

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

HELD ON MONDAY, 30th APRIL 2007 AT 7.45 p.m.

PRESENT

Mr Pusey, Mr Hockley, Mr Barnes, Mr Brooksbank,
Mr Chilton, Dr Grindley, Mr Kennedy, Dr McKeown,
Miss Thake

County Councillor David McCraith (who arrived
about half way through the meeting)

District Councillor Deborah Roberts

IN ATTENDANCE

8 members of the public

APOLOGIES

None

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting and briefly described the way it would be run with short speeches of about five minutes duration, each followed by questions.

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Mr Pusey proposed that the Minutes of the previous Annual Parish Meeting, held on Monday, 24th April 2006, be taken as read. Dr Brooksbank seconded the proposal and all were agreed.

CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

Mr Pusey welcomed both councillors and members of the public.

He said this was the last public meeting for five of the current parish councillors, as they had not put themselves forward for re-election. Thus the council was saying goodbye tonight to himself, David Chilton, Sally Thake, Brian Hockley and Rob Brooksbank. He said the village owed a large debt to these councillors who had given their time to serving the village: most of them had been on the council for eight years or longer. Fortunately, four councillors were standing for re-election and that would provide for the necessary continuity of business.

As only seven nominations had been received for the nine seats on the council, there would be no election for Foxton Parish Council this Thursday. This meant that the council would be two members short - with the amount of business to conduct this would put added pressure on its members. He asked that if anyone were prepared to be co-opted onto the council to make up the numbers, to let the council know, and have a word with the clerk afterwards.

Mr Pusey said, that for his part, this had been a very busy year with two major projects on the go and a whole raft of legal issues to deal with. The council had also had a steady stream of planning applications including the major redevelopment of part of the Burlington Press site and objections from a landowner regarding two sites that are

not included in the South Cambridgeshire Plan, who was seeking permission for major development in the village.

Mr Pusey said he was very grateful to the Friends of Dovecote/Meadow Group chaired by Catherine Cairns and to the Recreation Ground Extension Committee (RGEC) chaired by Rob Brooksbank. These two groups had acted successfully as the delivery vehicles for the respective projects.

He said that the combined efforts of these two groups, had resulted in the re-establishment of the village allotments after thirteen years and commented "*If only we could get the water connected*" and after 300 years the villages' last dovecote had been restored. More would be said about these two projects later in the meeting.

(COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT DEFERRED UNTIL LATER IN THE MEETING)

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

Mrs Roberts began by saying that she had a good track record for attendance at meetings at the SCDC offices. She said this had not been a happy year at the District Council; capping had caused difficulties and the council had lost a lot of officers and must continue to make cuts. The Planning Department was costing a lot because of the amount of development in the area, particularly at Northstowe.

One consequence of the lack of funds was that the council was no longer able to maintain Milton Country Park under present arrangements. Other bad news was that the South Cambridgeshire housing stock would run out of money for repairs in a few years' time. The council was also carrying out a very expensive (£0.75 million) exercise in consulting with its tenants.

Mrs Roberts said she had never been happy with the council's move to Cambourne, which had cost £17.5 million. The building was now rumoured to have fallen in value to £13.5 million.

In addition, Mrs Roberts expressed her disappointment about the degree of party political point scoring that was going on.

Mrs Roberts said that years ago, when the council had a lot of money in reserve, the Audit Commission encouraged it to reduce the reserves. Now the same people are saying that the council has got it all wrong.

Finally, Mrs Roberts thanked both councillors and parishioners for allowing her to represent them and said that if she were re-elected at the forthcoming election she would continue to do her best for the village.

REPORT OF THE RECREATION AND AMENITIES COMMITTEE

Mr Chilton, Chairman of the Recreation and Amenities Committee, gave his report as follows:

He said the committee was responsible for all the amenities and recreation areas of the village covering a wide area. Responsibilities included grass cutting throughout the village, the Play Area and the emptying of litterbins including the infamous dog litter. Nearly every section of the village was covered in some way by the activities of the committee.

Mr Chilton said that the past year had been a quiet one: the grass cutting had gone to schedule although recently it had become necessary to extend this to cover areas along the A10 due it being detrunked.

