

MINUTES OF MEETING
Great and Little Chishill Parish Council Meeting

Venue: Village Hall
Date: Tuesday 9th March 2011
Time: 7:30pm

In Attendance

Chairman:	Andrew Gardiner
Parish Councillors:	Cartwright, Scott, Erskine, Dibblee, Brearley
Clerk / Proper Officer:	Sarah Scott
County Councillor:	Susan van den Ven
District Councillors:	Jose Hales
CCC:	Nick Sweeny

Members of the Public:	Mr Jim Webb, Mr and Mrs Hatt, Malcolm Knobel-Forbes, Mr and Mrs Brand, Mr and Mrs Lillicrap, Robin Dibblee
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Actual Start Time: 7:29

1. Apologies for Absence and Reasons

District Councillor Barret – Prior commitment (accepted)
Cllr Murgatroyd prior engagement (accepted)

2. To Receive Any Declaration of Interests

2.1 Councillors to declare any personal interest in any items on the agenda. There were none declared.

2.2 Councillors to declare any personal and/or prejudicial interest in any items on the agenda and to inform the Chairman if they wish to speak on the matter during the public participation. There were none declared.

3. Public Participation

To allow up to 10 minutes for any members of the public and Councillors declaring a prejudicial interest to address the meeting in relation to the business to be transacted at the meeting.

4. To Approve Previous Minutes of 11th January 2011

4.1 It was agreed that these were a true and accurate record of events and were duly signed by the Chairman.

ACTION

5. The Windmill

The Chairman welcomed Nick Sweeny from Cambridgeshire County Council to the meeting. The Chairman then gave an overview of some of the history of the windmill and how it had now been made surplus to requirements of the County Council and been offered to the Parish Council. He made it clear that the Parish Council had not said that they would buy the windmill as the finances would not make this a viable option. The Chairman and Clerk had had many meetings regarding the windmill and had also been talking to English Heritage. It is now not on the Heritage at Risk Register, as the County Council had made some more substantial repairs at the latter part of last year. It is understood that these are strictly speaking still only temporary repairs. Nick Sweeny explained the situation from the County Council's perspective ie how it is of no benefit to the Council. He said there was no viable reason why the County Council purchased it in the first place. There had been no departments at the County Council who wanted to adopt the windmill and thus be responsible for the on-going maintenance. The process for the disposal is that the portfolio holder looks at all properties in its ownership and assesses them. It is a cabinet decision. The portfolio holder, Cllr Reynolds had stated that the windmill had no operational purpose for the Council and it had subsequently been made surplus to requirements. The next stage of the process is to offer it for sale to the District County and Parish Council – in this case for a nominal fee. If neither Council's wish to purchase it, it will go on the open market. Nick continued that he thought it would be great for the village to have an opportunity to acquire the windmill for the Parish. The Parish Council had thought that as this was such an emotive issue, they would survey the Parishioners to see what thoughts they had. It had been made very clear on several occasions that this was not a ballot or vote. The very fact that the document was called 'A Village Consultation' was pointed out and that the Parish Council was asking should the Windmill remain in ownership with the County Council or should the Parish Council look at ways of securing its future, as well as asking for ideas. The 'Consultation' paper was hand delivered to everyone in the Great and Little Chishill. The Parish Council was very pleased that 113 people responded. For reference, 70 wanted the Parish to investigate ways of securing the windmill and 42 thought it should stay with the County Council (and effectively sold off). A discussion followed with the members of the public and Parish Council, Nick Sweeny and Cllr van den Ven; the following points were raised:

- Given its present condition it should be down to the District Council to enforce repairs.
- The County Council should be looking for an appropriate organisation to take over the windmill not the Parish Council.
- If the windmill goes on the open market, will the potential purchasers be vetted?
- The windmill is not only a local icon; it is an important national and international monument.
- If the County Council owned it, they cannot get the grants afforded to other organisation for its restoration.
- As it is a Grade 2 * building it might be difficult to erect hand rails etc to fit in with Health and Safety guidelines, thus making it impossible for the windmill to be open to the public.
- This was not an opportunity for the village but a mill stone around their necks.
- It is a focal, local amenity with no substantial income stream (now or in the future).
- The County Council have maintained it minimally in the past and if they were still to own it, could neglect it altogether with no repercussions from the Conservation Department.

