

LITTLEPORT NEIGHBOURHOOD PANEL

Tuesday, 22nd October 2013

Littleport Community Primary School

PRESENT	
Cllr David Ambrose Smith (Chairman)	East Cambridgeshire District Council
Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith	East Cambridgeshire District Council
Cllr Andy Wright	East Cambridgeshire District Council
Cllr Neil Morrison	East Cambridgeshire District Council
Cllr Francis Brown	Littleport Parish Council
Cllr Geoff Norman	Littleport Parish Council
Cllr Daniel Divine	Cambridgeshire County Council
OFFICERS	
Andrew Killington	Deputy Chief Executive East Cambridgeshire District Council
Sgt Will Davis	Cambridgeshire Constabulary
Beth Green	Cambridgeshire County Council
Nick Ball	East Cambridgeshire District Council
Jack Merrell	Sanctuary Housing
Janis Murfet	East Cambridgeshire District Council

IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillor Hazel Williams, MBE

Members of the public: 8

LNHP 13/11 Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

LNHP 13/12 Introductions and Apologies

The Chairman introduced Cllr Daniel Divine, Cambridgeshire County Council Member for Littleport.

The following apologies for absence were received:

Cllr Darrell Gardiner	Littleport Parish Council
Cllr Brian Hayes	Littleport Parish Council
Cllr James Lee	Littleport Parish Council

LNHP 13/13 Chairman's Announcements and Consultation Items

The Chairman highlighted the following consultation items:

- The County Council was seeking the views of the public regarding how the budget in the coming years should be allocated and where savings should be made.
- Proposed Major Modifications to the submitted East Cambridgeshire Local Plan.

The Deputy Chief Executive stated that the District Council had agreed a new set of Corporate Priorities, and one of them was focussed on improving Littleport. The Chairman of this Panel was the Member Champion, and the priority was based around a number of projects:

- Improving/increasing car parking at Littleport Railway Station. The project to secure additional spaces was already underway.
- Transfer of land at The Paddocks from the District Council to the Parish Council.
- Tony Taylorson, ECDC's Communications & Media Manager, was working on the "Talking Up Littleport" strategy, which aimed to give out positive messages about the town.

LNHP 13/14 Neighbourhood Update (Action since the last Panel Meeting)

Andrew Killington, East Cambridgeshire District Council, summarised the issues relating to the District Council.

- Littleport Community Primary School – there is no real alternative to the recycling vehicles parking on the zigzag area to service the recycling banks. However, the contractor has said that they will try to service the banks outside of school dropping off and picking up times. The driver who was rude to the school caretaker has been spoken to and warned not to behave in such a manner again.
- Fencing Work, Woodfen Road – Spencer Clark, ECDC's Senior Open Spaces & Maintenance Officer, has tried to speak to all the residents to let them know what is happening. The groundworks will commence next week in Longfield Road, and then carry on to Woodfen Road. ECDC will work in conjunction with the County Council, and Sanctuary has agreed that all of its properties will be part of the scheme.

- Bird scarers, across the Panel area – there are no statutory provisions against the early sounding of bird scarers. However, the NFU offers standard advice in a code and ECDC’s Environmental Health can offer advice and guidance only to farmers. In order to give this advice, ECDC needs to be provided with intelligence - either the name and address of the farmer, or a precise location from which the noise is originating.
- Beech Court, fly tipping – this incident occurred on private land and is therefore the responsibility of the landowner rather than the Council. Fly-tipping on public land should be reported to ECDC and Community Payback may be able to assist with removal; Nick Ball is the contact for this.

In the absence of Terry Jordan, Nick Ball summarised the issues relating to the County Council:

- New lighting and black spots at Longfield Road and The Crescent – the street lighting has been replaced as part of the PFI replacement programme being undertaken on behalf of the County Council by Balfour Beatty. The programme includes removal of a percentage of street lights in residential roads across Cambridgeshire. The areas where street lights are not replaced *do* experience a lower level of lighting which could be described as “dark spots”.

Balfour Beatty is currently discussing with Cllr Morrison the options for Longfield Road. He has been informed that the light which was removed could be reinstated, but this will result in the need to remove another column in Littleport when the rest of the works are undertaken in the town.

