

MINUTES OF THE FOXTON ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

HELD ON MONDAY, 23rd APRIL 2012 AT 7.45 p.m.

PRESENT

Dr Oakley, Dr Grindley, Mr Bore, Mr Barnes, Mr Elliott, Mr McCreery, Mrs Macintyre, Mrs McFadzean and Mr Sutton

County Councillor Susan van de Ven (arrived after meeting commenced)

District Councillor Deborah Roberts

IN ATTENDANCE

5 members of the public

APOLOGIES

None

Dr Oakley welcomed all to the Annual Parish Meeting. He said that since last year's meeting there had been one returning, and three new, parish councillors who had all made valuable contributions to the work of the council. Some major developments over the past year had been the launching of the Parish Plan in March and the superb work of the Play Area Improvement Group in raising the funds to replace the ageing play area equipment. The Localism Bill had become law and was causing the council, and all levels of local democracy, to have a major rethink on planning policy. The usual activities of the council such as the work of the Recreation and Amenities working party, the Village Warden and the Planning Committee had carried on as always. Dr Oakley said that the reports to follow were an overview of the council's activities over the past year together with those from other village groups and from the district and county councillors (*Dr van de Ven would be arriving later and her report would be delayed until then*). Dr Oakley asked visitors to feel free to ask questions at the end of each report.

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Dr Oakley proposed that the Minutes of the previous Annual Parish Meeting, held on Tuesday, 26th April 2010, be taken as read. Mr Barnes seconded the proposal and all were agreed.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

This item was deferred until later in the meeting.

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

Mrs Roberts said that she intended to try to keep her report brief and, as she attended most of Foxton's monthly meetings when she both updated the council on local concerns that had been expressed and took away fresh concerns, she would attempt to keep to what she saw as the major points to be aware of regarding the activities of South Cambridgeshire District Council.

Mrs Roberts said that she believed the Localism Bill was something that all must pay strong attention to in the coming year, especially in regard to its possible effects on planning issues. She said that there was certainly great concern nationally, including from some serious players such as the National Trust, when the bill was first drafted, as it seemed to show that first and foremost the move was such that it was in danger of covering the countryside with bricks and mortar. Seemingly the Government took this on board and changes were made. However, the phrase in the Bill “ a presumption for sustainable development” still remained in place. Mrs Roberts asked what exactly that meant, and said she feared it could and would mean anything to anyone fighting for or against development - none more so than the would-be developers and their army of highly paid consultants and lawyers.

Legal challenges were expected as the Bill came into actual effect and she was sure that everyone would be watching these matters carefully as they tried to retain the character of the district’s villages whilst at the same time accepting that carefully thought out change would always happen.

Mrs Roberts said that workshops and training events on the Bill were due to be held at the SCDC offices at Cambourne and she would be attending these as well as being a member of the Planning Committee that would no doubt see the Bill in action.

The other great challenge to the district council would be in the field of social housing, which she said of course also married into the Localism Bill.

Mrs Roberts said that here, in South Cambridgeshire, there had been a huge growth in market housing schemes, but this had not meant a lowering of house prices as more homes had become available. Indeed, the opposite had occurred and the situation now was that, although life in South Cambridgeshire was flagged up as the “best you can get” by the SCDC’s leader, it was far from such for many average families in the area who simply could not get on the mortgage ladder. She said the real need was not for more and more five-bed luxury houses but for homes at fair rents that those, not on six-figure incomes, could afford to live in.

Those in control at SCDC more that two years ago had spent more that £1.4 million on trying to get rid of all its housing stock and this was done against all the previous evidence that the tenants would not go along with such a move. Now the Government had changed the rules and would now allow councils to retain all the housing revenue/rent as some had predicted would happen.

The council had had to borrow £200 million to be allowed to do so but, as the money had been borrowed on very good terms from the Government’s own credit agency rather than some High Street bank, the terms were such that there would still be enough to more than cover the interest payments and indeed to build up surpluses. This should now mean that, rather than having to sell off the “family silver” the council would be in a position to start building council homes again, though as yet the controlling group had not explained where they would find land at a reasonable cost on which to do this. Again she said she was sure that everyone would be watching this situation with interest. She also hoped that a new piece of land might come forward here in Foxton as an exception site to help with village residents still in need of affordable housing and that anyone who would consider putting forward land to help could contact either herself or, she was sure, the chairman or vice chairman of the parish council who would be pleased to explain how such schemes work.

In conclusion, Mrs Roberts was pleased to report that, in these difficult financial times, SCDC's auditors were, in general, positive regarding the council's finances and that, for the fourth year running, SCDC councillors were not taking a hike in their own allowances, as the chancellor would say, "we are all in this together" though she could assure those present she was not yet a millionaire!

Mrs Roberts thanked all her colleagues on the parish council for their help and support - as ever this was greatly appreciated - and thanked villagers who made her job so interesting and varied.

