

**MELDRETH PARISH COUNCIL**

**Minutes unapproved** of the Parish Council Meeting held Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2012, 7.30 p.m. in the main room of Meldreth Village Hall.

**Present:** Mr S Hawkins (SH) Chairman, Mr R.A. Searles (RAS) Vice Chairman; Mr G V Borgonon (GVB), 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) and Cllr S van de Ven (CCC)

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CCC Cambridge County Council; SCDC – South Cambridgeshire District Council.

- 190/12/12 To receive any apologies for absence:**  
Apologies were received from Cllr S Soond (SCDC).
- 191/12/12 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 interests declared.
- 192/12/12 Public Participation: [For up to 15 minutes members of the public may contribute their views and comments to the Parish Council - 3mins per item]**  
There were nine members of the public in attendance.  
Matters discussed:  
North End – the traffic is speeding through North End is it possible to organise a speed check with the police. There is a 7 day speed survey available on request. **Action: Clerk**  
With Ref. To 196/12/12 and 208/12/12.2 Chairman of SCDC Cllr Tony Orgee stated that SCDC would not want to enter a bidding war with the Parish Council and added that "If the [10 January] meeting takes place....." Cllr Orgee said that he had wanted to give at least a month from the last SCDC meeting [22 November] before the special meeting. There were those who had argued that it should have been before Christmas to remove unsettling uncertainty over the holiday period, but he had been conscious of the time frame to respond to FOI requests. He went on to say that it would be extremely unfortunate if the PC and SCDC should enter into a bidding war - without saying SCDC would not compete if the PC put in a bid. However on the subject of the 10 January meeting - if the PC were to make the decision to buy the site that would be a "material change of circumstances". The Parish Council have already stated to CCC they they would be putting in a bid to purchase the land.
- 193/12/12 To sign and approve Minutes of meetings dated 1<sup>st</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> November 2012:**  
**Minutes of the 1<sup>st</sup> November:** The minutes were proposed by CAL to be a true record, seconded by RAS, all agreed, the Chairman then signed the minutes.  
**Minutes of the 6<sup>th</sup> November (extra ordinary meeting):** Minor amendments – Mr John Bobecky should be recorded as a questioner to Cabinet and CCC Report should read Full Council not Cabinet as stated. The minutes were then proposed to be a true record by GVB, seconded by JC all agreed. The Chairman then signed the minutes.
- 194/12/12 Matters arising: (no actions information only)**  
- Grass cutting quotations will be sent out in the New Year  
- Meldreth Local History Group are one of the first groups in the country to be awarded a Heritage Lottery Fund All Our Stories Grant. The award will fund the digging of 20-30 test pits at various locations within the village. They will be working with Dr Carenza Lewis from Cambridge University.  
- The mobile warden scheme for Meldreth will be closing as of 31<sup>st</sup> December 2012  
- Highways have been informed of blocked drains in North End and pot holes in the High Street.
- 195/12/12 Planning: Cllrs. Hawkins, Searles, Burlton, Chamberlain, Fallon and Land**  
**Planning meeting for 15<sup>th</sup> November 2012**  
**Land east of 104-108 High Street, S/2232/12/VC**  
Variation of condition 2 of application S/0958/10/F to relocate terrace of 3 dwellings. Parish Council recommend **No Recommendation** with comments: 'There are major concerns that the turning space in front of the cart lodge is insufficient to allow larger cars to turn into the allocated spaces and that this may increase the amount of casual parking on the High Street since there is no other parking provisions for these dwellings'.

**Melda Farm, Bury Farm, S/2215/12/FL**, Erection of new vehicle testing building, Parish Council recommends **Approval** with no comments.

There was no planning minutes on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2012.

196/12/12

**Mettle Hill Update: Report from Working Party Chairman and Councillors**

Mr Paul Ray gave out a report and addressed the meeting. See appendix 1.

It would appear that there is a popular mandate to stop the actions of SCDC's proposal to purchase the land at Mettle Hill and reopen it as a traveller's site.

SCDC do not appear to have addressed the issues and attitudes of this proposal and are looking at the 'easy option' concerning planning, which would appear to be incorrect. The matter may have to go to court in order for SCDC to reopen the site as the planning, already in situ, is with CCC.

197/12/12

**Report from District Councillor:**

Cllr van de Ven gave a report on Cllr Soond's behalf.

There will be cuts to the Arts, Sports and Community funding this will have an impact on certain projects, further information can be found on the SCDC website.

198/12/12

**Report from County Councillor:**

**Cllr van de Ven read out a report.**

**Sale of Mettle Hill by Cambridgeshire County Council:** In selling its land at Mettle Hill, the County Council must offer first refusal to district or parish councils. This has always been the factor which gives Meldreth the opportunity to determine the future of Mettle Hill, and the role as County Councillor is to ensure that the parish's right is completely unhindered.

