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Annual Report May 2015



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Environment Committee Chairman's Report

The Environment Committee met on seven occasions over the past year, addressing a diversity of issues ranging from the circus to street furniture, the duck platform to dog fouling, and from recycling to railings. My thanks go, in particular, to Pene Nudds for overseeing the management of trees and allotments; John Dunn for keeping a close eye on drainage and flooding issues; Ruth Moulder for her leadership in sustainability initiatives; and Cedric Foster for facilitating repairs and improvements across the two villages. Thanks are also due to outgoing member Hooda Abdullah for her many contributions to Committee deliberations, and I am pleased to welcome Nick Wood and Christine Hertoghe as new members with fresh insights to offer. The work of the Committee has been supported throughout by the good counsel of David Jenkins and Denis Payne.

As a result of that work, welcome improvements to the environment of our villages have taken place in the last twelve months, and it is appropriate to highlight just a few. Spectacular gates have been installed at the entrance to Homefield Park, funded by a Public Art grant; at The Green, dead vegetation has been cleared to allow fresh growth to emerge, maintenance of the duck platform has been carried out and, at Christmas, new and overhauled lighting offered a delightful display throughout the festive season; dog fouling has been addressed with the provision of additional bins and stickers put up to raise concern; and the circular seat at the bottom of School Hill is a splendid example from a list of street facilities which have been renovated or replaced. These are all, of course, in addition to so many 'routine jobs' which can so often be taken for granted: the cleaning of the War Memorial; the repair of notice boards - so heavily used nowadays; the re-laying of uneven paving in the landscaped corner opposite the butcher's shop; and the renovation by the Enviro Volunteers of a bench seat at the Burial Ground.

There is, however, no sense of complacency, and initiatives have already been taken which, we hope, will come to fruition in the year ahead. Estate railings will replace the dilapidated wooden fencing at the front of Homefield Park, thus complementing the new gates. Team initiatives are being planned to tackle challenging allotment plots at Gatehouse Road, following discussions of the newly formed Sustainability Working Group. A path is to be laid across the ground which separates the Youth Shelter from the main road at the bottom of School Hill, so encouraging greater use of this facility. Increased WISER collections of worn-out electrical goods will be scheduled, providing an invaluable recycling service to the villages. Moreover, the Committee is looking at making greater use of our open spaces in ways that would not only widen the scope of community engagement but also generate revenue opportunities, thereby supporting other activities. The fair and the circus are both enormously popular, but there are so many other interesting possibilities; Shakespeare in Homefield, perhaps?

Above all, the Environment Committee must continue to work in partnership with other local bodies if it is to have the impact it seeks. The work which our largest local employer, Hain Daniel, has carried out this year on its perimeter trees and the ground beneath them has literally shed new light and air on the footpath between Manor Field and Saffron Road; and the clearing away of litter on the HD side of the fence - not their fault, it has to be said - makes the walk along the path a really pleasurable experience. From now on, the company will do a clear-up of its property every time there is a Big Tidy-up weekend, as organised by Committee member Cedric Foster four times each year. It is this kind of co-operation which enhances the appeal of the villages beyond measure, making them such healthy and attractive places to live.

Derek Marston, Chairman, Environment Committee

Planning Committee Chairman's Report

The Planning Committee have met 20 times this year and considered 47 plans for Impington, 62 for Histon and a handful for other parishes and County Council. Of these, we recommended approval of 69, refusal of 24, no objection to 12, 4 were for information only.

The team of Councillors responsible for commenting on these plans are: Denis Payne, David Jenkins, Brian Ing, Marian Cleaver, Josephine Teague, David Legge, John Dunn and Christine Hertoghe.

In addition, thanks are due to Chelsea Presland, Clerk to the Committee, for her commitment to ensuring the smooth running of the processes involved.

The Parish Council is a consultee on all planning matters affecting the parishes, as a consultee the Planning Committee makes a recommendation based on the plans provided. The final decision is with South Cambridgeshire District Council. When responding to applications, the Committee tries to ensure that the character and local history is maintained. Key issues the Committee usually comment on are parking provision, character of the street and loss of amenity to neighbouring properties (this often means loss of light).

All meetings are open to the public. We welcome both applicants and those with views on applications to attend meetings and take part. If a planning application affects you, we encourage you to make your views known to the planning authority, SCDC (South Cambridgeshire District Council) and the Parish Council.

As well as attending fortnightly Committee meetings, members also attend Northstowe Forum and public meetings, A14 consultations hearings, SCDC Liaison Sessions, Parish Planning Forum, Local Plan hearings, Darwin Green Governance meetings and have meet with residents and developers to discuss outline planning applications within the parishes.

