

Annual Report 2017

Some results

Much of the Council's "heavy lifting" this year has been focused on the major planning applications, work on our Neighbourhood Development Plan and groundwork for a new Village Hall & Nursery. We persuaded Persimmon to pay for restoration work on the Broad Lane ditches and retention pond, which are a key part of Tenison Manor's drainage. Once the related road and pavement works are complete that should allow the estate to be adopted by the County Council. We have also cleared the overgrown ditch behind Tenison Manor to the relief of many residents there. We have donations in the pipeline to All Saints Church, the Dissenters' Cemetery and the Community Centre and have made smaller grants to several local groups and community events. We continue to be more business-like, open and transparent. Our published agendas should clearly show what we will be discussing at our Council and Committee meetings, almost all of which are open to the public. The related reports pack and meeting minutes are also available on our website. During the year Kate Heydon stood down as a Councillor after many years service for which we are very grateful. With no request for an election we welcomed John Wilson as a co-opted member. Sadly Chris Richards has recently had to stand down and we have a vacancy. Thanks also to him.

Our Committees

Our five Committees meet regularly in public:

- Planning Committee meets twice a month to advise South Cambridgeshire District Council on plans and consultations and make representations at Planning Committee meetings or Inquiries, especially connected with the larger applications. We also worry about residents who fail to pre-notify tree work or apply for development permission for a Listed Building or in the Conservation area, post unpermitted advertising or just neglect their property.
- Community & Leisure Facilities Committee, which includes a number of co-opted representatives of Sports Clubs or key users, meets once a month to review maintenance issues and development projects related to our Open Spaces, Memorials, Play, Recreation and Sports facilities and the Village Hall. This year saw us expand the cricket squares, plant a hedge at the WARG field, replace the Play House, create a BBQ area on the Third Field and organise the Christmas Carol concert, the Festival and a beacon-lighting to celebrate the Queen's 90th birthday,
- Finance Legal & Administration Committee usually meets once a month to review our finance and governance. A substantial task this year has been to look at how the new Village Hall & Nursery can be financed and operated. Our Internal Auditor has been very complimentary of our governance procedures and overall achievements.
- Highways Committee meets every other month to consider issues related to bridleways, cycle-paths, drains, highways, pavements and traffic; trying to persuade our County Council or their contractors to do things they should have done. These projects seem to take an age which may help explain why the County Council claims to have no money. Nevertheless, we will soon get some improved pavements and additional pedestrian crossings. The Committee also took over the road closure for the Remembrance Sunday parade.
- Standards consider complaints against the Council and Councillor behaviour.

It's not all about Committees

We have several smaller, issue-focused Working Groups who meet informally - Burial Grounds, Drainage & Flooding, Human Resources, Neighbourhood Plan, Pedestrian Safety, Street Signs, and Village Hall. We should also mention our Play Area Inspectors and Trees Officer who advise us, and our Groundsmen who keeps all our Open Spaces in order and help us save money.

They all work alongside our Clerk, Responsible Financial Officer, Assistant Clerk, Caretaker and several contractors.

Some Councillors represent us on local charities, the Village College, Sustainable Cottenham and in the Emergency Co-ordination team.

We appreciate the contribution of our partners – Cottenham United Sports & Social Club, Kids Club, Ladybirds, Cottenham Day Centre, the Cricket and Football Clubs, aerobics etc. who all provide a social service as well as contributing to our finances.

And we do try to help you enjoy yourselves through communal events we support like the Cottenham Festival, the Yesteryear Road Run, the Feast Parade and Carol Concert last year and the upcoming Fen Edge Festival.

Key projects

An irony of planning life is that the District Council can, albeit reluctantly, approve large-scale housing developments outside the village development framework yet resist the re-development of our Village Hall. Hopefully we will soon find a route forward and begin the detailed technical design.

The basic design documentation and draft Business Plan are available on our website.

We will also shortly begin an exercise with a number of parties, including both GP practices, to understand better what facilities are needed and affordable in the new Medical Centre.

