

ELM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING

21 JUNE 2011 – 7.10 pm.

Present: Councillor Brand, Chairman; Councillors Mrs Cotterell, Mrs Johnson, Mrs Lankfer, Pinnock, Stokes, Tilney and Webb (until 7.10pm).

In attendance: District Councillor Sutton.

Apologies: Councillors Cotterell, Rogers and Softley plus County Councillor Mrs Tuck.

The minutes of the meeting of 17 May 2011 were confirmed and signed.

15/11 The Standards Board for England – Members' Code of Conduct

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

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

16/11 Co-option of Parish Councillors

Further to minute 4/11 (5), members considered the co-option of councillors to fill the two vacant seats (one in the Elm and Fridaybridge ward and the other in the Rings End ward) on the Parish Council.

The Clerk reported that, as a result of following the advertising approach agreed at minute 4/11 (5), two applications for membership (one for each of the vacant seats) had been received. The two applicants, both of whom qualify for membership of the Parish Council, had been invited, by the Clerk, to attend the Parish Council meeting.

Members decided, unanimously, that Mrs I Lankfer and Mr M Tilney be co-opted to membership of Elm Parish Council (representing the Rings End and Elm and Fridaybridge wards respectively); following their respective signing of a Declaration of Office, Councillors Mrs Lankfer and Tilney participated in the meeting.

17/11 Matters arising from minutes of last meeting

(1) Facilities for young people in the parish (minute 4/11 (1))

Given the absence of Councillor Rogers from the meeting, members were not able to receive an update on any further progress he had made regarding the provision of play equipment for young children.

At minute 15/10 (1) Councillor Rogers had informed members of a request from the Elm and Fridaybridge Youth Club for a skateboard park in Elm and that he had agreed to meet with the club to discuss funding options etc.

The Clerk reported he had now received a letter, supported by a list of 31 other signatories, from a local youngster, requesting that Elm Parish Council considers the provision of a skateboard park in Elm.

Members considered the request and invited the youngster and his father, who were in attendance at the meeting, to speak in support of the request and to explain exactly what is being sought by local youngsters.

Based upon some knowledge of skateboard parks installed recently in other Fenland villages, members are aware that the likely cost of such a project could be between £60,000 and £80,000 and they acknowledge that obtaining a significant amount of grant funding towards the cost of the project would be necessary if it were to be delivered.

Members decided that

- (1) the request for a skateboard park in Elm be supported in principle, acknowledging that a number of issues would need to be considered/examined in greater depth (such as identification of a suitable site, consultation, selection of a scheme design and obtaining the necessary funding);
- (2) the Clerk would obtain some examples, from a local manufacturer/supplier of "model" skateboard parks, together with estimated costs;
- (3) the youngster who submitted the request and his father would canvass residents of Elm for support for the provision of a skateboard park in the village;
- (4) investigations into possible sources of grant funding for such a project be undertaken, at the appropriate time, by Councillor Rogers.

(2) Additional street lighting in the parish (minute 4/11 (2))

The Clerk reported to members on the responses from the County Council's Street Lighting Team in relation to the two issues discussed by the Parish Council at minute 4/11 (2), as follows:

- The lamp column at Bramley Court has been added to the County Council's database of Parish Council-owned lamp columns and has been repaired, at a cost of £39.07 to the parish Council.
- The repair works to the faulty lamp outside 38 March Road, Fridaybridge were undertaken on 6 June 2011.

Members decided that the information reported by the Clerk be noted.

(3) Maintenance of playing fields and open spaces across the parish and at Elm Cemetery (minute 4/11(3))

The Clerk informed members of the latest situation with regard to disposal of the Parish Council's grounds maintenance equipment.

The Clerk and Councillor Mrs Hopkin had worked jointly to arrange for the grounds maintenance equipment, with the exception of the hand tools, to be sold by way of specialist auction on 6 June 2011. Although the payment from the auctioneer had not yet been received, it was understood that the sale had generated income for the Parish Council in excess of £10,000 prior to the deduction of selling fees.

The Clerk informed members of the important role that had been played by Councillor Mrs Hopkin in this matter; she had not only made the arrangements for entry of the equipment into the auction but also for its transportation to the auction venue. She had also attended the auction, to ensure that the Parish Council's interests were best served.