The Committee has responded to many consultations throughout the year, the main one being the SCDC Local Plan process, submitting both a representation to the consultation process and to the hearings. Other include the A14 consultation, SCDC Retention of Local Pubs consultation, Community Infrastructure Levy Consultation, Bishops Appeal and Local Green Space Designation Consultation.

Key planning matters this year:

- Loss of appeal at former Bishops Hardware Store, members of the Committee and Council are working closely with developers to work on a design appropriate for that area of the village. We look forward to seeing a fresh application later in the year
- Improved relationship with SCDC Officers
- Higher number of residents attending Committee meetings
- After several meetings with developers, work has almost finished on the development of 2 dwellings on Water Lane, Impington
- Formation of Neighbourhood Plan Task & Finish and Steering Group

It has been a very busy year for Planning Committee and I would like to record my thanks to Committee members for their contributions and regular attendance at meetings, and look forward to working with the newly elected members next year

Marcus Dann, Chairman, Planning Committee

Finance, Legal and Administration Committee Chairman's Report

The critical successes of the Finance Committee are not immediately visible. They revolve around meeting our legal and accounting requirements and the setting of appropriate budgets and effective financial management so that the operational committees of the Council can deliver their plans.

The work of the office team, with input from our internal auditor, has regularly ensured that our accounts pass audit with flying colours. Necessary oversight and checks are provided by Councillors.

The committee was saddened by the death of our internal auditor, Gerry Whitfield, after a period of illness - and grateful for Max Parish for stepping in to the role at short notice, and for the thorough and professional job that he did in little time.

The monitoring of spend to the established budget, and the setting of the budget for the financial year 2015-2016 has been more challenging.

Looking forward, we expect to see significant changes, all outside the control of the Council:

- 1) increasing Local Government Pension Scheme contributions and increased National Insurance costs (from the provisions linked to the single tier pension in 2017)
- 2) a stop to all contributions from developers towards the provision of open space and community facilities (from the switch to Community Infrastructure Levy from S106 contributions, and short term changes introduced by the Government to reduce the burden on small developers/developments)
- 3) and, a continuing (though not increasing) reduction in yield from Council Tax (arising from Localising Council Tax support)

The need to set a truly sustainable budget, whilst supporting the work of an ambitious Council, is challenging. At the same time, developer S106 contributions, need to be spent in a timely manner (otherwise they have to be returned), and reserves invested to maximise return. The plans brought forward by committees for revenue spend (i.e. "day to day" running costs, in some cases "year to year" spend spread by the use of small payments into funds) were well presented, and did not present any overall increase.

However, the plans for capital spend (i.e. one off projects, significant revamp/replacement of existing facilities) will have to be managed through the year as each project is brought forward. In addition, the committee recognise that the County and District Councils, both being capped in how far they can increase Council Tax, and having their government revenue grants cut, are increasingly having to cut services completely, or reduce the quantity or quality of existing services.

The committee has therefore proposed the establishment of a "community fund" of £10,000; to be funded in part from a small increase in precept, but also by challenging committees to make further savings. Where this will be spent is not at all clear - what is clear is that there will be calls upon it.

The resulting Band D increase was around £3.51 - just under 7p per week.
Key objectives for 2014-2015 include:

- 1) continuing to working with committees to ensure that projects and spending plans are effectively delivered and met through the year
- 2) continuing to manage investments prudently whilst maximising returns

- 3) building on the initial work started last year on 3 year forward financial plans
- 4) putting in place effective mechanisms to ensure that capital spend proposals are thoroughly presented for decision

Denis Payne, Chairman, Finance, Legal & Admin Committee

Recreation Committee Chairman's Report

The Recreation Committee formerly known as the Recreation Ground Committee has had a busy and frankly challenging year at times.

The day to day operation has been relatively smooth over the last year thanks to the work of the staff. We welcome the new Apprentice and hope that the role will be mutually beneficial to all parties.

One of the major works completed was the provision of a perimeter fence to help prevent rabbit access and improve security and it was extremely unfortunate that shortly after its completion a young footballer was injured climbing over the fence. A thorough review of the project was carried out and the Committee considered the resulting report in January 2015.

As ever the Ground is a thriving area of sporting and leisure activity which does lead to issues and problems which include principally football pitch capacity , there are just not sufficient pitches to meet the playing and training needs of the 25 Histon Hornet and other teams.

A considerable amount of preparatory work has been invested in projects to provide new Cricket nets and the provision of four new floodlit artificial grass tennis courts to replace the present grass courts. It is hoped that progress will continue to be made in the second half of 2015.

