

# ELM PARISH COUNCIL

## MINUTES OF MEETING

21 DECEMBER 2010 – 6.30 pm.

**Present:** Councillor Brand, Chairman; Mrs Johnson, Mrs Pinnock, Rogers and Stokes and Webb.

**Apologies:** Councillors Cotterell, Mrs Cotterell and Softley.

The minutes of the meeting of 23 November 2010 were confirmed and signed.

### 104/10 The Standards Board for England – Members' Code of Conduct

Members were reminded of the need to ensure that their register of Declarable of Interests is kept up-to-date.

No members had any amendments to make to their register entries.

### 105/10 Matters arising from minutes of last meeting

#### (1) Elm Parish Council website (minute 90/10 (1))

Councillor Rogers reported that he had, since the last meeting, obtained contact details for a number of local facilities and services within the parish, including Elm Post Office, public houses etc, but has not yet had the opportunity to take photographs of a selection of local facilities.

Members decided that, when completed by Councillor Rogers, the additional website content be forwarded to the Clerk, who would progress the matter with the company which hosts the Parish Council's website.

#### (2) Parish council office and adjoining land – maintenance and security (minute 90/10 (2))

The Clerk reported further in relation to the decisions reached at minute 66/10.

Members were informed by the Clerk that he had

- now received advice from the Property and Asset Manager at Fenland District Council in relation to a ventilation system for the Parish Council office. In summary, the advice is that, apart from ensuring that the building is as well insulated as possible and kept relatively warm during the winter months, there is little other action that could be taken. In addition, it is suggested that if the building suffers from condensation, using portable dehumidifiers may provide a solution.
- received, from Councillor Cotterell, the contact details of a relevant person in relation to undertaking works to clean out the dykes at the playing field.

Councillor Rogers suggested that - given its limited use, the costs associated with maintaining, insuring and operating the building - members should consider disposal of the Parish Council office. He expressed the view that it provides no benefit as a community asset/facility but is a liability for the Parish Council. Alternatively, he suggested that if the building is to be retained, it should be made available for hiring by community groups as a meeting place.

Members discussed the comments and suggestions made by Councillor Rogers. Given that the costs to the Parish Council of operating the building are currently minimal, that there are no debt charges against the building, there would be operational and financial consequences of either making the building available for hire or the Parish Council needing to hold meetings and provide storage facilities at other locations, members feel that there are benefits to the Parish Council in retaining the building for the time being at least.

Now that new arrangements are in place for locking the outer gates to the office and playing field area, the Clerk raised with members the issue of remunerating the local resident who undertakes this activity on behalf of the Parish Council, expressing the view that the rate paid under the previous arrangement of £40.00 per quarter does not reflect adequately the level of commitment involved.

Members decided that

- (1) the information reported by the Clerk be noted;
- (2) the local resident who locks and unlocks the outer gates to the office and playing field area be remunerated at the rate of £100.00 per quarter and, subject to the Clerk reaching agreement with the resident, the first payment being made at the January 2011 meeting (to cover the period to 31 December 2010);
- (3) the Parish Council office be retained at this time, to fulfil its current primary functions as a venue for the Parish Council meetings and for storage of Parish Council records etc, but the future of the building be kept under review.

**(3) Facilities for young people in the parish (minute 93/10)**

Councillor Rogers reported on a quotation obtained from the play equipment provider that he had mentioned at the last meeting.

The quotation included the provision and installation of four items of play equipment and associated safety surfacing at the Pocket Park, adjacent to Chapel Lane, in Elm.

Members feel that two of the four possible items of equipment contained within the quotation – a “boat climber” and a “springie seesaw” - should be purchased and installed at the Pocket Park.

Members decided that Councillor Rogers would obtain two further quotations for the provision and installation of the two items of play equipment selected and report to the next meeting thereon.

**(4) Elm and Fridaybridge Youth Club (minute 95/10)**

Members considered providing funding to support continuation of the Elm and Fridaybridge Youth Club, in the light of the information detailing the annual costs of running the Youth Club.

Members decided that

- (1) financial support be provided, up to the maximum annual operating costs (i.e. expenditure less income) detailed by the Youth Club, currently £8,543.71, for the financial year 2011/12;
- (2) the provision of funding is subject to
  - an assurance that efforts will be made by the club to maximize income (e.g. through increased membership fees, sponsorships, fundraising activities) and/or reducing expenditure (e.g. increased use of volunteers for staffing, negotiating discounts on accommodation hire);

- comprehensive marketing of the Youth Club across the parish of Elm;

(3) the Parish Council should receive a progress report on activities, budgetary position, marketing etc following six months of the funding being in place.

