

Impington Parish Council



Annual report 2011



May 2011

Impington Parish Council

The Parish Office

Histon & Impington Recreation Ground

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Finance Committee

Finance Committee is made up of:

Parish Council Chairman Denis Payne, Brian Ing, Hooda Abdullah, Neil Davies and Geoff Payne. The Responsible Financial Officer is the Clerk Angela Young, and the Internal Auditor Mr Gerry Whitfield.

All Finance meetings are open to the public. In January each year the Committee meets to make recommendations on setting the Precept to be requested for the coming year from South Cambridgeshire District Council and the amount received during the year to March 2011 was £110,350. This sum covers all expenditure on the Recreation Ground, Burial Ground, War Memorial and open spaces in the village, as well as a wide range of administration costs, youth facilities expenditure and traffic related costs. In recent years specific reserve funds have been set up for instance for Community Facilities, allotment land acquisition and other capital schemes.

Next year the Precept has been set for £112,500. Particularly at this time of cuts in County and District spend the committee spent some time debating whether, and if so, how much, Parish funds should "fill the gap". A front page article in the Courier produced only a few, inconclusive, results. The committee's policy was to budget for increases in youth and adult provision, but to also keep any increase to the minimum.

The quarterly meetings have dealt with the following items during the year:

- Ongoing reviews of policies and documents including Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Strategy. There is a new set of model standing orders, and likely changes in the coming year to the code of conduct. This is likely, therefore, to become a standing item;
- Overseeing the preparation of the annual audit;
- Checks continue to be made on the best investment of reserves in an unstable financial climate¹;
- Health & Safety - Risk Assessments reviewed annually;
- Introduction of a Donations Policy, which Council has asked to be reviewed with the potential for widening its scope;
- The new Risk Assessment form is being used by those hiring the Recreation Ground and Homefield Park
- The committee have recommended the closure of the Burgoynes Charity and transfer of its assets to another village charity. This is likely to be started in the near future. Taking forward the Children's Playground Charity is more complex. The committee is grateful for the considerable assistance of a local resident in getting this far;
- An Information Risk Report has been completed. An early action has been the photographing of Burial Ground Ledgers. Other actions are pending new employment policies being introduced;
- Selective upgrades have been made to office networking, PCs and printers;
- In line with County and District Councils all expenditure items over £500 are on the web - though they are actually also listed on minutes of meetings (as well as lower spend items);
- Office staffing - we have taken the opportunity to take on board a further member of part time staff;
- Section 106 moneys (from housing developments) are being received and earmarked for recreation and facilities as required by the District Council.

¹ Notwithstanding new accounts having been introduced by the Cambridge Building Society the best rates are not to be found locally.

Plans are in place to:

- Look at some new policies, including expenses;
- Revisit the review of registration of property
- Complete the computerised Asset Register
- Review procurement procedures

Councillor Denis Payne
Chairman Finance Committee

Planning Committee

All members of the Council are on the Planning Committee. The meetings are open to the public. If a planning application affects you, we encourage you to make your views known to the planning authority, South Cambs District Council. In addition please inform the Parish Council; you are most welcome to present your views to us when we are considering the application.

The work for the main village of Impington covered:

- Small developments
- Individual Houses
- Extensions and additions to existing properties not with the permitted development rights of the properties.
- Responding to consultations on matters of planning policy issued by South Cambs District Council, Cambridgeshire County Council and the City of Cambridge Council.
- Responding to proposals by the Planning Inspectorate
- Working with Residents affected by the Guided Bus to ensure noise barriers, lighting, landscaping and other impacts (often defined in planning applications by the County to the District Council) are managed successfully and to the residents' satisfaction where possible.
- Preliminary discussions with developers over major sites: this work will increase under the new proposed planning regimes which make local consultation before submission mandatory

As an area we are under a government requirement to build a considerable number of new houses (46,000 by 2030 in the Cambridge sub area, the target number has been unaffected by the recession but the target date has been slipped) of which three quarters are required for new residents of the area (mainly from other parts of the UK). IPC recognises the need for housing, especially affordable housing, but strongly believe that the new development needs to take cognisance of existing development, the facilities and the infrastructure to support the new and existing residents, the need for employment opportunities in the vicinity of the houses to reduce transport needs (and people's "waste" time travelling) and above all the need to maintain and grow a community for all the people. We argue that a short term fix of the housing need should not be used to create long term problems for the future.

