

Draft until signed
Minutes of Dry Drayton Parish Council (DDPC) Meeting
Tuesday 5th April 2022 at 7.30pm, at Dry Drayton Village Hall, High Street, Dry Drayton CB23 8BS

Present: Cllr S Aldersley (Chair), Cllr E Pyle (Councillor), Cllr S Vale (Councillor)

Attending: Mrs S Etherington-Meech (Clerk/RFO), Cllr E Murphy (County Councillor), Cllr C Garvie (District Councillor), Cllr T Bygott (District Councillor), 4 members of the public

1. To Accept Apologies for Absence

Apologies were accepted from Cllr S Lander (absent due to another commitment), Cllr E Wickham (absent due to work commitments) and Cllr T Houlihan (absent due to annual leave). No apology for absence was received for Cllr K Cullen.

2. To Accept Parish Councillors Declarations of Interest for Matters on the Agenda

No declarations of interest were declared.

3. To Agree to hold a Public Forum

A member of the public noted some concerns following the approval of the Section 73 application for Swifts Close. Firstly, no works have been carried out, such as fencing and treatments which were part of the application, and it was questioned if there was a time limit for works to be completed. Secondly, a planning application has been outstanding since May 2021 relating to car ports at the development, even though an email from the developer was received in February 2022 in relation to withdrawing this application. Finally, it was raised that Condition 5 is still to be discharged and it was questioned whether it has been overlooked as people have now moved into some of the properties. Cllr Bygott and Cllr Aldersley advised that the member of the public should report all concerns to Planning as was recommended by Cllr. Tumi Hawkins when she addressed the Parish Council in January 2022. The member of the public advised that despite numerous emails to Stephen Kelly at planning no responses have been received, Cllr Aldersley suggested forwarding emails to Lorraine Casey and copying himself into all correspondence.

It was asked if Cllr Aldersley and Cllr Bygott had received any response to their emails sent to planning in relation to the Swifts Close development. Cllr Aldersley advised that no reply had been received, however, he and Cllr Houlihan had attended a virtual meeting with Nigel Blazeby. During the meeting Cllr Aldersley requested a written summary of the discussions from Nigel Blazeby, however he was informed that it was too complex a case to provide. Cllr Bygott advised that he has requested that Stephen Kelly makes a statement.

Cllr Aldersley advised that he was unsure what more can now be done in relation to this matter as either a parish or parish council. He said that he thinks DDPC have done all they are able to and have reached an impasse. Cllr Bygott agreed that DDPC did all that they could as a parish council. Cllr Aldersley confirmed that other than a judicial review which would be costly with no guaranteed positive outcome the only option was to put pen to paper. Cllr Bygott suggested that in the public interest DDPC write to the Secretary of State with all the facts. ACTION - Cllr Aldersley agreed to draft a letter.

4. To Approve the Minutes of Meeting held on Tuesday 1st March 2022

RESOLVED (Prop Cllr Pyle, 2nd Cllr Vale, unanimous) that the minutes of the meeting be approved and signed by the chairman as a true and accurate record.

5. Matters Arising from the Minutes, Report of any actions and Resolutions from last meeting – See Appendix 1

- 5.1 Discussed within the public forum
- 5.2 Awaiting feedback from Cllr E Murphy
- 5.3 Cllr Murphy advised this issue is currently under review and the Local Highways Officer has stated that it is not bad enough to require resurfacing. Cllr Aldersley raised concerns with works in the parish not being carried out and infrastructure failing. Cllr Aldersley highlighted that it is only a matter of time before an accident occurs in the village. Cllr Murphy explained that Dry Drayton is not unique, and it is not possible to pump money in order to bring all footpaths and roads up to an ideal standard. It is difficult to increase the pace of works as

they are contracted and there are still the effects of the pandemic such as staff shortages. Cllr Murphy further highlighted the difficulty in obtaining information and explained that she has spent a huge amount of time trying to improve the quality of information.

Cllr Aldersley highlighted that he understands resident frustrations with a lack of action and how they have to suffer with ongoing issues such as speeding, flooding, etc. Cllr Murphy explained that Dry Drayton is not being ignored and that there are a number of initiatives available to assist with issues in the parish.

