

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF FOWLMERE PARISH COUNCIL
which was held on-line via Zoom
on Tuesday 16th March 2021 at 7:30pm

PRESENT: Cllr D Roberts (acting Chairman), Cllr P Burge (acting Vice-Chairman), Cllr C Howe, Cllr S Mulholland, Cllr R Lennon and Cllr P Collinson

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms K Byrne (Clerk), Cllr P McDonald (who left at 20.35), Mrs D Woods, Mr S Figg (who left at 20.20), and 2 members of the public

Actions

Before the meeting began, Cllr Burge advised the attendees that the Zoom session was going to be recorded, but would not be widely distributed. There were no objections.

1 Apologies for Absence

As Cllr Wragg was absent, Cllr Roberts proposed that she would act as Chairman, and Cllr Burge as acting Vice-Chair for this meeting. There were no objections.

There were apologies for absence from Cllr M Vinton (unable to join Zoom meetings), Cllr Wragg (personal commitment) and Cllr Hobro (work commitment).

2 Declaration of Interest in agenda items

Cllr Burge declared a pecuniary interest in item 13a), as a close neighbour.

3 Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting – 16th Feb 2021

The Minutes were reviewed, and were agreed by all to be a true record. The minutes were signed by Cllr Roberts at the end of the meeting in the presence of the Clerk and Cllr Burge. Cllr Roberts will deliver them to the Clerk.

4 Matters Arising not covered in the agenda (for information only)

There was none.

5 County Council Matters (written report)

Cllr McDonald had submitted a written report (see Annex A). Cllr McDonald emphasised the importance that asymptomatic adults with school-aged children be encouraged to test themselves using the rapid testing kits, to keep the Covid-19 infection rates down. Regarding the laptop campaign for disadvantaged children, there are still some machines available if any Fowlmere children need them. Cllr Burge agreed to let Fowlmere Primary School know.

Cllr McDonald said that the government has lifted restrictions for campaigning for County, Police & Crime Commissioner and Mayoral elections, which will take place on 6 May. Some concessions will be made for postal voting, South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) will allow a photograph of a signed completed form to be delivered via email instead of post.

6 District Council Update

Cllr Roberts said that SCDC had held a Covid-19 Communities meeting on 15 March with a number of different experts. She was pleased that everybody had been working well together. The rate of infection is now down to 30 per 100,000 in South Cambridgeshire, which is a dramatic drop. SCDC officers are expecting to receive a large amount of vaccine very soon and they are getting through the lists of people very quickly now.

Regarding planning, Cllr Roberts questioned why developers are putting in applications for large developments on land that has not yet been allocated, and with agents already approaching the PC, is it because the current 5-year land supply is currently precarious? There was no conclusive answer from SCDC.

7 Village Hall

Mrs Woods said that there is nothing new to report. The Village Hall is due to open after 17 May, and the junior sports should be back after 12 April once they have been allocated their fixtures. Cllr Mulholland asked whether the Village Hall Management Committee will be having its AGM this year. Mrs Woods said this will be in October.

The meeting was opened for urgent questions from members of the public and press.

There was none.

The meeting was then closed to members of the public and press.

8 County Broadband

Before the meeting, the Clerk had circulated 3 documents to Tim-Dagnell Scott and Steve Figg at County Broadband (CB), which were: Fowlmere Villagers Comments, County Broadband Problems, Questions for County Broadband. During the meeting Mr Figg said he had already forwarded the documents to his manager. They will be providing a response to as many of the questions as possible and will reply to the Clerk.

As Cllr Wragg was unable to attend the meeting Cllr Mulholland took the lead. He said that the PC wishes to have a constructive dialogue with CB. There have been several areas of concern raised by residents:

