

LITTLEPORT PARISH COUNCIL

Report of a Parish Council Meeting held in The Barn on Monday 19th October 2009 at 7.30pm

PRESENT: Councillor F J Brown
Councillor C M Ambrose Smith
Councillor D J Boyd
Councillor R Constable
Councillor P M Cox
Councillor J H Crane
Councillor D Gardiner
Councillor B W Hayes
Councillor S D Kerridge
Councillor G Norman
Councillor M Pyrah
Councillor A N Wright

Also present one member of the public and the Clerk

1. DECLARATIONS: Councillor Hayes declared an interest in Agenda Item 14 and Councillor Wright Agenda Item 21

2. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME –

Local resident Mr T Braddick raised his concerns regarding the costs to the ratepayer of an estimated £80,000 as published in a local paper for the Fire and Rescue Service to attend the recent fire at Murfitt Industries.

3. ENVIRONMENT AGENCY – MURFITT INDUSTRIES:

The Chairman welcomed and invited Mr Kevin Rutterford from the Environment Agency to speak to Councillors about the impact the recent fire at Murfitt Industries has had on the environment. Mr Rutterford had attended 4 public meetings called for the local residents most affected by the fire and understood their anger and frustration. The agency was on site within 15 minutes of the fire starting due to the scale of the fire there was little chance of containing it. Air quality monitoring is the responsibility of the District Council. Numerous agencies were involved including the Police, Fire Service, Health Protection Agency and Health and Safety Executive.

Foam was ineffective as a deterrent and the volume of water required would impact on the adjoining water courses from the run off which would be contaminated. There has been no evidence of fish dying. The cleanup operation will start once the tyres and rubble are removed from the site. The cleanup is the responsibility of Murfitt Industries. The cause of the fire has not yet been determined.

Members asked questions about how safe the site is; was the amount of material on site within the permitted licensing level; will there be a review of fire safety. The Agency was asked why the Parish Council had not been kept in the loop and they agreed this was a serious omission.

Rebuilding of the factory would require a planning permission, the current permit would be reviewed and any plans would be open to public consultation.

Councillor Mrs Kerridge reported that Murfitt Industries were now operating from a site at Lakenheath and wondered if it would increase its operation.

Mr Rutterford was thanked for his informative presentation of the facts.

4. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Reminder Remembrance Day Parade Sunday 8th November 2009 at Ponds Hill

Following a tree falling onto the Moors, the Tree Officer was consulted and the land owner informed. Eastern Tree Landscapes recommended the felling of all the trees due to a fungal root infection. Replacement trees of a variety yet to be specified will be planted.

Environment Agency consultation going on to 1st November on Managing Flood Risk

5. APOLOGIES: Councillors F J W Brown, Lee and Murfitt

6. MINUTES:

Before the reports of the Planning, Finance and Parish Council Meetings held on 21st September 2009, the Street Lighting and Allotments, Open Spaces, Footpaths and Play Areas Working Parties meetings held on 5th October 2009 and the Planning Committee Meeting held on 12th October 2009, were confirmed Councillor Gardiner pointed out he did not attend the Finance Meeting on 21st September 2009. The reports were then signed as a true record.

7. FINANCE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS:

Councillor Norman reported on the recommendation to award £1100.00 to YPL from the Section 137 allocation. Three applications failed to submit their annual accounts and would be asked to resubmit. Ely and Soham Dial a Ride did not meet our criteria for funding.

Agreed.

8. FOLLOW UP DIARY:

The Clerk reported:

Maintenance work on the level crossings will take place on 11th November on the bypass and 14th November at the Station.

Meeting with Nick Ball (ECDC) re: Skate Park and other issues taking place 20th October

Parsons Lane Parking restrictions - was going to committee (19th October) following one objection. Councillor Hayes reported his objection was over turned.

Councillor Mrs Kerridge raised the question of the proposed street light for Parsons Lane Play Area mentioned in the previous council minutes and working party minutes. The Clerk

pointed out Members would be able to review this matter when the draft precept is presented to the next full Council Meeting and no action would be taken before then.

9. DISTRICT COUNCILLORS REPORTS:

Councillor Ambrose Smith reported she had attended meeting with Councillor F J W Brown re Murfitt Industries fire and also attended two seminars.

Councillor Wright urged everyone to look at the Ely Masterplan and its impact on Littleport. It contains lots of promises but does not address development. The Policy and Resources Committee asked an independent review panel to consider councillors pay. They recommended a new position to cover Chairmen of the four local neighbourhood panels reimbursing them with £1100 pa. This will go to full council on 20th October.

Councillor Mrs Kerridge questioned the funding for the proposed Country Park in Ely.

10. COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT: No report

11. MURFITT INDUSTRIES FIRE:

The notes of the meeting held at Murfitt's Industries with the Fire Service on 7th September 2009 were received. A copy will be attached to the minute book.

12 RISK ASSESSMENTS:

Held over to next meeting

13. BMX DIRT TRACK:

A request to provide a BMX dirt track has been received and members felt this was worthy of support. A number of issues need to be resolved mainly where to locate it. The Council does not own any common land. Agreed to ask a local land owner for support and to enlist the help of the youth group.

14. SKATE PARK AND BYELAWS;

Held over to next meeting

15. PROPERTY DAMAGE – CONSERVATION AREA WELLINGTON STREET

Mr G Spinks had written to complain about property damage caused by large and heavy vehicles passing by. Agreed to forward his letter to the Highways Department and ask if he has any structural survey reports.

16. SECONDARY SCHOOL PROVISION – CONSULTATION:

Agreed a strong representation at the consultation meetings should be made to get our voice heard for the proposed new secondary school to be located in Littleport.