Discussions with County Council began on the afternoon of the day South Cambs made its surprise announcement. These discussions have gone very well and the Parish Council has been included from the start. The situation now is that the County Council has had its required second valuation and has this week written to both District and Parish informing them of their terms and conditions for the sale of the land, and inviting bids. There has never before been an instance of both District and Parish bidding simultaneously on the same piece of County-owned land. Cllr van de Ven is arguing that the parish council's should be the preferred bid, on the basis that this deeply local issue should be the remit of Meldreth's most local representative body. South Cambs District Council's bid is discredited by its complete failure to consult, after developing its plans to reopen the disused site in secret and having not thought through the the potentially damaging effects on the village community.

**Whitcroft Road speed reduction:** Garnering support from County Highways. Cllr van de Ven has spent some time discussing with senior officers at County Council the less-than-ideal support which has been received in Meldreth for this initiative. Concerns have been taken on board, and assurances given that in fact County needs to take all opportunities to work with parish councils that are willing to take up and develop ideas like this one.

**Footways etc:** County Council is investing £90 million over the next four years on roads, pavements and cycleways. As local member Cllr van de Ven will be making a case for priorities in Meldreth – can the PC forward to Cllr van de Ven its priorities. **Action: Clerk** As reported previously, Chishill PC is looking at how to tackle its well documented speeding traffic problems. It is now prepared to purchase mobile speed display signs which will cost less than going via County. It is working with Highways to agree site locations. Melbourn PC is involved in a similar project and it will be useful to learn from their experiences.

**Drainage around the Stocks:** A meeting with Meldreth Manor and council officers took place yesterday with a clear follow-up plan which we hope to get instigated quickly. A fuller look at drainage in Meldreth with council officers is scheduled for January.

**Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Rail User Group:** Next meeting December 12, 7:30 pm Foxton Village Hall. Updates include a new bench on the Cambridge-bound platform, donation of a compost bin for the Station Garden, donation of £100 from a Shepreth resident for the gardens at all three stations, and an invitation by the Rail User Group to the franchise bidders to come and meet us here, and outline how they would meet our franchise aspirations. The most critical issue for Meldreth will be tackling disabled access to the London-bound platform. Finally, the RUG has got First Capital Connect to give us 5000 pocket timetables which we will be putting through everyone's door – this exercise is carried out by other RUGs and it has been shown that disseminating travel information increases the likelihood of people using the service. If anyone wants to help us with delivery please could you let me know.

**Melbourn Locality Worker:** This new post funded by County Council and administered by the Care Network is now in place; the purpose is to support and develop all efforts to tackle social isolation, especially of the elderly.

The remit of the post includes Meldreth. This is a pilot project of the County Council and the reason for selecting the Melbourn/Meldreth area includes the new Melbourn Community Hub project and the support received from surrounding villages for the Library Access Point which will be housed there; and a variety of other cross-village ventures including Melbourn Area Youth Development, the Meldreth-Melbourn Self Help Group, Community Transport, etc. One of the first questions asked by the post-holder was about Mettle Hill and what support was needed.

**Broadband registration:** In Meldreth this has risen three-fold – this is great but need to get the numbers higher still.

**Meeting open to the public: 8.20pm**

It was asked that if planning is in doubt for the site at Mettle Hill will this have an effect on the price of the land? This has been raised by the Parish Council and they were informed by CCC that if the site came onto the public market it would be an attractive site for speculation and the asking price was fair

**Meeting closed to the public 8.23**

199/12/12

**Village Maintenance:**

- tree at war memorial – report from Tree Officer. Due to the bark cracking and exudate it would indicate some colonisation of a Phytophthora bacteria which is present in the soil water. The bark cracking will disrupt the flow of water and nutrients through the cambium placing the tree under stress.

- bus shelter at North End – quotation being sought from D Chappel.

200/12/12

**Eternet:**

Dates for visit being arranged for January 2013

201/12/12

**Alms Houses:**

It was proposed by SH for Mrs Lesley Farbridge to be the second Parish Council representative on the Alms Houses Trustees, seconded by RAS all agreed. Clerk to inform the Alms Houses committee.

**Action: Clerk**

The Parish Council trustees are: Dr Sandra Webb and Mrs Lesley Farbridge.

202/12/12

**Highways Minor Improvement Scheme (HMI):**

RAS circulated the report for extending the 30mph zone to include the West Way and Burtons Housing estates and to restrict the speed limit between Meldreth and Whaddon to 40mph. The Parish Council can only put one bid forward. This was proposed by GVB and seconded by DS, all agreed. If successful the Parish Council have to contribute 10% of the overall cost.