Dr Oakley thanked Mrs Roberts for her report.

REPORTS FROM THE WORKING PARTIES

RECREATION AND AMENITIES

Mr McCreery said that members of the working party during the past year had been himself, Rachael Macintyre, Christine McFadzean and Geoff Barnes. Members had met regularly both just before, and in between, Council meetings.

Grass cutting of the Recreation Ground, verges and the approaches to the village continued to be a significant cost. The council, after undertaking a tendering process, had made a new three-year agreement with CGM. Their work would continue to be augmented by the Cricket Club during the summer months.

Recreation Ground

A considerable amount of tree surgery had been carried out. In the main this had consisted of the removal of dead or diseased trees and the thinning out of the brush cover on the margins of the ground. The entrances to the ground had been repaired with a new gatepost at the car park and a refurbished pole at the St. Lawrence Road entrance.

The car park had been tidied up and the area next to the Bowls Club seeded.

The whole Recreation Ground was sprayed for weed control in June. This had not been a great success due to the dry weather and this year it was intended to spray twice.

The new training lights were installed and both the Football Club and Dynamo Foxton had made use of them during the winter. The training area would be over-seeded to help the grass recover. In addition a scheme was being considered to extend the coverage of the lights in order to enlarge the area that could be used for training.

One new litterbin was installed and the Tennis Club bin re-sited outside the club gates in order that it could be emptied regularly.

Play Area

The Play Area Improvement Group made good progress during the year in raising money from events, individual donors and three major grants from AmeyCespa, South Cambridgeshire District Council and Foxton Parish Council. One grant application remained outstanding. On the basis of this successful fund raising, the Parish Council ordered the new equipment, and work was scheduled to start on Monday 30th April with a three-week completion period. On completion the working party would arrange for the work to be inspected and the official opening was due to take place on

4th June as part of the Jubilee celebrations. Mr McCreery said he hoped people would be in attendance for this event.

Two new picnic benches had been delivered and would be installed by David Salmons at the end of May.

The junior goalposts had been re-sited and re-fixed. This work arose from the ROSPA report. Some other safety work was carried out in the play area although this was kept to a minimum, e.g. removal of the broken wobble board, because of the anticipated new equipment.

Foxton Woods

During the year County Farms had repaired various parts of the fencing and a new dog-waste bin was installed at the end of Caxton Lane. There were continuing problems with the fences being damaged and occasional overnight campers.

Sports Clubs

A Terms and Conditions of Use document was issued to all sports clubs using the Recreation Ground in order to have the current practices in written form and to clarify some points.

During the year the group had held two meetings with representatives from the sports clubs using the main area of the Recreation Ground viz the Football Club, the Cricket Club and Foxton Dynamo. These had been a useful forum to keep the clubs and the Parish Council in touch with each other's requirements.

Due to the shortage of football pitches arising from the expansion of the Dynamo Foxton Club the group was able to create an under-10's and an under-8's pitch on either side of the cricket square. The group also took the opportunity to point out this shortage of pitches in the District Council's recent survey of open spaces.

The clubs agreed to provide and spread fertiliser on the Recreation Ground based on a previously obtained soil sample analysis. *This had now been done.*

Other areas discussed were:

The ball wall

The clubs' view was that a protective surface would not be effective and that the wall should be re-sited. The R & A group would look at this matter again.

The hard standing

The clubs thought a quotation should be obtained for an Astroturf facility although it was pointed out that this was likely to be beyond the village's finances. The group was currently considering a cheaper option that could include volleyball and basketball as sports, which the village plan suggested to be of interest.

QEII Challenge

Mr McCreery said that the QEII Challenge was a programme to mark the Queen's Diamond Jubilee led by its patron the Duke of Cambridge. It was a landmark project to create a permanent, tangible and relevant legacy from the two major events of 2012

the Diamond Jubilee and the Olympics. The challenge would permanently protect a network of 2012 outdoor recreational spaces across the UK. The group had submitted an application to cover the Recreation Ground, Allotments and Village Hall sites. It was expected that the application would be successful.

Other Matters

A bus seat was installed in the Station Road bus shelter in January.

A new bin was installed at the entrance to the Dovecote field, the gate was repaired and non-slip matting installed through the entrance area.

There appeared to be interest from a number of youngsters in the village for a Half Pipe as a more interesting facility than the BMX track.

During the year the council joined the Parish Paths Partnership, which should help it keep signage up to date at reduced costs.

One continual problem was the inconsiderate attitude of a number of dog owners. Dogs fouling on the Recreation Ground continued to be an issue.

Cambridge County Council had started a programme to replace street lighting with fewer and brighter lights. As yet the council did not have a date for the alterations to lighting in Foxton.

In conclusion, Mr McCreery thanked all the members of the working party and, in particular, David Salmons, the Village Warden, for all their hard work during the year. In addition to keeping the Recreation Ground and other areas of the village tidy, David's building and fencing skills had been well used.