Members shared the view of the Clerk that the remaining items (including saws, brushes and spades) should be sold at a local, general household, auction.

Members decided that

- (1) the information reported by the Clerk be noted;
- (2) arrangements be made for the remaining items to be sold at a local, general household, auction;
- (3) the Parish Council's appreciation of Councillor Mrs Hopkin's work in achieving the sale of the grounds maintenance equipment be placed on record.

(4) Fridaybridge Clock tower (minute 12/11)

The Clerk reported that he had arranged for the company which undertakes the servicing of the clock mechanism at the clock tower to investigate the problem with one of the clock faces and to undertake the necessary repairs. A representative of the company visited the clock, with Councillor Softley, on 6 June 2011 and inspected the clock face.

The company advised that the remedy for the situation is to replace the existing clock face cover; Councillor Softley requested the company to undertake this work.

Members decided that the information reported by the Clerk be noted and that the action taken by Councillor Softley be endorsed.

(5) The Leam, Fridaybridge – fishing (minute 13/11 (1))

The Clerk reported that he had raised this matter with Mr Reuben Page, the relevant Water Bailiff at the Environment Agency, who had stated that he would visit the site but made the point that he only has powers to deal with a person's failure to possess a fishing licence; he would not be able to take any action to enforce the Parish Council's No Fishing ruling,

The Clerk reported also an e-mail from the resident who had raised this matter previously (minute 13/11 (1) refers). The resident was seeking information as to the action that the Parish Council could/would take in this matter. In addition, she had enquired as to whether the No Fishing rule is supported by an enforceable byelaw.

Members confirmed that the No Fishing rule is not supported by an enforceable byelaw.

Members decided that the resident of The Leam who had raised this issue

- (1) be informed of the action taken by the Parish Council and its limited ability to enforce the No Fishing rule;
- (2) be asked to contact the Police immediately when witnessing incidents of persons fishing at The Leam (PCSO Bogunovic has agreed to react to such calls and to give warnings to those caught fishing).

18/11 Police matters

PCSO Martin Bogunovic, of the Wisbech and District Neighbourhood Policing Team, reported on recent incidents of crime and disorder within the geographical area covered by Elm Parish Council, including:

- Coldham – criminal damage caused to one vehicle.

- Fridaybridge – three incidents of theft from gardens; one theft of a catalytic converter from a vehicle; one theft from a shed.
- Elm – theft of a cycle from a residential property; one dwelling burglary at Limes Avenue; theft of a vehicle registration plate; an incident of youth-related anti-social behaviour at Grove Gardens.

The PCSO mentioned that a resident of The Leam had made contact with him concerning fishing activities taking place at the pond. He had responded to the resident in the terms that he is able to draw a person's attention to the No Fishing sign at The Leam but is unable to take any action to enforce the Parish Council's ruling, The Clerk stated that the Parish Council is aware of this resident's concerns (minutes 13/11 (1) and 17/11 refer).

PCSO Bogunovic responded to members' questions.

Members decided that the information provided by PCSO Bogunovic be noted.

19/11 Highway issues

(1) Halfpenny Lane, Elm

Further to minute 6/11 (2), the Clerk reported the Local Highway Authority's response to the issue raised by Councillor Rogers regarding the timescale for repairing the pot holes on Halfpenny Lane.

The Local Highway Authority (LHA) has stated that, although the pot holes had been marked, no order for the repair works had been placed. This oversight has now been addressed by the LHA.

Members decided that the information reported by the Clerk be noted

(2) Hedges in Elm

Further to minute 6/11 (3), the Clerk reported that the Local Highway Authority is in the process of arranging for the necessary hedge trimming works to take place.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

(3) Highway safety in Elm

Councillor Mrs Cotterell raised concerns regarding slow vehicles exiting Halfpenny Lane and other vehicles travelling at speed around the sharp bend (when travelling from March direction towards Wisbech) just ahead of the Halfpenny Lane access on to the main road.

A number of members shared Councillor Mrs Cotterell's opinion that this situation is "an accident waiting to happen" and felt that it would be desirable if some form of advance warning signage could be provided (with the aim of making vehicles reduce speed when approaching Halfpenny Lane).