- Overgrown vegetation at Friars Place – in most cases the boundary hedges or planted shrubs adjacent to the public highway are in the ownership of the respective adjoining property owners, and therefore they are responsible for any maintenance. However, the County Council (as the Local Highway Authority) can send letters to the property owners requesting them to trim back the hedges and/or shrubs.

The relevant Officer within the Highways Service is trying to clarify ownership issues and will arrange for any clearance work/trimming to be done as required.

- BP Garage – vegetation has been trimmed back to improve visibility, but there is not much that can be done about cars exiting the roundabout at speed.

- Parsons Lane, drainage gullies – two of the gullies have been cleared, but the worst ones have not been dealt with.

There had been no priorities raised in respect of Sanctuary Housing, but the Panel noted the action taken regarding the overgrown vegetation spreading on to the path at Friars Place. Officers had investigated the area and not recorded any problems with overgrown hedges near Sanctuary properties.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Sgt Will Davis provided an update on the actions taken by the Neighbourhood Policing Team to address the priorities set by the Panel at its last meeting in July 2013.

He commenced by saying that the number of PCSO's in the area had diminished, as some of them had moved on to do other things. Those remaining were working very hard and would be redeployed as necessary so that they could concentrate on what they should be doing.

With regard to crime and antisocial behaviour, Officers had undertaken patrols in hotspot areas (including St George's Medical centre) and dealt with a number of young people for offences. This included dwelling burglary in the High Street, arson at the Pavilion and criminal damage at the Skate Park and Littleport Community Primary School. Three young people had been formally dealt with for offences.

It was noted that although antisocial behaviour (ASB) had increased, many reports did not relate to ASB affecting the wider community. Instead, they related to nuisance messages on social media, noise complaints, neighbour disputes, and parking complaints where no offences had been committed.

Sgt Davis then updated the Panel regarding the other issues which had been raised at the previous meeting, and he also responded to questions and comments.

The Chairman asked if there had been many thefts from allotments and Sgt Davis replied that there had been some, although he thought that not all were being reported. Jack Merrell, Sanctuary Housing, interjected to say that when there had been a spate of allotment thefts in Ely, Sanctuary had received many calls.

A member of the public asked if there had been any more news about the assault at Littleport Station, as Inspector Ormerod was going to check up on this and report back to the Panel. Sgt Davis said he did not have any information at this time but would try to obtain a specific update.

Turning next to the problems arising from obstructive parking, it was noted that patrols been conducted in the areas highlighted in the update document, but no

offences had been observed. A member of the public took issue with this, saying that cars were definitely parking outside 6 Gilbert Road; Sgt Davis replied that he was not disputing this, Officers just needed to be able to catch the offenders.

With regard to Speedwatch, Mrs Clarke-Jones, Clerk to Littleport Parish Council, said that there had been over 100 checks carried out in the village, and in response to a comment from Cllr Morrison, she would provide him with an update on activities.

The Chairman congratulated the Police, the PCSO's and the local retailers for doing such a wonderful job by working together to reduce shoplifting in Littleport.

LNHP 13/15 Neighbourhood Issues

The following issues were raised by Parish representatives/members of the public:

LOCATION	ISSUE OF CONCERN
Queens Road	Telephone box still not been renovated by BT. Contains no phone. Most phone boxes in parish have no equipment
Woodfen Road	Fly tipping of asbestos, black bags, timber reported three weeks ago.
Parsons Lane	Road surface near bus stop and cemetery. Water pooling in ruts and holes
Woodfen Road	Machine cleared dyke which is good, but fills up again really quickly. Littering
Cemetery	Along fence Wisbech Road is a load of white rubbish sacks
Wisbech Road	Parking restrictions work, but what about extension to weekends? 7 days a week ideal. People park up there over weekend
BP Garage	Black and white bars near garage. Crossing for pedestrians. Garage to work with Highways
Community Primary School	Dog bins not being emptied near CP school. Questions to Veolia. Dog bin needs to be bigger to cope with increased demand from more dogs
Grange Lane	Speed limit sign reversed

Leisure Centre	Canopy over Adizone? Taken down for Health & Safety reasons!
Community Primary School	Recycling bank. Any further need to maintain this bank? Dispense with bring sites? Contract has two years to run before being reconsidered
Wisbech Road , Camel Road junction	Ivy covered houses. Any powers to get them cleaned? Property in neglect?

