

# Reports to the Papworth Everard Parish Council - Annual Parish Meeting - Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> May 2021

## **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

This is my first annual report as Parish Council Chairman as there was no Annual Parish meeting held in 2020.

### **Covid-19**

As everyone is only too aware, the Covid-19 pandemic has had a truly profound impact on all our lives over the last year. The Parish Council was very pleased to see how quickly the Papworth Community Group was formed and we have worked with the group to support them as best we can in the great work that they have done and will continue to do.

We moved all our Parish Council meetings onto the Zoom video conferencing platform from April 2020 following a temporary change made to the law by the Government. We had a few teething issues as everyone got used to the technology, but in general the experience has been positive, and our attendance and public engagement has improved. We will return to face-to-face meetings from mid-May in line with Government direction.

During the periods of lockdown and local restrictions we have been forced to close various village facilities such as the playground, multi-use games area (MUGA) and the Village Hall. In order to reopen these amenities, we have had to carry out "Covid Secure" risk assessments and put in place appropriate mitigation measures which we undertook as quickly as we could.

As we all get back to a more normal way of life over the coming months, we look forward to being able to reopen everything we are responsible for and look forward to seeing parishioners using our facilities once again.

### **Playing Fields**

Work on the facilities on the King George V playing fields is still ongoing and should be complete in the next couple of months. In addition to the construction of the pavilion, this will also provide renovated changing rooms and a new car park with a widened entrance from Chequers Lane.

### **Parish Council changes**

Over the last year we have unfortunately lost an exceptionally reliable councillor, with the resignation of Mark Honeywood.

We still have vacancies for two Parish Councillors - so if you feel like you have the time and interest to get involved please contact the Parish Clerk, Sarah Cruse.

I would like to thank Councillors, both past and present for their contribution throughout what has been a wholly challenging year. And a thank you also to our Clerk for the efficient running of the Council's administration.

***Pete Cruse***

Chairman, Papworth Everard Parish Council

# **PLANNING COMMITTEE**

## **The role of the Parish Council Planning Committee**

First, we would like to remind you that the Parish Council does not make planning decisions. Approving or refusing planning applications is a decision taken by the local planning authority. Papworth Everard's local planning authority is South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC), based at Cambourne. However, the Parish Council is consulted by the local planning authority on all applications affecting the village and it is invited to say whether it recommends approval or refusal of the application and why. The Parish Council has a planning committee to make these responses on its behalf.

The local planning authority usually makes planning decisions at a meeting of planning officers, who are employees of the authority. (Planning Officers judge applications in the light of planning policies that are set out in South Cambs District *Local Plan*). However, a Parish Council can request, when the Planning Officers recommend a decision that is different from the recommendation of the Parish Council, that the application is taken to the SCDC planning committee to decide. (The SCDC Planning Committee is made up of some of the members we all elect to represent us through local council elections). The Parish Council needs to make out a good case for taking an application to SCDC's Planning Committee, referring to relevant policies in the Local Plan and other matters.

If an applicant for planning approval does not agree with the decision received from SCDC planning officers or the SCDC Planning Committee, they then have the option to make an appeal to a Government Planning Inspector, who makes a decision independently of the local authority.

## **The Parish Council Planning Committee: its membership and meetings**

The Parish Council Planning Committee currently consists of 6 Parish Councillors but may also include non-Parish Council members. Although the non-Councillors are not able to vote, they are fully involved in discussion of the applications the Parish Council is consulted on. (At present, we have no non-Councillor members of the Parish Council Planning Committee). As with all Council meetings, members of the public may attend as observers, unless the matter to be discussed is considered confidential.

Since the first COVID-19 'lockdown', all committee meetings have been on-line, via video conferencing. This seems to have worked well with a good turn-out of members. We have also had a handful of members of the public, who have logged-on to observe the meeting, from time to time.

## **2020/21 Planning applications**

The Parish Council's Planning Committee tends not to make comments about applications that involve alterations or extensions to a single domestic dwelling, unless we consider that the proposal has some potential implications for several nearby residents or the wider village community. However, we would always encourage near neighbours to make their own comments directly to South Cambs District Council, if they are concerned about how a new development may affect them. (The local planning authority notifies nearby residents whenever a new application is made).

