows and associated building regulation costs, at the same time as the kitchen work. The PC had no objections and will formally agree once the quotes have been seen. Clerk to report back to Michael Bates.</p>	Clerk
9.	<p>PLANNING COMMITTEE a) Minutes from 17th May 2011</p> <p>MINUTES OF A MEETING OF FOWLMERE PARISH COUNCIL PLANNING COMMITTEE HELD IN THE SCHOOL ROOM, URC, CHAPEL LANE, FOWLMERE ON 17TH MAY 2011 AT 7:15PM</p> <p>PRESENT: Cllr D Roberts (Chair), Cllr O Regan, Cllr J Peacock, Cllr N Webb and Mrs J Wright (Clerk)</p> <p>APOLOGIES: Cllr M Sunderland and Cllr L Wragg</p>	

	<p>1. Declarations of interest (if any) Before discussion, Cllr Roberts declared that if an application is later placed before South Cambridgeshire District Council she will approach any new information afresh.</p> <p>Cllr N Webb declared a personal and prejudicial interest as the people at item 2 are friends and left the room at 7:20pm</p> <p>2. C/11/40/029 Application to undertake work on trees situated in a Conservation Area Mere House, Rectory Lane, Fowlmere Mr R Care (3 New Farm Close)</p> <p>Fowlmere Parish Council would seek the advice of the SCDC Tree Officer as to whether this work is necessary. The Parish Council can only assume the applicants have sought permission from the owners of Mere House to undertake the work.</p> <p>Cllr N Webb returned to the room at 7:25pm</p> <p>3. Other Matters and Updates Other Matters and Updates <i>(for information only)</i></p> <p>There were no further matters for discussion.</p> <p>The meeting closed at 7:27pm</p> <p style="text-align: center;">*****</p> <p>The minutes were agreed as a correct record and were signed accordingly</p> <p>b) Affordable Housing in Fowlmere Update – Thriplow Triangle The Clerk has heard from Circle Anglia to say that the project is progressing and now has a builder on board. The subject of supporting a second site was raised but Cllr Roberts said the PC would need to see the current project up and running and only following its success over a couple of years, would the PC look at any additional applications for an additional site. This is the policy position, so there is little point in any housing associations applying for additional sites before 2 years of full occupancy at the Thriplow Triangle have passed.</p> <p>The Clerk to forward the formal planning approval to all Councillors from SCDC.</p> <p>The meeting was opened to members of the public.</p> <p>Mrs Flynn questioned the conditions for the Thriplow Triangle, did they cover all the conditions the Parish Council required? Cllr Roberts read out the document and it was felt that it covered all aspects.</p> <p>Mr Bottrill asked about the Foxton car scheme (following bus subsidy cuts) – is this something that Fowlmere can share, even as a temporary measure? The PC will need to look into this, if the attempts to get a PO service in the village fails – initially via a notice on the board.</p>	Clerk
10.	<p>BURIAL BOARD: Following a historical issue in the alignment of one of the rows in the cemetery, which has just come to light, it was agreed that the PC should reimburse all monies paid, (except for a £1 to show ownership, to demonstrate he has purchased it) to a resident affected by the issue. Cllr Wragg proposed and Cllr O'Regan seconded it, all agreed that the Clerk to send a letter of apology and regret from the PC</p>	Clerk

	<p>A time of 6pm on Sunday 3rd July was agreed to meet at the cemetery to discuss further.</p> <p>It was also suggested that Chris Wall is asked to quote to clear the weeds from the new hedge at the cemetery extension (following a look on the 6th July)</p>	<p>All</p> <p>Clerk</p>
11.	<p>TREES, GRASS AND HEDGES:</p> <p>a) Moat Trees</p> <p>The issue of moat trees was raised and there are lots of large pieces of debris in the Moat area which need to be removed. Clerk to ask Chris Wall to be asked to quote for the removal of the debris.</p> <p>Concern was raised about some raised decking protruding into the Moat Area – Cllr Roberts to seek advice from SCDC.</p> <p>The PC were fine to progress payment for Malcolm Busby for his consultancy work in the Moat area, proposed by Cllr Wragg and seconded by Cllr O'Regan– all agreed.</p> <p>It was agreed that the overhanging trees in Ryecroft Lane should be trimmed back, in stages to coincide with work undertaken in the Moat area.</p> <p>SCDC should be asked to notify PC's when work is to be undertaken to avoid any confusion – ie Dovehouse Close.</p> <p>Clerk to respond back to Mrs Drummond to say that we will maintain a watching brief on the situation. Cllr O'Regan to look.</p> <p>Following a request from the PTFA at the school re parking on the Butts for the 150th celebrations, the PC agreed that parking would not be permitted – all were in agreement. Clerk to respond back to the PTFA</p>	<p>Clerk</p> <p>Cllr Roberts</p> <p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p>
12.	<p>FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES:</p> <p>a) Audit. The Clerk reported that the internal audit had been successful and she would send the paperwork off for the external audit.</p> <p>b) Post Office This item was discussed earlier</p> <p>c) Playground Repairs. Following the ROSPA recommendations, the usual contractor who the PC have used previously is no longer operational. It was suggested the Clerk makes contact with the person Foxton PC use.</p> <p>The Clerk read out a request from Appleacre Park about supplying an elderly resident there with a panic button. All agreed to progress the installation of a new security alarm, Clerk to organise.</p>	<p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p>
13.	<p>CORRESPONDENCE: Re the Accorsini Memorial stone complaint letter, Cllr Roberts requested the Clerk write and say it has been discussed, the situation is that wherever we can, we do like to oblige people's choices at the cemetery and this correspondence is now closed.</p>	<p>Clerk</p>
14.	<p>ACTION LIST UPDATE: The Action List was updated accordingly</p>	

15.	<p>OTHER MATTERS: Re the stile on the footpath to Foxton, Cllr Roberts to ask about whether there needs to be 'flat' access at all (SCDC)</p> <p>The meeting closed at 21:20pm</p> <p>The date of the next PC Meeting is 7:30pm Tuesday 19th July 2011 at the URC, Chapel Lane, (with a Finance Meeting first at 7:00pm)</p>	