- The County Council will not be spending any further money on it nor do any work to repair it before any sale.
- The County Council has some duty to keep it on.
- If it goes on the Open Market and nobody buys the Windmill, it will stay in the hands of the County Council.
- Regardless of opinion, the fact is that the windmill has been declared Surplus by the County Council, a letter has been sent to the Clerk offering it for Sale (the Parish Council has not replied to this letter). There will most probably be a change of owner, be it an individual with an interest in Windmills or an organisation or charity.
- If the Windmill is taken on by the Parish Council, it will cost the parishioners lots of money in the long term.
- The recent fall of disrepair and dialogue had been going on for two years now and is minuted.
- It was pointed out that some of the parishioners who had issues with the 'Consultation', might have called the Chairman and / or Clerk for clarity, which might have alleviated the many emails that were in circulation at the time.

It was suggested that the Parish Council had been poor at communicating this issue. This was refuted as it has been an agenda item for a long time and it has been recorded in the minutes and reported on in the newsletter. Added to this the 'Consultation' was successful in terms of its response rate and therefore was a good line of communication.

The Parish Council will look at Organisations / Interest Groups to see if they can secure the windmill for the village, whilst concurrently taking advice from English Heritage to find a solution. When the Parish Council has explored all avenues, they may hold a special meeting to discuss their findings and then report back to Nick Sweeny.

Mr Hatt said that he did not mind if the Windmill was sold and put into private ownership.

Mr Dibblee thanked the Chairman for a most helpful meeting. At this point the Chairman thanked Nick Sweeny for coming along. At 20:40 he departed, as did Mr Webb, Mr and Mrs Lillicrap, Mr and Mrs Hatt, Mr Dibblee, Mr and Mrs Brand and Mr Knobel-Forbes.

6. To Discuss Planning Applications

S/1752/10 Mr J Akhtar – this re reviewed at another meeting

The Chairman said that the Clerk had been asked to write a letter of support from the Parish Council of the proposed car port and storage at the West's house in the Pudgell; the Parish Council had been supportive of the planning application and was astonished it had been turned down. The West's are appealing – hence the request, the Parish Council were unanimous in their decision to allow the Clerk to write

Clerk

7. Finance

- 7.1 The Clerk gave an overview of the bank accounts which are in good shape. She reported that she now cannot be self-employed and must be on PAYE. Our internal auditor is kindly setting this up for the Parish Council

8. Footpaths

The Clerk is trying to sent up a meeting with local farmers, Peter and Lorraine Brand, the Chairman and herself to arrange the repairs to the ruts.

Clerk

9. Highways

9.1 The Clerk is to take on the role of Highway Warden; there has been very little information on this. Cllr van de Ven suggested contacting Cllr Stone who is in Duxford.

Clerk

9.2 Gates to the Village in Barley Road – the Clerk has chased Eric Routely for the final costings and also asked if he could fit gates to the existing sign.

10. Speed Watch

Cllr Scott had been to the latest Speed watch meeting. It is the third season of Speed Watch and at least four more volunteers are needed. There are going to be some changes to those caught speeding, the letter will be more substantive and repeat offenders will be visited by the police. Cllr Scott asked that as an agenda item for the next meeting, the subject of paying mileage to the Speed Watch volunteers could be discussed.