### **106/10 Police matters**

The Clerk reported that PC Julie Coales, of the Wisbech and District Neighbourhood Policing Team, was unable to attend the meeting. She had, however, informed the Clerk of recent incidents of crime and disorder within the parish since the last meeting of the Parish Council, as follows:

- thefts of motor vehicles in Elm Low Road and Graysmoor
- thefts of metal from locations in Graysmoor and Chainbridge
- motor vehicle-related damage to a field at Redmoor Bank
- a domestic incident of common assault at an address in Maltmas Drove.

Members decided that

- (1) the information provided by PC Coales be noted;
- (2) they had no issues for reporting, by the Clerk, to PC Coales for investigation.

### **107/10 Rural Exception sites – affordable housing for local people**

Further to minute 94/10, members considered, in the light of the information now provided by Ms Freya, whether or not to proceed with a housing needs survey.

Members decided that it now wished to participate in the undertaking of a housing needs survey for the parish of Elm.

*(One councillor requested it be recorded that he had abstained from the voting on this item of business)*

### **108/10 Highway issues**

#### **(1) General**

Members decided that they had no issues, at this time, for reference to the Local Highway Authority.

#### **(2) Salt bins**

Members discussed possible locations for the siting of salt bins across the parish, following consultation undertaken recently, via e-mail with members, by the Clerk.

The Clerk informed members of the locations suggested by those members who had responded to the consultation.

Members decided that the Local Highway Authority be informed that the Parish Council now requires five salt bins and that the suggested locations for these bins be:

1. The layby at Coldham
2. In the vicinity of the War Memorial at Elm
3. Abington Grove (Fridaybridge Road end)

4. In the vicinity of the public notice board/Clocktower at Friday bridge
5. In the vicinity Fridaybridge School.

### **109/10 Planning applications**

The Clerk reported that no planning applications had been received from the District Council, for reference to the Parish Council.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

### **110/10 Finance**

The Clerk reported on the Parish Council's income and expenditure since the last meeting, as follows:

#### **Income**

W and W G West	Interment fee - Watson	£220.00
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>£220.00</b>

#### **Expenditure**

Fenland Citizens' Advice Bureau	Donation	£250.00
E Mason and Son	Cemetery maintenance: September to November 2010	£2,013.95
J Smith	Additional hours worked during notice period, plus cost of printer – minute 46/10 refers	£785.19
T Jordan	Salary (less income tax of £117.39, Broadband and other expenses)	£590.45
HM Revenue and Customs	Clerk's Income Tax – September, October and November 2010	£389.07
HM Revenue and Customs	Former Clerk's Income Tax – July 2010	£170.00
<b>Total Expenditure</b>		<b>£4,198.66</b>

Members decided that the income of £220.00 be noted and that the expenditure of £4,198.66 be authorised.

### **111/10 Parish Precept 2011/12**

Members considered the level of Parish Precept for the financial year 2010/11, plus other associated financial matters.

The Clerk presented a detailed report on the Parish Council's financial position as at 30 November 2010 and estimates of income and expenditure for 2011/12.

In addition, the Clerk reported both a letter from the Returning Officer at Fenland District Council detailing the estimated costs of the election of Elm Parish Councillors in May 2011 and an e-mail from the Chief Executive at Cambridgeshire County Council asking local councils to consider increasing their Precepts to help fund the delivery of public services. The Clerk also reported an e-mail from County Councillor Mrs Jill Tuck giving some examples of County Council services to which the Parish Council could consider contributing financially.

Members decided, being mindful of the current economic circumstances and its financial position, that

- (1) the Parish Council's financial position as at the half-year, the income and expenditure position as at 30 November and the estimates for 2011/12 be noted;
- (2) the level of Parish Precept for 2011/12 be set at £27,500 (i.e. the same level as for 2010/11);
- (3) Cemetery fees for 2011/12 be set at a future meeting.

### **112/10 Cemetery Cottage, Elm**

Further to minute 99/10, the Clerk reported on the latest position regarding the refurbishment of this property.

The Clerk informed members that following detailed consideration of the six quotations received, the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and he had visited Cemetery Cottage on 10 December 2010 to make a final assessment of the quotations.

Although a specification was produced by the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and the Clerk as the basis for inviting quotations for this work, unsurprisingly, some contractors had suggested doing additional work to that listed in the original specification and doing some things differently. As a result of the visit on 10 December 2010, it was agreed to invite one of the contractors, who had submitted a quotation based upon the original specification, to submit a revised quotation on the basis of undertaking additional works also. The contractor declined to take up the offer.

