**Weston Colville Parish Council**

**Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish on Wednesday 1st May 2024, at 7pm, in the Reading Room, 46 Chapel Rd, Weston Colville, Cambridge CB21 5NX. Present: Ray, Vidler, Bridget Durham, John Garrod, Rachel Jennings, Emma Rayner, Jessica Ashbridge (Clerk), County Cllr Henry Batchelor, District Cllr Geoff Harvey, and 5 Parishioners.**

**Annual Meeting of the Parish**

1. **Apologies for absence –** Cllr Pagonis
2. **Chairman’s Welcome and Annual Report –** The Chairman welcomed those present, and delivered his report – appended.
3. **District and County Councillors’ Annual Report –** Cllrs Batchelor and Harvey delivered their report – appended.
4. **Playground Rejuvenation –** A presentation was made detailing the progress that had been made with grant funding and planning. Parishioners were thanked for responding to the Playground Consultation, which was detailed in the Challenge. The Working Party were thanked for working hard keeping the momentum of the project going. A Parishioner suggested contacting Mead Construction about additional grant funding.
5. **Public comments and questions –** A Parishioner raised concerns about BT Digital Voice, and the problems that were experienced when there were power cuts, and often the digital network also failed, meaning in emergencies there would be no way of contacting the emergency services. The Parishioner had contacted Lucy Frazer, expressing concerns for the future when landlines become digital. Cllr Batchelor advised that have a scheme called Connected Cambridgeshire, Cllr Harvey would also look into it through South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC).

It was raised that one of the bungalows on Chapel Road (sheltered housing) no longer had their grass cut by SCDC. It was thought this had been overlooked as the other bungalows had been purchased privately. Cllr Harvey would report it to the appropriate team.

The Big Lunch in West Wickham was discussed. Cllr Durham would attend and report back at the next meeting.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 7.50pm

**WESTON COLVILLE PARISH COUNCIL PARISH MEETING CHAIRMAN’S REPORT 2023/24**

I would like to start by welcoming you all to the annual parish meeting. In the last year the council continued to carry out a range of village maintenance and support activities including: -

**The Green Play Area redevelopment**

Probably the most exciting thing the parish council has sponsored this year is the work of the play area improvement sub committee which following a public consultation has come up with a proposal to redevelop the play area and has applied for grants to support the cost of this work. You will see a presentation on the proposals later in this meeting. I would like to thank Councillor Rayner, Councillor Pagonis, the Council Clerk and the other members of this committee for their hard work in producing this.

**Flooding in the village**

The Parish Council flood prevention working party has had a successful year in updating the flood plan for the whole village and getting the County Council Highways department to complete most of its actions. Flood wardens are still in place and have dealt efficiently with several incidents of flooding on Common Road. I would like to thank Councillors Garrod and Durham and their fellow flood wardens for their hard work in delivering this. The County Council Flood Risks officer is also planning to visit the village with a representative from highways to see what they can do to help in the next few months.

**Maintenance of Roads and Verges**

The Parish Council implemented its usual verge cutting program and continued to provide street lighting for the village. Progress was also made with getting potholes repaired and gullies and drains cleared. However, it seems a never-ending task and there are still many potholes to fix.

**MVAS – Speed Indicator Sign**

Following a very generous donation from a parishioner, the council has been able to purchase 2 mobile vehicle activated signs which show the speed of vehicles passing through the village. These should significantly help to improve road safety and we hope to see them in regular use soon.

**Grass and hedge maintenance in the village**

The Council continued with its program of grass cutting and hedge trimming around the war memorial, at the Church end playing field and the play area on The Green.

**Play Areas**

An annual safety inspection of this equipment has also been carried out by an outside expert to ensure it meets current safety standards with the recommendations he raised will be implemented alongside all other necessary maintenance work.

**Annual Budget for the parish**

I am pleased to be able to report there will be no increase in Precept for 2023/24. However, due to an administrative error by South Cambridgeshire district council the amount payable by parishioners has decreased. This will be corrected for next year’s annual precept.

Finally, I would like to end by thanking all my fellow councillors and our Clerk for their time and effort in supporting the work and objectives of the council.

**District and County Councillor’s Annual Report 2024**

**County Council**

**A1307**

After some 10 years since the finances were secured for the projects, the upgrades to the A1307 completed in 2024. Over the last 12 months we saw completion of the roundabout on the A1307 at Linton, as well as the remodelling of the Dean Road junction between Linton and Horseheath.

There was some good (we hope) progress made on the final leg of the ‘Greenway’, which is the off-road path that caters for all non-motorised users, and links Linton to Abington and beyond. The original plan was to direct the route along Linton Road, Abington through the middle of the village and then out along Bourne Bridge Road. This option was rejected after public consultation and the new route was decided to be along Pampisford Road. The downside of this is that it will take longer to construct, as there are compulsory land purchases required, which involve lawyers, and always take time. However, the section along Newmarket Road, Abington is less contentious, and work is planned to begin this summer. Full detail can be seen at - <https://www.greatercambridge.org.uk/sustainable-transport-programme/public-transport-schemes/cambridge-south-east-transport>

**Greater Cambridge Partnership**

The big news that came from the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) this year, and last, was that Cambridgeshire were offered a large sum of money (many many millions) by central government to help improve the local public transport network in and around the city. The reason for this wasn’t random - Cambridge scores very poorly on congestion and pollution metrics – some saying it is the 3rd worst city for congestion in England and that it emits over 25% more pollution that the national average.