**Action: Clerk to submit form by 21 December**

The matter of the footways is still to be addressed, but will not be submitted for the HMI.

Highways are submitting a bid for funding for works to be carried out on Flambards and Whitecroft Road, but it is not certain whether this will be successful. Residents including Scope have been submitting their concerns with the state of the footways and the Clerk is amalgamating these, they will then be prioritised by the Parish Council and forwarded to Cllr van de Ven (see item 198/12/12)

JC and JF will look at the footways and report back to the Clerk.

203/12/12

**Playground:**

1. Monthly Report

Igloo, rocking horse, roundabout, abacus and both sets of swings appear to be in good working order. The seat, tree and bins are in good order.

There is a brick missing from the brick seat, Clerk to inform Dave Chappel.

**Action: Clerk**

The safety surfacing around the large swings needs looking at, this can be done by Wicksteed when they install the horse.

The ditch is full of water and there is a tree laying over it, this is situated behind the bungalows, Clerk to arrange removal.

**Action: Clerk**

2. Horse will be refurbished and Wicksteed to install in the New Year.

3. A new bin which will be lockable will be placed at the far end of the recreation ground to replace the existing bin, which keeps having the inner bin removed.

**Action: Clerk**

4. Clerk to order dog signs.

**Action: Clerk**

- 204/12/12 Correspondence and Clerk's Report:**
- Street Lighting designs for Meldreth – Information only unless there is concern. DS is checking they are correct. There has been one amendment to the proposed plans at Oakrits.
  - Junction of Whitecroft Road/Station Road – proposal from Mrs P Gilmore. To be discussed at the next meeting.
  - Quotations being sought for remainder of rabbit fencing, general maintenance and soil removal at the Burial Ground.
- 205/12/12 Holy Trinity Church:**
- 1 – Trees – quotations were circulated and it was proposed by APB to accept the quotation from Eastern Tree Services, this was seconded by RAS all agreed. Clerk to arrange.
  - 2 – Church wall buttresses – information has been sent to SCDC.
- 206/12/12 Parish Paths Partnership:**
- The following work has been carried out over the past month.
- Field paths have been inspected after harvest and the general state is not good, to be discussed further with landowners.
- Footpath 6 Riverbank Repairs – most of the work has been carried out, but will be finished next month. Many thanks to the small working party who worked very long and hard.
- The following work has been highlighted for future work:
- Footpath 1 – needs way-marking across the golf course.
  - Footpath 2 – the North End section of path will need some wood chippings.
  - Footpath 9 – verges need strimming on Melbourn side of bypass. Also need to contact the Highway Department re- overhanging trees obstructing light from foot way lighting.
- There is discussion regarding a transfer of the P3 Scheme to SCDC from CCC. The annual return has been submitted but it is unsure if there will be any grants this year.
- Mrs Wallbridge attended the P3 meeting of 6<sup>th</sup> November.
- 207/12/12 Councillors' Reports:**
- JF**  
Reported that CCC have started to paint the yellow lines around the station.
- DS**  
MAYD – a meeting has taken place where it was reported that transport has been suspended due to lack of use. Attendance records are being completed weekly.
- GVB**  
SPEP the next workshop is to take place north of the county and will focus on Sustainable Transport.
- 208/12/12 To receive details of cheques to be drawn on the Parish Council's account as detailed or amended by late payments. To approve payments:**
- 1. Cheques for approval and signature including any additional payments:**
- Payments already made**
- |                              |          |                   |                |
|------------------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------|
| Philip Langham               | £1500.00 | Legal proceedings | LGA 1972 s143  |
| <b>Payments for approval</b> |          |                   |                |
| J Damant                     | £ 782.42 | Salary            | LGA 1972 s112  |
| M Taylor                     | £ 274.95 | salary            | LGA 1972 s112  |
| Inland Revenue               | £ 214.18 | PAYE/NI           | LGA 1972 s112  |
| Wicksteed Playscapes         | £ 57.00  | paint for horse   | OSA 1906 s9/10 |
| Royal British Legion         | £ 75.00  | poppy wreath      | S137           |
| BT                           | £168.04  | telephone         | TCA 1986       |
| Talk Talk                    | £ 15.31  | Broadband         | TCA 1986       |
| <b>Additional payment</b>    |          |                   |                |
| CCC                          | £ 825.74 | street lights     | LGA 1972 s144  |
- LGA – Local Government Act, TCA – Telecommunications Act,
- Payments were proposed by JC, seconded by JF all agreed. Cheques were signed by JF and RAS.
- 2. PWLB – To approve loan application to Public Works Loan Board for the purchase of Mettle Hill Travellers Site and offer to buy Mettle Hill site from CCC.**
- The Chairman addressed the meeting and due to public interest the meeting was not closed. It is proposed that the Parish Council obtain a 25 year loan from the Public Works Loan Board which is specifically set up for local authorities to borrow money.