- 5.4 Nothing further has been heard other than investigations into a Compulsory Purchase Order.
- 5.5 No update.
- 5.6 No update.
- 5.7 Clerk has chased Daniel Jackson and was advised that James Broder would be able to provide an update. Clerk emailed James at the beginning of March and chased but still no response.
- 5.8 Cllr Aldersley advised this item must be postponed with the bigger picture looked at.
- 5.9 RESOLVED – Cllr Aldersley published the article in the newsletter.
- 5.10 Clerk has emailed Donald O’Shea on the 10th of March requesting a timeframe. A reply was received on the 18th of March advising that an update has been requested from the contractor and Donald is to discuss this item with the Highways senior management team at their next meeting.
- 5.11 Adjourned to the next meeting for Cllr S Lander to provide an update
- 5.12 Members of Dry Drayton Village Hall Management Committee were in attendance and advised that works to the gents’ toilet floor had been completed and the locks have been purchased for upgrading in the ladies’ toilets. Receipts to be provided to the clerk for Section 106 money reimbursement.

6. To Accept a Report from County and District Councillors

For Cllr E Murphy report – see Appendix 4

Cllr Murphy highlighted to DDPC the importance of LHI applications and liaising with Highways. She advised that parishes and parish councils must push initiatives forwards and engage with Highways not just the County Councillors. Cllr Aldersley explained that DDPC do not have enough time and/or money for just LHI applications and everything needed for the parish is far bigger than the resources and monies that DDPC have. Cllr Murphy explained that she observed other villages making their cases to the LHI panel and Cambridgeshire County Council know what areas they need to add to. Cllr Murphy confirmed that she shares DDPC and resident frustrations and that together they can be worked through. Cllr Aldersley advised that he will arrange a meeting with Joshua Rutherford and Cllr Murphy.

Cllr Murphy advised that she has raised in a full council motion the saving of 40,000 trees on the A14.

For Cllr C Garvie report – see Appendix 5

For Cllr T Bygott report – see Appendix 6

7. To Discuss Planning Matters

a. Applications received for consideration

- i. **22/00911/CL2PD - 6 Cottons Field Dry Drayton - Certificate of lawfulness under S192 for a single storey rear and side extension – For information only**
Information only – no comments to be made.
- ii. **22/00972/FUL – Springhill Stables, Oakington Road – Retention of mobile home – Deadline for comments 6th April 2022**
RESOLVED (Prop Cllr Aldersley, 2nd Cllr Pyle, unanimous) to resubmit comments made in January 2022 for application 21/05291/FUL.
- iii. **22/01092/HFUL - 61 Pettitts Lane, Dry Drayton - First floor front extension. Raising roof height of the existing single storey side extension to insulate – deadline for comments 12th April 2022**
RESOLVED (Prop Cllr Aldersley, 2nd Cllr Vale, unanimous) to support this application with the following comments:

- Concerns of possible damage, congestion and parking issues that maybe caused by contractors at the site.
 - The potential light pollution that could be created by the property.
- b. Decisions received from South Cambs District Council**
- i. 21/05417/FUL - Land East of Park Lane & South Side of Madingley Road - Change of use of land from agricultural to equine use and construction of an American barn, exercise track and associated works – Application withdrawn**
 - ii. 21/04898/S73 - 65 Pettitts Lane Dry Drayton Cambridge Cambridgeshire CB23 8BT - S73 variation of condition 1 (Approved plans) of reserved matters approval S/3447/18/RM (Application for approval of reserved matters following outline planning permission S/4554/17/OL for the construction of up to 10 dwelling houses & associated infrastructure & works in respect of appearance landscaping layout and scale) – Granted permission**
- c. Development at 65 Pettitts Lane (21/04898/S73)**
- i. Delegated decision letter from Stephen Kelly in relation to 65 Pettitts Lane and request from DDPC to be considered by the planning committee**
ACTION – Cllr Aldersley to produce a letter to be sent to the Secretary of State in relation to this issue.
 - ii. Cllr Aldersley & Cllr Houlihan to advise of meeting carried out with Nigel Blazeby at Greater Cambridge Planning (GCP)**
Cllr Aldersley advised that notes from the meeting have been circulated to councillors and that he would be happy to attach as an Appendix – see Appendix 3.
- 8. Matters for discussion/correspondence received**
- 8.1 To consider proposal received from OKO Coffee group in relation to a semi-mobile takeaway café**
Cllr Aldersley and the clerk explained that an email exchange had been occurring with the OKO Coffee group and they had been invited to the April and June meeting to present their proposal.
 - 8.2 To consider and discuss future LHI application ideas**
Cllr Aldersley to contact Joshua Rutherford at Highways in relation to future LHI applications.
 - 8.3 To consider and discuss email from CAPALC in relation to NALC setting up a smaller councils committee, items to be considered by 30th April 2022**
Cllr Aldersley agreed to put some notes together and circulate to councillors for their comments before submission.
 - 8.4 To inform of correspondence from Brookfield Groundcare in relation to fixed costs for the grass cutting for Dry Drayton and confirmation of ‘no mow May’**
RESOLVED (Prop Cllr Aldersley, 2nd Cllr Pyle, unanimous) to continue contract for grass cutting and maintenance with Brookfield Groundcare. DDPC agreed they are happy with the service, relationship, and costings with Brookfield Groundcare and despite approaching three other companies no quotations were received.
 - 8.5 To consider and discuss a plan for ‘Operation London Bridge’**
Clerk to circulate documents to councillors for review and action plan to be produced at the May meeting.
 - 8.6 To consider and discuss email from resident of Scotland Farm Road in relation to speeding issues/concern**
Cllr Aldersley has forwarded email to Cllr Murphy to include with the many Highways concerns DDPC and residents have.
 - 8.7 To consider an application for the 4th round of ZCC grant scheme – deadline for applications 1st June 2022**
Cllr Aldersley adjourned this item for consideration at the May meeting.
 - 8.8 To discuss parking concerns outside of the village hall**

Cllr Aldersley explained that concerns have been highlighted in relation to parking on the pavement outside of the village hall making pavements inaccessible. Dry Drayton Village Hall agreed to inform people to park considerately when visiting the village hall.

- 8.9 To consider Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group email in relation to a pond conservation fund – funding available to restore existing ponds and create new ponds in the parish**
Les Waters circulated the email via the resident email group.

9. Consultations

- 9.1 To consider EWR business case for EWR letter from Anthony Browne and support of letter**
Cllr Aldersley advised that DDPC supported the letter delivered to the Minister of Transport by Anthony Browne and which was signed by various parishes and organisations along the proposed route.

