

Item 6: Supporting additional Early Years provision and childcare by Cottenham Parish Council

Representation by Cllr Tim Wotherspoon, County Councillor for Cottenham and Willingham:

Cllr Wotherspoon has consulted the Monitoring Officer and has declared a non-statutory disclosable interest as a member of Cottenham Parish Council. This means that he would not be able to participate in any debate or vote on this matter. He is, however, permitted to make a representation before the start of the discussion, subject to Members' being made aware that he has a non-statutory disclosable interest as a member of Cottenham Parish Council.

Councillor Wotherspoon states:

All that I am going to say is that I have been watching the emergence of this proposal for many years, and it comes at an opportune moment, with Cottenham on the way to growing by 600 extra houses, and construction of a new village hall partly financed by borrowing whilst interest rates have been at their lowest.

As the report outlines, this capital project has been supported by an informal referendum (in the form of a voting paper distributed with the "Cottenham Newsletter", which effectively amounted to giving one vote to each household, that is to say, one vote per council tax-payer, which strikes me as quite an appropriate way of testing public opinion on such a question).

The nursery element, however, is being largely financed by the Section 106 contributions from five recent, current and forthcoming developments in Cottenham. The new facility will meet growing demand for early years places as new families join the village. Given the estimate that it might cost the County Council £1.44m to meet its own statutory duty to provide the latest forecast need for early years places I believe the Parish Council is doing us all a favour.

I approve of the first preference being given to the current provider, and I believe the conditions give adequate safeguards to the County Council to ensure excellence in standards should there be any future uncertainty as to the continuing quality offered by the current provider.