

Impington Council - Winter 2008

Impington Needs YOU!



While there are regular elections for District and County Councillors, MPs and MEPs, it may seem that the Parish Council proceeds without an election. In fact the Council was last elected in 2003, and is coming up for re-election in May.

The Parish Council spends over £100,000 of your money each year: running the Recreation Ground and Homefield Park (jointly with Histon), the Burial Ground; organising a wide range of environmental work; and supporting youth work. It aims to make a difference, and make our voice (and your concerns) heard at District and County level.

Although there are administrative and grounds staff doing sterling work to support the aims of the Council, much depends on Councillors themselves.

This is where **you** come in!

Impington Council has 11 Councillors - though we currently have one vacancy - and whilst some of the existing Councillors may stand for re-election, not all will. So, **there will definitely be vacancies to fill** - and if enough people are interested, there would be a vote at the same time as the coming District election.

Are you interested? It's an opportunity to make a difference to our community and to influence how the village evolves and changes for the better! Councillors have to attend Council meetings, and can join one or more committees, where much of the real work is done. How much of your time it takes is very dependent on how much time you want to give it and how involved you want to be.

In order to maintain our Quality Status we need to have at least 11 people nominated for the coming election - so please do consider putting your name forward!

Still interested? Then please talk to our Clerk, Angela Young, or any Parish Councillor (See list ☞)

You'd like to help, but can't be sure that you can make the time to be a full Councillor?

The Council would really welcome assistance from anyone with some time to spare. If you've got skills that could help - such as experience or a background in planning, traffic, PR, design, health and safety, noise, environment, horticultural - you name it, we've needed it recently! Even if you've only got time to read some of the documents that we see from time to time, and pick out areas that are relevant to us, that would allow Councillors and others to focus their time and be invaluable.

Again, if you feel you could help in any way, please contact Angela, or any Councillor.



Artist's Gate for Orchard Park Primary School, Arbury Park

The newly installed gate was designed and built by the artist blacksmith Adam Booth, in consultation with Head teacher Jenny Russon, Andy O'Hanlon (SCDC) and Joanna Gray (CCC). The design is based on fen poppies and also has coloured glass 'bugs' on the grass stems. Gallaghers will be asked to seed the mound with wild flowers including fen poppies.



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Impington

Retaining it's Place in History

Despite what some people think, Impington Parish Council is completely separate from Histon Parish Council. Although we are often lumped together as "Histon and Impington", the Impington councillors are proud of their independence and the special history of our village; they try to raise the profile of the village whenever possible.

While Impington Parish Council has a different set of issues, priorities and goals to those of Histon and its own way of doing things, there are many areas where we work together with Histon Parish Council for our mutual benefit.

The two parishes have some joint interests; the burial ground, the war memorial, Homefield Park, and the Recreation Ground to name a few. The management and upkeep of these facilities is a joint responsibility and is shared financially between the two councils, and the two councils often act together to provide a louder and stronger voice when responding to consultations, large planning applications or traffic related issues. We also jointly employ a team of 4 staff. This delicate balance of being separate yet working together is reviewed periodically to ensure we are not duplicating effort or costs. There are also periodic reviews as to whether the two villages would be better served by a single council. The last review was held in 1979 and no changes were proposed at that time, but the subject is under discussion again by both Impington and Histon Parish councils, to see whether the situation has changed sufficiently to warrant another in-depth review.



The Village Sign Repainted

Eagle eyed residents will have noticed that the village sign, on the corner of New Road and Bridge Road, has been repainted.

Because the sign gets a lot of sun, keeping it in good repair is an ongoing concern for the Council, and it has to be repainted on a regular basis. It was originally designed and painted by Ray Malmstrom who was, until his retirement, Head of Art at the Village College.

Over the years, artistic licence had led to small changes in colour and detail from the original version. Research in the Council's archives has found Ray's original drawings, and this repainting is faithful to the artist's original design. In addition, aluminium, rather than timber, has been used for the base in order to increase the life of the sign.

If you are interested in the details of the design, more information is available at www.hisimp.net/history/impsign.htm



Planning, Planning and More Planning

How Many More Homes Do We Really need?

The checking of Planning Applications and the consideration of wider issues related to planning form a significant part of the work of the Parish Council. Although it does involve looking at small, individual applications for residential extensions, conservatories, etc., more importantly, it also includes the consideration of issues relating to larger developments which, although they are not in the village itself, will affect our village community.

