

Minutes 29th March 2018

Elmstead Parish Council – Informal meeting of those interested in joining the New Community Centre Committee Community Centre, School Road, Elmstead Market, CO7 7ET

Present: Cllrs Paul Beard, Jane Triscott, John Gray and Martine Ward. Mr Pip Saill, Mrs Cathy Brock, Mrs Ellen Chubb, Mr Sid Wright, Mr Ron Fairweather, Mrs Dawn Stammers.

Also Present: Mrs Baxter (clerk)

Apologies: Mrs Jen Grotier

Cllr Beard explained that this informal meeting is to get those councillors and non-councillors who have expressed an interest in joining this committee together and bring everyone up to date. The next meeting, after the PC has resolved on the details for this committee, will be an official public meeting with a summons and agenda. The PC needs to agree the members, duties, powers, chair and vice-chair.

Planning

Over the past few years TDC has not had a Local Plan or a 5 year housing supply. Developers had an opportunity and there have been a lot of applications. As a Parish Council we have spent a lot of time defending these, going to the TDC Planning Committee Meetings at Weeley and fighting every application. However, although we can influence, we are a small cog and the approval decisions still went through (although often by appeal). The 32 houses on Clacton Road were agreed with no benefit for the village, similarly for the 62 houses on School Road. The Meadow Close development will provide a road crossing. The details are still being argued for the 32 houses on Tye Road which provides some land. We possibly should have engaged more with developers. We don't have much in the village, only a small playground. The two developments with significant benefits for the village have been slower than the rest. (Church Road and Charity Field). The 5 year housing supply and Local Plan are still not in place, these developers could still put in new applications and change the section 106 agreements. They could compare their section 106 agreements with the other developments in the village and think that theirs is not fair.

With Church Road Ian Mitchell owned the land and Knights did the original development application. With our revised hall design we knew that the £400,000 figure would not be enough and that we would have to raise more or cut back on the hall.

The question has been raised as to whether the village residents were asked for their preferred location for the hall. We have not seen any evidence that people were asked to compare the two sites, Church Road and Charity Field. We are not in a position to ask this now either as Charity Field is still not sold. There was a great deal of momentum a few years ago with the idea of the Church Road development. The £400,000 for the hall, plus £35,000 for allotments and £90,000 for the football pitch on a development of 20 houses does not add up. Knights had been keen to work with us, but then decided to sell. Newell homes bought it and their agent is Robert Pomery.

Mr Fairweather commented that the PC had in the past thought that £400k would build a shell but it would not be fitted out. They subsequently found out how much other halls have cost.

Cllr Gray asked if Newells have to take on the same section 106 agreement as Knights?

Cllr Beard: Yes under the current approved application, but they can start the application again.

Both Church Road and Charity Field need to complete their reserved matters and get those agreed. Charity Field has been owned by Winsleys charity for years. Edward Gittins was their agent and got approval for 50 houses. It was not backed by TDC and they had to start engaging with the PC. Their section 106 agreement includes affordable housing, a community building (but with no attached figure), allotments and a car park (which was originally intended to also be an overflow for Market Field School). There's an open field area, we could make it a football pitch. There's been some question of why we would want 2 community centres (Church Road and

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Charity Field) but that has never been an option. The original plan for this community building was a medical centre. We met with NHS England but they couldn't do it. They want "super" GP practices. If Church Road hadn't gone through then this could have been a plan B for a hall. We've had lots of alternate ideas such as a Scout hut or changing rooms.

Mr Gittins has since retired and the charity are selling by auction. Cllr Beard and Mr Fairweather met some of the charity trustees and they said that 50 houses were not enough and it was likely they would apply for more. The auction finished before Christmas and they have a preferred bidder. This is Go Homes who did the development on Clacton Road. This sale will be signed off within 8 weeks. Go Homes has started engaging with us, Cllr Beard has been dealing with Nigel Tedder. He is a main decision maker.

First meeting with Newells

We have been inviting developers to our PC meetings and we met Newells and Robert Pomery for the first time at the December 2017 PC meeting. They told us that they would prefer not to build the community centre and instead give us the £400k to either build elsewhere or on their site. The section 106 agreement specifies that they build the hall. They suggested that they could go back to planning with a new application. They wanted a decision that night. We didn't have another site at the time though and so couldn't reply. They gave us a plan for the £400k, what they thought they could build for the money. We've been through the list of items included and realised it's not quite right but also realised we need to raise a lot of money to get the hall we want.

