

Pre-meeting Reports

15th May 2012

9. **Police Report.** The Chairman welcomed PCSO Fiona Sharp, Suffolk Constabulary, who gave members an overview of the crime statistics for April (attached). Fiona was reminded of the continuing nuisance caused by the vehicle that consistently parked on double yellow lines at school closing time opposite 25 Waterloo Avenue (and which caused all sorts of problems by doing so).
10. **County Report.** The Chairman welcomed Councillor Smith who wished to just inform members of his decision to resign as the Chairman of the AAF and the reasons for it. These are laid out in an addendum to these minutes. He began by congratulating Cllr Hodgson on his appointment as Chairman and thanked Cllr Cooper for the kindness and help he had given to him over the last two years. Cllr Cooper in turn thanked Cllr Smith for all his efforts on our behalf over that time and offered the Council's full support in his current endeavour.
11. **Public comments.** Mr Bloomfield raised the issue of the current planning application for the plot of land between 55 and 81 Valley Road. He pointed out that the houses fronting the road were in front of the building line obeyed by the rest of the Road and asked that members take this into consideration. Mr Churchman asked that members look at the way the proposed flats overlooked Mill House.

During the above discussions, the time reaching 7.30pm, it was proposed by Cllr Ginger, seconded by Cllr Hawkins, and agreed, that standing orders be suspended to allow the public part of the meeting to continue.

**At a meeting of the LEISTON-cum-SIZEWELL TOWN COUNCIL
held in the COMMUNITY CENTRE, King Georges Avenue, Leiston, on TUESDAY,
15th MAY 2012, at 7.48 p.m.**

PRESENT

Councillor T. E. Hodgson (in the chair)
Councillor R. Bailey
Councillor A.M. Cooper
Councillor R. J. Geater
Councillor Mrs S. M. Geater
Councillor C. S. Ginger
Councillor T. J. Hawkins
Councillor W.H. Howard
Councillor N. Parker
Councillor Mrs A.V. Nunn

12. **Minutes.** It was proposed by Cllr R Bailey, seconded by Cllr Howard and agreed that the minutes for the meeting of 1st May 2012 be signed as a true record.
13. **Apologies.** Apologies were accepted from Cllr Nunn, Cllr Last, Cllr Boast, Cllr Sparrow and Cllr D Bailey.

14. **Diamond Jubilee.** Cllr Cooper updated members on how the plans for the Picnic in the Park were coming together. Everything was almost in place and publicity was being planned.
15. **Finance.**
- a) **Accounts for Payment.** It was proposed by Cllr Cooper, seconded by Cllr Mrs Nunn and agreed that accounts presented in the sum of £2689.36p along with £12,240.42p paid since the last meeting be approved for payment.

16. **Planning Matters.**

- a. **C12/0684 – Extension to rear of 2 Wood farm Cottages, Westward Ho, Leiston.** Members felt that the roof line, even though it had been lowered from the previous application, was still made of the wrong material (zinc) and was not in keeping with its surroundings. The extension was still too big for the property and, overall, the appearance of the extension was not in keeping with the historical setting of the listed building or, indeed, the cottage itself. Members understood the concerns of the neighbouring property with regards to the foundations and, if this proved to be a planning consideration, felt that this should be added to the concerns raised above.

RECOMMEND REFUSAL

During the above application Cllr Cooper declared a personal interest and remained in the room.

- b. **C12/0835/36 – Retention of temporary protection works at Upper Abbey Farm, Leiston.** There was concern at the time being taken to get this project underway and, although members unanimously agreed to support the application, some clarification of timescales were asked for from EDF.

RECOMMEND APPROVAL

- c. **C12/0822 – Stair and lift extension to south elevation , new door and window to west elevation, new ramp to education area, new glazed exit doors and internal alterations at The Long Shop Museum, Main Street, Leiston.**

RECOMMEND APPROVAL

During the above application Cllr Hawkins declared an interest and remained in the room.