- Traffic management and lack of warning notices – this had improved during roll-out;
- The condition that some verges have been left in. The PC would like an assurance that CB will put all of the verges right at the end of the work, and a walk around the village involving a CB representative and 1 or 2 councillors. Mr Figg said they are due to finish on 21 May, civil work should finish 3-4 weeks before that. The verges will be top soiled and seeded in the spring (this has not been done previously because it was not the right time of year for seeding). A site walk was agreed to and will be arranged for the first week in May;
- Contractors not using the welfare van and using the Round Moat instead. Is supervision of contractors adequate, was the welfare van on site from the beginning, and is there scope to have 2 welfare vans? Mr Figg said this will be investigated. Meanwhile, CB now have a supervisor on site to make sure everything is carried out properly.
- When driveways are blocked can a note be put through the letterbox with time and date of when it will be blocked and with a phone number that people can call if they need their driveways clearing? Mr Figg will raise this issue at his Communications meeting this week. Cllr Howe suggested that the supervisor in a group of workers could be identified perhaps by wearing a high-vis jacket with a name on it (or a different colour jacket) so that members of the public can easily identify who is in charge. Mr Figg agreed that this would be a good idea.

Cllr Mulholland also informed Mr Figg of the BT box on Long Lane, which has fallen apart after CB had accessed it and is now posing a trip hazard. Mr Figg said that they will use their direct access to Openreach to get this resolved.

ACTION – Clerk to forward email from Steve Figg to Steve Mulholland; Cllr Mulholland to send photos and more info to Steve Figg regarding the issues with the BT box

Clerk / Cllr
Mulholland

Cllr Roberts thanked Mr Figg and Cllr Mulholland for their input.

9 Road Safety

a) Flooding

Cllr McDonald said regarding flooding on Long Lane, a report is expected imminently from Highways Officers on the test drills and camera inspection of the road. The work for possible broken drains on Pipers Close has been resubmitted. Cllr Howe said that it has been suggested

that the number and weight of HGVs may have damaged the road on Long Lane, if when the road is being surveyed could the Highways Officers look into this.

Cllr Collinson said between Highbank and Beech House, residents had cleared sludge from the drains near their houses. Cllr McDonald said he will look into this too.

b) Footpaths and CCC Budget [Councillor McDonald]

Cllr McDonald said that the County Council budget for the new Financial Year includes significant amount of money for footpaths repairs, maintenance and enhancement.

Cllr Mulholland said the footpath between Fowlmere and Thriplow needs some improvements, and on Long Lane a footpath might be installed between where the footpath runs out to possibly the cemetery. Cllr McDonald suggested that the PC could carry out an audit of these footpaths, after which the PC could make a bid. Cllr Roberts said previously a proposed footpath from Seven Elms to the Cemetery was considered but the costs were unreasonably expensive.

ACTION – Cllr Mulholland to lead on conducting an audit on footpaths in Fowlmere

Cllr
Mulholland

Cllr McDonald offered to set up a meeting with rights of way officers after the PC had done the audit.

c) Traffic Strategy Report

Cllr Howe referred to his Traffic Strategy Report from Dec 2020. Regarding HGVs seen coming through the village, residents could provide information (dates, times, locations, directions of travel, operating company) via the PC's Facebook page. Perhaps an Ap can be used to collate the data, if not any information provided could be collated by the Clerk.

Cllr Howe said he could monitor whether AJ Grabhire are violating the terms of their planning conditions (i.e. by deliveries going to/from their premises outside 7am to 8pm).

Regarding Speedwatch, Cllr Howe and Wragg are meeting to identify new locations and any suggestions from the PC can be sent to Cllr Howe. Once Covid rules allow Speedwatch to resume, they will monitor whether HGVs are breaking the speed limit.

Regarding a possible campaign to slow traffic by encouraging residents on Long Lane and Pipers Close to park legally on the road during daylight hours, Cllr Lennon said the PC should carefully target which roads, so that accidents are avoided. Cllr Burge said the PC should time this carefully so that local farm traffic is not inconvenienced unduly. This item will be discussed again when the PC has more information.

Regarding speed of traffic, additional measures may be considered once more data have been gathered by Speedwatchers and a silent survey, and the current traffic calming measures have been in place for about a year.

d) Traffic Calming

Discussed in the item 8c.

e) HGVs through village*

Discussed in the item 8c.

f) Speedwatch*

Speedwatch sessions remain suspended due to Covid rules.

g) SatNav errors

There was nothing new to report.

h) Road closures (scheduled)*

The PC was not notified of any new road closures additional to those mentioned in previous PC meetings.

