

ELM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING

20 JANUARY 2015 – 7.00 pm.

Present: Councillor Brand, Chairman; Councillors Mrs Cotterell, Mrs Dalliday, Hopkin, Mrs Hopkin, Milham, Stokes and Webb.

Apologies: Councillors Mrs Lankfer, Pinnock and Miss Webb.

In attendance: County Councillor Gillick and District Councillors Sutton (from 7.20 pm) and Tanfield.

The minutes of the meeting of 16 December 2014 were confirmed and signed.

121/14 Open Forum

Overstone Drive, Coldham

A resident of Coldham mentioned that the County Council had recently undertaken re-surfacing works to part of the carriageway at Overstone Drive. He requested County Councillor Gillick to investigate why public money had been spent on undertaking works to a road which is in private ownership; not adopted highway. The resident also enquired as to whether the County Council intends to re-surface the remainder of Overstone Drive.

Members decided that both the comments of the resident and County Councillor Gillick's assurance to investigate the matter be noted.

122/14 Members' Code of Conduct

Further to minute 31/12, the Clerk reminded members of the need for them to submit to the Monitoring Officer at Fenland District Council any changes to the content of their Register of Member Interests forms.

Members decided the reminder from the Clerk be noted and acted upon.

123/14 Friends of Rings End Nature Reserve

Members received a presentation from Phil Clerk, the Community Green Spaces Manager at Cambridgeshire County Council, on the activities of the Friends of Rings End Nature Reserve in terms of management and operation of this nature reserve. Mr Clark was accompanied by two members of the Friends of Rings End Nature Reserve group; they explained some of the development work which had been undertaken at the Rings End Nature Reserve (which is within the parish of Elm) since formation of the friends group.

Mr Clark informed members that Cambridgeshire County Council owns seven nature reserves across the County, four of which (including the one at Rings End) have friends groups. He explained the value of green spaces in terms of providing a facility for members of the public to keep fit and be active and the work that is being undertaken in association with schools and the County Council's Children's Centres in that regard.

Mr Clark informed the council that the Friends of Rings End Nature Reserve are looking to apply for grant funding to both meet the cost of undertaking maintenance works at the reserve and to run events. He stated that part of

any funding received would be utilised to purchase items of machinery, which would be shared with other nature reserves within the County.

Mr Clark stated that the application for funding needs to be accompanied by letters of support from the community and expressed his hope that Elm Parish Council would be able to provide a letter of support for this funding bid. He sought members' views as to whether they would find it beneficial to receive, on a quarterly basis, at Parish Council meetings, an update on the activities which had taken place and were planned at the Rings End Nature Reserve.

Mr Clark and the two members of the Friends of Rings End Nature Reserve group responded to councillors' questions.

Members decided that

- (1) the information reported by Mr Clark and the two members of the Friends of Rings End Nature Reserve group be noted;
- (2) Elm Parish Council would provide a letter of support for the Friends of Rings End Nature Reserve group's application for funding;
- (3) they would be pleased to receive, on a quarterly basis, at Parish Council meetings, an update on the activities which had taken place and were planned at the Rings End Nature Reserve.

124/14 Progress on actions from minutes of last meeting

(1) Play equipment provision in Elm and Fridaybridge (minute 108/14 (1))

With regard to the possible provision of play equipment at Elm, the Clerk reported the updated quotation, received from the play equipment supplier, to include the provision and installation of appropriate fencing. The contractor had provided a cost for gates and a price per metre for 1.2 metre high bow-top fencing.

The Chairman reported that plotting of the area which would be covered by the play equipment, to enable the cost of fencing to be calculated, had been undertaken; this shows that the cost of fencing (at £68.68 per metre) of the proposed play area would be approximately £5,000.00.

The Clerk informed members that he had enquired of the Local Highway Authority (LHA) as to the feasibility of Elm Parish Council installing the proposed play equipment on the grassed verge area at Abington Grove, Elm and that the LHA had responded that it would have no objection to the proposal provided that it passed the safety audit and that the Parish Council retained the responsibility for all aspects of the play equipment's maintenance and safety etc.