LNHP 13/16 Panel Prioritisation

The Panel agreed that the policing priority should be:

- Antisocial Behaviour and Crime – non dwelling burglary
- Parking in Parsons Lane

LNHP 13/17 Littleport Schools Update

At the invitation of the Chairman, Ian Trafford, Education Capital Projects Manager, Cambridgeshire County Council, gave a presentation on the new secondary school and special school for Littleport.

He commenced by reminding the Panel of the origins of the proposal, and spoke of the Council's statutory responsibilities and the requirements of the Education Act 1996 which established the basis on which educational support for children and young people with Special Educational Needs (SEN) should be provided.

Demand for school places was forecast using various sources of data including NHS birth data and the adoption of multipliers for housing development. Using this information meant that it was currently possible to predict demand for Year 7 places to 2022/23. Mr Trafford stated that there was a steady upcurve in each parish feeding into Ely College, but there would not be enough places available for all the children to attend the College.

The review of secondary school provision was concluded in 2010 and the County Council's Cabinet decided that there should be a new secondary school in Littleport, with the future potential for the secondary school and a primary school to share a campus.

It was noted that there were six area special schools in Cambridgeshire serving 886 children and young people aged 2-19. A review of SEN provision had shown that the

Council needed to provide three new 100 place special schools by 2022 to cope with demand. Co-location with a mainstream school would provide flexibility, promote inclusion and reduce costs by sharing facilities. Highfields School in Ely was already full and there was a growing demand for special school places within East Cambridgeshire; additional places would be required by 2016.

Under the terms of the Education Act 2011, a single sponsor would be required for the co-located secondary and special schools. The sponsor process would be launched in December 2013, with the Assessment Panel identifying the preferred sponsor in March 2014. The Panel's preference would be considered by the County Council's Cabinet in April 2014, and the information would then be sent to the Secretary of State for Education for final decision.

With regard to the Design and Build Programme, Mr Trafford informed the Panel that the consultant team would be appointed in late November 2013, and a local stakeholder group established in January 2014. The planning application was due to be submitted in late 2014, and work to start on site in Spring 2015. It was anticipated that the project would be completed in July 2016, with the school opening in the September of that year

Mr Trafford concluded his presentation by showing a site/location map and an aerial photograph. In response to a question from a member of the public, he said it was intended that the access road to the school would be located off Camel Road on the A10. There would have to be a full traffic survey, and the proposal would have to be acceptable to the Local Planning Authority.

The Chairman thanked Mr Trafford for his presentation.

LNHP 13/18 Shape Your Place Update

At the invitation of the Chairman, Beth Green, East Cambridgeshire Community Engagement Officer, Cambridgeshire County Council, gave a short presentation to update the Panel on the "Shape Your Place" (SYP) community project.

The first 18 months had shown the website to have been a very effective means of community engagement, with in excess of 18,000 visitors and 42,000 visits. Over 100 issues had been raised and more than 1,300 comments posted.

Ms Green explained that SYP comprised three main parts: issues, comments, and blogposting, and in her experience, the issues raised tended to be the same everywhere. Any issue raised was directed to the appropriate body/agency/person and had to have a response within 10 working days. The website was a very safe

environment because all posts were moderated before publication, and it was a means by which people could talk about issues and get genuine responses.

Blogposting was a nice aspect of the site and had already proved very useful in the case of the new school in Soham. Some of the information reported in the local press had been inaccurate and therefore the Headmistress had blogged on SYP to keep people up to date with what was actually happening.

With regard to residents' thoughts about SYP, Ms Green informed the Panel that there had been a slight change to the format and the site was now easier to use. Across the whole county, more than 75% of visitors had found the sites easy to use. Over 90% had found them helpful, and in excess of 55% felt the sites helped them to influence local decision making. It was also noted that the Fostering Adoption Agency made use of SYP.

Looking to the future, Ms Green said it was hoped that community engagement would be increased and the scheme would become a "one stop" shop. The project was working in conjunction with the new Police Neighbourhood Alert scheme and it was also hoped to have closer integration with other schemes.