*'The Public Works Loan Board is an independent and unpaid statutory body who consider loan applications from local authorities and other prescribed bodies and, where loans are made, to collect the repayments. At present nearly all borrowers are local authorities requiring loans for capital purposes. Moneys are provided by Act of Parliament, drawn from the National Loans Fund and rates of interest are determined by the Treasury. The Board's accounts are audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General whose reports on them are laid before Parliament'.*

The loan would be added to the precept allocation. Precept allocations are based on a Band D house and would increase the precept by less than £1 per month. The repayment to the PWLB is fixed and can be paid early if desired.

It was proposed by GVB that the Parish Council should submit an application to borrow the required funding and purchase the site as this would be the best solution and the interest rates are much lower, this was seconded by NP, all agreed. (Due to the business sensitivity of the matter financial details were circulated to councillors previous to the meeting and not disclosed to the public)

**Action: Clerk and SH**

### 3. Precept

Clerk has requested an extension until the 8<sup>th</sup> February 2013, this has been agreed.

**209/12/12**

#### **Agenda items for the next meeting:**

- Dispensations
- Internet Banking
- Parish Plan
- Precept
- Pavilion
- Tree Replacement Plan
- Speed limits on Whitecroft and Whaddon Road
- Parish Plan
- Burial Ground Maintenance – rabbit fencing, removal of earth, general maintenance
- Mettle Hill update

**210/12/12**

#### **Action Points: if not already covered:**

**Notice boards:** will be repositioned at the junction of Bell Close and High Street. The old notice board has been taken down and is presently being refurbished and will be placed at the junction of Whitecroft Road and Elin Way.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.10pm.

The next meeting is to take place on 3<sup>rd</sup> January. This may be deferred to the 10<sup>th</sup> January depending on the progress of Mettle Hill.

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Chairman

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Date

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**METTLE HILL WORKING PARTY  
CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – Mr P Ray  
TO MELDRETH PARISH COUNCIL ON THURSDAY 6 DECEMBER 2012**

**SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION**

**Meldreth Parish Council should buy the Mettle Hill site from Cambridgeshire County Council and set up a consultation process with villagers as to the use to which the site should be put.**

Such action would preclude South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) from buying the site and re-establishing it as a Traveller site. The 2005 Parish Plan established that Meldreth villagers' top concern was that the vacant derelict site might be reopened for Traveller use. SCDC's recent announcement that this is what they intend has resulted in an unprecedentedly large petition from both villagers and residents of surrounding villages to ask them not to.

It would appear that SCDC want to reopen the Mettle Hill site to cover a perceived shortfall of Traveller pitches in 2021-2026. SCDC appear to have failed to get additional Traveller pitches included in any of the several large developments planned or in construction around Cambridge. They have fallen back on the concept of reopening Mettle Hill because they think it has valid planning permission and they can take advantage of a large Government grant. SCDC are apparently ignoring consistent advice (including their own) on the unsuitability of the site on several counts including - its remoteness from any doctor's surgery and the village's facilities - the concentration of sites around Meldreth and, - the historic antipathy between Travellers and Showmen.

Written legal opinion indicates that:

- 1 There are grounds for asserting that there is no longer valid planning permission for Mettle Hill's use as a Travellers' site
- 2 Even if there were valid planning permission, it cannot be transferred from Cambridgeshire County Council to SCDC.
- 3 There is no current legal requirement for SCDC to provide additional Traveller sites.

Ultimately these matters may have to be sorted out in court because SCDC Cabinet claim to have taken legal advice on the planning situation, believe the site has not been abandoned and that valid planning permission remains available to them.

Members of the SCDC Cabinet are all Conservative and 5 of the 8 have Traveller sites in their wards. The SCDC is made up of 34 Conservatives and 23 independents or other parties. Whether or not a whip was applied, it is doubtful that the village could successfully lobby a majority of SCDC Councillors not to support the recommendations of the inner circle of Conservative Councillors. We are, nevertheless, working hard to maximise our chances and we have the support of our MP, County Councillor and District Councillor.

Our expectations of the special SCDC meeting on 10 January are low. If the meeting takes place and there is a vote, our view is that SCDC would vote to press ahead with the purchase of Mettle Hill for Traveller use. With this in mind, work is in hand to put together information helpful to a subsequent judicial review, to which we consider SCDC is vulnerable. Judicial reviews are however time-consuming, expensive and uncertain.

A good weight of argument is being assembled which, all things being equal, should persuade rational people not to reopen Mettle Hill as a Traveller site. However, we can take matters into our own hands now, buy the site and provide the certainty the village craves.

Paul Ray