10 Reports from Meetings attended

Cllr Roberts and the Clerk had attended the Communities briefing meeting on 15 March where items discussed included the Community Chest Grant, Mind Mental Health training, Covid vaccinations, and re-opening facilities after lockdown.

ACTION – Clerk to forward information from the SCDC meeting to the PC

Clerk

11 Annual Village Meeting

The Clerk said that currently the last day remote meetings will be allowed is 6 May, and that Covid restrictions will not be lifted until at least 21 June. Therefore, the PC might consider whether the Annual Village Meeting and the Annual Meeting of the Council (AGM) could be held remotely before then, possibly both on Tuesday 4 May.

[This item was discussed at the end of the meeting in case Cllr Wragg was able to join later; he was not.] The PC discussed this and decided that the dates should be left as they were with the Annual Village Meeting on Tuesday 11 May and the Annual Meeting of the Council on Tuesday 18 May. If necessary, this matter could be reconsidered in the April PC meeting.

12 Burial Board

a) Recent and upcoming burials and memorials

The Clerk said that a transfer of exclusive right of burial for plot 692 (Mrs P Aldous to Ms Vallis) had been completed and the fee paid. The additional inscription was approved by the PC in September 2020. Transfer of exclusive right of burial for plot 723 (Mrs G Burgess to Ms Stevens) had also been completed and the fee paid. The memorial design for Mrs Burgess was approved by the PC in November 2020.

b) Repair works progress

Cllr Mulholland said there are a couple of graves that have sunk recently, the Loveridge plot (487) and the Ward plot (488), these will need levelling. Also, the recently installed Harriss headstone has started to tilt. Ivett & Reed could be asked to put that right.

ACTION – Clerk to ask Ivett & Reed to correct the Harriss headstone, and ask Martin Hardy to quote to level and seed the Loveridge and Ward plots

Clerk

Cllr Mulholland said that the debris near the new shed should be cleared in due course. Cllr Roberts said that a small skip could be offered to Ian Wilson get rid of it. The PC thought that it might be possible to clear this without a skip. Cllr Mulholland said regarding the painting of the doors this will resume in the warmer weather.

13 Planning Committee

a) 21/00447/REM – Approval of matters reserved for access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale following outline planning permission S/4112/17/OL for development of 1 No. detached house as part of the SCDC Right to Build Vanguard (Re-submission of 20/04274/REM)

Cllr Burge left the meeting at 20.59.

Cllr Roberts said that if this application goes to SCDC planning committee she will come to it afresh. This is a re-submission of a previous application for one dwelling on Butts Lane on land to the rear of 1 Westfield Road, for which the PC had submitted concerns about excessive use of glass and the traffic management plan being inadequate.

Fowlmere PC recommended refusal (all concurred). Although some changes had been made to the proposed design following the previous refusal, the alterations were not adequate to mitigate the PC's previous concerns. The amount of fenestration was still excessive to the rear of the proposed property, and the issue of overlooking neighbouring properties had not been resolved.

The PC remained concerned about the traffic management plan which consisted only as a drawing and did not include a written report. While a brief traffic statement had been added to the end of the revised "planning statement" document and there were further comments within the new "application for approval of reserved matters" document the PC was concerned that these would not form conditional documents in the same way a formal traffic management plan would and was therefore inadequate. If a formal and descriptive Traffic Management Statement is not forthcoming then the PC insisted that the following conditions were placed to provide clarity:

- 1) Strict timing restrictions be set on deliveries and other vehicle movements in line with Fowlmere Primary School's comments dated 9th November 2020 on the original application (20/04274/REM). A precedent for this exists within planning application S/2023/17/DC.
- 2) A Banksman be present for all vehicle movements on and off site. While the delivery time restrictions should mitigate the risk to the school children, the access road to the front of the site is a designated public footpath and sees pedestrian traffic at all times of day.
- 3) Conditions be placed to restrict contractor parking to the curtilage of the site, and specifically state that using the parking area intended for Primary School staff (as clearly defined in planning application S/0653/93/F) must not take place.