- d. **C12/0845 – Construction of access road and erection of 15x3 Bed Houses, 5x2 bed flats and 5x1 bed flat on land between 55 and 81 Valley Road, Leiston.** Firstly, members pointed out the problem with the road entrance into the site. **If it were to remain where it is it takes away 6 on street parking billets in Valley Road which would be totally unacceptable unless they are incorporated into the development.** It would have been far better to have worked with Highways to reduce the constant stream of minor accidents at the corner of Crown Street and Valley Road by making the estate entrance opposite Crown Street and installing a mini roundabout there. The road needs to be widened slightly at that point to make the junction safe and this would have achieved that aim. The site is surrounded by 49 old dwellings that have no facility for off street parking. This has led to an aggravated parking problem in the area which, due to geography and street layout, causes bad feeling, loss of amenity and is constantly referred to the Town Council as a big problem. It is one of the major issues raised in Town Appraisals and cannot be ignored and cannot, under any circumstances, be allowed to get worse. This development, should it be

approved, MUST be able to contain all the vehicles it is expected to generate plus the six spaces removed by the entrance. This equates to at least two cars per household these days and this must be considered a minimum provision. Even one bedroomed flats these days have two adults with different jobs and, in Leiston's position, these are generally outside the parish requiring transport just as in any rural parish. Members strongly believed that a development in this position needed extra parking to avoid a situation that would create misery and disharmony for both existing and potential new residents alike for years to come. The developers agreement to contribute to the play space fund was of course appreciated but members would much prefer to have a small playspace included in the development as there are no play areas within a reasonable distance of this site and none that do not require negotiation of a main road. Green space here would be essential and therefore needed to be added to the plan. The building line in Valley Road is very clear and it would be better for the street scene to see the frontages of the new houses pushed back to be in line with this otherwise it overcrowds the road and becomes oppressive for the residents opposite. It also looks better. Anglian Water have completed a multi million pound project in Valley Road which is as far as they can go to reduce the flooding problem in Valley Road. The site under proposal is well farmed and well drained at present although there is still run off in heavy downpours. The development would certainly give cause for concern vis-à-vis surface drainage and contingency measures would have to be built into the estates infrastructure to ensure run off did not exacerbate the high level of surface water experienced in Valley Road during even only moderately severe events. The developer's observations on section 106 possibilities were also appreciated. There is a problem with bringing forward much needed social housing in Leiston and it is hoped a solution can be reached to ensure that some are provided sooner rather than later on this site. The gift of a serviced site is mentioned but Flagship have permissions for several other properties in the town, on their own land, which are not being built at present so members were concerned about that. It was hoped SCDC could include or consult with Leiston Town Council when this topic is discussed and that every effort is made to get new social housing built as part of this development as soon as possible. There are currently talks about the Emergency Plan for Sizewell and members wished to see the NII's response to SCDC with regard to this plan when it was received. Most important issue however was the lack of parking – hopefully this and the greenspace issue could be addressed and the layout adjusted. Members would be very happy to discuss these issues with the developer as they take this project forward. Currently however the application is hugely flawed and members felt unanimously that it be firmly rejected.

RECOMMEND REFUSAL

During the above application Cllr Copper declared an interest and remained in the room.

- e. **C12/0927 – Extension and change of use of ground floor to residential – extensions to create third floor comprising two flats – insulating and rendering exterior of building to improve thermal efficiency at Leiston Court, High Street, Leiston.** Members noted the assertion that the senior design/conservation officer at SCDC had agreed the design elements of the scheme and therefore was comfortable with the complete contrast that the design and colour would have on the street scene. Members were in no doubt that the building needed renovating and also hoped that the frontage and courtyard could now possibly become a feature to enhance the area.

RECOMMEND APPROVAL

f. **Neighbourhood Plan.** Members discussed the possibility of an initial exploratory meeting with Mr Bowden from Navigus Planning and it was agreed to go for Thursday 31st May at 2pm.

17. **District Matters.** Cllr Cooper informed members that the Core Strategy was now in the hands of the Inspectorate.

18. **Questions to Chairman.** Cllr Parker informed the meeting that the next meeting of the SPLG was on 26th May followed by their AGM on 29th – he hoped that the Chairman could attend.

There being no more business the meeting finished at 8.50 pm.

Chair

Dated

Addendum below

REPORT TO LEISTON-CUM-SIZEWELL TOWN COUNCIL, 15 MAY, 2012
FRON COUNTY COUNCILLOR RICHARD SMITH, MVO

I am aware that tonight's extraordinary Town Council Meeting has been called to concentrate on planning matters, and that these are outside my purview as a County Councillor. However, as I was unable to attend your Annual Meeting on 1 May, I asked if I might be allowed to come along this evening to explain to you more fully the background to my decision to resign from the Amenity and Accessibility Funding Panel, news of which appeared in the press on 25 April, which was the same day that I flew out of the Country on holiday.

I want to ensure that what I say is exactly right so, unusually for me who prefers extempore reporting, I am reading this Report which has been carefully written in advance, and a copy has been handed to the local press.