Dr Oakley thanked Mr McCreery for his report and invited questions.

Mr Challis asked whether Mr Salmons would continue as Village Warden for another year

This was confirmed.

Mr Bore pointed out that the sign for the pavilion was spelt wrongly.

It was thought that a fresh sign could be ordered at the same time as the further signs for the Play Area already agreed.

Mrs Ward asked whether a surplus sign, hanging above the sign for the gravel car park, could be removed.

This was agreed.

Mrs Howell commented that the gate into the Dovecote field was much appreciated.

Mr Howard complained that the area bordering the Recreation Ground, adjacent to the Illingworth Way houses backing onto it, had been "decimated".

Mrs Macintyre said that the clearance work had been necessary, but that the Recreation and Amenities group would look at the site to see whether improvements could be made.

Mr Barnes said that Mr McCreery was to be congratulated for all his efforts over the past year.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

Dr van de Ven reported as follows:

General County Council matters

The 2.95% council tax increase for 2012/13 would help to fund a £90 million investment in roads and pavements (not necessarily for massive improvement but to prevent further deterioration), speeding up the rolling out of high speed Broadband by private companies and a prospective £29 million bypass for Ely Level Crossing. *Dr van de Ven said that a cheaper alternative scheme for the Ely crossing could save £13 million*). Dr van de Ven said that “Black hole” budget problems plagued adult social care. The good news was the reversal of library closure decisions last year, and the realisation by the administration that something needed to be left in the pot for subsidised public transport.

Local matters

Localism

There were some worthy intentions regarding local decision-making powers, but these were in practice leading to an unrealistic devolution of responsibility and funding. Dr van de Ven said the county council would like to devolve funding for Heavy Commercial Vehicle (HCV) monitoring, station parking, upgrading the A10 cycle path, traffic calming, Melbourn library access point, Melbourn Area Youth Club and community transport, to name just a few. Tonight’s planning report would point out the lack of attention to local views in the decision on the Barrington quarry. The Civil Parking Enforcement Policy had been delayed due to “lack of response” in the public consultation. Dr van de Ven said that the extension of double yellow lines in Station Road would have taken about three years to wind its way through the bureaucracy by the time the work was completed. A “Local Highways Warden” scheme was being rolled out; to some extent this was a duplication of effort since parish and county councillors already played this role. She commented on the timely publication of the Parish Plan.

Roads

A 50 mph speed limit had now been implemented south of the level crossing.

Gritting of Shepreth Road in icy weather was now being undertaken.

Patching up a stretch of the A10 path on the Foxton/Shepreth border had highlighted the case for a proper upgrade for the whole of the A10 pavement and this needed campaigning on.

Referring to the Heavy Commercial Vehicle Strategy Dr van de Ven said that Foxton had accepted an offer to be a pilot test case for a new HCV monitoring policy under the banner of “Localism”, but all assessment was done via a desk-top exercise and the policy itself required parish funding for any measures deemed necessary to curtail HCV movements.

Drainage

Dr van de Ven hoped that residents would continue to report localised surface water drainage issues. The county council had agreed to jet a significant stretch of Fowlmere Rd/High St after it was made aware of the problem there.

Public Transport

Buses The 139 service had been cut last April. Dr van de Ven said that the county council had committed to “as good or better alternatives” to its wholesale elimination of bus subsidies but had excluded in this promise the cuts made last April. Community transport, and all transport for those who for whatever reason had no access to private transport, had been inadequately supported by the county council.

Rail Dr van de Ven said that the county council did not seem to engage of its own initiative with the local rail service as a form of public transport and so it had been useful to have a Rail User group to fight this corner. Having said that she said that the county council has been actively supportive of all aspects of the Rail User group’s campaign. This year had seen retention of the 50% student discount fare, elimination of parking charges at the area’s nearest station car park (Shepreth) and replacement of the ticket machine screens. The establishment of the station garden at Foxton last summer was good for morale but had also encouraged the train operating company to make small local improvements. Dr van de Ven thanked those Foxton residents who had kept the tubs well looked after.

Level Crossing

Dr van de Ven said that Foxton Level Crossing accounted for a number of serious long-term problems. There was almost a sense of resignation that this was how things were and that whatever discussion took place in years past about meaningful solutions was history. She said it was beyond the power of the parish council, or of any one player, to solve these problems and that the big players needed to be harnessed. As already reported, the county council did not seem to engage when it came to local rail issues and this included all the aspects of the interface between rail and road. Network Rail was a massive and impenetrable organization and not subject to public accountability through Freedom of Information and so the hope of attracting their attention and support has been couched in frustration. However, the breakdown of the pedestrian gates in August 2010 and the many close calls reported by members of the public and logged by the Rail User Group since then, had been a catalyst for getting the attention of both Network Rail and County Council and it was important that pressure was maintained. A public meeting with the Network Rail Managing Director regarding safety concerns would take place at Foxton Village Hall on 21st May at 7:30pm, the Rail User Group would be visiting the signal boxes at Foxton and Cambridge next month. Meetings with senior county officers and the Managing Director of Network Rail to look at the whole range of problems and meaningful solutions would take place in June.