Clerk

11. Youth Group

As previously discussed, the cuts to Youth Service are bad. There is still no ownership for the Skate park and the Youth Group cannot take it on. There is a meeting tomorrow evening and more will be ascertained then. The Chairman asked if a budget and plan could be brought to the next meeting so that the Parish Council could discuss any funding. The Youth Group will keep going, but in a different format and they also have some plans for fundraisers later in the year. A discussion took place as to the way Melbourn has restructured. The Parish Council had decided not to write to other Parishes to ask for donation to run the Youth Group.

Cllr Erskine /
Cllr Dibblee

12. Residences at Risk

There was nothing further to report.

13. Trees

Cllr Scott reported that the tree works had nearly been completed. A chestnut tree on the playing fields is badly diseased and will also come down. He said that anyone could collect the logs that were stacked on the playing fields.

14. Bus – Removal of Services

The No 31 bus will stay for a year. The Clerk had monitored the usage and spoken to the bus driver. Normally between 3-7 children use the bus in the morning. The Chairman commented that the Parish Council may look at Community Transport to bridge the gap if and when the bus goes.

15. Trail Blazing – Cambs ACRE

The Clerk had met with ACRE to discuss this and is awaiting to hear more.

16. County and District Councillors Report

Cllr van de Ven had pre-circulate her report to which the chairman thanked her. A copy will be attached to the minutes. Cllr Hales apologised to the Parish Council about some erroneous information he had received and passed on to the Parish Council regarding the Precept.

He also said that if any one sees the bin men not emptying the paper caddy separate (blue bin) they must let him know.

17. Correspondence

There was none.

18. Matters for Future Consideration

19. Date of Next Meeting

5th April

There being no other business the Chairman closed the meeting at 21:18

Chishill Parish Council, March 2011

County Councillor report

1. The Chishill windmill: I have had concerns expressed to me by members of the public about the county council's care of the windmill and now its wish to sell the property. I know that the parish council has been working steadily ever since I became your county councillor in May 2009 to liaise with the county council on urgent repairs, and then to pursue all relevant detail surrounding the county council's offer of first right of refusal to the parish council when it made the decision to dispose of the windmill. All three parties – county, parish and I - liaised steadily between July when the county first informed me of its wish to dispose of the windmill, and October, when I arranged a meeting at Shire Hall for parish council representatives, the County Estates team and the relevant portfolio holder, Cllr John Reynolds. As you know the county wrote to the parish in December offering it first right of refusal in the county's sale of the windmill, and subsequently there has been a discussion within the parish about next steps. The critical concerns conveyed to me during the past month by several members of the public have been about the county council's failure to maintain the windmill in a good state of repair, and the terms under which it is proposing to dispose of it. There are also questions about the district council's role in enforcement, and while I have asked some initial questions of the district council on this matter, it is not in my remit to pursue. I promised to bring answers to these questions and concerns to the March parish council meeting, and Nick Sweeney from County Estates has offered to come and provide direct information in order to ensure clarity.

2. County Council budget cuts

The budget was passed (not unanimously) through council on February 15th. This is a five year plan which has set out savings of £160 million overall; £50 million in year one.

a. Setting: Three arrests occurred during the council's eleven hour meeting, which was attended throughout by police. This included police guard for the Chairman's lunch. I had asked the chairman about a year ago if the serving of wine in the middle of a decision-making day might be inappropriate; I was told that it was in fact perfectly appropriate. A small change has been made which took effect from this budget setting meeting: councillors can now opt out of paying for wine. (Councillors cover the full cost of the Chairman's Lunch so there is no public money involved.) So part of the police presence at this meeting to decide unprecedented cuts to public services involved standing at the door of the Chairman's Lunch while wine was being served to the 20-odd councillors who'd signed up for it. This doesn't pose a helpful public image, which in my view is important.

b. Principles around reinvesting in public services: As you may know, the government offered a grant equivalent to a 2.5% increase in the council tax to all those councils who kept council tax at a 0% increase. The county council took this grant, but its leadership also decided to plan for no council tax rise at all during the next five years – despite no grant being offered. The impact of this is that the cuts made by the county are between £50m and £80m worse than they need to be and it will be impossible to plan a reinvestment in public services which will now be lost. The public consultation indicated clearly that Cambridgeshire residents favoured a tax rise in line with inflation if that would save public services, and ranked roads, busses and libraries as the top three priorities.