10. Finance and Policy

- a. To accept account review to date and end of financial year bank reconciliation**
Bank reconciliation (see Appendix 2) and finance spreadsheet were circulated to all councillors before the meeting, RESOLVED (Prop Cllr Aldersley, 2nd Cllr Pyle, unanimous) to accept and approve the accounts and bank reconciliation.
- b. To advise of payments received between 25th February 2022 – 31st March 2022**
- i. UK Power Networks – Rental Credit - £11.50**
- c. Direct debits and standing orders paid between 25th February 2022 – 31st March 2022**
- i. Salary/Overtime/Expenses/Pension (Period 11 & 12) - £1,328.66** (LGA, 1972, s.112)
- d. Online payments made between 25th February 2022 – 31st March 2022**
- i. Cambridge Restoration – Upfront payment for materials for benches - £1,850.00**
(Parish Councils 1957, s.1)
- ii. National Salary Award backpay for 2021/22 – £130.24** (LGA, 1972, s.112)
- iii. HMRC – National Insurance Contribution (Period 12) - £4.10** (LGA 1972, s.112)
- iv. DDVH – Hall Hire 5th & 8th April 2022 (4 hrs) - £28.00** (LGA 1972, s.133)
- v. Paul Clark – Bus Shelter Cleaning - £15.00** (Local Government Miscellaneous Act 1953, s.4)
- e. Payments to hand**
- i. Parish Online – Online Mapping Service - £45.00**
RESOLVED (Prop Cllr Aldersley, 2nd Cllr Pyle, unanimous) for payment to be made, to be approved online. (LGA 1972, s.143)
- ii. CAPALC – Clerks Bitesize Election Training - £30.00**
RESOLVED (Prop Cllr Aldersley, 2nd Cllr Pyle, unanimous) for payment to be made, to be approved online. (LGA 1972, s.112)
- f. To consider quotation for accounting package and allotment management package with Rialtas**
DDPC considered the quotation and decided that costings were high, and the current finance spreadsheet used was adequate for DDPC accounting needs.
- g. To consider adopting Safeguarding Policy in order for clerk to apply to Community Chest Grant Fund Scheme for monies towards a jubilee bench – deadline for application 12th April 2022**
RESOLVED (Prop Cllr Aldersley, 2nd Cllr Pyle, unanimous) to adopt the Safeguarding Policy.
- h. To consider adopting disciplinary & grievance & equality policies**
The chairman advised for this item to be adjourned to the May meeting in order for review of the documents.
- i. To discuss basic DBS checks for safeguarding officers**
RESOLVED (Prop Cllr Pyle, 2nd Cllr Vale, unanimous) that Cllr Aldersley and S Etherington-Meech (Clerk) should have basic DBS checks carried out for their role as Safeguarding Officers for DDPC.
- j. To agree budget for Annual Parish Meeting refreshments**
RESOLVED (Prop Cllr Aldersley, 2nd Cllr Pyle, unanimous) budget of up to £50.00 for refreshments.
- k. To discuss removal and adding of bank signatories following elections in May 2022**
ACTION – Cllr Aldersley to investigate process for removal and adding of bank signatories following the May elections

11. To accept notices and matter for the next agenda

No notices or matters raised.

12. Date and time of next meeting – Annual Parish Meeting on Friday 8th April 2022 at 7.30pm at the Village Hall & Annual Parish Council Meeting on Tuesday 10th May 2022 at 7.30pm at the Village Hall.

EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

That in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the public and press be excluded, and they are instructed to withdraw, Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.

13. To feedback on clerk’s annual appraisal and backpay of National Salary Award for 2021/22

In confidential minutes

Meeting closed at 9.28 pm

Signed.....Chairman

Date.....

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Appendix 1

Action Report/Ongoing Issues

5.1	Letter drafted to Lorraine Casey, Charlotte Peet & Enforcement requesting a satisfactory response in relation to complaints with planning and procedures at GCP	SCA/SL
5.2	Zoom meeting with Highways to discuss transport issues to be arranged with Cllr Aldersley, Cllr Murphy, and members of the Speed Watch team	SCA/EM
5.3	Update on dangerous footpath between Hill View & Trinity Stables	EM
5.4	Progress on NMU	EM
5.5	Section 106 projects from Townlands Trust	SCA
5.6	Update on 2022/23 LHI application	SCA
5.7	Erection of additional poles for MVAS	SCA/SEM
5.8	Liaise with Joshua Rutherford in relation to creation of a Highways Improvement Working Group	SCA
5.9	Newsletter article in relation to land ownership and need for tidying footpaths	SCA
5.10	Update on a time frame from Highways in relation to fixing of wigwags	SEM
5.11	Update on completion date for benches from Cambridge Restoration	SL
5.12	Village Hall Management Committee Meeting Update inc. toilet restoration	EP
5.13	Update on the Pegasus consultation for a new development	DDPC

Appendix 2

DRY DRAYTON PARISH COUNCIL
March 2022 End of Year Bank Reconciliation

	£
Lloyds current account on 28 th February 2022	£27,625.79
<u>Less</u> payments presented from 1 st March 2022 to 31 st March 2022 <i>5 online payments, 1 direct debit and 2 standing orders</i>	£2,706.52
<u>Plus</u> , receipts presented from 1 st March 2022 to 31 st March 2022 <i>No receipts received</i>	£0.00
Closing bank account on 31 st March 2022	£24,919.27
<u>Less outstanding payments not yet subtracted</u>	£0.00
Balance carried forward at 31st March 2022	£ 24,919.27

Notes:

Sarah Etherington-Meech

RFO

1st April 2022

Appendix 3

Notes following the call which Cllr. Houlihane and Cllr. Aldersley had with Nigel Blazeby, 11 March 2022

- Nigel Blazeby (NB) is the Delivery Manager Development Management of Greater Cambridge Shared Planning. This call was organised following a meeting the previous day (Quarterly Meeting with Parishes and Area 3 Team) when SCA posed a question regarding the S73 at Swifts Close. It was requested that we took the discussion to another meeting as otherwise the answer would monopolise the Wednesday meeting.
- The call lasted a little over 30 minutes and the content was quite technical. However, the salient points are as follows:
 - o This S73 is a variation of previous reserved matter, not the original planning permission.
 - o Planning will only comment on the plans as presented; they will not comment on the as-built properties. If there are concerns that what has been built does not conform to the plans for which permission was granted, this has to be passed to Enforcement.
 - o One of the main objections was the belief that the GIA of the properties was in excess of 999 square metres which, at the time that permission was granted, was the limit above which affordable housing must be provided. The original plans showed a GIA for the ten properties of less than 999 square metres.
 - o The plans which were submitted to support the S73 application showed a GIA of less than 999 square metres and, hence, were acceptable. The other issues which had been flagged related to visual impact which were considered to be acceptable.
 - o NB commented that the way in which permission was given originally was wrong as the conditions do not address the situation where a homeowner seeks permission to extend their property and, therefore, exceed the limit.
 - o Guidance has changed at national level and the notion of floor space is now out of date. Enforcement must be 'proportional' and considers current guidelines and not necessarily those which were in place at the time when permission was granted.
 - o The Local Plan has not yet been updated and still refers to the 999 square metres limit but, accordingly, government policy takes precedence. Local policy is out of step with national guidelines.
 - o SCA commented that there was a rumour that one of the units at Swifts Close had been purchased/retained by the developer with the intention of constructing another house in its garden. This would then exceed the threshold of current government guidelines which is for >10 homes. This is also linked to site area, but the area was not specified. NB said that if such an application were to be submitted, Planning would scrutinise it closely to try to ensure that "someone" was not trying to circumvent the restrictions.
 - o NB agreed that the people who had made the applications on behalf of the developer knew their way around the planning process and that the process was very much in favour of the developer.
 - o SCA pointed out to NB that a letter had been sent to Stephen Kelly some 18 months ago to express the concerns that DDPC had over the development at Swifts Close and that we were still waiting for an acknowledgement, let alone a response.
 - o SCA had been unable to record the call as he was not the host and so asked NB if he would provide a brief summary of the discussions which he declined on the basis that it was "very complicated".

Cllr Edna Murphy

MONTHLY REPORT UPDATE - APRIL 2022

COVID-19

Whatever the Government may say, rates of the virus in Cambridgeshire have been higher than they have ever been in the last few weeks, with thousands of school children and staff in schools, hospitals and other essential fields off sick. It is regrettable and short sighted that Covid tests are no longer freely available, and that worker protections including sick pay from day 1 and some funding available for those self isolating have gone. The local Director of Public Health is continuing to ask people to do the following:

- Vaccinate: get COVID jabs and booster jabs when offered.
- Test: where possible take a rapid test before meeting others, and isolate if positive. If you have symptoms, isolate.
- Protect: wear a face covering in crowded indoor spaces, keep your distance, wash hands, and meet in well-ventilated spaces.

[General](https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/coronavirus/coronavirus-overview) [Covid](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/coronavirusvaccine) [information](https://twitter.com/CambsCC) <https://twitter.com/CambsCC>
<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/coronavirus/coronavirus-overview> <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/coronavirusvaccine> [covid-19-overview](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-overview)

FINANCES

Additional funding for highways

There has been some revenue underspend, which has occurred for various reasons due to the pandemic having disrupted work and demand for certain services, and £1.5m additional funding has been put into the highways budget, specifically to increase activity in certain areas as well as bring forward improvements such as developing a better asset management system. Specific additional funding includes:

Potholes £400k
Better road markings (safety) £250k
Flooding hotspots on highways £400k

FULL COUNCIL MOTIONS – POLICY CHANGES

Repair cafes get more support

My colleague Ros Hathorn (LD county councillor for Histon and Impington) secured support to ensure the Council supported Repair Cafes and a range of repair, reuse, recycling and upcycling initiatives. The motion called on the council to investigate a range of initiatives to reduce waste and support people to live more sustainably and report back to the meeting of the Communities, Social Mobility and Integration Committee on 21 July. Repair cafes are a

practical way to tackle climate change by reducing waste and empowering people with alternatives to just throwing items away. It is the kind of initiative that the new Just Transition Fund will support.