Cllr Burge re-joined the meeting at 21.09

b) 20/01209/FUL – Approval of Chrishall Road development for 16 dwellings/S106

Cllr Burge said that this development had received approval. The Section 106 agreement has been published and is on the planning website. The PC had been given the full amounts including a green infrastructure contribution of £1,600 towards improving access to the Round Moat. The money will be paid when the 8th house is occupied.

Cllr Lennon said that some residents of Appleacre have written to (the landowner) to ask for a sterile corridor between the hedge and the fence so that maintenance of the fence can be carried out – no response had yet been received.

c) 20/04223/HFUL – 20A Pipers Close parking area application (for information)*

Cllr Burge said the PC had already seen and commented on this application, it will go to SCDC planning committee because of a mistake in the initial paperwork. No further comment was required from the PC. Cllr Roberts said that when this application goes to SCDC, she will look at it afresh.

d) 20/03105/FUL – Mill Farm Fowlmere Road – Additional information

Cllr Burge said the PC had commented on this application twice including in Nov 2020. The additional information did not make any difference to the PC's previous concerns. Cllr Burge had let the planning officer that the PC's concerns still apply. This application will go to SCDC planning committee. Cllr Burge proposed that he could speak on behalf of the PC (or Cllr Wragg if Cllr Burge is not available); all concurred.

Cllr Roberts said that when this application goes to SCDC, she will look at it afresh.

e) 20/04410/HFUL – Fieldside, Thriplow Road – Appeal (information)*

Cllr Burge said this application was refused. The PC had been asked if it wishes to withdraw its previous comments on this application, all agreed that it did not.

14 Review of Website and PC Email addresses

Cllr Hobro was not present but had arranged with the Clerk and Cllr Collinson to have a meeting possibly during the week of 29 March to work on the new website and emails.

Cllr Collinson clarified that a new website provider should be able to register the fowlmereparishcouncil.gov.uk domain name on the PC's behalf.

ACTION – Clerk to arrange a website Zoom meeting and invite any interested councillors

Clerk

15 Trees, Grass and Hedges

a) Timber from fallen trees in the Round Moat

No progress on this item.

b) Tree work priorities 2 & 3 [Clerk]*

The Finance Committee had reviewed 3 quotes and recommended accepting the quote from Shires for priority 2 & 3 work to be done together, which was £7,500+VAT. Cllr Burge proposed that the PC approve this, Cllr Collinson seconded, all concurred.

c) Trees on The Way

Cllr Burge said ownership of the land where the trees are growing is not clear from historic planning documents, it appears to part of the parcel of land where the adopted/awarded waterway is and therefore is the responsibility of SCDC. The PC decided that the resident should contact the awarded watercourse division of the environmental health department at SCDC, who should have maps. The PC would not object to the tree work but are not currently in a position to advise; once ownership of the land is established a TPO application will be required.

ACTION – Clerk or Cllr Roberts to advise the resident that they should contact SCDC. The PC would not object to the tree work but are not currently in a position to advise. A TPO application will be required

Clerk / Cllr Roberts

d) Protected Verges

The PC decided that the Clerk will ask Agriplant to quote to cut the protected verges, as in previous years.

16 Progress on grant-funded projects

e) Zero Carbon project – Cycle Stands

Cllr Hobro was not present but had notified the Clerk that most of the cycle stands (9 out of 14) had now been installed, 6 at the Village Hall and 3 on The Butts. He will be meeting up with Ian Wilson and The Chequers manager to sort out the next set shortly.

f) Round Moat (Pebble) project/ Clunch pit project

Cllr Collinson said the first small species bird box has been installed, four old ones have been inspected which are still serviceable after 20 years, and 5 mixed species bird boxes had been donated. The 'Friends of the Round Moat' group now has 96 members on Facebook & email. The group look forward to meeting the Cambridgeshire Bat Group, who had offered their expertise and will carry out a survey of the Moat. Several working party projects are planned for after Covid restrictions are lifted including prep for a wildflower meadow, bug hotel, log piles for invertebrates, bramble protection, and wood chipping the main path.

Cllr Roberts said she is waiting to hear from Pat Matthews from SCDC about the water levels in the Round Moat. She will chase up on this.