c. Process: CCC, which is Conservative run, is one of the only councils in the country in which the opposition group produces an alternative budget, which is then constructively scrutinized in a public meeting. As a Lib Dem councillor I was part of the team that undertook this project.; the alternative budget recognized that huge cuts were inevitable and that the government settlement to local authorities was even lower than has been anticipated, but proposed a £14 million injection back into the budget to mitigate the effect of some of the cuts and to create a platform for reinvestment, on the basis of further efficiencies and a council tax increase in line with inflation from year two. It was inevitable that this budget would be rejected by the council's administration, because that is the political reality, but the process was important and meant that rather than just ranting against cuts, a costed alternative was properly debated.

d. Busses and the number 31: There will be a 100% cut to bus subsidies over the coming four years. Heydon and Chishill are set to lose the 31 bus though not for at least one year. The free Cambridge city centre shuttle bus will also be eliminated, from April 17th of this year, although though this was a condition of the pedestrianization of Cambridge many years ago. The County Council has articulated its expectation that community transport schemes should 'step up,' although they depend on volunteer drivers and the rise in cost of fuel is not matched by an increase in per-mile fuel subsidies. I attended a meeting today of CCC passenger transport, Meridian and Stagecoach, SCDC Community Transport, and Royston and District Community Transport. The main difficulty at present, apart from the funding cuts, is lack of a timeframe for removal of subsidized services so that alternative means of getting people from A to B can be considered.

d. Post-16 education transport subsidy: This entitlement has not been eliminated as originally planned, but some of the busses needed to transport young people to college will go. This creates a gap which the council must now resolve. The 31 bus is a case in point as it is the post-16 education transport link for Heydon and Chishill. I used my one 'free' question at Budget Council to ask how the gap resulting from the removal of the 31 bus would be met, and have followed up several times to officers and the cabinet member, but no answer yet.

e. 'Localism': A clearly defined theme underlying many of these cuts is 'localism' and the 'Big Society.' It is also the principled basis upon which reinvestment in public services will not take place. But cobbling together the raft of services which will be dumped on parish councils takes money.

f. Other headline cuts and savings: Melbourn Library Access Point is safe as it is already community run; Great Shelford and Sawston Libraries are two of 13 libraries being asked to downgrade to partially community run if they are to survive. Overall library service transformation depends also on trust status and shared services with neighbouring councils. No significant investment in roads; deterioration will continue. No strategic plan around the issue of Cambridge-area traffic congestion. Road safety education deleted; school crossing patrol criteria tightened. No more funding to Cambridgeshire music – choirs and orchestras. Children's Trust no longer statutory but continues– is it a worthwhile organization? Contact centre hours reducing according to highest hours of demand. Some cuts to communication including the cutting of the council's magazine. Shared Services with Northamptonshire providing £1.9 million savings.

3. Melbourn Youth Club: FYI, this will be reconfiguring under a package of support to cover the cost of youth workers, provided by Melbourn, Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton parish councils. We expect that Fowlmere will soon join this project. Meldreth and Foxton have had no youth clubs but were keen to ensure that there is at least one strong youth club organization in the area upon which further work can be built. Proportional financial contributions have been worked out on the basis of attendance during the previous year; some contributions are very small but they have all added up. A steering group has been set up consisting of myself, CCC youth work coordinator and locality manager, and parish council reps and residents from each participating village. We are looking at a model which provides the opportunity for some local work during holiday times in each of the villages; the main club will run on a Tuesday evening at Melbourn Village College where the County Council will continue to offer free premises. Any other village that falls into the Melbourn VC catchment area would be welcome to join. We have explored community transport links for Tuesday evening to widen access.