Similarly, proposals relating to new planning policy are examined in minute detail, so that decisions made by the City, District or County Councils, and, in some cases, Cambridge City Council, are not to the detriment of our village. This examination process considers data relating to traffic, noise and light pollution, flood risk assessment relating to drainage (water and sewage) as well as other material matters, such as access to public transport and local amenities. Because much of the infrastructure serves both Impington and Histon, some responses are made jointly with Histon PC.

In a recent newsletter, a retiring councillor, Trevor Silk, highlighted many of the larger planning issues dealt with during his term of office from 1979 up until 1997. Since then there has been an ever increasing number of planning applications and consultations to deal with. In the past ten years, for example, the Parish Council has been involved in planning applications and consultations relating to:

- The Cambridge to Huntingdon Multi-Modal Transport Strategy (CHUMMS)
- Traffic Calming
- Closure of New Road at the B1049
- Community Appraisals
- Impington Church Wall
- The Recreation Ground Project
- The Local Development Framework

A significant amount of work has been (and is still being) carried out in relation to individual proposals at Arbury Park, including the provision of Public Open Spaces, the Hotel, the Civic Square, the sports facilities and a wind powered generator as well as the residential units.

All Impington councillors are members of the planning committee and contribute to the council's recommendations to South Cambs planning department. Our more experienced councillors, who have expert knowledge in key areas, attend and speak at the SCDC planning committee and sometimes present evidence at public inquiries. Our current workload is challenging and includes:

- Guided Bus (crossings at Park Lane and Station Road, traffic and parking issues)
- Arbury Park (900+ homes, hotel, school, local retail centre, business units)
- NIAB Park Farm (seed trials expansion)
- NW Cambridge David Wilson Homes (1800 houses in south west of parish)
- Milton Park and Ride (effect of increased traffic and parking)

- Northstowe (impact on the village relating to drainage, traffic etc)
- Proposed Town of Mereham
- Redevelopment of Unwins site
- Mereway (chicken farm) Change of use to distribution depot or small industrial units
- Manor Farm (Chivers) (conversion to small industrial units)
- HFC/Cambs FA development

The amount of documentation that has had to be read in relation to Arbury Park is formidable—and Northstowe will be more than ten times bigger!

The enormity of this task has led to the formation of a Joint Action Group (JAG) which has members from the councils of many of the nearby Parishes, including Impington, Histon, Girton, Cottenham, Oakington, Longstanton and Willingham. The aim of the JAG is to represent these parish councils as a body in relation to issues which affect them all and to ensure that the impact of one development is not dealt with in isolation from the impact of other nearby developments - in other words it will try to ensure that the District and County Planning departments deal with 'planning' across South Cambs in a 'joined up' way rather than by a piecemeal approach.



War Memorial Makeover



You may have noticed that the War Memorial has received some long overdue care and attention, and is now looking much smarter than before it was refurbished in the Summer. Its stone work has been cleaned and the lettering repainted and it now looks quite magnificent.

The work was completed in time for for the Remembrance Day Parade on 11th November, which was attended by around 250

people, despite the chilly wind. As usual the local Guides, Scouts, Cubs, Brownies and other youth groups were all on parade as well as representatives of the local armed service Volunteer units. The Honour Guard was provided by the CCF RAF and the music provided by the Salvation Army Band. Wreaths were laid by the Chairmen of the two Parish Councils, as well as by members of the organisations represented at the service and some individual family members. The parade was followed by a Civic service in St Andrew's Church, Histon.



Who Are We? What Do We Want to Be?

We might have clear answers to these questions as individuals, but what about as a community? Do we know what facilities we enjoy, and the benefits of living here? More importantly, can we identify what is important to the community for the future of the Histon and Impington settlement?

Impington Parish Council's Position

At its December meeting, the Parish Council agreed to proceed to engage with the community in an attempt to produce a Parish Plan. Histon Parish Council support and involvement is to be sought.

A Parish plan can, however, only be valid if it has the support of the community and the community are prepared to assist the Parish Council in this important project. Councillors Mark Cope and Brian Ing have agreed to set the project in motion, and to be involved in and support the project through to the end; the Parish Council is now, therefore, seeking volunteers and support.

How can I be involved?

The Parish Council would be delighted to hear from residents who wish to participate. This is an opportunity for you to contribute to the community that we all enjoy and benefit from, without the need for a longer term commitment such as serving on the Parish Council. If you think that you can help in any way, please contact the Parish Council Office (01223 235906) in the first instance.

Hopefully, all community groups would wish to be involved in this exercise. Could we please ask you all to make sure that any groups you belong to have the Parish Plan on their agenda. The project team will need informed suggestions and feedback and the existing community groups are a valuable source of this support.

Do we have issues we need to consider?