Dr van de Ven said that, on a similar vein and within this overarching theme, the local debate over double yellow lines in Station Road near the A10 had highlighted the glaring absence of proper car parking for the station, something which she and the parish council were actively pursuing and which she would be incorporating into discussions with the county council and Network Rail in June.

Around Foxton

Dr van de Ven said that many local services were based in Melbourn and that under localism and the devolution of funding to parish councils, this became complicated - different parishes had different pressures and priorities and simply could not afford to support everything.

Melbourn Village College now held academy status, which was now the norm in South Cambridgeshire. Foxton Primary School had done well through its membership of the School Sports Partnership and was thereby able to retain some activities, which would otherwise have become expensive. The Rail User Group had undertaken various projects with both schools and with Cambridge Sixth Forms around the themes of sustainable transport (including post-16 transport for sixth formers) and gardening: the highlight of this year had been the planting of tubs for the station platforms and the donation of a wormery (and thousands of worms!) to the primary school for its vegetable and flower gardens.

Dr van de Ven concluded by saying that it was a privilege to be Foxton's representative at the county council.

Dr Oakley thanked Dr van de Ven for her report and invited questions.

Mr Challis asked whether, in her discussions with the various bodies concerned, the question of a road bridge at the level crossing ever arose and what was Network Rail's attitude to this.

Dr van de Ven said that the difficulty was finding the right people to talk to and this problem was compounded by the frequent turnover of staff at Network Rail. She said that, to have any real impact, under the Managing Director of Network Rail's initiative to hold a meeting with the County Council, there would need to be about 20 like-minded people at Network Rail.

Mr Bore asked whether the potential saving of £13 million at the Ely level crossing might be earmarked for the Foxton crossing

Dr van de Ven thought the likelihood was that, in the event that this sum was saved, it would be subsumed into the council's general expenditure.

FINANCE

Mr Sutton said that the group's membership was himself as Chairman, Dr Grindley as Vice Chairman, Mr McCreery and Dr Oakley

Mr Sutton had previously circulated a schedule to councillors giving details of the council's Receipts and Payments for the year ended 31 March 2012.

The precept for this financial year was £20,550 representing an increase of 26.46% on the previous year. Mr Sutton said that the precept had been much lower than for other villages in Cambridgeshire of a similar size to Foxton for many years. The council had therefore taken the view that, in the present uncertain financial climate, it should apply for a significant increase for 2011/12 in order to bring Foxton more in line with other villages in South Cambridgeshire and to provide funds to enhance village facilities.

The major part of the Training Lights expenditure, £13,159, had been incurred in the previous financial year with the balance of £4,069 being spent in the year under review. In order to fund this balance Foxton Recreation Ground Trust made a further payment of £4,910, having paid £1,340 previously, making £6,250 in total. During the year the council received the final 10% of the total grant of £5,120 towards the training lights from South Cambridgeshire District Council.

The schedule referred to earlier showed the payments made by the council every year, one of the largest being £1,780 for the cost of insurance with the policy providing cover for public liability of £5,000,000, employer's liability of £10,000,000 and additionally covering the Memorial Seat/Shelter, the Dovecote building and other assets around the village such as the War Memorial, Bus and Youth Shelters, Street Lamps and Bicycle Stands. The total value of assets covered by the policy was £101,153. Village Warden costs for 2011/12 were lower than the previous year at £2,565.

Mr Sutton said that grass cutting was the council's largest recurring expense and an increased number of grass cuts, plus weed killer spraying (not applied every year) resulted in a higher charge for the year of £3,252. In 2011, the year under review, grass cutting commenced in March whereas in 2010 the first cut was deferred until May. Those two extra months of grass cutting in early 2011 had cost £624. Tree surgery at £1,944 was not significantly different from the previous year.

Non-recurring items included the seat for the Station Road bus shelter installed at a net cost of £400. The council had also purchased two benches for the Play Area at a cost of £1,422 with VAT of £233 yet to be recovered. Following the installation of the training lights electricity costs of £169 had been incurred in the year, with a further £160 in April 2012, against which the senior and junior football clubs had made contributions of £360. The council had supported the Melbourn Youth Club with a donation of £300 and Parish Plan printing costs at £192, using a local printer, were significantly lower than budget. Two new litterbins had cost £368 and the redundant telephone kiosk at Hillfield had been purchased for £1.

Overall a surplus of £3,501 in the year 2011/12 had been achieved which would be carried forward to assist expenses in the current year, particularly the new Play Area equipment which should be installed in time for Jubilee week.