Mr Chilton praised the excellent work done by Vic Mead in the past year, keeping the Play Area clean and tidy, making sure all the rubbish on the Recreation Ground was cleared on a regular basis, carrying out minor repairs to fencing, seats, bins etc most of which were necessitated as a result of vandalism, and looking after the area round Vicarage corner.

Mr Chilton said he would like to thank Mr Mead for all his hard work and also to thank those residents who look after the War Memorial, and the growing band of people who help to keep the village clean and tidy by picking up rubbish.

The Play Area had again passed the annual RoSPA inspection with very little work needing to be carried out.

Mr Chilton ended his report by thanking his fellow committee members for their help and support in the past year and again giving special thanks to Vic Mead for all his hard work and support over the past seven years during which, as chairman of the R & A Committee, he had worked with Vic.

The clerk said she was sorry to report that she had received a letter of resignation from Mr Mead, who would be leaving his post with the council at the end of June. The council was very sorry to hear this and asked the clerk to send Vic a letter of thanks for all his hard work and the contribution he had made to the maintenance of village amenities.

REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Mr Hockley reported as follows:

Financial Year 2006/07

Mr Hockley said that this year the economies made by both the District and County Councils had impacted on the financial climate for the parish council directly affecting the parish precept. The District Council had cut out all expenditure on footway lighting at a direct cost of £600 to Foxton Parish Council this year. SCDC had also phased out recycling credits and this would, in a full year, cost the parish some £500 per annum. In addition, the County Council had reduced its contribution towards the cost of grass cutting. As the parish council was locked into a 4-year grass-cutting contract, this would cost the parish some £200 per annum. Mr Hockley said that as a result of these economies by SCDC and CCC the parish precept would rise by about an extra £1,300 per annum.

Mr Hockley said that, for the first time in several years, the Recreation Ground had been sprayed to control plantains. This had been very successful and would be repeated again in 2007/08. Some £1,750 had been spent on seats and a basketball goal for the Recreation Ground. £1,170 was spent on tree work, including £460 for work on the large Ash tree at the end of the Illingworth Way path onto the Recreation Ground.

The restoration of the dovecote and the meadow project were largely completed in this financial year. Grants and donations more than covered the costs. Some £3,000 was

being returned to general parish funds and about £6,000 would be retained for the maintenance of the dovecote and meadow, and to form a fund for the possible future use of the dovecote to house village artefacts.

Mr Hockley said that the precept for 2006/07 had been increased to £13,500 and with the Recreation Ground Trust's contribution of £6,250 (an increase of £1,750 over 2005/06) the council's accounts showed a surplus of about £4,500.

Financial Year 2007/08

Mr Hockley said that the council had budgeted £1,000 towards infrastructure costs on the extension to the Recreation Ground and had increased the amount allowed for grass cutting to £4,600 to cover the extended cutting season resulting from warmer weather, and the additional cutting areas mainly along the A10 and Barrington Road.

Bids for funds included £500 for legal fees, £500 for Foxton Help Group and some money for an additional security camera for the Community Building. Grants would be sought to assist with the latter expenditure and the Recreation Ground Trust had agreed to fund 2/3's of any shortfall for the camera. Sums of £500 each had been allocated to Play Area equipment, footpath development and traffic related work.

Mr Hockley said that, with the precept increased to £14,100 for 2007/08, a deficit of about £3,000 was anticipated. However, he said that it should be noted that this deficit was more than covered by the surplus of about £4,500 carried forward from 2006/07.

Mr Pusey thanked Mr Hockley for his report and invited questions.

Mr Sutton said that he could not have audited the accounts so quickly without the clerk's meticulous work and thanked both Joan and Brian.

Mrs Howell commended the council for its good housekeeping and asked how much the extra security camera would cost. Mr Pusey said the whole process was being held over while the grant application was being submitted.

Mr Barnes said that Mr Hockley would be sorely missed when he stepped down from the council at the forthcoming local council elections.

REPORT OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

Mr Barnes said that, unlike Finance, Planning had not had such a good year. The Burlington Press application had been approved despite the council's objections and the development would not provide much low-cost housing.

Other applications had included 16 extensions, 4 conservatories, applications for 4 listed properties and 3 barn applications. There was also a retrospective application for the car-wash facility close to the level crossing.