Members decided that this matter be referred to the Local Highway Authority, with a request that it considers implementing appropriate measures to reduce the potential for accidents at this location.

20/11 Planning applications/appeal

Members considered the following planning applications and decided to submit to the Local Planning Authority the comments set out (in italics) below:

- (1) Erection of four dwellings, involving demolition of existing garage at land east of 176 – 180 Fridaybridge Road, Elm – F/YR11/0344/O (applicant: Mr T Weaver).

That the application be supported.

- (2) Erection of a three-storey dwelling with first-floor balcony to rear on land north of Florence House, Back Road, Fridaybridge – F/YR11/0351/F (applicant Mr D Taylor).

Members noted that one of the residents of Back Road had expressed concerns to the Local Planning Authority and the Local Highway Authority regarding the drainage system at Back Road and how this development might affect that situation.

That the application be supported.

- (3) Formation of vehicular access at Beech Cottages, 128 Fridaybridge Road, Elm – F/YR11/0352/F (applicant: Mr M Warby).

That the application be supported.

- (4) Erection of part two-storey/first-floor rear extension and detached garage with office over to existing dwelling, involving demolition of existing detached garage/utility, at Soffits, Halfpenny Lane, Elm – F/YR11/0365/F (applicants: Mr and Mrs O Rogers).

That the application be supported.

Further to minute 134/10, the Clerk reported the submission of an appeal to the Planning Inspectorate against Fenland District Council's refusal of planning permission for the erection of a 3-bed dwelling and detached garage on land east of 5 Gosmoor Lane, Elm and informed members of the process for the Parish Council's submission to the Planning Inspectorate, if it wished to do so, of comments (in addition to those submitted by Fenland District Council).

Members decided that they had no comments to make to the Planning Inspectorate in relation to this appeal.

21/11 Finance

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

Income

E.on	Refund of overpaid electricity charges for Cemetery Cottage	£13.24
Grounds and Co.	Cottage rent: 5 May to 30 June (less agent's fees, cost of cooker etc)	£390.65
Kettle Funeral Directors	Scattering of ashes in Elm Cemetery	£100.00
A R Clingo	Burial of cremated remains	£125.00
P Barnes	Interment fee - Roseberry	£250.00
Total Income		£878.89

Expenditure

R J Warren Ltd	Grounds maintenance contract	£1,269.37
Singh (UK) Ltd	Skip hire - cemetery	£186.00
Chairman's Allowance	Allowance for 2011/12	£300.00
Fen Ditching	Elm Cemetery – extension works	£12,438.00
Elm Friendship Club	Donation – April to September 2011	£168.00
Anglian Water	Cemetery – water	£23.56
N Hopkin Machinery	New battery for Ransome mower	£46.20
HM Revenue and Customs	Clerk's Income tax (March, April and May 2011)	£428.19
T Jordan	Salary (less income tax of £140.87), Broadband and other expenses)	£638.32
Smith of Derby	Investigate clock face fault	£180.00
Total Expenditure		£15,677.64

In addition, the Clerk reported on the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 31 May 2011 (in the total sum of £127,421.65), together with the month-end figures for each of the preceding six months.

The Clerk reported also that, because of the circumstances explained to members, it had not been possible to refer the Annual Audited Accounts to this meeting of the Parish Council and that it may, depending upon the requirements of the External Auditor, be necessary to hold an additional meeting for consideration of this matter.

Councillor Pinnock expressed the opinion that, in addition to the information reported currently by the Clerk on a monthly basis, members should receive management accounts (showing income and expenditure under each of the Parish Council's budgets). Councillor Pinnock stated that the Parish Council's Financial Regulations currently require the reporting of such information on at least a quarterly basis.

Members discussed the necessity or otherwise for the reporting of this additional financial information and a number of differing views were expressed in this regard.

Members decided that

- (1) the income of £878.89 be noted and that the expenditure of £15,677.64 be authorised;
- (2) the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 31 May 2011, together with the month-end figures for each of the preceding six months, be noted;
- (3) the situation with regard to the Annual Audited Accounts be noted;
- (4) for a trial period of 12 months, the Clerk would produce, on a quarterly basis, management accounts for presentation to meetings of Elm Parish Council.

