

**MELDRETH PARISH COUNCIL**

Minutes unapproved of the **Extra Ordinary** Parish Council Meeting held Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> November 2012, at 8.00 p.m. in Meldreth Village Hall.

**Present:** Mr S. Hawkins (SH) Chairman; Mr R.A. Searles (RAS) Vice-Chairman; Mr A P Burlton (APB); Mr S.W.J. Chamberlain (JC); Mrs C.J. Fallon (JF); Mr C.A.Land (CAL); Mr N Pellatt (NP), Mr D Stewart (DS)

In attendance: J Damant (Clerk), Cllr S Soond (SCDC) and Cllr S van de Ven (CCC)

- 187/11/12      To receive any apologies for absence:**  
Apologies received from Mr G V Borgonon who was on Parish Council business.
- 188/11/12      Councillors to disclose any Pecuniary Interests (disclosable pecuniary interests (DPIs) include interests held by a member's spouse, civil partner or similar) listed on the Agenda:**  
There were no declarations declared.
- 189/11/12      To discuss the opening of the old traveller site on Mettle Hill, Meldreth:**

SH welcomed the residents of Meldreth and explained the procedure of an Extra Ordinary Parish Council meeting.

**Reports:**

**CCC Report:**

Cllr van de Ven addressed the meeting and read out her report.

The main items are:

1. Status of Mettle Hill ownership:

The land in question is currently owned by CCC.

CCC has to offer first refusal to SCDC or the Parish Council. The Parish Council did explore this option some time ago but it was not well supported by SCDC and the price of the land was also very high.

This will be going to full Cabinet on 22<sup>nd</sup> November where a vote will be taken whether SCDC is able to bid for the land. The Parish Council have to make a very quick decision and consider realistic options.

They have to be able to say what the land will be used for,. If it is just to keep people off it won't be a strong enough case, needs a plan.

If two bids are received CCC will made a decision on 'best consideration' this is what is best use for the land and not necessarily the highest bidder.

2. Petition

The petition is currently on line and there has been 621 responses, so far with a total of 1327 which includes hard copies. The petition will be presented at the meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> November.

3. Stages of the Campaign

At the meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> November there will be 8 SCDC council members made up from councillors from other villages and they have 1 vote each, if they vote for this proposal it then goes to full cabinet on 22<sup>nd</sup> November.

Cllr van de Ven believes Meldreth have a very strong positive case. The village has a good relationship will all residents who presently reside in the village with all communities getting on well.

Mr R A Searles (Vice-Chairman of Meldreth Parish Council) report: Attached

Mr Searles read out his report.

A meeting took place with Mr Steve Hawkins (Chairman of Meldreth Parish Council), Mr Searles, Mr Mark Howell – SCDC portfolio holder and Mr Ray Manning SCDC leader. Mr Manning will be leading the cabinet meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup> November. This meeting took place at the request of Meldreth Parish Council. This proposal to reopen the site has supposedly come about from a request from Bassingbourn Parish.

A site was proposed in Bassingbourn and a vote was taken where 1250 voted against this proposal, but 18 did state that a possible alternative would be to reopen the site at Meldreth.

The site on Mettle Hill was closed due to uncompromising behaviour from the travellers already in situ.

The site was then closed and CCC declared that it would never be opened as a traveller site again.

Since the closure two Showman sites have opened opposite, a private Romany site and a further traveller site on the border with Whaddon have also opened. All these communities live and work well within Meldreth.

The site on Mettle Hill still holds planning permission for a travel site, other companies have enquired about having this planning changed but SCDC Planning were not very forthcoming in allowing this, so the companies did not purchase the land, if planning could not be changed they would not be able to run their business and they would not know this until after they purchased the land, so was not a viable proposition.

For SCDC it would appear the better option. The Public Consultation of 2009 gave 20 possible sites and Meldreth was NOT one of them. Northstowe and Cambourn were possible sites.

The question is why having declared this site not fit for reasons of :

1. Nearest doctors surgery is Melbourn so therefore too far away
2. Too far from the centre of the village

How come it is even being discussed let alone being proposed to be reopened again.

SCDC are able to receive money from central government which they have to be able to spend quickly on developing traveller and showman sites as their quota has to be met, i.e. they have to have so many sites opened by 2032.

Mr S Hawkins proposed a Motion.

'Meldreth Parish Council objects to the current proposal by South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) to purchase the closed travellers site on Mettle Hill, Kneesworth Road, Meldreth with the purpose of reopening it'.

Seconded by Mr C A Land

All Councillors in favour. Motion Carried.

Meeting Paused at 8.30 pm

Mr Hawkins stated that the procedure at the meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup> November would entail 3 members of the public to speak for 3 minutes each, Mr Searles and Mr Hawkins are able to speak for 5 minutes each and the District Councillor – Mr Soond was also able to make representation and he has no time restraints. It is important that the questions are phrased correctly and are to the point and are not repeated.

The meeting was then opened up to the floor.

There are two Showman sites in Meldreth – Biddall's Boulevard and Five Acres.

TB – was happy to see such support.

JB – purchased the showman site in 1996 as the travellers were leaving. All the showman on the site belong to the Showman's Guild and they have integrated well within the community. He is very concerned about the close proximity of Showman and travellers as they are come from very different cultures. Travellers need sites as well but this is not the right one for them or Meldreth. He did inform the meeting that he had looked into purchasing the land some years ago but was quoted a price of £400,000.

GB – If travellers had still been living on the land the showman would not have purchased the land opposite, also if they had decided to live there would they have been allowed to purchase the land in such close proximity – very doubtful. There is only 7 mtrs separating the showman sites and the traveller site, it is too close.