A major item had been the council's own application for the extension to the Recreation Ground. Mr Barnes said that hanging over the council was the independent examination that would take place of the SCDC Local Development Plan. The owner of two sites near Foxton Bottom had registered objections to the sites being outside the village envelope and thus not available for development unless redesignated. These "objection sites" would form part of the examination. The council had submitted a detailed response expressing concern about the possibility of large-scale development of the village.

Mr Barnes said that several applications included low-cost houses but nothing appeared to be happening with regard to these proposed developments. He warned that the budget for Gypsy/Traveller sites could compete with that for low-cost housing.

In conclusion, Mr Barnes thanked his fellow committee members for their support with special thanks to Mr Hockley, who took over the chairmanship of the committee when he was unavailable due to his operation.

Mr Pusey thanked Mr Barnes for his report. There were no questions.

POLICE LIAISON REPORT

Miss Thake said that no incidents had been directly reported to her in the last month although there had been an arson attack on a car and the theft of two motorbikes. Overall, there had been few problems in the past year and she hoped that the coming year would also be a quiet one.

Mr Pusey thanked Miss Thake for her report and invited questions.

Mr Howard reported a Play Area sign had been torn off the fence, broken up and the pieces put in a litterbin

RECREATION GROUND TRUST REPORT

Mr Pusey said he hoped not to break the 5-minute rule, and, after a brief introduction, would ask Rob Brooksbank to give a RGEC report.

He said that parish councillors are automatically Trustees of the Foxton Recreation Ground Trust and that a significant amount of councillors' time had been spent on Trust matters during the year.

The purchase of the land from the County Council to extend the Recreation Ground, and to provide for replacement allotments etc, was being dealt with through the Trust. The drafting, amending and negotiating of terms for the Pre-school and Cricket Club leases, and the Management Agreement with the Foxton Gardens Association (FGA) were all being dealt with through the Trust. These processes had not gone as smoothly as he had hoped. However, he was pleased to say that agreement had been reached with FGA on the Management Agreement and the accompanying allotment holder's licence, and that the Trust's solicitor would be instructed this week. The Trust had cleared the general principles regarding the leasing of land and the draft leases with the Charity Commissioners. However, the Trust's solicitor had recently queried some of the terms. There had been no opportunity for present Trustees to deal with this and it would therefore be something for the new Trust to resolve. Mr Pusey said he was sorry to have to hand this matter on.

During the year the Trust returned to the previously agreed draft terms of a new Trust Deed. After further detailed and often protracted consideration, Trustees made a number of amendments to the draft, which were then put to its solicitor. The response from the solicitor a few days ago would now be considered by the new Trust.

After a strong push, the County Council had finally produced the necessary maps and measurements to enable us to go forward with the registration of both Trust and Parish Council land and the Trust's solicitors had been instructed to complete the necessary

registration at the Land Registry. Notification that this process has been completed was awaited.

Trust finances had been put on a sound footing with the fund for the longer-term maintenance of the Village Hall and pavilion in place. Invoices for the County Council's contribution to the fund were being paid on a regular basis through the Village Hall recharge. Unfortunately, the County Council, despite reminders, had not yet paid the account for the first year of the operation of the fund (2004). If this was not paid soon, legal action might have to be considered.

Mr Pusey said that the Trust had just sufficient unrestricted funds. The interest from the investment of these funds enabled it to reimburse the Parish Council for the upkeep of Trust land, grow the unrestricted fund balance by inflation, and have a little left over each year. Mr Pusey then asked Dr Brooksbank to report on the Recreation Ground extension

Recreation Ground Extension Committee Report (RGEC)

Dr Brooksbank reported as follows:

The year had seen substantial progress, although the pace of progress had at times been frustratingly slow. Key achievements over the past twelve months included the award of an SCDC grant towards the dirt-bike park, the installation of a water connection, which was paid for by the County Council, and the submission of a planning application for the site by the Parish Council. There had also been more visible signs of progress such as the pegging out of the entire area and, of course, the allocation of allotments and the commencement of work on them.