The council's unrestricted cash reserves at the year-end were £34,455 with a further £8,498 held as restricted funds arising from the prior year Section 106 receipts. These restricted funds must be used for the improvement of village facilities.

Mr Sutton concluded by thanking the Parish Clerk, Joan Burns, for the accounting records she had kept so ably and Mike Matthews for carrying out the duties of Internal Auditor for another year.

Dr Oakley thanked Mr Sutton for his report. There were no questions.

PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT

Dr Grindley reported as follows:

1. Meetings

The committee had held twelve meetings during the year.

2. Applications

Sixteen planning applications had been received. The district council (SCDC) granted permission for extensions to 9 dwellings and the replacement of one dwelling. Two applications for a new dwelling were refused by SCDC. An appeal for a dwelling in Station Road was dismissed, and an appeal decision was awaited on another proposed dwelling in Hall Close.

SCDC granted approval for a replacement garden room in Barrington Road.

Approval was granted by Cambridgeshire County Council for works to import materials to fill the quarry void at Barrington.

A planning decision by SCDC was awaited for 7 new dwellings, including two affordable homes, proposed at 57 High Street, and another for the conversion of an existing dwelling on Cambridge Road into an eco-office.

Two applications for tree works within the conservation area were considered and recommended for approval. No decision notice had been received from SCDC.

The retrospective planning application by SCDC, promised for the end of March 2011, for the selling of cars at the former Q8 garage had still not been received.

Foxton Parish Council's request that SCDC obtain counsel's opinion on the interpretation of the wording of the Permitted Development Order used with reference to the new access to Burlington Press was declined, after a delay of almost a year. The Council was instead invited by SCDC, on 13th October 2011, to seek a judicial review of the matter. This invitation was considerably out of time. Such application to the High Court is defined as having to be made promptly (*Customarily such applications are restricted by the Court to those made within weeks rather than months of the decision in question – in this case dated 5th November 2010*). The SCDC request was not therefore pursued and this matter would be taken up elsewhere.

3. Consultations

Responses were made to government consultations on Neighbourhood Planning regulations, and the Community Infrastructure levy.

A response was also made on the SCDC housing strategy.

Proposal by SCDC to sell land on Station Road for a new access road

This consultation included a dossier by Endurance Estates describing a local consultation exercise carried out by them on their proposed new access road for housing development behind the Press houses.

The committee consulted all local residents affected by this proposal, which established that there was overwhelming opposition to the proposed development. Returns from residents actually backing onto the proposed housing development also revealed that a number of them were not invited to the exhibition and workshop held by Endurance Estates, and almost all were opposed to the development, contrary to the statements made in the Endurance Estates submission to SCDC.

The Council informed SCDC of the views of residents, and requested the transfer to it of the grassed area of land on Station Road owned by SCDC, but maintained for many years by Foxton Parish Council. The district council was scheduled to make a decision on this matter on 13th June 2012.

4. Localism Act 2011

The Localism Act received Royal Assent on 15th November 2011. Some provisions came into force on that day and many came into force on 15th January 2012. It was originally envisaged to be fully in force by April 2012, but some sections, such as section 88 (land of community value), though partly in force for specific purposes at Royal Assent, awaited the Secretary of State's issue of the supporting regulations to enable implementation to proceed. However, the intent was clear and part of current legislation.

Dr Grindley said that the Localism Act required a significant change to the present culture and practice of local government in order to achieve more genuine and meaningful future consultations with local communities. For example, this past year, the county council did not evaluate or test the feasibility of this council's views on the proposed refurbishment of the Barrington light railway for use to transport waste to fill the quarry void, and suggestions made to minimise the impact on Foxton residents. This failure devalued their consultation procedure. Also, in the past year, without any consultation, the district council felled two mature trees on their land in Station Road maintained by Foxton Parish Council, and a planning application was approved by SCDC officers, contravening district policy, former planning approval conditions, the statutory consultation period, and the recommendation of this council. Hopefully, in future, consultations will actually occur, and also be taken into account.

5. Future work

Dr Grindley said that, following adoption of the Parish Plan, the Planning Committee needed to carry out both a detailed tree survey, and an appraisal of all the buildings of architectural importance and historical significance, with their associated landscape setting in the village. These surveys would be in order to afford better protection of the village by extending the conservation area. A Neighbourhood Plan would be prepared to incorporate the extended conservation area and to resolve other issues identified in the Parish Plan. It was proposed to work with local residents and collaborate with SCDC and CCC officers on this project.

Dr Oakley thanked Dr Grindley for his report and invited questions.

Dr van de Ven praised Dr Grindley's report and the exemplary and meticulous work of the Planning Committee.

Mr Challis agreed with these plaudits and asked who would make the decision about the proposed transfer the ownership of the grassed area in front of the Press Cottages to the parish council. Mrs Roberts said this would be made by the SCDC Housing Portfolio holder: both she and Dr Grindley would meet with him on 13th June.