17 Finance & General Purposes

a) Analysis of expenditure against budget

Cllr Burge summarised the review of income and expenditure and forecast for the rest of the year, which had been discussed in the Finance Meeting on 25 February. There was unexpected additional spending on repairs to St Marys Church wall (without which the expenditure would have been slightly under budget), so the PC had needed to draw some money out of reserves. Because of this and the large amount of tree work to be carried out in the next financial year, the precept has been increased (by 14%).

Cllr Roberts thanked Cllr Burge for his hard work on the PC's Finances.

b) Adoption of FPC Policy documents

The Finance Committee had reviewed and recommended approval of the updated FPC's Standing Orders and Code of Conduct documents. Cllr Burge proposed that the PC agreed to adopt the new updated Standing Orders and Code of Conduct documents, Cllr Lennon seconded, all concurred.

ACTION – Clerk to upload the Standing Orders and Code of Conduct documents to the website Clerk

c) Defibrillator

Cllr Burge had spoken to the managers at the Chequers and had yet to hear back.

d) Bank account transfers

The Clerk said the funds from the Santander accounts had now been transferred to the PC's Unity Trust Current Account, and these accounts are now closed.

To make the Unity Trust Instant Savings Account up to £2886.78 (the amount of \$106 money left) £2,382.44 will need to be transferred from the Cambridge Building Society account. Cllr Burge proposed that the PC approve this, Cllr Collinson seconded, all concurred.

ACTION – Clerk to administer transfer of £2,382.44 from the Cambridge Building Society account to the Unity Trust Current Account Clerk

e) Re-seeding goalmouths on the Butts

Hardys quote to re-seed the goalmouths on the Butts Recreation ground (£350+VAT) had been approved by the Finance Committee on 25 February. The PC noted this.

f) SLCC and CAPALC membership renewals

SLCC membership for 2021-2022 will be £144.00, CAPALC membership renewal for 1 April 2021-31 March 2022 will be £423.01. The PC decided to renew the SLCC membership this month, and agreed to renew the CAPALC membership in April (as last year).

g) Bills to be paid

The contribution to Fowlmere Primary school for grass cutting was not paid last year, therefore the PC had been asked to pay 50% of the school's grass cutting costs for 2019-2020 and 2020-2021. Cllr Burge proposed that the PC do so, all concurred.

K Byrne – Salary adjustment, £0.20

Seniorlink Eldercare – February 2021, £57.51

E.on Chapel Electricity (22 Feb - Final Bill), £9.29

GSC Solicitors LLP, £420.00

SLCC Membership, 1 April 2021-31 March 2022, £144.00

L Wragg - refund (Monthly Zoom subscription - March 2021), £14.39

Cemetery Water Rates (1st half) Source for Business (formerly Cambridge Water Business), £74.46

Fowlmere Primary School - grass cutting contribution (2019-2020 & 2020-2021), £950.00

The bill payments were approved.

Bills already approved / Direct Debits

OPUS ENERGY LTD - 3 Feb to 2 Mar 2021 (Direct Debit), £178.49

EDF Energy - Cemetery Electricity (Direct Debit), £11.00

Clerk's Salary (Direct Debit) – Confidential

NEST – Pension contributions (Standing Order), £50.41

Income

Fee for transfer of ERB - plot 692, £50.00

Fee for Additional Inscription on existing Memorial (Mrs Aldous), £40.00

Bank transfers

Fowlmere PC (Closure of Santander Business Savings account), £9,721.57

Fowlmere PC (Closure of Santander Closed Issue Current account), £2,113.82

18 Correspondence

a) March Correspondence list

The PC noted the correspondence.

Regarding the possible collapse of the culvert between Ryecroft Lane and the Round Moat, Cllr Roberts will contact Pat Matthews from SCDC to have a look at it.

ACTION – Cllr Roberts to contact Pat Matthews to look at the Ryecroft Lane culvert

Cllr Roberts

19 Action List Update

The Action List was reviewed and updated.

Regarding Action 5 assessing accounting software, the Clerk had been to an SLCC meeting on 12 March where Scribe Accounting software was highly recommended by several Clerks. Therefore, with the agreement of the Chair of Finance and Chair of PC the Clerk had arranged to have a demonstration of the software (on Friday 19 March).