If this goes ahead are SCDC willing to:

1. find the showman alternative sites
2. develop them
3. transfer them to a new site
4. find them a nice village
5. put their lives back together.

The showman purchase and develop their own plots at their own expense.

Showman have a different heritage and is this proposal an **infringement on their basic human rights?**

Q

There are three hundred traveller sites throughout England, Meldreth at the present time is the 15<sup>th</sup> largest, if this proposal goes ahead they will be the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest.

JT – Showman's Guild

They have not been involved with any consultation are are presently looking at further sites within the UK, why have they not been included as Showman need more sites as well. They did make enquiries concerning Mettle Hill three weeks ago and have just been invited to the meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup>. They do have funds to purchase the land. Cllr Soond (SCDC) will put this into his report.

Linda Oliver – CCC

Is very concerned about what is happening and is in full support of the village.

JS – Kneesworth Community Group

Is also concerned as they were affected by the previous traveller site. There should not be a concentration of traveller sites – goes against all that the 'Big Society' stands for.

Deborah Roberts - SCDC

Concerned about the way this is happening, but what is needed if for people to turn up at the meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup>. Concern is also that SCDC managed the previous site and were unable to handle it - what makes them think that they can do this again? The other sites Whaddon is over looked by the army barracks and the site at Milton is overlooked by the A14, Mettle Hill is very closed off.

Goodridge

Why has nobody been informed of this? How is it possible that they can push something like this through, they are elected members is there no body overlooking how they run their business?

Q

At the meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup> there will be 8 councillors who will take a vote:

2 Cottenham, 2 Willingham, 2 Papworth, 1 Waterbeach and 1 Swavesey. None of them will want to see a traveller site in their village.

Q

I had been burgled, the police believed it was individuals from the site on Mettle Hill, but were to frightened to enter the site. If this behaviour is repeated again and the police are already being cut back on what assurances will the village have that they will be protected?

Cllr van de Ven is upset at the way SCDC have conducted themselves throughout this whole procedure and believes that their credibility has been ruined.

TD

Had many incidences with the traveller site with machinery being stolen, cars vandalised, rescuing police cars, verbal abuse and intimidation.

SL

This is a peaceful community why are we being threatened with this again, once was enough and who will pay the costs.

JH

Why are they insisting on flooding this area with sites?

SCDC initiated in 2006 a survey to find sites, it want to public consultation where they chose 20 sites and rejected 12 (one of which was Meldreth). Meldreth still has planning permission so this is an easy way out. Question is why are they ignoring the other 20 sites already agreed?

RG - Scope

What will the Council do to protect the vulnerable residents in this village?

SH response – can not give any assurance and is in agreement with this question as it is extremely important considering the village Meldreth is.

DC

Will SCDC and CCC be able to provide funding for this when they can't even do the footpaths?

ML

SCDC set aside £500,000 for the provision of Mettle Hill, £250,000 to purchase and £250,000 to rebuild the site. There are to be 10 plots with roads and accommodation, believes it is doubtful that £250,000 would cover these costs.

PH

Could the Parish Council seek funding from the community to purchase the land?

Response: There is still the question of need and a reason to purchase – just to stop travellers is not good enough and the price is dependent on what it can be used for.

Q from the Chair – If this was the way to go, who would be interested in raising the precept in order to purchase the land – (1 against) all others raised their hands in support of this.

Q

How many pay Council Tax with the visitors from neighbouring villages this was still in the majority.

Q

Could be raised by public subscription.

Cllr van de Ven

You need a timescale. CCC have a cabinet meeting one week after the 22<sup>nd</sup> November to discuss this matter. The Parish Council have very little time. The process will be fast and the land is being valued already.

J

Understood that this site would never be reopened as a traveller site and was given assurances to this fact and that if it was to change then a full consultation would have to take place, this has not happened. The item needs to come off the agenda. A proposal needs to be initiated for a full and public consultation.

Cllr Soond

Judicial Review – question of process. SCDC does have a code of conduct, which is on the website.

Q

Can Mark Howell be made to resign?

A

No he does not have to resign.

Parish Council need legal representation on how to proceed with the way SCDC have conducted themselves which they are in the process of doing.

RC

Can we not ask for Freedom of Information to find out what has been happening and to have all correspondence?

J

Protocol has not been followed there should be 3 weeks lead time – NOT 1 week – needs taking off the agenda.

Cllr van de Ven – any individual is able to have items removed – Cllr van de Ven will look into this.

S

Thanked the Parish Council who are though elected by the residents unpaid and she is aware of all the work that is going on behind the scenes.

RAS

Getting this taken off the agenda may prove difficult as it is buried amongst a financial document so is not an item in itself but part of a much larger document. Needs the whole financial package to be removed.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> November there are 55 Councillors in attendance.

Jl

Need to get speakers and questions to put forward and the meantime try and get it removed from the agenda.

AD

Email the councillors they are on SCDC Website – make sure they are not offensive and to the point.

Q

What sites were rejected and on what grounds?

DR

Northstowe is about to be build why can't the site be built there as it was one of the original approved sites?

LO

Confirmed that CCC did decide that the site would not be reopened and there is written correspondence stating this – will bet it to the parish council.

Speakers: Questions need to be to the point and constructive. Steve Hawkins and Rob Searles will help in constructing questions if needed.

Roger Gale or Linda Oliver - School

Carla Birch - Showman

John??? - village

Kneesworth Community Website:

Please put any comments onto the website but please make they constructive and not offensive as this will not help the cause.

Is concern as Bassingbourn Barracks are due to close, there will no longer by any assistance in helping to keep the peace.

Mr S Hawkins thanked everyone for attending.

Meeting closed at 22.15hrs

There will be another meeting held before SCDC cabinet meeting of 22<sup>nd</sup> November

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Chairman

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Date

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