PARISH PLAN REPORT AND ACTION PLAN REVIEW

Mr Elliott introduced his report and review by saying that, although the Parish Plan had only recently been published, the Parish Council had had access to the information for some time and had already moved forward with several of the areas in the Action Plan. He went on to outline the Action Plan intentions and progress:

1. Planning

It was aimed to limit expansion. The Planning Committee had met with Station Road residents to gauge their opinion on plans to build 19 homes behind the Press Cottages; the opinions received by the committee were found to be in direct contradiction to those claimed to have been received by the developer, Endurance Estates. The district council had been informed of the results of this meeting.

It was planned to expand the conservation area. The Planning Committee had outlined a proposed extension to the conservation area, and had had offers of help with finding out more information about local listed buildings.

2. Housing

- 2.1 Plan to provide affordable housing: The Planning Committee was actively engaging with local landowners to investigate a number of sites for affordable housing. In addition, the committee was meeting with developers of proposed smaller housing developments, to ensure that suitable affordable housing would be incorporated (e.g. 59 High Street, Moore's farm, etc)
- 2.2 Promote energy saving measures: No action had been taken so far.
- 2.3 Improve storm drainage on High Street: County Highways had investigated and fixed some problems; but it was not yet clear whether this had resolved the issues.

3. Education/Children

- 3.1 Provision of Holiday play scheme and after school clubs: No action had been taken so far. Although not strictly in this category, Mr Elliott pointed out that the Parish Council had actively supported the recently inaugurated Melbourn Youth Group.
- 3.2 Update/Expand play area: The working party set up for this purpose had obtained all the necessary funds through fundraising and grants and the new play equipment would be installed in time for an official opening at the Jubilee celebrations.

4. Transport/Roads

- 4.1 Improvements to Foxton Crossing, in the short and the long term: The parish council was grateful for the hard work being done by County Councillor Susan Van de Ven on this matter. Safety would be improved in the short term by increasing CCTV coverage to monitor pedestrians as well as traffic. For the longer term, the question of improvements to this junction had again been raised in recent county council meetings with the hope, perhaps not justified by past experience, that action might be taken.
- 4.2 Parking and congestion near the station: the parish council had been trying to find possible sites for a car park near the station, and had also supported an application to the district council for extended double yellow lines on Station Road (these had now been approved and should be in place later this year).
- 4.3 Parking in the centre of village: No action had been taken so far.

- 4.4 Speeding on entry roads to the village: No action had been taken apart from ordering 30mph stickers for wheelie bins owned by residents living adjacent to roads at the edge of the village.
- 4.5 Bus Service improvements: The council was again grateful to Susan Van de Ven for her efforts in trying to get the County Council to reverse its decision to cut 100% of bus subsidies.
- 4.6 Train service improvements: The Rail User Group founded by Susan Van de Ven had been meeting for some time, and was now in contact with Dave Ward, Network Rail's Managing Director for the Anglia Route, who had committed to helping sort out problems with the level crossing gates.
- 5. Medical/Social**
- 5.1 Local medical facilities: No action taken so far.
- 5.2 Foxton social car scheme: The existence of the scheme, together with contact details, were now published in "The Laurentian" every month.
- 6. Law & Order**
- 6.1 Aim to improve perception of police presence in the village: Geoff Barnes, the council's Police Liaison representative, had made the police aware of potential trouble areas in the village and had ensured that they regularly patrolled these areas.
- 6.2 Consideration of Neighbourhood Watch scheme: A volunteer was needed to organize such a scheme; one person had been asked, but without success.
- 7. Leisure/Social**
- 7.1 Encouragement of new activities: As part of the Parish Plan questionnaire, several people expressed an interest in setting up or joining various groups: although the Parish Council offered to pay for hire of Village Hall accommodation for introductory meetings to get such groups off the ground, the take-up was limited, and it is thought that no groups that went through this process were still in existence.
- 8. Recreation & Environment**
- 8.1 Aim to encourage use and access to countryside in and around village: No action taken so far.
- 8.2 Opportunities for enhancement of the village environment: The parish council was looking for land for a Community Orchard and had recently considered purchasing land for this, but the site had unfortunately been sold to a higher bidder.
- 8.3 Lighting: This year the Parish Council would install a solar light for the path across the Dovecote Meadow (similar to that by the corner of Illingworth Way and the allotments).
- 8.4 Lighting for the Recreation Ground: Lights had been installed, but lit an insufficient area for training resulting in the ground suffering in this area. The parish council would be looking to increase the lit area this year by improving the lighting.

- 8.5 Village footpaths: No action taken so far.
- 8.6 Litter and Foul waste: Regular reminders needed to be made about dog litter on the Recreation Ground (notes in “The Laurentian” seemed to make a difference for a short while). Letters had been written to residents who had been seen failing to clean up the mess left by their dogs.