## **The Printers/Church Lane**

Construction of a new area of housing to the south of Church Lane has progressed rapidly in the last year, despite a short suspension of activity because of COVID-19 restrictions. The developer of this site, Flagship Homes, is operating under a legal agreement to provide a watertight shell, as the first step in provision of a community building at the former printing factory site ('The Printers') on Ermine Street South, opposite the Village Hall. During 2019 to 2020, the Planning Committee was in regular contact with the developer; however, meetings and other points of contact fell away during 2020; however, we were aware that despite the speed of the Church Lane development no start had been made to renovate the remains of the old printing factory. This concerned the Planning Committee greatly, as the legal agreement in place with the developer prevented occupation of any of the new housing until the work on the printing factory had been completed.

More than a year ago now, the developer made an application to South Cambridgeshire District Council to amend the legal agreement, so that more houses could be sold and occupied before the renovated printing factory was handed over for the community building.

The proposal for the community building was included in the South Cambs Local Plan at least 10 years ago, so we feel the village has waited long enough for this requirement to be met AND we also believe that pushing provision of the building towards the end of the Church Lane construction programme could make it more likely that it never happens.

The Parish Council Planning Committee requested that the decision as to whether to approve the application to amend the legal agreement was made by the SCDC Planning Committee. (SCDC planning officers had recommended approval of the application). The application came before the SCDC Planning Committee early in last month (April 2021). The Parish Council made a representation in the 3 minutes slot in which we were permitted to speak. We are fortunate that the elected members of SCDC who are on their Planning Committee voted 6 to 3 in favour of rejecting the recommendation of their own officers and agreed with the Parish Council Planning Committee. Therefore, no new houses on the Church Lane development can be occupied until the work on the 'Printers' (community building) has been completed.

We are sorry for those hoping to move to Church Lane, but we strongly feel that the Flagship Homes has not respected the needs of the village and should follow the requirements of a legal agreement they knew was in place when they bought the site for development.

## **The former Estate Office**

The white building with the tiled roof and half-timbered porch on the bend at the bottom of the hill on Ermine Street South, opposite the bottom of Papworth Hall drive, was once the Estate Office of Papworth Village Settlement (now known as the Papworth Trust) and head office of Papworth Industries. It was built in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Sadly, it is now deteriorating and is surrounded by 'site fencing' and trees growing closely to the walls. Two or three years ago, a planning application was made by the owner to convert it into two dwellings. This was approved by SCDC. The great benefit of this proposal was that it would leave the exterior of building - with an important history and standing in a prominent position in the centre of village – largely unaltered.

Then this plan was changed, and a new application made, which proposed to demolish the building and replace it with an 'contemporary' apartment block standing close to the edge of Ermine Street South.

The Parish Council Planning Committee recommended refusal of the new proposals as being not in keeping with the character of the area. When it came before SCDC to decide, it was rejected. The owner then appealed to the Government Planning Inspectorate to try to get it approved (on 05/04/2020). Further information was provided to the appeal by the Parish Council Planning Committee. The appeal process has now been going on for nearly a year; we are still awaiting a decision.

**Late News – In a decision dated 04/05/2021 this appeal was dismissed by the planning inspector – i.e.: it was not approved**

### **Papworth Hospital**

Following the failure of a previous potential purchaser of the Papworth Hospital site to complete the deal; the Papworth Hospital Trust put the former heart and lung treatment centre on sale again. It was relatively recently that it was announced that finally the site has been sold. We approached South Cambs District Council Planning Policy section, but they have said they have no intention of preparing an agreed plan for development, even though it is the subject of a set of special policies in the SCDC Local Plan.

When we approached the consortium who bought the site, they said they were in the process of preparing a development plan and would bring it to the Parish Council for discussion once it was complete.

### **A Neighbourhood Plan for Papworth Everard**

For several years, Parish Councils and Community Councils have had the opportunity to prepare 'Neighbourhood Plans'. These are development plans for their own, local area. Neighbourhood plans must conform to the policies of the district local plan and should encourage and cannot prevent development; however, they can be more specific about suitable locations for development at a local scale and identify those aspects of an existing village that residents believe are important and should be preserved.

The Parish Council Planning Committee has decided the time is right to promote and lead the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan for Papworth Everard. This will involve a considerable amount input from of village residents, in the form of ideas and opinions. At the end of the process, the plan is put through a local referendum, to demonstrate it has the approval of a majority of local electors. If successful, it would then be adopted by the District Council and may be used to decide planning applications.

While the Parish Planning Committee have taken the first small steps towards producing a Local Plan, the process has been slow to date, partly because of the amount of time energy that we have expended on the Church Lane/Printers' issue (see above).