The major speculative developments continue to absorb our time and effort, with some cost:

- Endurance Estates have outline planning permission to build up to 50 homes on a site in Oakington Road over the next few years. They still have to submit a “reserved matters” application to show the detailed plans and we should have a chance to review, and possibly improve, that plan.
- Towards the end of March, Gladman Developments obtained a delegated approval, subject to a long list of planning conditions and obligations, for up to 200 homes and up to 70 residential places with care on a site in Rampton Road. There are still several steps before they can obtain full planning permission.
- The Persimmon application is scheduled to be reviewed tomorrow – 10th May.
- The County Council application has not yet been reviewed by the Local Planning Authority.

There will be substantial funding from any of these projects that go ahead in the coming years; small compensation – especially for those residents most affected – but the cash will be useful if and when it arrives.

There are also some smaller projects that we hope to tackle in the coming months and years as we work through the information we gained from the Neighbourhood Plan survey, on community facilities and highways improvements. Look out for more fitness and play kit on some of our open spaces and more accessible walks around the village.

Our finances

Our £206,000 precept was supplemented by section 106 developer contributions of around £37,000.

Our outgoings fell following completion of our major projects. Our underlying costs fell, mostly due to project completions.

Overall, our cash reserves increased from a little less than £560,000 to over £580,000 despite investing around £75,000 in new facilities and initial work on the new Village Hall.

Simplified Extract from Unaudited Preliminary 2016-2017 Accounts

Income	2016-17	2015-16
Precept	£206,939	£204,098
Recreation Ground Income	£39,107	£37,315
Donations & Grants	£0	£13,139
Project Grants	£0	£366,502
Other income (inc. s106 money)	£45,511	£209,538
Total Income	£291,557	£830,591

Expense	2016-17	2015-16
Office and admin	£71,738	£51,548
Professional services	£6,618	£5,651
Maintenance services	£30,635	£25,141
Donations & Grants	£9,795	£16,646
Facilities costs	£39,553	£65,037
Project costs	£99,719	£615,794
Finance charges	£6,238	£6,354
Total expense	£264,296	£786,172

Cash	2016-17	2015-16
Current year Surplus (Deficit)	£27,261	£44,419
Previous Surplus plus reserves	£557,730	£513,311

Net Short-term assets	31 st March 2017	31 st March 2016
Current cash assets (reserves)	£583,406	£558,730
Allocations (approx.):		
General Reserve	£100,000	£100,000
Capital Fund	£0	£82,000
Loan Fund / Other reserve	£294,640	£179,000
S106 Community Facilities	£33,489	£29,000
S106 Open Space	£134,913	£148,000
S106 Public Art	£20,364	£20,000
Net short-term assets	£583,406	£558,000

Net Long-term assets (excluding land)	31 st March 2017	31 st March 2016
Total	£1,859,757	£1,878,428
Key elements:		
• Village Hall		
• Ladybirds	£428,000	£428,000
• Sports Pavilion	£499,000	£499,000
• SkatePark	£640,000	£640,000
	£75,000	£75,000

The following have been formally committed as specific projects:		
Sports Pavilion retention	15,000	from s106 Open Space fund
Community Centre	13,000	from s106 Community Facilities fund
Dissenters' Cemetery	20,000	from s106 Open Space fund
Public Art Competition	16,000	from s106 Public Art fund
KGV Car Park extension	50,000	from s106 Open Space fund
Pavilion pathway	15,000	from s106 Open Space fund
Pavement project	38,000	from Other reserve
	167,000	

Some disappointments

While South Cambridgeshire lacks the protection of a valid Local Plan it is now down to Parish Councils to step up and defend against unsustainable developments while accepting, even welcoming, those that are truly sustainable and maximising developer contributions from those that are let through.

Our Village Hall & Nursery project is making slower progress through the planning system than we would like for several reasons. Once we clear the planning hurdle, we hope to move the project forward as quickly as possible. It should help us provide a much wider range of activities for a broader section of residents.

Traffic continues to plague many residents and may get much worse before it can be improved.

Our request to Royal Mail to consider adding a post-box on the High Street in place of the one moved to the new Post Office fell on deaf ears but the campaign continues, especially following Audrey's petition that many of you signed.