He said the coming year should be one of continued progress and even more visible signs. As cultivation continued, the allotments should start to mature, and we could all look forward to seeing produce grown on this land exhibited in the village show. The allotment subcommittee was hoping to get a series of water tanks installed over the next month or so in a project that should also see taps provided for the cricket nets and preschool garden. The dirt-bike park was fully funded and, once the planning permission was in place, the creation of this facility should rapidly follow, hopefully in time for the summer holidays. The preschool garden was also funded and ready to go: the finalization of the lease looked like being the rate-limiting step. Despite this Dr Brooksbank hoped to see the garden completed in time for the beginning of the new school year in September. He said the cricket nets still seemed some way distant - the Cricket Club was understandably reluctant to apply for funding before it could demonstrate security of tenure over the land for over 20 years. It would take good fortune and hard work to have these ready for next summer. The picnic area was a project for the new Parish Council, and he said that once the planning permission was through there would be no legal hurdles to overcome. Perhaps this project would fall on the new R&A committee. Dr Brooksbank said that when planning this area, it should be remembered that the Foxton gardens Association was keen to donate two trees in memory of Angela Lloyd and Barbara Orchard.

Dr Brooksbank said that many people deserved thanks for their work in progressing these projects, from which many villagers would benefit. In addition to all of the current RGEC committee, he said he would like to thank the following former RGEC members: Jeremy Piper who had now left Foxton but who had put in a lot of work on

behalf of the FGA, Richard Lione who was no longer on the preschool committee but co-ordinated the early stages of that project, and Colin Grindley who represented the Cricket Club and co-ordinated the surveying and marking out of the area along with subsequent preparation of the planning application. All the villagers who turned out on a cold January morning to help measure out the areas also deserved thanks although they are too numerous to mention individually. Finally, none of this measuring and marking would have been possible if Richard Barnes had not done such an excellent job of clearing the land.

In conclusion, Dr Brooksbank said he should finally mention that Dudley and he had both expressed a willingness to provide continuity by still being involved in RGEC should the future Trustees so wish.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

Mr McCraith said that the County Council had had to cope with many more government initiatives in the past year, which, although very often much needed, did not always come with the money to fund them. Thus the county remained the fastest growing in the country but with below-average funding from the government forcing the council to make further cuts in some services and to increase council tax by the legal maximum of 5%.

Turning to local matters, Mr McCraith said the County Council had replaced the officer dealing with the repairs needed for the Community Building. The new officer, Mr Martyn Smith, set out to resolve the remaining problems once and for all but, although this had been partially achieved, concern had been expressed about the brightness of the exterior lighting left on all night and some alternatives were considered such as infrared cameras or light sensors.

Mr McCraith said he was still concerned that the station was not providing Foxton residents with all the benefits that might be expected – chiefly the provision of a car park. He said this matter was still being pursued and that he was always on the lookout for a suitable area of land for a car park. A car-wash facility had recently been established on a possible site, but due to the need for traffic on the A10 to flow freely over the level crossing without being impeded by vehicles turning right onto the site, it was not altogether suitable. Mr McCraith said he was frequently asked about the possibility of a road-bridge over the level crossing but this project was not being given consideration at present.

Mr McCraith reported that the government-sponsored concessionary fare scheme introduced last year had now been transformed from applying solely within the district to applying throughout the county, and including bordering towns such as Royston. This outcome had been achieved as a result of the County Council bringing the City Council and the four District Councils and Stagecoach (the operator) together and also providing extra money to make sure the scheme was successful.

The County Council had won an award this year for being the most efficient recycling county in the country with 49% of waste being recycled. The council had taken steps to make further improvements. A state-of-the-art waste management centre would be built at Waterbeach dealing with all the county's waste and capable of recycling up to 62% including all metals, plastic bottles and compostable material. It would also be producing refuse-derived fuel where possible.

The Guided Bus scheme was making progress with a government grant of nearly 100 million pounds and extra costs to be met by the developers. When completed, this would be the largest guided bus scheme in the world and would, it was hoped, make a substantial difference to Cambridge traffic.

Mr McCraith concluded by saying that the County Council was involved in many different things and he hoped it was giving Foxton a satisfactory service. He looked forward to another year working with Foxton's parish council to ensure it did.

Mr Pusey thanked Mr McCraith for his report and invited questions.