With regard to the provision of play equipment at Fridaybridge, the Clerk informed members that he had, since the last meeting of the Parish Council, received from the relevant team at Cambridgeshire County Council an "in principle" approval to the use of the playing field (which is leased by Elm Parish Council from Cambridgeshire County Council) at Maltmas Drove, Fridaybridge for the provision of an equipped play area.

District Councillor Tanfield reported that officers at Fenland District Council are in the process of writing applications for grant funding for the purchase and installation of play equipment at the playing field at Maltmas Drove, Fridaybridge.

Members decided, unanimously, that

- (1) the information reported by the Clerk be noted;
- (2) the Parish Council would proceed with the purchase of the scheme of play equipment, as detailed within the quotation from the manufacturer/supplier;
- (3) the Clerk would ascertain from the Local Highway Authority its requirements in terms of progressing with a safety audit for the provision of an equipped play area on the grassed verge area at Abington Grove, Elm;
- (4) they would consider, in twelve months time, whether to add to the play equipment provision at Coldham a Crazy Cube Climber.

(2) Street lighting (FPC2 at Oldfield Avenue, Elm) (minute 108/14 (3))

The Clerk reported that he had provided to the council's insurance company all of the information required by the company to enable consideration of the council's claim in relation to the impact damage caused to street lamp FPC2 at Oldfield Avenue, Elm and that, consequently, the claim had been approved; a cheque in settlement of the claim (for the cost of replacing the lamp column, less the £250 policy excess) had subsequently been received from the council's insurers (see minute 133/14).

The Clerk added that he had now requested Fenland District Council to make arrangements for replacement of the damaged lamp column.

Members decided that the information reported by the Clerk be noted

125/14 Police matters

No member of the Wisbech and District Neighbourhood Policing Team was present at the meeting and, consequently, members received no information relating to recent incidents of crime and disorder which had been reported to the Constabulary, in relation to the geographical area covered by Elm Parish Council, since the last meeting of the council.

The Clerk informed members that he had been informed of very recent staff changes within the Wisbech and District Neighbourhood Policing Team, which had resulted in PCSO Dave Russ no longer covering Elm parish; the PCSO who would be taking on responsibilities for Elm parish is PCSO Andy Bush. Consequently, the Clerk had sent PCSO Bush a copy of the agenda of this meeting but had heard nothing from the PCSO in response.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

126/14 Fishing at The Leam, Fridaybridge

Further to minute 106/14, members considered whether to pursue the process of making a byelaw as a means of seeking to prevent fishing at The Leam, Fridaybridge.

The Clerk reported that the resident of The Leam who had addressed the council at minute 106/14 had sent to him an e-mail which included links to a Government website where details of the byelaw-making process, as well as model byelaws, could be found. He outlined briefly to members the process involved in making byelaws and suggested that the model byelaw in respect of Pleasure Grounds, Public Walks and Open Spaces would, with amendments necessary to reflect the situation at The Leam, be the most appropriate if the council wished to pursue the implementation of a byelaw as a means of seeking to prevent fishing at The Leam.

The Clerk had forwarded a copy of the e-mail from the resident to all members of the council in advance of the meeting.

Members decided that

- (1) the decision at minute 104/14 (2), regarding investigating the possibility of installing a palisade security fencing at The Leam, be not actioned;
- (2) the Clerk would produce a draft byelaw for consideration at the next meeting of Elm Parish Council.

127/14 Planning applications

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 a dwelling on land north-east of Florence House, Back Road, Fridaybridge – F/YR14/0995/O (applicant: Mrs D Stevenson).

That the application be supported.

- (2) Erection of single-storey side extension and single-storey front extension to existing building, involving the demolition of various existing buildings, at Fenmarc Produce Limited – F/YR14/1005/F (applicant: Fenmarc Produce Limited).

That the application be supported.

- (3) Change of use from 3-bed dwelling to day school on land south of 2 Rookery Cottages, Well End, Fridaybridge – F/YR14/1025/F (applicant: Mr Jason Wright).

That the application be supported.