The Friends of the Rec continue to work proactively for the benefit of the Recreation Ground donating over £8,000 in the last year including meeting the cost for provision and installation of the Community Public Access Defibrillator and running a number of sports and exercise activities.

Two of the highlights of the year were the finish of the first Flaming June Half Marathon on the rec which was watched by over 2000 people and the outdoor film showing of 'War Horse '

Community park working party

In the last year progress in acquiring the 12 acres of land at Bypass Farm on a 30 year lease from Cambridgeshire County Council has been extremely frustrating and we are not optimistic that further progress will be made in the next year.

The provision of new open space for recreational and leisure use is an absolute priority and solutions must be found in the near future.

Neil Davies, Chairman, Recreation Committee

Youth Committee Chairman's Report

This year has been one of change for the way the Parish Council delivers youth work within the villages. In September, Andrea Cramp, our long time youth worker, was formally seconded to the Parish Council. This meant that all her working time would now be spent in the two villages. We were able to put in place plans and activities to:

- widen provision and increase uptake for young people
- provide a broader and more diverse set of successful activities
- increase communication with and information for our young people

During the summer term (April to July) activities for our young people continued as planned with the junior youth club and the babysitting course both being very successful.

Building on the successful film project run last year, we announced a film competition supported by 4 half-day *film techniques and editing* workshops. The project was designed and run by Steve Wallis and was linked to the @Impington75 celebrations. The workshops were very well attended, but disappointingly we only had 2 entries to the competition. However, these were of a high standard and were shown at a special showing for IVC students in March.

The lunch-time drop-in at IVC was initiated as a walk-about (meet & greet) activity and eventually became a joint operation between Andrea and Chris Farmer, a youth worker attached to the Baptist Church. This has been a key factor in increasing contact with young people.

The main disappointment of this period was our failure to get enough responses to our youth questionnaire. This left us with a gap in our understanding of what our young people wanted and has placed greater importance on getting an alternative means of communication, such as a youth forum or a social media site, up and running.

Andrea started her secondment at the beginning of September; this was a huge learning curve for everyone as we had to learn how to support Andrea in this new role, how to recruit additional youth workers and put in place procedures for handling and recording risk assessment for trips, child protection and safeguarding to name but a few. We also had to find a space of Andrea to work in and space to store all the resources required for running youth activities. Some of this work is still ongoing.

It quickly became clear that our desire to “widen provision and increase uptake” was severely hampered by the lack of appropriate space in which to hold the sort of clubs and activities we wanted. Whilst the junior club has successfully relocated to the Recreation Centre, this requires a lot of logistical arrangements each session and is not available for other youth activities. Enquiries have shown other venues to be too expensive or not appropriate. The youth committee are strongly supporting the proposals for community facilities at Bypass Farm as this seems to be the only feasible location for purpose-built youth facilities. The delivery of a Skate Park is also dependent on this project.

One big success this year has been the increase in co-operative working and visibility between all the agencies involved with our young people and the Parish Council. Andrea has been the catalyst in this - she regularly has contact with staff at IVC, the youth workers associated with our churches, the PCSO and colleagues at the county council in Children and Young Peoples Services. She has also been in discussions with Wherry Housing to help our young people living at Kings Meadow have access to youth activities. The “Transitions” project re-starting in summer 2015 will see Andrea working with our Year 6 students at Histon & Impington Junior School as they prepare to transition to IVC.

To address the communication and feedback gap with our young people we have held two youth forum meetings. Both were attended by a very small number of young people, but did result in some useful and positive feedback. Taking this initiative forward is our objective for the summer term and into next year.

New opportunities started since September include

- Crafternoon - a social enterprise craft project in partnership with Lorna Wood of StAC
- First Aid and Food Hygiene certifications - these are one-off sessions that have been hugely popular.
- Youth Lounge - planning for a senior club is underway following input from the youth forum
- a regular slot "Youth Noticeboard" in the parish newsletter.

Since last year the situation for young people across the country has become much more challenging: it is harder for them to get secure jobs and to live independently, their future prospects look worse than those of the previous generation, and the consequential growth in mental health issues affecting our young people is of increasing concern. Our aim over the next year is to find ways of alleviating these issues by working with others to provide the necessary support.

Having a "seconded" has been like having another member of staff and the management of this and finding appropriate office space has been challenging for all concerned. The secondment was initially due to run for 18 months, but recent cuts in budget for the county youth service have brought about changes that have made the County Council decide to end the secondment at the end of July 2015. The Parish Council are looking into ways of retaining Andrea for at least the next 12 months.