Some of our heritage buildings are suffering from neglect with the listed Gothic House at one extreme, others with modifications incomplete, and ill-advised modernisations of some Conservation Area properties at the other.

Sadly, we have some selfish residents – dog owners who fail to clean up their dog's mess, people who fly-post their events or activities or put larger posters around the village without permission, others who speed through our streets.

Taking control

Keeping a village vibrant and as a place where youngsters aspire to live independently with their own families requires a balance between conservation and development. Without modest growth, our village will die under pressure from traffic and unaffordable house prices. Our youth will choose to live and work elsewhere or be forced to live with their parents. Equally we must not forget our elderly and less-mobile residents.

Some more affordable housing will be required, old and young, as will new or improved facilities for sport and small business. Development could provide better facilities for pre-school children, a Medical Centre, a better Day Centre for the elderly or new units for small businesses. We need to be aware of the pressure on our schools and other facilities. It could also open up our fen edge countryside to increased leisure possibilities.

The Neighbourhood Development Plan, if adopted, could bring more control over how and where development takes place, more community facilities and a greater share of any related financial settlements, possibly through use of a Community Land Trust. That Community Land Trust would ensure that some housing remains affordable for Cottenham folk forever. The survey conducted early last year has been the basis of a number of iterations, the latest of which includes possible additional sites for a modest amount of additional housing. Hard copies of the Plan can be viewed in Cottenham Library or the Parish Council Office and on-line under "projects" and "Neighbourhood Plan" at www.cottenhampc.org.uk. Do send your comments to cottenhamnnp@gmail.com

Complementary to the Neighbourhood Development Plan is the Traffic & Transport strategy which will, once developed with your help, provide a blueprint for improvements over the next decade.

Conclusion

Cottenham Parish Council first met in 1895. Cottenham residents – young and old – still contribute to the community in so many ways. A special mention this year to Audrey Brownlow, who continues to inspire support in the campaign for the replacement post-box.

To end, we thank our staff, contractors and partners for keeping us in touch with your problems so we can help you. And thanks to you for trusting us.

COMMUNITY & LEISURE FACILITIES COMMITTEE (CALF)

ANNUAL REPORT 1/4/16 – 31/3/17 - DRAFT

CALF was established by Resolution of Cottenham Parish Council (CPC), and the Terms of Reference were approved on 1st July 2014 by item 14/213 of the Full Council Minutes.

The areas of responsibility CALF has is by delegated authority to:

- (a) Develop a 4 year strategic framework, reviewed at least annually, for desirable improvements to leisure, recreation and sports facilities within the village
- (b) Consider and make representations to the appropriate authorities on any matter or document that may affect the Parish from a leisure, recreation or sport perspective
- (c) Review annually the rent and/or fees for hiring out Parish Council-owned rooms and/or grounds
- (d) Ensure all hirers and lessors of Parish Council-owned rooms and/or grounds have written contracts, based on templates provided by the Finance, Legal and Administration Committee, in place before the relevant event
- (e) Discuss, review (at least annually) and manage the safe and cost-effective operation of all Parish Council-owned or managed equipment, facilities and land
- (f) Discuss, review (at least annually) and manage provision of allotments
- (g) Prepare an annual bid for consideration by the Finance, Legal and Administration Committee for precept assessment process

Specific matters dealt with by CALF include the following:

- Monthly Health & Safety survey of play equipment
- WARG field, Histon Rd - ongoing
- Public Art – funding by CPC (\$106 monies)
- Bus shelter cleaning - ongoing
- Connections Bus - ongoing
- Village Hall – replacement – Separate Committee dealing
- Dog fouling – highlighting the issues - ongoing
- Festival 2016 – held at the recreation ground 1st / 2nd July 2016
- Queen’s 90th birthday – celebrated on the Village Green on 21st April 2016
- Budget items 2016/7 – Outside fitness kit situate Tenison Manor
- Cricket square – additional strips created
- Defibrillator – second one installed
- Play equipment – replacement
- Sports pavilion – CCTV installed
- Balancing Pond – Reedmace removed from the pond, and security fencing installed – ongoing
- CPC stall at Feast Parade October 2016

Specific matters being considered by CALF include the following:

- Phone box – Denmark Road / High Street – usage
- Budget 17/18 – discussed prior to 31/3/17 – Capital Projects £30k, Youth Provision £12k & General Maintenance £20k
- Neighbourhood Plan – Separate Committee dealing

FINANCE, LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE (FLAC)

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The Finance, Legal and Administration Committee (FLAC) have generally met monthly during the course of the year. Key areas covered by FLAC have been:

1. Overseeing the development of the financial aspects of the project to develop a new village hall.
2. Reviewing the banking arrangements of the Parish Council and overseeing the movement from Lloyds Bank to Unity Bank. This has led to a modernisation of banking arrangements through the use of Internet banking. This has enabled the Responsible Finance Officer and FLAC to improve oversight and monitoring of CPC's financial position. Bank charges have also been reduced.
3. Drafting the CPC annual budget for income and expenditure for the Parish Council to review and adopt. Then using monthly management accounts to track expenditure against budgets set and providing regular updates to the monthly Parish Council meetings. There has also been a monthly review of income and expenditure to ensure that this has been recorded accurately and appropriately authorised.
4. Reviewing the CPC asset register and ensured that insurance and public liability cover are appropriate for CPC needs. In other areas of administration FLAC have continued the periodic review of council policies.

HIGHWAYS COMMITTEE

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The Highways Committee has met 6 times during the year. Key areas covered have been:

- **HCVs** – we appreciate the concerns about HCV traffic through Cottenham and have met regularly with local hauliers and businesses to minimise the impact on our village.
- **TROs** – parking restrictions have been implemented on Lambs Lane, the High Street (Post Office/Shawn's) and Twentypence Road (layby).
- **Safe route to school/pavements** – (Summer 2017) plans are underway for a new Zebra Crossing on the High Street (north of Village Green), Priority Feature and Speed Cushions on Beach Road, junction improvements at Franklin Gardens, Eastlands Close and Coolidge Gardens to allow safer crossing.
- **Harlestones & Lyles Road, Franklin Gardens and Eastlands Close** – micro-asphalted.
- **Beach Road to Landbeach** – potholes repaired and surface dressed, grips re-dug allowing better drainage.
- **Child Designed Road signs** – installed.

Neighbourhood Plan Objective - We are now developing a Traffic & Transport strategy to reduce the impact of traffic, especially in the core of the village.

PLANNING COMMITTEE

ANNUAL REPORT 1/4/16 – 31/3/17

The Planning Committee was established by Resolution of Cottenham Parish Council (CPC), and the Terms of Reference were approved on 1st July 2014 by item 14/213 of the Full Council Minutes, and amended on 7th June 2016 by item 16/143 of the Full Council Minutes.

The areas of responsibility the Planning Committee have is by delegated authority to:

- (a) Develop a 4 year strategic framework, reviewed at least annually, for desirable improvements within the village landscape and infrastructure
- (b) Make representations to the appropriate planning authority on applications for planning permission
- (c) Make representations to the appropriate authority on applications for tree orders
- (d) Make representations in respect of appeals against the refusal of planning applications
- (e) Identify and make representations to the relevant authority in respect of enforcement action or any other matters considered to be breaches of planning regulations
- (f) Consider and make representations to the appropriate authorities on any planning related matter or document that may affect the Parish from a planning perspective
- (g) Review possible and planned future developments and advise the Highways Committee, Parish Council and other relevant authorities
- (h) Monitor conditions imposed on approved planning applications for compliance, reporting deviations to the relevant authority

Total number of meetings held: 24 (2015/16 - 26)

Total number of applications received: 115 (2015/16 - 78) (includes 1 street trading, 10 for information only & 1 withdrawn)

Number of applications CPC approved: 61 (2015/16 - 54)

Number of applications CPC rejected: 38 (2015/16 - 22)

Number of applications CPC made no comment: 4 (2015/16 - 2)

Total number of residents attending normal meetings was 50, and 21 for the large applications.

A few applications have resulted in contrary decisions by CPC & SCDC.

Number of tree orders received: 18 (2015/16 - 24)

Number of Consultations: 3 – Starter Homes, Flood Awareness Questionnaire & Local Green Space Designation.

Enforcement visits: 22