- (4) Erection of 3 x two-storey 4-bed dwellings, involving formation of new accesses, on land south of The Conifers, 67 Fridaybridge Road, Elm – F/YR15/0004/F (applicant: Mr K Rickett).

That the application be supported.

128/14 Reports from District and County Councillors for the parish

Councillor Gillick, the County Councillor who represents the electoral division which includes the parish of Elm, informed members that

- he had sought to achieve repairs by the County Council to a road at Colletts Bridge, Elm but this had not been possible as the piece of road is not adopted highway and, consequently, the County Council, as Local Highway Authority, has no responsibilities for maintenance of the road
- he had been pursuing officers of the Local Highway Authority to undertake the action that had been promised by those officers to residents of Back Road, Fridaybridge to address drainage problems along that road
- he had made a complaint to the County Council's Director of Law, Property and Governance regarding a particular film which had been shown in some Cambridgeshire schools
- he had attended, earlier today, a meeting, led by the Constabulary, regarding issues of child protection and the exploitation of young girls. He commented that any member of the public who has suspicions in that regard should report their suspicions to the Constabulary.

A number of the members of Elm Parish Council stated that they failed to see the relevance to the parish of some of the matters of which they are informed by County Councillor Gillick.

Councillor Tanfield reported that Councillor Mrs Dalliday and she, working together, had been able to arrange for planning application F/YR14/0876/F (relating to The Dale, Begdale Road, Elm), which had been considered by Elm Parish Council at minute 110/14, to be referred to the February 2015 meeting of the District Council's Planning Committee for determination.

Councillor Sutton, one of the District Councillors who represents the parish of Elm commented that he does not recognise local authority officers in the way described by County Councillor Gillick. Councillor Sutton stated that he had nothing but respect for those officers of the District and County Council with whom he had had dealings; he further feels that the comments made by County Councillor Gillick at meetings of Elm Parish Council are insulting to the Clerk of Elm Parish Council, who had dedicated his working life to local authority service within Cambridgeshire (including working for both Fenland District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council during his career).

Members decided that the situation be noted and concurred with the opinion of District Councillor Sutton with regard to the inappropriate comments made by County Councillor Gillick regarding council officers.

129/14 Street lighting in the parish

Further to minute 112/14, at which members considered a letter from Fenland District Council (FDC) regarding that council's proposed approach to addressing the outcome of its condition survey of the street lighting which is owned by the District Council and the Parish Councils within Fenland, the Clerk informed members that the Cabinet at FDC had decided, at its meeting on 18 December 2014, that:

- the recommendations set out in the report be deferred until a future Cabinet meeting to enable further discussions with the Parish Council and District Councillors to establish a way forward
- Fenland District Council would make a "without prejudice" offer to arrange and deliver the category 1 repairs, to address the immediate safety liability facing Parish Councils and this will only be done on a signed agreement being received from the Parish Councils giving permission to the District Council to carry out this work on the Parish Council's assets.

To enable the repair works to be progressed, the District Council had sent, with the letter explaining the decision of the District Council's Cabinet, a form of agreement to be completed by the Clerk if the Parish Council wishes the District Council to undertake the category 1 repairs. The letter states that arrangements would be made for the continuation of discussions between Fenland District Council and the Parish Councils in Fenland on addressing the remaining defective street lamps.

Members decided that the content of the letter from Fenland District Council (FDC) be noted and that the offer from FDC in relation to arranging and delivering the category 1 repairs, to address the immediate safety liability facing parish councils, be accepted; the Clerk would sign and forward to FDC the Parish Street Lighting Agreement.

130/14 Open spaces (including the cemetery) under the Parish Council's control

Members considered whether there are any issues relating to the open spaces issues which required discussion by the Parish Council.

Further to minute 113/14, the Clerk informed members that the annual cutting of the boundary hedging and the pyracantha at the cemetery had now been undertaken by the council's grounds maintenance contractor.

Further to minute 113/14, the Chairman reported that he would be meeting later this week with the local grounds maintenance contractor which had expressed an interest in submitting a quotation for undertaking this council's grounds maintenance works.