The committee has once again struggled with membership and has recently decided to form a less formal working party with a view to getting a more diverse set of attendees. This had its first meeting in April and made some progress in meeting the objective of having increased participation from young people. Looking ahead, we are hoping to get more people attending and would urge anyone with enthusiasm and an interest in helping to shape our youth provision to get in touch. It is not necessary to be a Parish Councillor.

I would like to thank the committee members and office staff for their contributions and our youth workers for the planning and management of our projects which is helping to deliver our vision for youth. Also, I would like to thank IVC for their willingness to work with us and our local PCSO Tony Martin, who continues to support us and our young people.

Hooda Abdullah, Chairman, Youth Committee

Highways Committee Chairman's Report

The past year

It is with some personal pride that the past year has started to see a number of projects come to fruition that are the culmination of years of consultation, planning and refining.

The project to improve the junction of Station Road and the High Street has finally gone in. It is disappointing however that whilst we now have a safer crossing point to The Green, it does not yet have its lights and stripes; these are due to be installed by the County's contractor. The final part of this work is to improve the parking on The Green by reducing the curve of the pavement - even returning some area to grass.

This also coincided with a push, started by Junior School parents, to introduce an experimental Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) to prohibit vehicles accessing the road by The Green at school

pick-up and drop-off times. Whilst it seems to be quite effective, a formal review is required before it can become permanent. Thanks to the diligence and persistence of my predecessor Cllr Foster we were able to get the County Council to resurface this road, which was in a dreadful state.

At the other end of the High Street, the St Andrews Centre also saw some improvements to the street scene funded by the County Council's Minor Highways Initiative. This saw the addition of cycle parking outside the centre, some assigned parking (both for Blue Badge holders and anyone), and improved crossing points to access the Manorial Waste Bus Stop. The new kerblines encourages vehicles to approach the blind-corner more slowly.

Other initiatives have included providing 'wheelie-bin' 30mph stickers to residents along the B1049 to remind drivers it is now a 30mph limit.

Progress has been made with the project to improve bus flow through the village, with the proposals having gone to consultation. A decision is due to be made soon once the feedback has been reviewed.

The A14 pinch-point is virtually complete, and sadly without protection for neighbouring residents. It remains to be seen if there is a reduction in traffic through the village as the scheme completes. Meanwhile the main A14 upgrade scheme has been formally submitted for approval and the Parish Council has a voice in the machinations.

Funding secured for future projects

During the year a number of applications for future funding have been successful:

- Another Minor Highways bid incorporating a package of small measures between The Green and Winders Lane
- A project to improve the traffic-light junction at The Green
- A project to improve the B1049 between The Holiday Inn junction and the A14 roundabout

20mph limits for the villages?

A project to investigate introducing a 20mph limit for the non-A and B roads within the villages has been started, and includes a speaker at the Annual Parish Meeting. With Cambridge introducing 20mph limits across the city the idea has been raised by a number of residents. Responses so far have been mostly positive, though some concerns have been raised; if it is to happen there must be wide consultation and general consensus across the villages over the next year or two.

Looking ahead

More aspirational schemes being considered are solutions to resident concerns over the volume and behaviour of traffic along Station Road, and in the context of Cambridge's City Deal, a second Guided Bus Stop for the north-west of Histon.

Finally, the Parish Council has been encouraging businesses in the villages to install cycle facilities, whilst continuing to do so it has now identified a small number of sites to lead on installation.

The year ahead will be challenging - to work through all of these schemes and more takes a lot of effort, coordinating with Highways England, County Highways, the City, our surrounding Parish Councils and of course our residents.

David Legge, Chairman, Highways Committee

King's Meadow Committee Chairman's Report

King's Meadow Committee continued to meet during the year and for the second year running the community was pleased with the Christmas tree. There was a special event for which the tree was the focal point for a Christmas carol service one afternoon early in the Christmas period.

A programme of improvements has been agreed for the estate which, because they can be integrated into activity elsewhere can be carried out cost effectively and save money.

A survey to test the appetite of the community for alternative forms of governance unfortunately had little response and so any changes have been shelved for the time being.

David Jenkins, Chairman, King's Meadow Committee

Mobile Warden Scheme

The Mobile Warden Scheme is designed to help older people who may need some support, to live at home independently, for as long as possible. The warden keeps in contact with clients by regular visits and phone calls. She helps in practical ways, such as shopping or collecting pensions, giving help with forms or putting them in touch with other agencies, as well as providing much needed personal and moral support.