Saving the A14 trees from dying

The County Council supported my motion to take further action to protect the trees planted several years ago as part of the A14 project.

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They were intended to reduce noise from the extra traffic, increase biodiversity and help with decarbonisation plans. Tens of thousands of saplings were planted, but currently they look dead. After a great deal of digging for information, I discovered that as early as 2020 the Council was aware that 94% of the 40,000 saplings initially planted had died. Reasons for failure were given as a combination of poor performance by National Highways as well – more worryingly – ground conditions. Almost nothing has been done in the last two years to try to understand and fix the problems.

The motion requires the County to challenge National Highways to do much better in honouring the contract, to get to grips with what the problems are (and therefore what solutions might be effective) and to publish facts and figures about the situation. Above all it requires the Council to think how to achieve a positive outcome ie thriving trees. It's not good enough to fingerpoint at National Highways when their obligations time out and they have failed, the goal is for the trees to thrive.

National Highways issued a statement as a result of the publicity caused by the motion and have promised to do a tree survey in April and then replant what is required in the next planting season. We will watch carefully to ensure they are held to account on this.

Digital connectivity strategy and the copper switch-off

Recent publicity suggests that there may be a backtrack on the policy and there may not be a copper switch-off in 2025. Old copper networks had been planned to be phased out and start to be replaced with digital systems delivered over broadband connections. There has been a great deal of criticism of the lack of connectivity for a significant minority and there would be a worsening of the 'digital divide'.

Cllr Edna Murphy

edna.murphy@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Appendix 5

Corinne Garvie

District Councillor of Girton, Madingley and Dry Drayton

Annual Report April 2022

1. Attended presentations on Eddington and Darwin Green new plans and asked questions, mine and those of residents and communicated the answers to the individuals concerned.
2. As District Councillor I represent the Council on the Adults and Health scrutiny meetings, for example on integrated care. For the All Autism Strategy I presented a report I had requested from the Gretton School.
3. I enabled the re-wilding group by proposing the person who could take it further to become the organiser. I invited the Dry Drayton group to attend the meeting so we can learn from each other.
4. I visited some businesses to encourage them to view the Business Support site on the South Cambs website and to sign up for the Open for Business newsletter to hear about how they can grow their businesses. This is on-going.
5. I met with the Head teacher of the Dry Drayton School to see if there was anything I could help with. We discussed funding solar panels and I need to follow this up.
6. I help with planning issues when there is a delay in planning consent and when disputed plans needed to go to the Planning Committee
7. I have reported local flooding issues, blocked drains and many potholes and tree issues in Girton to the County Council Highways reporting site. The potholes have not been repaired as yet but are on the list.
8. I have a good, therefore productive, working relationship with the County Councillor.
9. I set up a reporting system in all villages where I can disseminate more urgent information, for example in Girton I send information to the Parish Clerk who puts in on the Girton Community Facebook page
10. I attended all District Council Meetings.
11. I have, during my first year, developed networks with Council Officials and my fellow Councillors to help me to work more effectively.
12. I have over the year been meeting residents to find out if they had any concerns which I can help with.
13. My promises on getting elected were to get a Post Office for Girton and we now have a mobile post office on Fridays, and to sort out the Oakington Bridge with the County Councillor. This was one of her first projects. The parapets have now been repaired.
14. My next focus is to improve the bus service and to enlarge the 20mph zones to make villages safer for cyclists and pedestrians. I am working with the Parish Council and the County Councillor to achieve this. I am also looking at how to provide support for families who take in Ukrainian refugees.