Members were reminded of their decision at minute 69/10 that the Parish Council would accept the quotation which provides best value – not necessarily the cheapest – in terms of refurbishment of this property.

Members decided that the quotation submitted by DM Builders of March, in the sum reported, be accepted and that the Clerk be requested to agree with the contractor a time scale and other operational arrangements for undertaking the refurbishment works.

### **113/10 Correspondence**

- (1) Winter Service and the Localism Agenda – Opportunities for Third Party Working.

The Clerk reported receipt of a letter from Cambridgeshire County Council, seeking to establish whether or not Elm Parish Council would be interested in assisting the County Council, as Local Highway Authority, in extending the winter gritting service (to include certain footways and cycle ways) within the community.

All Town/City/Parish Councils within the area covered by Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) are being offered this opportunity to undertake direct works to enhance the County Council's existing level of winter service. CCC is offering training, equipment and insurance for those who volunteer to undertake this work.

Members decided that Elm Parish Council would not participate in this scheme and that the Clerk would respond to the County Council accordingly.

(2) Community ACTION magazine.

The Clerk reported receipt of the latest edition of this magazine.

Members decided that the document be circulated amongst members of the Parish Council.

### **114/10 Grove Gardens, Elm**

Councillor Rogers reported on a local resident's concerns regarding wildfowl on Grove Gardens, Elm and the resident's enquiry as to whether the Parish Council could take action to address those concerns.

Councillor Rogers informed members that there are a number of wildfowl, which are not believed to be owned by anyone, roaming along Grove Gardens and, according to the local resident, the wildfowl are leaving droppings on the pavements and on the front gardens of properties on this estate. The resident makes the point that the mess on the pavements is not only causing a health hazard but is resulting in the dangerous situation of many school children walking in the road.

As a result of raising this matter with Fenland District Council (FDC), the resident has been informed that FDC is only able to take action in relation to fouling by dogs. The District Council suggested that he contacted the Parish Council to see if it is able to address the issue.

Members are of the view that, as the Parish Council has no powers to take action to remove the wildfowl from this land, the only action available is to report the matter to the owners of the land, i.e. Kier Anglia.

Members decided that this matter be referred, by the Clerk, to Kier Anglia, with a request that the company takes appropriate action to address the concerns of local residents.

*(The Chairman agreed to this item of business being discussed as a matter of urgency to enable the issue to be addressed without undue delay)*

### **115/10 Open Forum**

One resident of Elm made comments in relation to issues which had been discussed by members at the meeting, as follows:

- Elm Parish Council website (minute 105/10 (1) refers) – a suggestion that the Parish Council should both publicise the existence of the new website and undertake consultation with the public in terms of content that they might find useful.
- Parish Council office and adjoining land – maintenance and security (minute 105/10 (2) refers) – welcomed the increase in the level of payment to the local resident who locks and locks the gates at the playing field.
- Facilities for young people in the parish (minute 105/10 (3) refers) – mentioned that the Parish Council had previously obtained information from Doncaster City Council in relation to types and suppliers of play equipment

and suggested that this information may be useful and relevant in implementing the decision to provide play equipment at the Pocket Park in Elm.

- Parish Precept 2011/12 (minute 111/10 refers) – suggested that the Parish Council exercises caution in relation to using its reserves to fund spending plans; for example: the purchase of play equipment (minute 105/10 (3) refers), supporting financially the Elm and Fridaybridge Youth Club (minute 105/10 (4) refers), refurbishment of the Cemetery Cottage at Elm (minute 112/10 refers). The resident suggested also that the condition of the War Memorial at Elm should be assessed and that any remedial action required be undertaken as a matter of priority.
- Grove Gardens, Elm (minute 114/10 refers) – a suggestion that a letter be sent by the Clerk to Kier Anglia in relation to the concerns of local residents.

In addition, in response to a question from the resident, the Clerk reported on the current position regarding the proposal to extend Elm Cemetery; the situation being that the Parish Council is awaiting information from the Local Highway Authority in relation to one of the conditions imposed upon the planning permission for this development.

Members noted the comments made by the local resident.

**116/10 Dates of meetings for 2011**

Members decided that meetings of the Parish Council in 2011 (all commencing at 6.30 pm (except Annual Assembly, which commences at 7.00 pm) and taking place in the Parish Council office on Begdale Road, Elm) be held on the following dates: 18 January, 15 February, 22 March, 19 April (including Annual Assembly), 17 May (Annual Meeting of the Council), 21 June, 19 July, 16 August, 20 September, 18 October, 22 November and 20 December.

**Meeting finished at 8.30 pm**

Signature:.....(Council Chairman).

Date:.....