Members decided that the situation be noted

131/14 Former canal: Chapel Lane to Colletts Bridge, Elm

The Clerk read to members an e-mail from the Clerk to Emneth Parish Council regarding the fact that Norfolk County Council had informed that Parish Council of its intention to declare the former canal land (which includes a footpath) surplus to requirements and enquiring as to whether that council wished to have ownership of this land; the Clerk to Emneth Parish Council is of the belief that Norfolk County Council proposes to convey the land to the Parish Council at nil consideration with each party bearing its own legal costs.

As the Norfolk/Cambridgeshire boundary runs through the centre of the site, Emneth Parish Council is enquiring as to whether, in the event that Emneth Parish Council does acquire this land, Elm Parish Council would be interested in a partnership arrangement for maintenance of the land.

Members decided that unless Elm Parish Council were to take ownership of a part of the land, it should not take any responsibility (and cost) for maintenance.

132/14 Grants to voluntary and charitable bodies - Fridaybridge Community First Responders

Further to minute 116/14 (2) - at which it was decided that the application be deferred to enable Councillor Milham to undertake investigations into the appropriate use of the piece of medical equipment for which financial assistance from this council is being sought - members considered the application from the Fridaybridge Community First Responders (CFR) group for financial assistance to purchase (via the NHS) a certain piece of medical equipment, at a cost of £115.15.

Councillor Milham informed members that his investigations had revealed that the volunteers who would be using the piece of medical equipment for which financial assistance from this council is being sought have undergone the necessary training to use the equipment and, on that basis, he feels that the application should be granted.

Members decided that the application from the Fridaybridge Community First Responders, for financial assistance to purchase (via the NHS) a certain piece of medical equipment, be approved.

133/14 Financial matters

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

Income

Maxey Grounds	Cottage rent (less fees)	£523.60
Fenland District Council	Concurrent Functions Grant – second 50%	£2,640.00
Richard King	Memorial tablet	£275.00
Peter Barnes	Plot purchase and interment fee	£853.00
Peter Barnes	Interment fee	£275.00

Came and Company	Insurance claim – street lamp replacement cost (less policy excess)	£998.34
Total Income		£5,564.34

Expenditure

Glazewing	Wheelie bin emptying – Elm Cemetery (includes VAT of £17.63)	£105.78
R J Warren Ltd	Grounds maintenance contract (includes VAT of £357.88)	£2,147.29
T Jordan	Salary (less income tax of £159.36 and NI of £16.05), Broadband and other expenses	£704.57
Kierman Window Cleaning	Clean parish notice and information boards	£45.00
C Brennan	Playing field security (quarterly payment to 31 December 2014)	£100.00
Fenland Fire Appliance LLP	Annual servicing of fire extinguishers (includes VAT of £11.65)	£69.90
Tower Hall, Fridaybridge	Financial assistance – lighting improvements	£1,000.00
Total Expenditure		£4,172.54

In addition, the Clerk reported on the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 31 December 2014 (in the total sum of £131,682.95), together with the month-end figures for each of the preceding six months and as at 31 December 2013.

Further to minute 21/11, the Clerk reported on the management accounts that he had produced for the third quarter of the 2014/15 financial year; he gave explanations as to variances between the estimated income and expenditure for the year and the actual levels of income and expenditure in that financial year.

Members decided

- (1) that the income of £5,564.34 be noted and that the expenditure of £4,172.54 be authorised;
- (2) that the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 31 December 2014, together with the month-end figures for each of the preceding six months and as at 31 December 2013, be noted;
- (3) to note that, after allowing for the Parish Council's ear-marked reserves (totalling £57,745.50) at 31 December 2014, the actual balance available to the Parish Council at 31 December 2014 was £73,937.45; making further allowance for a general contingency (at the level of 150% of the 2014/15 Precept, which equates to £45,000) reduces the actual balance available to the Parish Council at 31 December 2014 to approximately £28,937.00;
- (4) that the financial information within the third quarter's management accounts be noted.

134/14 Parish Precept 2015/16

Members considered the level of Parish Precept for the financial year 2015/16.