Mrs Howell said that she understood that the number of stopping trains was being reduced. Mr McCraith agreed with this and Mr Howard said that it was absurd to reduce the number of stopping trains.

Dr Brooksbank asked whether there were any plans for the doorstep collection of plastics. Mr McCraith said that the new recycling centre would be able to separate plastics out. Mr Sutton enquired about the new system of green and black bins. Mrs Roberts said that since the introduction of the scheme the results had been excellent.

REPORT ON FOXTON COMMUNITY PROJECT

Mr Pusey said that ever since these buildings were erected, the Parish Council, the Village Hall Management Committee and the Foxton Sports Clubs Association had been trying to get the County Council (CCC) to fulfil its contractual commitments with regard to a long list of defects. Last year, the County Council was finally motivated to allot some officer-time to these outstanding matters. He said the cynic in him had to conclude that as the council was about to outsource this work, its prime motivation was to clear the desks. The resulting report was most unsatisfactory, even going back on previously agreed positions, particularly with regard to external lighting. Despite FPC having prepared long and detailed arguments, CCC was not prepared to budge on any of the matters in dispute. After an independent assessment of light pollution by South Cambridgeshire District Council, much debate and correspondence, Trustees reluctantly decided not to pursue the County with regard to the external lighting. The latest position is that the Village Hall Trustees are minded to contribute towards a scheme to reduce the cost of electricity consumed and at the same time to achieve a more effective and acceptable level of light emission. Mr Pusey said that, associated with this proposal, and in order to meet the insurance requirements of the County Council, it would be necessary to extend the school security system by installing an infrared camera. At present, action on this was on hold pending someone taking on the task of making the necessary grant application and carrying the scheme forward.

The council still wished to argue the case for the cost of works to one of the Velux windows in the main hall to be borne or reimbursed, but this awaited a detailed engineer's report before a claim could be submitted. Other works detailed and accepted had now all but been completed, with the work to the pavilion floor being carried out last week.

After a technical report by Councillor McKeown, separate negotiations with the supplier and manufacturer of faulty lock-hardware in the pavilion had resulted in the promised replacements. "So we are nearly there" said Mr Pusey

REPORT ON DOVECOTE/MEADOW PROJECT

Mr Pusey said that perhaps the most obvious achievement of the Parish Council this year was the restoration of the village's 1706 dovecote, the creation of a wildflower meadow and the creation of a new wheelchair-friendly footpath from the High Street to the new community facilities.

The contract was delivered on time, within budget and to plan, just in time for the opening to be held in 2006 to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the only surviving dovecote in the village.

He said the building considerably enhanced the view from the High Street and also stood out well when viewed from Foxton Wood. The meadow was once again resplendent with buttercups and the path was very well used. The acquisition of some free bark made a difference to what was becoming quite a muddy length of path at the back of Edis Way properties.

The council had decided to create an artefact display and store in the dovecote using some of the surplus funds from the project, with the remainder being set aside for the longer-term maintenance of the building.

It had been noted that not everyone agrees with the decision to block the access for pigeons, but this had to be weighed against the decisions to install a bat box and swift boxes in an attempt to preserve species that are losing habitat and nest sites. Mr Pusey said the pigeons would survive and multiply without any help from us humans.

As a testament to the work already carried out, the meadow and the footpath had recently received two Natural Heritage awards from SCDC – one highly commended for the delivery of countryside access and biodiversity enhancement and the other commended for initiatives that recognise, celebrate and enhance village life.

Mr Pusey said he had had great pleasure in attending the award ceremony on 17th April together with Catherine Cairns and Jill Hockley. He added that next year SCDC would consider awards for buildings so perhaps the Dovecot itself would be considered.

There were no questions.

Mr Barnes, speaking on behalf of the parish council praised the contribution made by Mr Pusey over many years during which, among other things, he had tenaciously battled with Leases, Trust Deeds and Land Registration for which he deserved the thanks and congratulations of all parishioners.

FOXTON TOWN LANDS TRUSTEES' REPORT

Mr Oakley reported on behalf of Mr Challis, who was unable to attend.

At the beginning of the last financial year, the cash in the bank was £2,409.57. Rent from the Charity's asset was £350 and £76.50 had been earned in interest. A small grant of £200 had been made to Foxton Help Group, bringing the total in the account at the start of the present financial year to £2,636.07.