Scribe had quoted for the accounting software £485+VAT for the first year (£288 subscription plus £197 one-off set up fee) and £288 p.a. (£24/month) thereafter.

Cllr Burge proposed that the PC agreed in principle to accept the quote, dependent on a successful demonstration of the software; all concurred.

20 Ideas for Improvements to Village Life

a) Street Signs

Cllr Mulholland had still not heard back from Conservation Officer at SCDC.

b) Future projects

Cllr Roberts proposed that the PC continue the meeting beyond the 2.5 hours, Cllr Howe seconded, all concurred.

Cllr Lennon said that a resident had asked whether the 915 bus service, which has been temporarily diverted via Fowlmere, might stop in Fowlmere. The service normally runs every hour from Royston to Cambridge via Shepreth and Foxton. The PC agreed that it would write to Stagecoach to request this. Stagecoach should also be reminded that there is a 20mph speed limit through Fowlmere village. Cllr Burge asked Cllr Lennon to thank the resident who suggested this.

The meeting closed at 22.25

Dates of next meetings:

| | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| PC Meeting | 7:30pm Tuesday 20th April 2021 | – Online (via Zoom) |
| Annual Village Meeting | 7:30pm Tuesday 11th May 2021 | – Location TBD [‡] |
| Annual Meeting of the PC | 7:30pm Tuesday 18th May 2021 | – Location TBD [‡] |

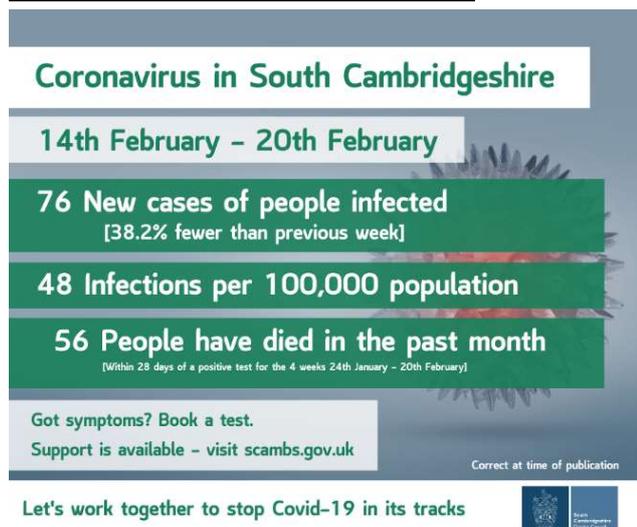
[‡]*status of remote meetings uncertain*

**These items had already been worked on by the PC and only required updating, noting or approval.*

Annex A – Cambridgeshire County Councillor Peter McDonald’s Report

Report for Parish Councils – March 2021

C19 Case Numbers Cambridgeshire



Vaccination

You can see the daily data here:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/covid-19-vaccinations/>

Rapid Covid-19 home testing kits for households with children

Households with school-age children can now test themselves twice a week from home using rapid Covid-19 home testing kits.

With up to one in three individuals with coronavirus showing no symptoms, it means some can potentially spread Covid-19 without knowing it. Regular testing of people who are unable to stay at home and don't have symptoms means that people with Covid-19 can be detected early and can self-isolate.

As children and young people return to the classroom, we need to be sure that potential Covid-19 cases are found as quickly as possible and that measures are put in place to prevent them from spreading throughout the school community. Although cases are declining generally, we all need to continue to play our part to keep the virus under control and ensure children and young people can remain in education.

Rapid Covid-19 home testing kits will be available for asymptomatic:

- adults living in households with primary and secondary-age pupils, including their childcare and support bubbles;
- school staff and adults working in the wider school community, including bus drivers and after school club leaders, as well as members of their households.

Testing is for adults only. Secondary school and college pupils will also undertake regular testing which will be provided via their school or college. Primary school pupils are not being offered rapid testing at this time but parents and carers should access a PCR Covid-19 lab test for them via the national booking system if they develop symptoms.