This scheme is working well in our villages. It is funded by contributions from the County Council, SCDC, Histon & Impington Parish Council and the contributions paid for the service by the clients. It is managed very efficiently for us, at the moment, by Age UK, although their contract comes up for renewal in November 2015. Should the contract for running the Mobile Warden Scheme be awarded to another organisation our warden's employment would be protected under the TUPE regulations.

We are very fortunate in having Mrs Gillian Berry, a village resident, as warden. She has a good working relationship with Jean Newman, The Older Persons' Co-Ordinator, the Firs House and those who run the Mini-bus and the Day centre. This means that she is often informed of people who might need her services and others learn of the scheme by word of mouth. Currently, her contracted number of clients is 17 but a flexible arrangement is in place to allow her to take on the additional one or two. At the moment she has twenty four on her books but some of these are couples in the same household and others are temporarily in hospital. At the moment the Histon and Impington scheme has a healthy balance and allows for these additions. However, it is clear that numbers of those needing the service are rising, gradually, but steadily. It is unlikely that two wardens would be funded by the scheme and we should be aware, that if the need arises, we might have to meet the increased costs ourselves.

Cllr Marian Cleaver, Representative

Histon Poores' Land Charity

As one of the three Parish Council representatives nominated as trustees of the Charity, I present below a summary of the charity's activities during the period.

History:

The Poores' Land charity dates back to the 1600's and is mentioned in the 1806 enclosure of the village of Histon under an Act of Parliament. The land it owns in Cottenham Road known, as the "Paradise Allotments", seems to have been aggregated from the original 1649 purchase of land for £4 "the rents and profits to be distributed among the poor of Histon for ever" and land obtained as part of the will of Dr. Pont in 1780 "to buy firing for the poor". In court papers of 1816 regarding the tenanting of the land for agricultural purposes; "the sum (rents) according to

immemorial usage is laid out in coals which are distributed, at the discretion of the church wardens and overseers, amongst the settled resident poor, without regard to the receipt of parish relief, but with preference to widows and those having the largest families.” In addition, in 1771 Mrs. Sindrey in her will left £26 “to the poor of the parish” the interest of which was added to the amount available for distribution by the churchwardens under this charity.

The minute book evidences the charity’s use of the land for allotments dating back to the 1890’s and the introduction of Parish Councils in the early twentieth century led to the trustees’ role being equally split between the Church and Histon Parish Council. The charity’s funds in recent history being dependent almost solely on allotment rents meant that distributions became limited to the traditional Christmas gift of coal for widows born in Histon and, as coal was replaced by gas and electricity as the main heating source for most people, by cash instead.

In 1999 the charity received a bequest from the estate of Esme Bumpstead, a former resident who had retired to Cornwall, of £32,588.75 which increased the monies available for distribution from £2-300 a year to £2-3,000 a year. However, the widows found who could and wished to benefit from this had been steadily declining. The trustee therefore undertook a major review of its role in 2002, through the late Dr. Malcolm Ruel and in consultation with the Charity Commission. As a result, in December 2006, the charity was allowed to change its scheme and broaden its remit to include “the relief of persons resident in Histon and Impington parishes who are in need, hardship or distress” and change one of the Parish Council trustees and one of the Parochial Church Council trustees to represent Impington.

The trustees decided three years ago to improve the allotments by investing £4,320 in providing water to the site via a borehole. The rents were increased as a result (doubling over a four year period) with a view to obtaining a return on the investment in 6-8 years and increasing the monies available for distribution by approximately £800 per annum at today’s values.

Current Status:

As a small charity the trustees still struggle to distribute its annual income, as required by the Charity Commission, which in 2014-15 was £3,800. As well as the traditional annual gifts, which are now distributed in the first quarter of the year, the trustees have recently been focusing on giving money to organisations that work in the two villages in specialised areas that co-inside with the charity’s aims. Recent donations have included contributing to the Older Person Co-ordinator scheme, Blue Smile and the new credit union. At the September 2014 year end the value of the total funds invested and in the bank were £73,771. The 3.67 acres of land owned by the charity was last valued in 2004 at £87,500, as it lies just outside the village envelope, albeit that it is surrounded by residential properties.

Of the six trustees of the charity the three current Parish Council representatives are; Marian Cleaver, Brian Ing and Max Parish. All the charity trustees are appointed for a four year term. It is important that the Parish Council continue to take a keen interest in the workings of this charity because:

- a) There is a local perception that the charity is run by the church and is therefore not totally independent, and
- b) Unlike several local charities that have folded in the villages due to lack of available funds, this is a well funded and asset rich charity that can help make a difference to resident’s lives in the community.

Max Parish, Representative