You all know the background. The fund was set up with monies from EDF Energy to compensate for the building of the dry-fuel store within the Sizewell B site. It was the first community compensation package of its kind and details were negotiated with Council Officers. I only knew about it after the scheme was agreed, and legally signed and sealed. This is an important point to understand.

I went along with the request made to me to be the County Council's representative and to Chair the fund panel, which would meet once a year. I attended the launch event and spoke because I believed very firmly that the fund could do some good to our local area, and that through a relevant application could help the people of Leiston and district. Such a project was quickly evident to me, and I asked your Clerk with the help of County Officers to draw up an application to improve both the AMENITY and ACCESSIBILITY of the Leiston Household Refuse Site in Lover's Lane, which is situated wholly inside the AONB boundary, and which otherwise had no chance of gaining the funding needed to carry out the very desirable enhancement and safety work. Extra land was needed for this project. The surrounding land is owned by EDF Energy and I asked them for it and received an assurance that this land could and would be made available either as a gift or at a peppercorn rent if funding for the project could be found.

The cost of the project to build an approach road to the west of the site, which would have the very real appeal of improving accessibility and increasing road safety by providing off-road parking at times when the refuse site is closed during working hours (when a skip or skips need to be changed over) is around £98,000, although this cost has risen from £80,000 when priced a year ago, and could probably be done for less than now stated. In very difficult financial times, I obtained the agreement of the County's Portfolio Holder for Waste to contribute £20,000 and because I am so convinced of the importance and usefulness of this scheme to all local people who use the site, I am prepared to contribute £8,000 from my Locality Budget if the AAF would grant £70,000, a sum which quite obviously could only be granted once given the future income stream of the fund.

The AONB bureaucracy (who claim five per cent of the fund each year to cover their 'costs'-£6,000 this year) rejected this application as ineligible. I dispute this assessment.

I have studied the terms of reference of the fund and felt that I could argue and persuade my colleagues to overrule the bureaucrats and support this relevant scheme which was, in my opinion, far more useful than many of the other schemes proposed. My preferred way of working is in the background, out of the public gaze, and I do not seek great publicity for what I achieve as a County Councillor, as this is just not my style. I did, however, discuss this with a County Council Official who had helped to draw up the Fund's original terms and conditions. We did not agree. However, shortly thereafter I received a note from the County's legal department (and I have it here, but it will remain private between them and me) saying

that I could open the Fund to legal challenge if I continued to back this scheme, which had been ruled ineligible by the AONB team, and that Judicial Review could come from one or more of those projects which would be denied funding if this project was successful.

I am not open to bullying nor to such insidious pressure, and realise that this is often the way a bureaucracy acts under threat or when it feels it will not get its own way.

My decision to support this scheme was unwavering and I argued my case at the AAF Funding Panel meeting on 24 April. I could not persuade my two colleagues to agree with me and, because I felt so strongly, I then resigned. The rules of the Panel state that all three Panel members must be present for the meeting to be quorate, so the meeting then ended, with no funding decisions taken nor ratified.

The County Council has now appointed Councillor Andrew Reid to the panel in my place, and the meeting will be re-convened soon. I intend to pursue this application by writing a strong and detailed letter about why this project should be approved within the present terms of the AAF agreement and, in turn, will threaten the very real possibility of Judicial Review if the scheme is rejected.

I have taken this action and explained it in, I hope, clear detail to you as Leiston-cum-Sizewell Town Councillors, because I believe Leiston and its townfolk have been sold short in the terms of the AAF and it is my job and responsibility to fight for the best deal for **all** those I represent within my County Division. Approval of this scheme would bring precisely these enhanced benefits and increased road safety conditions to Leiston people, to Aldeburgh people, to Knodishall people, to Aldringham people, to Thorpeness people and the thousands of others who use the Leiston Household Refuse Site from many miles radius around this much-valued and well-used local facility.

I am unrepentant in my actions and we are by no means yet at the end of this saga.

Finally, by way of comparison, I am involved in the negotiations and arrangements for the community benefit package arising from the Greater Gabbard offshore wind-farm, which comes ashore at Sizewell, which is now virtually complete and will bring a fund of around £20,000 to the community. The guidelines for this fund are likely to state that the monies made available are spent within a five kilometre radius of Sizewell, where the on-shore facilities are sited, and where local residents have at times very patiently endured the disruption caused by this scheme over the last few years. Sometimes, sense can prevail! This makes my continuing fight for a fair share of the AAF monies for Leiston and surrounding communities so important.