The Trustees of the Charity remained the same viz Nigel Oakley, David Boreham and Don Challis.

Mr Pusey thanked Mr Oakley for the report. There were no questions.

FOXTON HELP GROUP

The clerk read out the Help Group's report as follows:

Since last year's report, the investigation into the care needs of the senior citizen community in Foxton has been completed. The possibility of personal alarms and a community warden scheme was widely publicized, including a lengthy article in the *Laurentian*. As far as we know, all queries about these items have been answered, and it transpired, in spite of earlier responses, that there was not sufficient need for the village to have its own community warden at this time. However, the Help Group committee will be happy to facilitate any future changes in need, and the fund supplied by the parish council last year to meet these aims is reserved for this possibility.

The car scheme in the village continues to be well used, with 17 volunteer drivers, covering 116 journeys with a total of 1263 miles. All drivers have recently submitted forms for police checks to be carried out, as part of the requirements. It should be recorded that thanks are due to these drivers, who have a mileage allowance paid, but give their time for free, and provide an essential service to the village community.

A new and successful care service of the Help Group is to facilitate a local centralised medical service for multiple inoculations against influenza. A doctor and two nurses arrived at the village hall sports pavilion, from the Harston surgery, and in the space of two hours provided 90 residents with their flu jabs. The Help Group committee organised a simple administration system and served tea and coffee, so it became quite a pleasant social event!

It (*the scheme*) minimises travelling and maximises efficiency. It is expected that the Melbourn surgery will do the same next year.

Socially, the Help Group has continued with coach trips to the theatre and a shopping trip to Norwich. A coach trip to Bletchley Park National Codes centre was also recently popular. Afternoon teas and Christmas lunch at the Cambridge Motel are also now regular annual events. The Help Group acknowledges with thanks, the generous donation towards the cost of recent coach trips from the Town Lands Charity. Joining in with Foxton Primary school lunches happens on an occasional basis.

Heather Neill, Helpgroup chairman, and Car Scheme.

Geoff Houghton, Helpgroup treasurer.

Ann Sanderson, Helpgroup secretary.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT REPORT

Mr Hockley reported on public transport as follows:

Roads

Maintenance of minor roads and pavements continued to be an area of low priority in respect of County Council expenditure. He said two "repairs" carried out during the year could be mentioned: these were the kerb edging to the inside bend on Shepreth Road and the resurfacing "patch" of the road outside the village shop.

Bus Services

Mr Hockley said the village continued to benefit from an hourly bus service to both Royston and Cambridge during the day for 6 days a week.

The most significant happening this year had been the application of common sense to the concessionary bus pass scheme for elderly residents by the various councils involved.

Train Services

Mr Hockley said that at weekends, whilst there were still hourly trains to Royston and Cambridge from Foxton, journeys to/from stations beyond Royston and to/from Kings Cross station necessitated a change at Royston and a slightly increased journey time. Incidentally, he said, the frequency of passenger trains through the level crossing at weekends had reduced to 6 per hour.

Mr Hockley said that the weekly service on the line was likely to be changed significantly this year. Whilst no details of the new service had yet been published, there must be the possibility that the pattern of services on Saturdays – with only a shuttle serving the local stations between Royston and Cambridge – may be repeated for part or all of the day on weekdays. He said it was unlikely that the service for Foxton commuters would improve as a result of the timetable change, as the stated intent was to improve the service for the most popular stations such as Cambridge.

Mr Pusey thanked Mr Hockley for his report. There were no questions.

Mr Pusey thanked those present for attending and reminded them that the next meeting of the new Parish Council would be the **Annual General Meeting, which would be held on Monday, 14th May 2007 at 7.45 pm in the Meeting Room of the Village Hall.**

Mr Sutton endorsed Mr Barnes' remarks about Dudley Pusey's contribution. He also praised all the councillors, including the District Councillor, Deborah Roberts and the County Councillor, David McCraith, for their work and achievements. Speaking as a resident, he said councillors had made a huge contribution to the village and wished those councillors serving on the new council the strength and determination to carry out their duties. To those councillors who were retiring he wished a less stressful life.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.15pm.