

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 30 April 2024

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. We have identified Cllrs with lanyards, so please do feel free to use this opportunity to speak with and get to know us. We have a vacancy on the Parish Council and would love to see it filled. So, if you feel this may be a way in which you can serve your community, please use this opportunity to speak with me or one of the other Cllrs to find out more about what is involved.

I would like to also express my thanks to our County and District councillors who attend our Parish Meetings and have given us excellent support throughout the year. I must also mention our Clerk, Sam Chambers-Turner, who has gone well beyond the call of duty in a very challenging first year with us.

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.

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 - badgering Highways to improve the drainage in Lode Rd, an upgrade to the Ancient Meadows footpath, grass cutting and keeping the cemetery and trees in good shape. The Parish Council has no direct control over what happens on the public highways, but we have also found ourselves drawn into numerous communications with unhappy residents and contractors installing fibre throughout the village. It has been quite a headache for us all. The only encouragement I can offer is that we are not alone - it has been happening in nearly every village I drive through.

But it has also been a very busy year also dealing with a number of major issues which I would like to briefly touch on.

1. RETIREMENT VILLAGE

Cllrs, residents and the Surgery have expended hundred of hours over recent years working to oppose the application to build a Retirement Village on our green belt. So we were very disappointed to lose the fight at the second appeal. As you will know, after seeking expert legal advice, ECDC decided not to pursue a Judicial Review and the application is approved. The challenge now is to ensure that we make the best of what we have. ECDC have committed to working with the Parish Council to ensure that the promised affordable housing, play area and 3 ha of amenity land are delivered in line with the S106 agreement for the site.

Green Belt status is the strongest protection one can have for land and I have been informed by our planning experts that a Neighbourhood Plan would not have had a material impact on this Appeal decision. However there is growing encouragement and financial support for communities to develop and adopt a neighbourhood plan - to guide development of the village into the future. So the Council instituted a working party last year to take the process forwards. While the working party is operating under the umbrella of the Parish Council, it is important that it is a whole community project. So I am very pleased that a non Parish Cllr, Tony Jolley, has taken on the mantle of leading the project -

at least for the time being. But we would like to have more residents involved in the project team - so please consider whether this is something you could be involved with. You can discuss it further with our Planning Team in the break-out session.

2. BUSES

A very significant matter occupying our thoughts this year has been seeking to rectify the loss of the No.11 bus through the village. I would like to thank Cllrs John Austin and Steven Odell for representing the village on the AtoB 1102 group and our Clerk, Sam Chambers-Turner, who is also on the steering group. We were the first village to take forwards the AtoB1102 survey of resident's transport needs and Cllr Nadene Cundell put in an incredible effort to get it all set up in a way that other villages could build on.

The survey results have been very significant in persuading the Mayor to now propose a completely new bus service connecting the B1102 villages to Bottisham and then on through the Wilbrahams, Fulbourn, Addenbrookes and the six form colleges. We think this will be an excellent step forwards and will be projecting the new plans on the screen at the back.

To help put pressure on the Mayor to carry this through, we would be delighted if all residents could write to him and you can get details of how to do this at the table. So please go and have a look.

3. RIDGE CLEAN SOLAR PARK

This last year saw approval for a new solar park just south of the A14. The developers have been keen to contribute to the local community and also offered a 40 year Community Benefit Fund to Parishes impacted by the park. The park is wholly situated within Bottisham Parish Council. However the access to the site and connection to the grid will be through Great Wilbraham and Little Wilbraham & Six Mile Bottom - who were thus brought into the discussion. There then ensued a long and quite difficult negotiation between the three parishes and the developers. Very positively we negotiated a 20% uplift in the overall offer from Ridge Clean and ended eventually with a good agreement and much improved relationships between Bottisham and the Wilbrahams. A real win. The result is that, for the first two years after production commences Bottisham will receive a contribution from Ridge Clean of £15,000/annum, rising to £20910 for the remaining 38 years (index-linked).

This will be a great help in supporting the Parish, as we take on increased costs with the new cemetery. Although the connection to the grid has yet to be constructed - so we will not see the money for a year or so.