Meeting with Gary Guiver

Cllr Beard and Mr Fairweather met with Mr Gary Guiver, Head of Planning, TDC. They asked where we stood on the section 106 agreement if Newells make a new planning application. GG said they could ask for 30 houses and no hall. However TDC would look at the history of the application and it would be hard for TDC to accept or for the Planning Committee to approve. Newells has also been to see GG saying that the building of the hall is not viable. It has been mentioned, but is not validated, that Knights were going to purchase the land at a discount to help with the building of the hall but that Newells did not get this discount. Newells want to add more houses to the application. GG advised that we negotiate quickly with Newells. He looked at the quote that Newells supplied for a £400k hall and agreed that some of the items shouldn't be on there. GG suggested we look at Charity Field for the hall. Cllr Beard said but it hasn't been purchased yet. GG said he has talked to both parties and he knows where they are going. He advised that we work with someone who is willing to work with us. TDC can hold the money for us to combine the funds from both developments. Cllr Beard mentioned that other alternatives have been considered – expanding the cricket club or looking to add to School Facilities. The cricket club and land is not an option though as it is not owned by the cricket club. GG agreed with Newells that it is not feasible to build a hall for 20 houses. Cllr Beard asked about the definition of a community building included in the Charity Field section 106, could they just build us a shed? GG replied it has to be a hall and it could be argued that it should be for £400k as for the Church Road Section 106. There is momentum to have £400k from both, although it is not agreed.

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Discussions with Go Homes

Mr Nigel Tedder contacted us to ask if they could do anything for the village for the 32 houses they built on Clacton Road. It has been agreed that they are going to replace the fencing around Elmcroft.

NT said he was happy to offer a figure to have the hall built at Church Road, but couldn't commit at the time. He's happy to give the money, or to build the hall on Charity Field. NT thinks it's a better site with better access, it's better services and has more space. Go Homes would build it themselves. We expected that they would also want to add more houses to the application.

Mrs Chubb asked where the allotments would be located. Cllr Beard replied that the details have not been decided. Mrs Chubb added that previously when we had allotments in the village, people didn't want them.

Meeting with Newells, Robert Pomery and Nigel Tedder (Go Homes)

Cllr Beard, Cllr Kavanagh and Mr Fairweather attended. The two developers have had meetings between themselves. NT is confident that they will get Charity Field. They have agreed that their preferred site for the hall is Charity Field.

Cllr Beard told them that there was some public preference for Church Road. Newells has confirmed that they will not build the hall themselves there. Newells has previously said that they would add approximately £40,000 if the hall is not on their site. Newells will make a new application (to change the section 106 as they will not build the hall) which will include the £400k and 30 smaller houses on the same acreage as the previous 20.

Go Homes confirmed that they are keeping their development at 50 houses. They are happy with this and the houses will go up quickly. They said that they would match the £400k from the Church Road agreement. They would design the hall with us and start attending meetings to see what we'd like. NT estimated that the total cost would be £1million and said that by the end of 2020 we'd have a hall. Both parties are waiting for the PC's decision.

We've had advice from two different knowledgeable sources regarding the value of the land at Church Road (designated for the community benefits). One suggested £200k whilst the other said £400k. If we are able to obtain that value we could end up with £1million to £1.2 million.

Cllr Beard will update the PC at the next meeting. We need to decide; where do we want it, where is feasible and what to do about the other options.

Mr Saill left the meeting.

It was agreed to recommend Cllr Beard as chair of the committee to the PC. Proposed: Cllr Ward, Seconded Mr Wright, all agreed.

It was agreed to recommend Mr Fairweather as vice-chair of the committee to the PC. Proposed: Cllr Triscott, Seconded: Mrs Brock, all agreed.

Cllr Beard added that we do not know who owns the current community centre, and it seems that the PC title has not been registered. Cllr Fairweather added that just because it is not registered with land registry doesn't mean that the PC does not own it.

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The option of selling the hall to fund the new hall was mentioned but it is not a good idea for the village to be without a community centre until the new one is built. Another option is to obtain a bridge loan.

Mrs Brock asked, when the new hall is built will it include a football pitch. Cllr Beard replied that it's up to us to decide.

Cllr Beard: The decision of what to do with the current hall site could release more money.

Grants were also discussed – the possibility of getting a grants officer to apply for funds to deck out the hall. We have other ideas such as a MUGA, playground, and tennis courts. We could look at building changing rooms on the current playing field. We need someone with the know how to do this. We could look at hiring someone.

Cllr Gray mentioned a buy a brick scheme and Cllr Ward said that they are grants for eco-friendly projects. Cllr Gray also said that when Greenstead Community Centre was built Colchester Borough Council provided a lot of help, does TDC have its own fund raising people who could help us? Cllr Beard added that the committee may decide that someone is in charge of funding.

It was agreed that the next meeting would be Thursday 26th April at 7pm.

The meeting closed at 8.30pm.

Minuted by Angela Baxter
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