Appendix 6

District Councillor's Report Apr 5th 2022 - Cllr Tom Bygott

Platinum Jubilee events

To mark Her Majesty's historic 70-year reign, 2022 will see Platinum Jubilee celebrations throughout the UK and the Commonwealth as part of a year-long programme of events. There will be an extended bank holiday weekend from Thursday 2nd to Sunday 5th June 2022.

The Government has put together some advice and guidance for people wishing to hold events. There is a Platinum Pageant Pack that can be downloaded from: www.platinumpageant.com/#get-involved

Street Parties are one important type of event, and many villagers will have fond memories of street parties held during the silver, gold and diamond jubilees. There is a guide to organising street parties at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/your-guide-to-organising-a-street-party. For large events, South Cambs District Council has a Safety Advisory Group, whose advice can be found at:

www.scambs.gov.uk/event-safety-advisory-group. The County Council advises that "a street party event is an event organised by residents for residents and neighbours only. They are only permitted to take place on quiet residential streets that do not affect the wider road network." Applications for street parties can be made at: www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/roadsand-pathways/highway-events/organising-a-street-party-event

The District Council has added a category of grants from the Community Chest for the Jubilee: www.scambs.gov.uk/community-safety-and-health/grants/community-chest-grants. This will be on a temporary and one-off basis until 12 April to allow Parish Councils and community groups to make Jubilee-related applications of up to £700. Some suggestions are to install a Commemoration Bench, or to plant a tree or a rose in Her Majesty's honour for the Jubilee.

Support for the people of Ukraine

A number of villagers have expressed to me their deep sadness and distress caused by the invasion of the Ukraine, and the feeling that we are watching the Ukrainian people suffer without being able to help. I too have been both moved by their plight and inspired by their courage.

There are some practical things that we can do to help:

- Providing accommodation for a Ukrainian family. Details are still being finalised now on how this will work, but the Government has set up a section on its website to provide advice www.gov.uk/government/news/ukraine-what-you-can-do-to-help.
- Giving to charity. Be careful of scams and only give through properly registered charities. A charity's registration details can be checked at www.gov.uk/checkcharity.
- Boycotting companies with links to Russia. A list can be found at:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2022_boycott_of_Russia_and_Belarus. If you do business with companies that are not on this list, you can write to them and ask them why they're not.

The main thing that we can do however is to save energy. Reducing oil and gas use is key to ending the war, as this is the source of 40% of the Russian government's income. I wrote about this last month in relation to energy costs, but the strategic necessity of ending the use of oil and gas and achieving energy independence has now become even more urgent. Some ideas are:

- Install better insulation. Advice on household energy efficiency and the Government's Green Deal can be found at www.gov.uk/green-deal-energy-saving-measures.
- Install solar panels. The increase in electricity cost has made the economics more favourable.
- Don't buy a new petrol or diesel car. There is a shortage of computer chips and these are best used in new electric and plug-in hybrid cars. Major disruption to oil supplies can't be ruled out this year and the last petrol and diesel vehicles sold are unlikely to remain in use for long.

South Cambs 2022-23 Budget

There are many things to welcome in the South Cambs District Council budget such as money towards environmental improvements and building more council houses. However there were some elements that I couldn't support:

- An increase in Council Tax by the maximum legally allowed - £5 for a Band D property (a £50 difference to the council tax paid four years ago). This is not appropriate when there is a squeeze in the cost of living.
- £200,000 on recarpeting the council building and £70,000 on redecoration. This makes up the majority of this year's council tax increase, £327,000. It was also revealed through the course of the meeting that over £500,000 has been used to pay staff to leave the council over the past four years via early retirement settlements, gardening leave and redundancies.
- Putting up council tenants' rents by the legal maximum of 4.1%. Ordinary people are being asked for restraint in asking for pay rises to control inflation, yet institutional landlords seem happy to fuel inflation through rent rises.
- Increased external borrowing for the purpose of commercial investment. I don't believe we should be borrowing nearly £150m in uncertain times especially when this risk could burden residents with further tax if the investment strategy that the budget relies on goes wrong.

The council is facing other potential problems, as over £300,000 is at risk of being returned to developers for failing to deal with their applications on time.

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