9. Business Issues

- 9.1 Mobile Phone Coverage: The coverage had been investigated and had revealed that O2 had the best network in Foxton; Vodafone was the worst (because it fell between two cells). Better coverage might require a mobile phone mast to be positioned on a high point in the village – perhaps the Church tower.

Dr Oakley thanked Mr Elliott for his report and invited questions.

Mrs Ward raised the matter of poor drainage in the High Street and at Vicarage Corner.

There was also a short discussion about the poor quality of the light shed by the solar light for the Illingworth Way footpath.

POLICE LIAISON REPORT

Mr Barnes reported as follows:

The new Police station at Cambourne was now fully operational and South Cambridgeshire now had its own Commander, Chief Inspector Darren Alderson supported by Inspector Chris Savage and the new Crime Lead, Detective Inspector Ian Simmons.

Mr Barnes said that the idea behind changes was to concentrate on local problems with local knowledge.

The old 0345 non-emergency telephone number for contacting the police had been replaced in the past twelve months by the number 101.

Mr Barnes said that overall crime figures were about the same as reported last year. The police had currently issued the following warnings:

- Local burglaries for cash and jewellery
- High value cars being stolen to order by breaking into houses to steal keys

Speed checks had been carried out in Fowlmere Road, High Street and Shepreth Road. The police continued to monitor parking in Station Road and Hall Close.

Dr Oakley thanked Mr Barnes for his report. There were no questions.

RECREATION GROUND TRUST REPORT

Mrs McFadzean reported as follows:

Mrs McFadzean said that all parish councillors were Trustees of the Foxton Recreation Ground Trust (RGT) and were charged with maintaining the properties and facilities of the Recreation Ground, the Village Hall and Pavilion in good order for the benefit of residents. The Village Hall and Pavilion were operated by the

Village Hall Trust on behalf of the RGT and a Facilities Manager was employed to ensure the smooth operation of the buildings, equipment and fixtures.

Income for the year to 31st March 2012 was £21,890 including a contribution of £9,391 from Cambridgeshire County Council to the Provision for Future Maintenance of Fixed Assets in recognition of the school's use of the facilities. As the Trust continued to experience a low rate of interest on its investment funds, agreement had been reached with the Village Hall Trust to share the salary cost of the Facilities Manager from January 2012. Trust funds were invested with UK banks and a building society in one and two-year fixed rate bonds and short notice accounts.

Major expenditure was incurred in 2011/12 including modifications and repairs to the Pavilion to increase space in the changing areas and to rectify the poor drainage in the showers (£20,361); the Facilities Manager's salary (£6,598); full inspection of the Village Hall roof and remedial repairs (£1,788 after a contribution of 50% by the school); repairs to the boilers (£2,920); a contribution to the Training Lights installed by the Council (£4,910) and the revaluation of land and buildings at 31st March 2011 by Januarys for accounts purposes (£720).

In addition the RGT had agreed to support the Play Area improvements by underwriting a £4,000 grant application and an overall shortfall of £2,000. This was to allow the expenditure of £43,000 on play equipment to proceed prior to the outcome of a further grant application and to avoid the risk of losing other grants awarded that were due to expire prior to completion of the works.

Mrs McFadzean said that a project was in progress to modify one of the officials' changing rooms in the Pavilion to create an office for the parish council.

Dr Oakley thanked Mrs McFadzean for her report. There were no questions.

REPORT ON THE DOVECOTE/MEADOW PROJECT

Mrs Macintyre reported as follows:

The annual survey of flora and fauna had been carried out in June, and again showed very little variation from previous years.

The dry spring and summer encountered last year had resulted in less growth and hence there was no need for the usual two cuts. Richard Barnes had cut the meadow in August and Jon Cairns had raked and piled up the arisings.

The entrance from the High Street had been improved this year with the addition of a new green waste bin. Also, matting had been added at the entry gate to prevent the ground from becoming muddy during wet weather.

The hedge bordering the High Street was also cut in August when nesting had finished. It was noted that in 2012, both sides of the hedge would need trimming as the meadow side was becoming very long and straggly and encroaching into the meadow. The newer hedge planted by the school playing field and alongside the footpath to the school car park would also benefit from a trim in 2012. The thistles growing by the path were strimmed off in late summer.

A large pile of wood chippings was lying in the meadow and would be spread along the footpath when required.

Finally, there was still no evidence of owls, bats or swifts residing in the dovecote.

Dr Oakley thanked Mrs Macintyre for her report. There were no questions.

TRANSPORT ISSUES

Dr Oakley reported as follows:

Rail

Dr Oakley said that Foxton station was a very important community asset that the village needed to do its utmost to retain. However, over the past year most things associated with the station and the rail service had been negative such as safety at the level crossing and the parking issues in Station Road. The level crossing had received much adverse publicity in terms of safety, especially in association with the failure of the pedestrian crossing gates and the signal box control. This was totally unacceptable and the parish council was actively supporting County Councillor, Susan van de Ven, in her dealings with Network Rail. He said Susan had worked tirelessly in her determination to improve safety at the level crossing and it was to her credit that the senior management personnel at Network Rail were now publicly admitting that there was a problem with the whole crossing including the pedestrian gates.