4. BOTTISHAM GREENWAY

This has been another project that has consumed numerous hours for Cllrs this year in seeking to understand and negotiate the best way forwards to facilitate safe walking/cycling within the village and into Cambridge. Many of you attended the resident's meeting we held at the end of January and filled in a response form on the night. Your responses were noted and communicated to the GCP. However things have altered significantly then. Those of you at the meeting will recall that very strong support was voiced for having 20 mph throughout the village. We had seen similar feedback at the Community Forum last year. In response, the Council has now submitted a request for 20 mph throughout the village under the Local Highways Initiative - along with a request for double yellow lines

opposite the Bell Rd junction. We are pretty confident this will be approved - given the number of school pupils on our roads (if not this year, then next year).

The Parish Council then held a meeting with the GCP Director of Transport, Peter Blake, at the end of March - where he demonstrated a real willingness to listen to our concerns. He himself reflected that, once a village-wide 20 mph scheme was in place, there was little point in bringing an almost identical Greenway scheme through the centre of Bottisham. The Council instead suggested that the Greenway should end in Bell Rd by the back entrance to the village college (just before Wisbeach Ave). We also asked for consideration of a spur off the Swaffham Greenway, from the Lode Rd cross-roads down to the village college. It was felt that an upgrade to the footpath and cycleway here would be well supported by surrounding parishes – with many pupils using this route to get to school.

Mr Blake expressed willingness to explore the suggestions that the Parish Council had made and will respond in due course. He further committed to hold a face-to-face public consultation with residents before any works commenced in the village.

5. PROJECT PLAY

After many years of searching and consultations, the Council finally accepted that it had exhausted all options to build a new play area inside the village envelope and decided that the only option was to look again at purchasing new land for a larger multi-use play area. So last year we initiated a new residents working group (called Project Play) to review potential options around the village. A number were suggested by the group and we commenced communications with local landowners - including the Village College. Sadly, our interactions confirmed what we have always found previously - which is that there is no land to be had unless you come waving a very, very large cheque (which would be well beyond our means) or offering planning consent for a new residential development.

The good news is that the developments that have been approved recently are opening up new play opportunities for the village. The Bottisham Meadows development off Bell Rd will have a good new play area for younger children (plus some allotments). There is also a belt of woodland between Bottisham Meadows and the Ancient Monument, which is currently being transferred into the ownership of ECDC. ECDC see an amenity opportunity here and are interested in working with the Council and residents to develop this into a woodland play area - with potentially some wooden play equipment suitable for older children installed on the scrubland just to the north of the wood. We are looking for local residents to get involved with this project.

Another opportunity is on the new retirement village site, where the outline planning consent includes provision for a play area and 3 ha of amenity land. It is early days and detailed plans are yet to be presented. However Project Play and the Parish Council will be working together to make sure that we make the most of this opportunity for the village.

6. 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 the case. The first meetings about a new cemetery were in 2012 - and it has required enormous patience as we have worked to identify suitable land available at an affordable price and carry out all the studies required. Given the difficulty of obtaining land locally, we were extremely fortunate that the National Trust were willing to consider cooperating with a

compulsory purchase of inalienable land they held in trust. Because of the status of the land we are also able to purchase it at amenity rather than residential rates. Both the purchase and legal costs are also being covered by an ECDC grant. The downside of purchasing from The National Trust is that we have had to liaise with Trust experts in gaining approval for the design of the cemetery - and we lost at least two years through the impact of COVID on their staff availability.

But we now have planning consent and have almost completed the discharge of conditions. What is now delaying construction is the compulsory purchase - which is proving a painfully slow process. However, I am optimistic that we will finally have the land at the end of this year and will be able to go out to tender this autumn for construction in 2025 - potentially opening in 2016. Just when our current cemetery finally reaches full capacity.

I would emphasise that see the new cemetery as offering not only provision for burials, but a valuable social amenity for the village. There will be abundant planting of trees/shrubs around the site, with also the opportunity to create wildflower meadows on land yet to be used for interments - so it should be a pleasant area to walk in. We are also hoping to engage with the adjacent Village College in developing educational ecology projects on the site.

Jon Ogborn

Chair of Parish Council

30th April 2024