- [Find out where you can collect home test kits](#)
- Or, if you are unable to collect, you can [order online to be delivered to your home](#)
- Or by calling [119](tel:119)

LGBT Adopters & Foster Carers

Cambridgeshire County Council is supporting this year's annual LGBT+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) Adoption and Fostering Week (1-7th March) to help raise awareness about the need for more adopters and foster carers throughout the county.

The campaign 'Build Your Family' encourages LGBT+ potential adopters and foster carers to consider expanding their family and sharing their life with a child or young person, either permanently through adoption or more short-term through fostering. The campaign seeks to tackle some common misconceptions surrounding the process, and raise awareness among people who identify as LGBT+ of the adoption and fostering parenting routes that are open to them.

There are around 745 children and young people in Cambridgeshire who need foster carers and the greatest need is for teenagers and brothers and sisters.

Annex A – Cambridgeshire County Councillor Peter McDonald’s Report

LGBT+ Adoption & Fostering week is organised by New Family Social, a charity that supports LGBT+ Adopters and Foster Carers across the UK.

If you are interested in fostering and want to find out more: call 0800 052 0078, email fostering@cambridgeshire.gov.uk or visit www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/fostering.

If you feel adoption is better suited to you then please call 0300 123 1093.

Laptop Campaign

There is County-wide schools laptop campaign. A campaign to help disadvantaged children across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to get internet and laptop access is gathering pace, with the first batch of equipment being delivered to schools this week.

Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council launched the ‘Laptops for Children’ campaign earlier this month in partnership with the Youth Panel, Cambridge Digital Direct, Cambridge 2030 and the Cambridge Culture Foundation, aimed at purchasing laptops and 4G routers for vulnerable young people.

Around 8,000 children in the region do not have use of a computer or broadband, meaning they cannot access lessons and online resources, putting them at risk of falling behind with their studies.

Just over two weeks after launching the campaign, an impressive £567,845 has already been raised thanks to support from businesses and individuals, as well as funding from both authorities. A first batch of over 1,000 laptops and 460 routers have been purchased and will be distributed to schools from this week.

A total of 352 laptops have also been donated to drop-in centres and libraries across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. These will be checked and updated before being distributed to schools.

The campaign will continue to secure sufficient funding so that every young person in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough has the necessary equipment to continue learning. Both councils are writing to businesses and Chambers of Commerce this week to drum up further support.

For more information on the campaign and to make a donation visit [our GoFundMe page](#).

Meanwhile locally I have secured 15 machines from the Genome Campus which have so far gone to Thriplow and Whittlesford schools. A few machines still remain.

Thakeham

We are holding a Parish Call on March 2nd to update on progress and next steps for the action group. Two key things happened in February:

1. MHCLG published a bid of £50k for stakeholder engagement for “ up to 4 new developments” along EWR.
2. The Government published the draft OxCam Arc document talking about ‘ opportunity areas’ for housing development across the Arc.

Updates as usual here: www.swcag.org.uk

Resignation of County Council Deputy Leader

As a result of an investigation into the tenancy awarded in 2017 and investment of £185k of funds from the County to this farm, the Deputy Leader of the County Council Cllr Hickford has resigned and left his farm. This is the statement from the Leader:

“On Tuesday February 23rd I received a long and complex report which was the culmination of the Manor Farm Audit. The subject of the report largely concerns the Deputy Leader Cllr Roger Hickford’s occupancy of Manor Farm, Girton as a tenant of Cambridgeshire County Council’s Farms Estate.

The contents of the report are confidential at present, for legal reasons in order for the Audit and Accounts committee to fully consider and discuss the matter. But having read the report I had two meetings with Cllr. Hickford to consider implications for the Council, outside of the remit of the committee.

Subsequent to those meetings Cllr Hickford has asked me to accept his resignation as my Deputy leader and as a member of the Council with immediate effect.

I have accepted his resignation and confirmed this to Chief Executive Gillian Beasley.

I have also thanked Cllr Hickford for his years of service in his role as a Councillor and the support he has given me over the years as my deputy leader.”

A report into the granting of the tenancy and subsequent actions will be reviewed at the March 5th Audit & Accounts Committee. The timetable is here:

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/news/manor-farm-audit-to-be-considered-by-audit-and-accounts-committee>

Peter McDonald

March 6th 2021