Some applications have received considerable attention and are worth reporting separately:-

- Merrington Place (named after the former farming owner of the land after consultation with the Parish Council and its history adviser) was granted planning permission in a previous year despite the Parish Council wishing to keep the site as

"employment" use. Despite this inauspicious start the relationships with the developer have been exemplary, with them consulting us on many aspects (e.g. the name as mentioned above) and proudly showing representatives the site as development progressed. The new residents to the village, welcome to them, received a first version of a village information pack developed by the Parish Council office.

- A further application has now been granted for the second part of this development (running behind the western end of Impington Lane). The developer showed the Full Council their initial plans and even took some of our suggestions into the application made to SCDC. One of these was the inclusion of a community orchard
- A proposal was made for an infill development out of character to a street scene (and badly affecting neighbours' amenity) which had the support of the planning officer at SCDC. The Parish Council strongly felt this was inappropriate development and convinced the SCDC Planning Committee. The applicant made an appeal to the Planning Inspectorate which was unsuccessful. At the time of writing a much more sympathetic (and more neighbour friendly) proposal is under consideration.
- We also undertook considerable preparation work for the A14 upgrade enquiry before the new coalition government cancelled the scheme. We were grateful for the offer of pro bono support from a resident QC. The Highways Agency has considerable budgets for legal teams and technical advice: it is a David and Goliath situation for the Parish Council, with minuscule budgets by comparison, to argue against their proposals

The Planning Committee has found it necessary to meet for a full evening almost twice a month in the last year, as well as needing the preparation of supporting papers prepared outside the meetings. In effect, Planning Committee takes about half the time made available to the Parish Council by the volunteer Councillors.

The Coalition Government proposals for changes in planning processes (mainly but not only in the Localism Bill currently being debated in Parliament) has many new demands on Parish Councils (e.g. Local Development orders, Right to develop, compulsory consultation on major developments, local development plans to name but a few) not only in time but in necessary expertise. We will await developments in the proposals and consider how we should respond during the next twelve months.

*Councillor Brian Ing
Chairman Planning Committee*

Youth Committee Report

The past year has been a mixture of consolidation of past successes and planning for the uncertainty of the future following 30% reductions in funding for youth work locally as a result of cuts to public service demanded by the new government.

For 2010-11 we budgeted to maintain and extend the clubs and activities initiated in the previous 12 months – all building stronger relationships between our committee, our youth workers and the young people in the villages. We saw increased participation and leaps in confidence as groups of young people performed in public at the Junction to gain their bronze Arts Award and a team of young reporters contributed monthly to give a 'young persons viewpoint' in the local community newspaper, the Histon and Impington Courier.

The young people also continued to support the Thursday Sports Club on the Recreation Ground and the Connections Bus which visited IVC on Friday evenings. On a less positive side we have not yet managed to realise the potential of the use of the Lodge building at

IVC which, although now in college ownership, remains unfurnished and unused. We continue to press for this facility to be brought into use for the benefit of our young people until such time as a larger, permanent, dedicated building for youth work is available.

In September we received a request from a group of skateboarders and BMX riders who wanted a site somewhere in the villages in which to practise their sport. We are working with them to identify a site, design the layout and raise funds. The need for provision for skateboarders and BMX riders remains the one constant during my many years involvement with the youth committee. Maybe next year this project will succeed.

Throughout the year we have also been supported by our local PCSO, Tony Martin, who often drops in to the Connections Bus and frequently meets and talks to young people out and about around the village. He is an extra pair of eyes and ears and sometimes is able to provide us with first hand information on what some of the young people are thinking.

The restructuring of the Youth and Connexions services in the county in answer to the Government's funding cuts was completed in January this year. We are fortunate that both our locality manager Paula Mayes and our senior youth worker Andrea Cramp retained positions in the new structure. However the focus of youth work delivery is much changed with only those most in need and the most vulnerable being targeted. This means that there is now a greater need for the Parish Councils and the 'Big Society' to provide the much needed open access to activities for our young people. With this in mind our budget for next year is built to focus on those current activities which would not be justified for funding by the Youth Service under their new prioritisation guidelines.

*Councillor Hooda Abdullah
Histon & Impington Youth Committee*

Highways Traffic & Transport Committee (supplied by Histon PC)

This was my first year as Chair, and so I'd firstly like to thank all attendees for their support.

The first item of the year was to increase the quorate level from 2 to 3, bringing it in line with current guidance, and I feel rightfully so. This does however mean that anything other than a full turnout is potentially a problem. To this end I would like to suggest a further one or two (voting) members be formally added to the committee.