Councillors Cox and Hayes would be attending. Agreed to ask Councillor F J W Brown to attend also on Littleport's behalf to support the new school being in the parish.

Grenville Goodson of the Littleport to be informed of the meetings.

17. LITTLEPORT – AREA OF NEED:

Matter held over to future meeting.

18. TELEPHONE KIOSKS:

BT is selling off redundant telephone kiosks. Agreed there is no reason for us to retain them.

19. PRE-SCHOOLS SECTION 106 ALLOCATION|:

Incorrect information had been supplied to the Pre-School Group about funding. Section 106 monies can be drawn down from the education Budget.

20. LITTLEPORT MASTERPLAN:

Councillor Pyrah produced notes of the inaugural Masterplan meeting which were circulated to the meeting.

The Village Hall has been booked for Public Consultation in late January/early February 2010.

Councillor Pyrah asked for the Council's wish list to be forwarded to Sally Bonnett at ECDC

Councillor Mrs. Kerridge urged Councillors to look at the ECDC website and quoted from documents printed off. Agreed the Clerk will circulate these notes with the next agenda.

Councillor Cox again criticised the lack of parish council representation on the Masterplan Working Party.

District Councillor Peter Moakes is chairman of the working party. £44500 has been allocated in the budget for the Masterplan.

The Clerk would look up Our Town our Future to see what was promised in the past.

It was noted that neither Councillors F J W Brown nor Wright could sit on the groups because they own business's in the village.

Councillor Wright left the meeting at this point

21. PLANNING APPLICATION – GRANARY LODGE:

Before the matter was discussed the Clerk read a statement from the District Solicitor and the Chairman advised there should be no major discussions and any statement would be minuted verbatim

Councillor Mrs Kerridge kindly agreed to take down the minutes in shorthand and the transcribed copy would be sent to the clerk.

The Clerk reported she had requested advice from the District Solicitor at ECDC who had advised it was not for her to give local advice, if the Council felt that decisions had been made prior to the Planning Meeting, they should obtain advice from CALC or an independent Solicitor.

Christine Ambrose Smith advised unfortunate things had been said after the planning meeting in Littleport. She rang Jeanette Thompson, Monitoring Officer for ECDC, regarding the feelings at the meeting and she felt it could only go to the Standards Board. If the Parish Council would like to speak to her, she would speak to them.

She had actually been in attendance at the Planning Meeting and it was not a politically biased committee, to her knowledge at least one Liberal Democrat Councillor had voted for the planning application. It was approved as there were other planning applications in place so it stood a good chance of passing. On reflection it was insulting to other Planning Committee members; one is an independent member, Derek Beckett.

She did not believe Councillor Fred Brown would jeopardise his position as a District and County Councillor for financial advantage and Committee members would not accept a tap on the shoulder to vote for this.

Paul Cox asked if the response of the Parish Council to the planning application was sent to ECDC. On 10 August it was stated:

“The Parish Council consider that as the site is within the conservation area, the workshop and warehouse ought to be retained on merit.”

“Recommend refusal as the site is too small and in the wrong place to make an environmentally friendly home. Parking is inadequate. The Hitches Street access is likely to cause congestion. Members totally disagree with 4 bullet points in agent’s letter. Over development of the site. Facilities do not meet care standards. Note taken of NHS and Medical Centre’s grave concerns.”

We were very clear on our opposition to the planning application.

Geoffrey Norman said it was left to the officer’s final decision as mentioned on the web site.

The Clerk advised the details of members attending the meeting will be on the heading of the minutes. It was not recorded who voted for what at the meeting but there was one vote difference in the voting for the application.

Paul Cox said there was no suggestion of political bias but I think there was one view, Omni presence.

Geoffrey Norman said the main question was the fact it had been approved for other changes of use. Did we agree to the other changes of use? No.

John Crane mentioned the fact that there is nobody on the Planning Committee from Littleport; one of the four District Councillors should be on the Committee.

The Clerk advised on 18 May 2009 there were no objections from the Parish Council to the demolition of the warehouse. On 8 June 2009 the Parish Council made their comments on the residential care flats.

Robin Constable stated Brian Hayes had said we should know what he wanted to do with the building before we gave permission of the demolition.

Brian Hayes said the decision should be seen to be open and transparent and all objections included in the report.

Diane Boyd said we made our considerations very clear and the site is unsuitable for a care home. However this is only the first stage of the development and it will now have to go to the Social Services for them to monitor how it is going to be run. There has to be some way to question what happened at the meeting but I cannot question what happened at the meeting.

As a Parish Council we can actually go back to the Planning Department but they disregard what we say or do. Is it worth having meetings at all? ECDC disregard whatever we want for Littleport.

Malcolm Pyrah wished to make two points, firstly the PCT was consulted and said they did not want this as there are too many care homes in ECDC. Secondly a person in Littleport said that two parking spaces would be taken away to allow access into this particular development. Helen, the Assistant Clerk, had said the access into Hitches Street is for pedestrians only with the pavement being built out with a crossing over the road so only one parking space would be lost.

Christine Ambrose Smith said her feelings were this is the first stage of the application and it may crumble at the second or third stage. The Master Plan will help perhaps to stop further things like this in the future. At the Master Plan meeting she had made her views clear.

Paul Cox proposed, seconded by Robin Constable, that

“We do write a letter expressing the Parish Council considered view after the event we still feel that it was wholly inappropriate and we are very disappointed by the decision.” Also Diane Boyd’s comments should be included in the statement, those sent to the Planning Committee).

Carried

Councillor Gardiner left the meeting part way through the discussions.

In confirmation of the foregoing report

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CHAIRMAN

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DATE