22/11 Elm Cemetery

(1) Roadway re-surfacing etc

Further to minute 10/11, the Clerk reported to members on the current situation regarding re-surfacing etc of the roadway at Elm Cemetery.

The Clerk informed members that he is now in possession of revised quotations from the two contactors which had submitted quotations previously (for the lesser specification) plus a quotation from one of the additional contractors suggested by the Local Highway Authority.

Some members were surprised at the variation between the amounts quoted by the contractors.

Members decided that

(1) subject to (2) below, the lowest quotation for this work, in the sum of £7,100.00 plus VAT, be accepted;

(2) prior to the work being awarded to the company which submitted the lowest tender, the Clerk, the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman would meet the contractor on site to satisfy themselves that all of the Parish Council's requirements in relation to this work are included within the quotation.

(2) Purchase of burial plots

The Clerk sought members' views as to whether they wished to review, in the light of the cemetery extension works, the decision reached at minute 67/08 (26 August 2008) restricting the pre-purchase of burial plots at Elm Cemetery. He mentioned a particular case where the parents of a still born child had enquired as to the possibility of purchasing the adjoining burial plot for themselves within the existing cemetery.

To assist members' deliberations, the Clerk informed members of the number of unallocated plots currently within the cemetery and the number of burials which had taken place within the last 12 months.

Members expressed the view that the particular request now reported complies with the spirit of minute 67/08.

Councillor Pinnock informed members of information that he had obtained as to the recommended period of time that should elapse before burials take place in the new, extended area; it is recommended that the new area be not used for burials for at least five years.

Members consider it essential that the existing burials area within the cemetery is able to accommodate the potential demand or grave spaces until such time as the new, extended area can be used for burial purposes.

Members decided that

(1) the practice agreed at minute 67/08 be not changed at this time;

(2) the situation be reviewed in the spring of 2016;

(3) the current request, reported by the Clerk, be approved (on the basis that it complies with the spirit of the decision reached at minute 67/08).

23/11 Correspondence

(1) Planning and Localism training.

The Clerk reported an e-mail from Fenland District Council, detailing a training event that has been arranged by FDC for members and clerks of Town and Parish Councils in the district; the training event will cover two topics: firstly, relevant issues in relation to the consideration of planning applications and probity and protocol in that regard; secondly, the implications of the Localism Bill in relation to planning.

The training event will be held on four occasions (one in each market town on separate dates in July) and the date of the event to which the members of Elm Parish Council have been invited takes place on 21 July 2011.

Members decided that the information reported by the Clerk be noted and that members wishing to attend the training event would notify the Clerk accordingly by the response deadline set by FDC (4 July 2011).

(2) Community ACTION magazine: Summer 2011.

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

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

(3) Fenland District Council's Interim Planning Policy Leadership Statement.

The Clerk reported information forwarded to the Parish Council by a local architectural agent in relation to Fenland District Council's Interim Planning Policy Leadership Statement (IPPLS), which was issued by the District Council on 14 March 2011.

The Clerk read to members the IPPLS, which, in summary, indicates that the Local Planning Authority is happy to consider the approval of planning applications which propose residential development of land immediately outside Development Area Boundaries provided that certain criteria, as listed in the IPPLS, are met.

Members decided that the content of Fenland District Council's Interim Planning Policy Leadership Statement be noted.

(4) East Anglian Ambulance Service – request for financial assistance.

The Clerk reported a request from the East Anglian Ambulance Service for financial assistance towards the cost of purchasing a piece of medical equipment, known as a Pulse Oximeter, for use by the Community First Responders group which covers the parish of Elm.

The letter of request detailed the length of time that this group has been operating and the number of hours of voluntary cover that it had provided in 2010.

Members are of the opinion that this group provides a very valuable service to residents of the parish and, consequently, consider that a donation should be made to cover the cost of purchasing this piece of equipment.

Members decided that a donation, in the sum of £324.10 (the net cost of the piece of equipment), be made to the East Anglian Ambulance Service for the purchase of a Pulse Oximeter, to be used by the local Community First Responders group.

24/11 Next meeting

Members were reminded that the next meeting of the Parish Council has been scheduled for 19 July 2011, commencing at 6.30 pm, at the Parish Council office, Begdale Road, Elm.

.Meeting finished at 8.40 pm

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

Date:.....