If we had few issues to address and the way ahead was straightforward and obvious, there would be little advantage in having a Parish Plan. However, the communities are currently challenged by many issues. The following list is by no means complete but does demonstrate that the community needs to address some complex and difficult problems:

- Housing, especially affordable housing for the current members of our community
- Maintaining the full age range distribution in the village (to justify the full educational provision if
- nothing else)
- Transport: public (including the Guided Bus), sensible car use and provision of alternatives.
- Balance of local employment and population
- Provision of public open space (the two villages together are well below the expected provision)
- Lack of community facilities, in particular a Community Centre
- Retention of the retail facilities in the village
- Impact of major developments in the area
- Maintaining physical separation from other settlements
- Impact of the move of the Cowley Road park and ride.

What do we do at the moment?

We have recently dealt with numerous proposals to impose significant levels of change upon us. The Parish Councils, often with powerful local support, have had to react to these proposed changes and have tried to reduce the effects of them upon our community. Examples include the development of Arbury Park (which is in the parish of Impington), the plans for and the disruption caused by the implementation of the guided bus project, and traffic calming in Station Road

The reaction to these proposals has often centred upon particular issues and, unfortunately, being reactive is often seen as a short term view and NIMBY-ism (Not In My Back Yard). We currently have an outline proposal from a developer for housing on the old Unwin's site, which proposes a higher housing density than anywhere else in the two parishes, but we have no Parish policy on how we wish the community to develop in the long term, against which to judge this proposal.

What are the Benefits of having a Parish Plan?

Firstly, the opportunity to debate and reach agreement, throughout the process, will hopefully result in the Parish having a community with a united view and an increased sense of belonging.

We would collect a great deal of demographic information on the parishes, as well as opinion and suggestions as to what must be retained and what needs to be improved upon. This information will both guide the planning process and be invaluable as we implement the plan. It will also enable us to respond more comprehensively to other agencies who are making plans which might affect us.

Furthermore we would end up with some of our own policies, which we can use to argue the case for our own proposals in future. Obviously, they could not be used to oppose government policy (such as the minimum number of dwellings per hectare in a new development) but could be used in any discussions with developers, as well as during the planning application process, to influence the outcome of any proposals.

By including the architectural standards (that would have previously been included in a Village Design Statement), we can influence the look of new developments and alterations so that there is consistency through both parishes.

If we do not plan our own future, we should not be surprised if others try to plan it for us. If, however, we have a formed and coherent policy, which is endorsed by the District and County Councils, then they will know what we want, and can frame their proposals to suit – hopefully we will then get the community that we deserve.

For those with Internet access, the Dullingham Parish Plan, which has won awards as a good example of a Parish Plan, can be found at:

www.dullingham.com/plan_bdy.htm

How do we go about it?

The government has set out the process which enables a community to set out its aspirations for the future in a Parish Plan and there are good reasons for our community to produce one. The costs of production, information gathering and expenses can be funded. Additionally there are numerous examples of other village Parish Plans and individuals who can advise us on best practice and how to go about producing our own.

To be effective, a Parish Plan must be produced by the community as a whole. It is NOT produced by a Parish Council in isolation from their electorate. Of course, Councillors can and should be involved in the project, and it must be adopted by the Parish Council before it becomes an official document, but the "we" in the question refers to all of us, not just the Parish Council.

The production of a Parish Plan needs a project team supported by many organisations and individuals, and typically takes about two years to produce. This timescale allows for information gathering, consultations, analysis, feedback and the creation of policies, priorities and statements of intent.

A Parish Plan needs both a strong information base and feedback on issues and proposals. You will receive requests from the project team (or the community groups you belong to) - your diligence and support will add value and strengthen the validity of the resultant Parish Plan.



Innovations in Commuter Transport



This sign appeared in Park Lane last October; we were intrigued to discover what it meant.

We are reliably informed that a 'pedestrain' is an adult, long distance version of the 'walking bus' which is used in many cities to take children to school.

The 'pedestrain' can be used by commuters free of charge and is a zero carbon-footprint transportation system. To use the 'pedestrain' all you have to do is congregate with other commuters at a bus stop and wait. Eventually someone will say "I've had enough of this waiting, I'm going to walk". Invariably, several other people will say "I'm going with you" and set off, instantly forming a 'pedestrain'.

If this form of transport becomes popular, then the guided bus-way will be a particularly efficient route to take to the science park.



What do you think?

The feedback we've had from previous issues has been greatly appreciated and very valuable - we've done our best to act on it and take up issues with the relevant

authorities. We'd be delighted to hear from you on any topics raised, or other matters of concern. Do remember also that **all** Parish Council meetings are open to the public.