A solution to this, that the government were looking to support financially, was get a very reliable and cost-effective public transport system, as has been seen to work in other cities. This would eventually have had to be self-funded and the proposed way to achieve this would be to charge for road usage, a congestion charge, or what was being labelled as a Sustainable Travel Zone (STZ).

After having undertaken the largest public consultation in Cambridgeshire’s history on the subject and as a result not having enough political support to move the scheme forward, the proposals fell and are highly unlikely to be revived.

**Civil Parking Enforcement**

After applying to government several years ago to take on the responsibility of parking enforcement in South Cambridgeshire from the Police, this year it was finally implemented. As of February 2024 there are now dedicated traffic wardens patrolling the villages and towns of South Cambs issuing parking tickets for poor and illegal parking. As the scheme is still in its infancy there aren’t huge numbers of officers, so the impact is unlikely to be immediate, or completely solve the issue, but they are aware of the ‘hot spots’ for bad parking and will be prioritising these areas. Anyone can report areas of bad parking on the County Councils website - <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/parking-services/south-cambridgeshire-civil-parking-enforcement>

**Solar Farm**

In the summer last year, the County and District Councils were approached by a solar farm company who had plans to build a solar farm on some of the land between West Wratting, Balsham and the A11. The size of the proposal is fairly significant, 900 hectares, and if approved today would make it the largest solar farm in the UK.

The scheme has been altered somewhat since the first iteration of the plans and at a public presentation by the applicants in Balsham, the areas being considered had changed. Essentially the area will be from the edge of West Wratting to the A11, where the current solar farm is.

The reason that we get a lot of green energy schemes proposed for this area (the wind farm, existing solar farm etc) is because the main power line runs parallel to the A11 here – meaning that energy can be fed directly into the main power grid without having to pipe it miles away.

The obstacles that the other scheme have come across in this area is the impact on the countryside and the loss of high-grade agricultural land. A formal planning application isyet to come but when it does, given the scale of it, it will be decided by the Secretary of State rather than the local planning authorities.

**Anaerobic Digesters**

Over the last year we have had two planning applications in our area for anaerobic digestion plants in our area. One is in Streetly End, West Wickham and the other just over the Suffolk border outside of Haverhill on the A1307.

The proposals are slightly different in scale with the Suffolk application being larger but the principle of location of these plants seems to be the main cause for concern from those living near to the sites. These plants tend to be in the open countryside, rather than close to villages and towns and the residents have written into the relevant local planning authorities to make these points.

At time of writing neither has been decided, so please do write to the planning officers directly if you would like to comment on either: Acorn, Haverhill –Andrew.rutter@suffolk.gov.uk

Streetly End, West Wickham – helen.wass@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

**District Council**

**Cambridge 2050**

For those of you who read our monthly reports, you will be aware that there is currently a proposal from central government to attract international science and tech companies to the Cambridge area making it the UK’s version of ‘Silicon Valley or Boston’ (their words not ours). To facilitate this there would need to be housing for these companies to utilise and the currently proposal is to build 150,000 houses in and around Cambridge to make the area as attractive as possible to these companies and to do this by the year 2050.

To put this into perspective, Cambridge city is currently 56,000 houses, meaning that if these plans went ahead it would quadruple the size of the city and could make villages like Abington suburbs of the city.

There will be, of course, major issues to overcome such as water scarcity, electricity scarcity, existing infrastructure and local planning issues such as impact on the Green Belt. The plans are some way off being finalised but the local councils that will be directly affected, South Cambs District Council, Cambridge City Council and Cambridgeshire County Council are currently battling to ‘stay at the table’ and maintain a voice in how these proposals are formulated.

**Four Day Week**

As of January 2023, the District Council have been trialling a 4-day working week for their office-based staff. The reason for this was because our area is an expensive one to live in, and local authority wages being set nationally, it was very hard to attract and hold onto staff, specifically specialist roles such as planners. The trial is an attempt to see if this makes the role more attractive and ultimately employ people on permanent contracts rather than using expensive agency staff. There are also health and wellbeing benefits for the staff as well as the fact that this is quite a pioneering pilot scheme, as the council are the first public sector body to try this.

Before starting the trial there was extensive performance benchmarking undertaken to ensure the council had something to compare the results to, as an indication of the trialssuccess or not. The results are all independently assessed by the Bennett Institute of Cambridge University.

The waste collection service moved to a four-day week in September and the transition went extremely smoothly, a lot smoother than expected.

The government has taken a position of being against the concept of a four day week and has requested that SCDC send performance data to them every week, which is also made public on their website - https://www.scambs.gov.uk/your-council-and-democracy/four-day-working-week - a decision on whether to make the trial permanent, or not, will be made later in the year.

**Elections**

In May 2024 there will have been an election for the Police & Crime Commissioner for Cambridgeshire. Also in 2024 there will be a General Election – at time of writing the date of this is unknown but likely to be in the autumn. In May 2025 there will be elections for the County Council and the Mayor of Cambridgeshire and