The Clerk presented a detailed report on the Parish Council's income and expenditure for 2013/14 and as at 31 December 2014, the financial position as at that date, estimates of income and expenditure for 2015/16 and various notes to aid members' deliberations regarding the level of Parish Precept to be set, including the facts that

- the difference between the estimated expenditure (of £57,830.00) and estimated income (of £23,182.00) for 2015/16 (excluding Precept) is £34,648.00
- Elm Parish Council Precept for 2014/15 was £26,287.00 (to which was added £3,713.00 by the District Council in Council Tax Support Grant)
- the level of Council Tax Support Grant which has been allocated by Fenland District Council to Elm Parish Council for 2015/16 is £3,664.00
- the Parish Council was awarded a Concurrent Functions Grant by Fenland District Council of 5,293.00 in 2014/15. Fenland District Council has confirmed that it will award a Concurrent Functions Grant at the same level as that paid in the current financial year
- the estimate for the Clerk's costs for 2015/16 take into account the "cost of living" pay award of 2.2%, with effect from 1 January 2015, to local government employees. The estimate also assumes continuation of the current level of Employer NI contributions
- allotment rents were increased by approximately 33% in October 2012 (minute 42/11 refers) and could not be increased further until October 2015; to increase rents from October 2015, the Parish Council would have needed to give notice to tenants in October 2014. This means that the opportunity does exist to increase these rents with effect from October 2016, provided that notice is given no later than October 2015
- There is the opportunity to increase burial fees with effect from 1 April 2014
- according to the Practitioners' Guide to Local Council Governance, it is recommended that a local council should possess, as general reserves, a sum equating to three to twelve months of its gross expenditure; in the case of Elm Parish Council, that would be a sum (in addition to any ear-marked reserves) of between £12,500 and £50,000 (based upon recent average annual expenditure). It is estimated that the level of general reserves at the end of the 2014/15 financial year will be of the order of £65,000
- the likely cost to Elm Parish Council over the next three financial years in relation the repair/replacement of street lamps will be approximately £74,000 (minute 112/14 refers). Consequently, it is appropriate for the Elm Parish Council budget for 2015/16 to include a sum towards the year one costs.

Members decided that

- (1) the Parish Council's income and expenditure for 2013/14 and as at 31 December 2014 and the financial position as at that date be noted;
- (2) the estimates of income and expenditure for 2015/16 be noted and approved as the basis of the Parish Council's budget for 2015/16;
- (3) no specific provision be made in the 2015/16 budget for the fees for the May 2015 Parish Council elections; they will be met from the council's general financial reserves;
- (4) being mindful of the current economic circumstances, the Parish Council's financial position and its desire to be able to continue to meet the needs of the community, the level of Parish Precept for 2015/16 be set at £34,648.00 (which equates to an increase of £0.61 per month per Band D (of Council Tax) equivalent property in the parish).

(Councillors Brand, Mrs Cotterell, Mrs Dalliday, Hopkin, Mrs Hopkin, Milham, Stokes and Webb declared their respective pecuniary interest in the setting of the Parish Council Precept, by virtue of having a beneficial interest in a domestic dwelling within the parish, but had been granted a dispensation to speak and vote in this matter)

135/14 Abington Grove, Elm - parking of the grassed verge area

Further to minute 118/14, the Chairman suggested that the Parish Council should consider further the possibility of installing bollards to prevent the parking of vehicles on the grassed verge area at the Abington Grove and Main Road, Elm junction and he offered to obtain three quotations for the manufacture and installation of such bollards.

Members decided that the offer of the Chairman to obtain three quotations for the installation of bollards at the grassed verge area at the Abington Grove and Main Road, Elm junction, be accepted.

136/14 Correspondence

Rural Cambs Citizens' Advice Bureau – financial assistance

Further to minute 102/14 (2), the Clerk read to members a letter of thanks from the Rural Cambs Citizens' Advice Bureau in relation to the financial assistance provided by the Parish Council.

Members decided that the content of the letter be noted.

137/14 Date of next meeting

Members were reminded that the next meeting of the Parish Council had been scheduled for 17 February 2015, commencing at 7.00 pm, at the Parish Council office, Begdale Road, Elm.

Meeting finished at 8.25 pm

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

Date:.....