Ms Green concluded by saying it had to be accepted that this was the way that people were communicating and the challenge would be to respond to this.

A member of the public congratulated Ms Green, saying that the scheme actually worked. She replied that she was very pleased to hear this, and the people of Littleport would be seeing more of her in the coming weeks as the town was to be her "festive focus" in the run up to Christmas.

The Chairman asked how those without a computer could be engaged. Ms Green replied that there were ways to get round this; some of the public libraries had computers and she knew of instances where one person had posted on SYP on behalf of someone else. The Chairman next asked how SYP compared with Facebook and was informed that SYP stayed completely away from it. The whole point about SYP was that it was a safe environment and completely anonymous.

Mr Trafford asked how, as an Officer, he could use SYP. Ms Green said it was the same for everyone, organisation or individual, and if he wanted to call her, she would help him.

The Chairman concluded by thanking Ms Green for her presentation, which he felt had raised some good points.

LNP13/19 Service Review of Neighbourhood Panels.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Nick Ball, Community Safety Officer, East Cambridgeshire District Council, gave a short presentation on the findings of the Service Review of the Neighbourhood Panels.

He commenced by introducing Cllr Hazel Williams, MBE, (District Council Member for Burwell), explaining that she had been Chairman of the Service Review over the last few months. He then made comment under the following headings:

- History - the scheme started as a pilot in the Soham area in 2006 and was launched across the District in 2008. The Panels were set up at a time when there was limited public access , but times had now moved on.
- Service Review – this had been undertaken by a group comprising ECDC Members, Officers from the District and County Councils, Sanctuary Housing, and Cambridgeshire Constabulary.
- Strengths - the Panel meetings gave the opportunity to raise issues with key service providers in the District and provided a "face" for the public services. The partner agencies had a positive attitude towards working together to solve problems and no issue was deemed trivial. The Panels promoted a greater awareness of the needs and priorities of communities and were a cost effective way for the Constabulary to deliver on the requirement to hold a "beat meeting".
- Weaknesses - attendance was decreasing and of the issues raised in 2012/13, 44 out of 76 were fault reporting. All the issues were calls for service and could have been dealt with in another way. The Panels were not complying with the Terms of Reference; 5 out of the 6 key tasks were not being met. With regard to consultation with the Town and Parish Councils, it was noted that the Panel meetings were least valued as a method of community engagement but most valued as a forum for sharing information.
- Conclusions – Neighbourhood Panels were not an effective tool for community engagement and they were not cost effective. More efficient and effective mechanisms were now in place for issues to be raised and resolved. The Town and Parish Councils were being consulted on alternative options, and a recommendation would go to ECDC's Community & Environment Committee on 20th November 2013, that the Panels should cease. It was proposed that a new model (possibly Parish Conference) be put in place for 2014/15.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Cllr Williams addressed the Panel. She said that when the Panels first started, they were right for what was wanted at that

time, but this was no longer the case. Things had moved on and the meetings were no longer engaging with enough of the public. The Littleport Panel was fortunate in that it only had one Parish Council to deal with; other Panels had many more parishes and this gave an incredibly different “flavour” to their meetings. However, it did not change the fact that many of the issues could have been dealt with by the Parish Councils.

The Review Group had concluded that the Neighbourhood Panels should cease, but was passionate that something must replace them. Inspector Ormerod was very clear that the parish conference model would enable priorities to be sorted.

The Chairman praised the Police for the level of care and attention that had been given to Littleport and he also commended Julie Cornwell, ECDC’s Partnerships Officer for the commitment she had shown to the Neighbourhood Panels. He reminded everyone that Littleport had a forum for community matters at each Parish Council meeting, and “Shape Your Place” would be another means of engagement.

LNP13/20 Forward Agenda

The Chairman said that there was no Forward Agenda, as the Panel meetings were coming to an end. However, he urged everyone to “watch this space” regarding whatever would replace them, and asked that people keep communicating by using the Parish Council and other agencies.

One member of the public felt that the meetings had been all talk and little action, and said that he had only attended because of the Police items. Councillor Wright commented that there had been value in the engagement with the Police, and this was something that the Parish did not want to lose.

The Chairman closed the meeting by thanking everyone for their attendance.

The meeting closed at 8.52pm.