### ***Chris Howlett***

Chairman of the Planning Committee  
Papworth Everard Parish Council

# **VILLAGE HALL COMMITTEE**

## **Look Back over 2020-21**

Last year was unprecedented for us all and the Village Hall stood empty for a significant amount of time during the pandemic. We managed to re-open to some of our regular bookings from 19 October – 5 November and again between 7 - 21 December when unfortunately, we had to close our doors again.

When we were able to be open, the hall was fully fitted out to meet Covid safety precautions. The Hall has been deep cleaned, we purchased hand sanitiser stations, floor stickers, posters and restricted the use of the kitchen area and introduced a one-way system for people to move around the Hall safely. Our cleaning regime between bookings has been enhanced and we have temporarily replaced the fabric covered chairs with plastic ones, which are easier to spray and wipe down after use. QR codes to allow hirers to 'check-in' have been clearly displayed on the walls. In addition, we have ensured all our regular bookings had provided specific covid risk assessments to allow them to safely carry out their activities.

We are hoping to re-open the hall again to our regular bookers from 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021 in strict accordance with current guidance and then to be able to fully re-open from 21<sup>st</sup> June (if permitted). We are therefore taking provisional bookings for the hall from 21<sup>st</sup> June 2021 onwards - these will be subject to government announcements.

## **Finances 2020-21**

Due to the various lockdowns and restrictions caused by the pandemic, the Village Hall has been closed for use for almost the entire 2020-21 financial year and has therefore run at a significant loss. Expenditure for running the hall (including council rates; bills for gas, electricity and water, the wages bill for the Caretaker and Bookings Clerk, the cost of maintenance contracts for the heating, lifts, CCTV, fire and intruder alarms and outside areas, etc) have all continued to be incurred despite there being little income.

The Parish Council have been able to claim back furlough payments which have covered the majority of the Caretaker's salary.

The Parish Council has also become eligible for a Government grant and has recently been awarded just under £20k – although this has been paid in the new financial year so will not show on last years' accounts – but will make the bank balance look a bit healthier for the coming year!

## **Improvements to the Village Hall**

The Village Hall Committee's budget includes the cost of small items that improve the facilities offered or assist the running of the building. No improvement work has been carried out in the past year, although general maintenance issues have been addressed when necessary.

Occasionally, there are improvements or work required which the committee's budget will not cover. In such cases, the Parish Council is asked to pay for these out of its financial reserves. This year the Village Hall Committee requested assistance from the Parish Council for repairs to be made to the roof area above the Hall's kitchen, which the Parish Council paid for out of its General Reserve funds.

## **Thank you**

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the Parish Councillors who continue to support the village hall by being on the committee.

Thanks, are also due to our 'village hall delivery team', consisting of Sarah Cruse (Parish Clerk, who, among her many other duties, carries out the day-to-day management of the

building), Clare Taylor (our bookings Clerk, who ably organises the hiring of the hall and invoicing) and Michelle Valderama (our caretaker).

Special thanks are also due to those Parish Councillors who, voluntarily, cover the unlocking and locking of the building during the caretaker's weekends off and holidays, and who provide extra support for the caretaker when she must lock the building after events that go on late into the evening.

***Victoria Carter***

Chairman of the Village Hall Committee  
Papworth Everard Parish Council

## **AMENITIES & PLAYING FIELD COMMITTEE**

The last year has been an incredibly quiet one for the Amenities & Playing Field Committee due to the COVID pandemic.

The play area and MUGA were closed on government instructions.

When they were allowed to reopen, restrictions applied, and we successfully implemented these to allow safe use of the equipment.

All safety checks were still carried out on the play area during the pandemic.

We were not able to open the paddling pool last year, but hopefully, Government guidelines permitting it will open this year - this will be reliant on being able to employ someone to look after it.

We are looking into installing some outdoor gym equipment on the Playing Fields this summer.

The sports clubs - tennis, football and bowls have run intermittently this past year in line with Government guidelines.

The playing field has been maintained to an extremely high standard throughout the past year enabling our Parishioners to enjoy this outdoor space.

The new clubhouse, next to the tennis courts should soon be finished - this has been held up by the pandemic.

Hopefully, we can look forward to a more normal summer this year.

***Paul Phillips***

Chairman of the Amenities & Playing Field Committee  
Papworth Everard Parish Council