Roads

The A10 now had a 50 mph speed limit from Foxton Station through to Frog End. This would, it was hoped, improve safety along this busy road. However, Shepreth Road coming into the village still had a speed limit of 60 mph! The council and Dr van de Ven were working to correct that anomaly. Luckily potholes had not been as much of a problem this year due to the milder winter. Parking remained an issue, especially in Station Road and at the T-junction of Station Road with the High Street. Together with County Highways, the Parish Council approved a scheme to increase the length of double yellow lines in Station Road to help in improving the traffic problems that can occur at the junction of that road and the A10. There were very good reasons why these lines could not go as far down the road as some would like but the extension of the lines would definitely be an improvement on the current situation. Parking around the T-junction was harder to deal with and the council would ask that, if vehicles were illegally or dangerously parked, they be reported to the police. Speeding in the village remained a problem but the presence of parked cars did reduce speed, a fact that was particularly apparent in Fowlmere Road.

Buses

Due to the budgets cuts, Cambridgeshire County Council announced last year that it would be removing all subsidies on the County's bus routes. This had affected Foxton with the removal of the 139 service although the 26 service was still running. This shortsighted action by the County Council had affected all of rural Cambridgeshire and County Councillor Susan van de Ven was doing her utmost to get the Council to commit to viable alternatives for affected communities. On the plus side, the parish council had now installed a seat at the bus stop outside the Press in Station Road.

Cycles

Consideration was being given to upgrading the cycle path between Foxton and Harston as part of the general upgrading of facilities for cyclists especially those

commuting to Cambridge by this means. The parish council and Susan van de Ven were actively supporting this initiative.

FOXTON TOWN LANDS TRUSTEES' REPORT

Mr Challis reported as follows:

Mr Challis said that he, Dr Oakley and Mr Boreham were the Trustees of the charity.

The accounts for the year ended 31st December 2011 were:

Cash in hand at 1 st January 2011	£2,838.10
Rent from land for the year	£450.00
Interest from Bank for the year	£4.36
Total	£3,292.46
Less: grant to Village Hall for screen	£(1,000.08)
Cash at bank at 1 st January 2012	£2,292.38

Dr Oakley thanked Mr Challis for his report.

REPORT FROM FOXTON HELP GROUP

The Chairman read the report supplied by Julie Oakley as follows:

“The Helpgroup currently has a list of around 200 households containing at least one Senior Citizen and we send out regular mailings giving details of planned trips and events. The Helpgroup also runs a Car Scheme for any resident of Foxtton who needs transport to get to a medical appointment, particularly the elderly or those with young children.

Last year the Helpgroup organised tea parties at Easter and Christmas with cups of tea, home made cakes and songs from the school children plus lots of opportunity to chat. There was also a very well attended Christmas lunch at the Cambridge Motel. Trips during 2011 were to Wisley Gardens in June, to London to see Warhorse in September and to the Thursford Christmas show in November.

Geoff Houghton stepped down as Helpgroup Treasurer last year after many years of sterling service and we are grateful to Alan Fosbeary for taking his place. We are also very grateful to the Townlands Charity for a generous gift, which has enabled us to keep enough funds in our account to buy theatre tickets etc before all the money has been collected in.

We look forward to the coming year when we will have trips to Sandringham, Southwold and to the London Palladium to see the Wizard of Oz, and we thank all those who give up their time to make the Helpgroup so successful.”

Mrs Ward praised the Help Group and said it had given her a lot of help.

Mrs Howell suggested that the parish council had an e-mail address.

Dr Grindley said the council would be developing its own website in conjunction with SCDC and this would have an e-mail address. In the meantime, Dr Oakley said he was willing to accept e-mails on behalf of the council.

Mrs Howell, on behalf of the visitors, gave a vote of thanks to the council for all its work.

CHAIRMAN'S CONCLUDING REMARKS

Dr Oakley said that Parish Councillors were of course all volunteers and that he would like to thank them all for giving up their free time so willingly and for all their efforts over the past year. He said he would also like to thank Deborah Roberts and Susan van de Ven who both worked tirelessly for the good of Foxton. Dr Oakley said he would also like to thank the council's clerk, Joan Burns, and all the others in the community who gave of their free time and worked hard, often very much behind the scenes, to make Foxton such a desirable and pleasant place in which to live.

Dr Oakley thanked all those who attended the meeting and said he hoped they would come along to the next meeting on May 14th where the council would hold its AGM, with the election of councillors to the various positions followed by the normal council business.

Mr Barnes thanked Dr Oakley for all his efforts during the past year.

The meeting closed at 9.35 pm.