Impington members regularly (and thankfully) attend, and this is a demonstration of the two Councils working together; conversely with no equivalent Committee for Impington an inconsistency is highlighted. I believe this would be an area where a Joining would greatly clarify and simplify governance across the two Villages.

I am attempting to address the interest in the Committee with a programme of invited speakers. A talk by the Chair of the Cambridgeshire Advanced Drivers and Riders (affiliated to RoSPA) is due later this month. I would also be keen to invite a talk by a local initiative with national coverage, CycleStreet.net which provides comprehensive route planning for cyclists.

The main issues dealt with throughout the year have been:

- Work on the B1049: new speed limits and cycleways
- Ongoing discussions on a 'Crossing by the Green'
- Removal of a parking space on The Green
- Various requests for signage by residents

- Stagecoach Issues
- Safety concerns around School entrances

The Committee as a whole has been wary of proposals for new signs as a way of addressing issues as this can lead to a cluttering of the 'street scene', and it is arguable whether drivers who are causing problems are likely to take notice. There are also currently deliberate experiments (e.g. New Road in Impington) with removing a lot of road markings to try to encourage a natural flow and this concurs with newer national guidance of reducing 'street furniture'.

With budgetary constraints the story at all tiers of Government, and epitomised by the abatement of the County's AJC (Area Joint Committee), the Parish Council is ultimately left with the dilemma of whether to pursue vital safety improvement works for the village such as a new Crossing at the Green. For the foreseeable future lesser schemes may well have to take a back seat, or be funded by third party contributions.

We have recently had issues raised by a number of schools in the area, but it is far more preferable to tackle the cause of these issues rather than their symptoms. To this end the institution must be an active partner in the solution.

Cllr David Legge
Chairman HT & T Committee

Histon & Impington Mobile Warden Scheme

This scheme is now run for us by 'Age UK'. 'Age Concern' and 'Age UK' have now amalgamated under the name of 'Age UK' but the personnel have remained the same. The scheme is designed to help elderly people continue to live at home for as long as possible. Our Warden, Mrs Gillian Berry, who has the advantage of living in the village, has been in post for well over a year now and is really enjoying the work. She feels she has good relations with her clients and has been very active on the new 'Older Peoples' Forum' doing considerable research into current and future numbers of elderly residents. She has also given a talk recently about the MWS to the St Andrews Men's Group, as she feels it is much harder to make contact with men who may need help.

At the moment she is looking after 16 people, 1 man and 15 women. Of these 5 are from Impington and 11 from Histon. There are 2 people on the waiting list. During the cold weather she found her work load was increased as several of her clients found it difficult to go out but she was able to ensure that they were all able to receive the help they needed. At Christmas the Link Committee provided the funds for her to buy a small present for each of them. At present the focus of extra help is on assisting with the digital changeover and the Census returns

Our new the Age UK Co-ordinator is Melanie Murdoch who has been working with us since she was introduced to the Link Committee by our previous Co-ordinator at our meeting in September 2010. She was very impressed with the idea of the Older Peoples' Forum and a village co-ordinator and thought Age UK might be interested in regarding this as a pilot to be rolled out for other villages. Although Age UK would not have the funds to help directly, she did suggest approaches could be made to local Housing Associations and Comic Relief.

Until now the Mobile Warden Scheme has been funded by grants from the County Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council, both Parish Councils and donations from The Feast Committee. SCDC had decided to withdraw their grant in 2012 but after Age UK made

strong representations to them, indicating how important this grant is to all the Mobile Warden Schemes in the area and how counter-productive removing such help from the vulnerable elderly would be, the District Council has retracted its decision to withdraw this grant. However the County Council's three year contract with Age Concern came to an end on 31st March 2011. The contract has been extended until November while the Council review all their service contracts. Age UK will be submitting a tender by the deadline at the end of June and hope their contract will be renewed but in the meanwhile CCC funding only covers the next few months. The CCC, until now, has provided 30% of the Mobile Warden Scheme funding.

The Link Committee is made up of a representative from each of the Parish Councils, a resident of Histon, the Mobile Warden and the Age UK Co-ordinator. We would also like to have a resident from Impington on the committee but so far no-one has volunteered in answer to our request put in the HI Courier and on the Parish website. We meet twice a year to receive reports from the Warden and the Co-ordinator.

Cllr Marian Cleaver
Village Warden Representative

10 May 2011
Impington Parish Council