

## ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 16th May 2023

### PRESENTATION BY CHAIR - JON OGBORN

#### INTRODUCTION

I would like to welcome you all to our Annual Parish Meeting. We are a little restricted by law on the date for this meeting and, at the request of one of the village clubs, chose this day to avoid conflict with them - only to find we now have a clash with the WI. So I am aware that we are missing a number of our regulars. I guess we will never get it right however hard we try!! But I know we will still have a good evening.

Before I start I would like to express my appreciation of the sterling efforts of all the residents, Parish Councillors and organisations who contributed to the very successful Coronation celebrations we enjoyed earlier this month. With a particular thank you to Tony Jolley, who took the initiative in setting up and steering the working group that oversaw the day. Well done - a great community day.

The plan for this evening is to have 45 minutes of presentations, followed by the opportunity to informally meet and discuss further with the presenters at tables around the hall - at which point the bar will be opened. Other public bodies that serve the village will also have a table where you can speak with them informally.

We will commence with a presentation by myself, then we will hear from our County and District councillors. I will then come back and provide a brief summary of the Community Safety Forum many of you attended in March. To keep things tight we will not take questions after each speaker but, if there is time, there may be the opportunity for an open forum at the end. If not, you will have the opportunity to engage with the speakers afterwards when the bar opens.

#### CHAIR'S REPORT

I would like to begin my report by thanking my fellow Parish Councillors for their continuing faithful service to the village. It is the work of unsung volunteers like these that helps to make Bottisham such a great place to live. I would ask you to take the opportunity when you can to thank them for their service - too often all they get are grumbles about things that are wrong!! Thank you too to our County and District councillors who attend our Parish Meetings and have given us excellent support throughout the year.

You are all welcome to attend and listen in to our Council meetings - normally held on the first Monday of each month. There is also an open forum prior to the start of the meeting, for any resident to address the Parish Council.

Several councillors stood down at the May elections and we now have four vacancies on the Parish Council. There have been some expressions of interest to join the Council in June, but we still have vacancies and have been running for a long time without a full Council - which significantly impacts our ability to serve the village. So could I ask you to seriously consider whether you are able to support our village by becoming a councillor? It is a very worthwhile way in which you can contribute to your community. Please ask me or one of the other councillors if you would like to find out more about the role.

We were disappointed to lose Alice Bettoney as our Clerk at Easter. However we were delighted to be able to recruit Sam Chambers-Turner to replace Alice at the end of March.

Sam brings with her good local knowledge and experience as Clerk at several local Councils. She was planning to be here tonight, but had to pull out due to an emergency meeting at another Council. However I am sure you will all get to meet her in due course.

The day-to-day business of the Parish Council has seen us dealing with a number of “bread and butter issues” to preserve and maintain the fabric of the village - agitating on flooding in Lode Rd and potholes in Bell Rd, keeping cemetery trees in shape, grass cutting and and upgrades to the footpath and flood lights in the cemetery - to name but a few matters. But let me focus on four key matters.

## 1. RETIREMENT VILLAGE

After successfully fighting the appeal by Axis over the Retirement Village we were disappointed to see them coming back with an amended application and have been active in fighting it again. A decision by ECDC on how they will respond to the application has been delayed by the May elections. But if you want to find out more, please have a chat with John Wilson, our lead on Planning, later on.

## 2. NEW CEMETERY

When we commenced the process of acquiring a new cemetery, we were warned by our consultant that this would be a project of many years - and this has been proved to be true. The first meetings about the cemetery were in 2012 - and it has required enormous patience as we have worked to satisfy all the parties involved - and slowed down by over two years by COVID.

However, after some final amendments requested by the County Flood Risk Officer, all the relevant parties have now approved our plans and I am optimistic that we will have planning consent in the next month. Then commences the process of compulsory purchase by ECDC (which will take some months), during which time we will be inviting tenders for the construction phase. As I have learnt over the years nothing moves fast with this project, but I am hopeful we could be opening the new cemetery in 2025 - which may be just as our current cemetery reaches capacity!! If you are interested you can view the final design and ask me any questions about the project after the meeting.

The annual accounts for the Parish Council are on our web-site for you to review if you wish. In recent years we have been building up a reserve to help cover the costs of the new cemetery and have been able to carry forwards a reserve of over £166K into this financial year. We have also received a grant from ECDC towards the purchase costs and legal fees. So we have a good buffer to take into the construction phase when we are also able to borrow from the Public Works Loan Board at a very competitive interest rate and are confident that our current precept should adequately cover the costs of any loan. I would add that our precept still remains quite low for East Cambs villages like ours - and you can be assured it should continue so despite this major project.

## 3. PROJECT PLAY

After many years of searching and consultations, we have finally accepted that we have exhausted all options to build a new play area inside the village envelope and have decided that the only option is to look again at purchasing new land for a larger multi-use play area. I am grateful that a resident has volunteered to lead a working group to explore options to purchase land and install a new play area - and a first meeting of the group will take place on 12th June 2023. While a number of other residents have also volunteered to

be part of the group, we would welcome additional members. Anyone interested in getting involved should contact the Clerk in the first instance.

#### 4. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

In April we had a first meeting of a Neighbourhood Plan working party. I am grateful to all councillors and residents who have volunteered to help support in building this vital document to influence how the village develops in the years ahead. There will no doubt be much to report in the months ahead. If you would like to find it more about this project please speak with Cllr Wilson after the meeting.

#### COMMUNITY SAFETY FORUM

A very successful Community Safety Open Forum was held on a really cold snowy evening on 8th March. Thank you to all those who ventured out - we had a surprisingly full room, despite the weather. The event was hosted by the Parish Council, with support from East Cambs Community Safety Partnership. There was a broad panel with representatives from our schools (BVC/BCPS), ECDC, police, County and District councillors. The audience led the discussion, with a broad range of issues raised including illegal parking, road safety and anti-social behaviour.

Positively, it was noted that there has been a significant reduction in antisocial behaviour from recent coordinated action by the police/BVC, facilitated by the Parish Council. Localised action can and is having a positive impact on our village.

Representatives from a street that has recently set up a neighbourhood watch scheme also highlighted how it has helped in tackling antisocial behaviour in the vicinity. We don't have many neighbourhood watch schemes in Bottisham and perhaps your street would like to start one?

Some very good ideas for taking things forward came out of the evening. One of the most interesting was a discussion about how other communities have influenced road usage behaviour by educating children in the local schools - who then put pressure on their parents to moderate their behaviour!!

The East Cambs Community Safety Partnership, working with the panellists, will develop a plan for Bottisham in the next few months. I was hoping that we might have members of the Safety Partnership with us tonight to give us an update on progress, but no-one was able to attend. But we have a date in the diary for a formal feedback session to all residents on Tuesday October 17th. Please do put this date in your diary.

Jon Ogborn

16th May 2023