

'ELM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING

18 OCTOBER 2016 – 7.00 pm.

Present: Councillor Brand, Chairman; Councillors Mrs Cotterell, Mrs Dalliday, Mrs Davis, Miss Ferguson, Hopkin, Mrs Hopkin, Milham, Patrick, Pinnock, Stokes and Webb.

Apologies: District Councillor Tanfield.

In attendance: District Councillor Sutton (from 7.35 pm).

The minutes of the meeting of 13 September 2016 were confirmed and signed.

65/16 Members' Code of Conduct

The Clerk reminded members of the need for them to submit to the Monitoring Officer at Fenland District Council, via the Parish Clerk, any changes to the content of their Register of Member Interests forms.

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

66/16 Progress on actions from minutes of last meeting

(1) Overgrown hedges between Fridaybridge and Elm (minute 53/16 (2))

The Clerk reported that he had, again, drawn to the attention of the Local Highway Authority and, additionally, to the local Member of Parliament (MP) the situation with regard to overgrown hedges between Fridaybridge and Elm.

The Clerk read to members the e-mail response that he had received from the MP's office, which states that the Local Highway Authority (LHA) had confirmed its awareness of this issue and detailed its approach in addressing situations such as this. That approach is that the LHA sends a letter to the owner of the vegetation which is causing an obstruction of the highway (one letter had already been sent) and if the letter does not achieve remedial action by the land owner, the LHA is required to send two further letters at four-weekly intervals; if a land owner ignores all three letters, the LHA has the power to take direct action and to seek to recover from the land owner the costs incurred. The relevant officer of the LHA did make the point to the MP's office that the LHA's financial resources are already "stretched" and funding hedge cutting may be extremely difficult. The officer of the LHA also made the point that the Parish Council could, if it wished, and with the owner's consent, undertake the hedge cutting works.

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

(2) Play equipment provision in Fridaybridge (minute 55/16 (1))

The Clerk informed members that, due to his absence recently because of annual holiday, together with workload pressures, he had been unable to submit an application (electronically) to WREN for funding towards the cost of providing an equipped play area scheme at Fridaybridge. He stated that he hoped to be in a position to submit the application prior to the next meeting of Elm Parish Council.

Members decided that the current situation be noted.

(3) Speeding across the parish (minute 55/16 (2))

Councillor Pinnock updated members on the operation of the Speed Watch scheme across the parish. He had circulated to members, in advance of the meeting, reports containing statistical data in relation to Speed Watch activity between January and 13 October 2016. The reports show that: 14,354 vehicles had been "clicked"; 1,149 vehicles (7.9% of the total) had been speeding; 76 Speed Watch sessions (covering a period of 105 hours) had taken place.

Officers of Cambridgeshire Constabulary had joined the Speed Watch team on one occasion recently and officers had given words of advice or issued tickets to a number of motorists. In addition, officers had issued tickets in response to inconsiderate parking around Elm Primary School.

Councillor Pinnock mentioned that although Cambridgeshire Constabulary continues to support the activities of the local Speed Watch group, he is disappointed at the lack of response that he had received from the Constabulary - despite the assurance given at the last meeting from Inspector Will Davis that he would arrange a meeting between Councillor Pinnock and Paul Jenkins, the Constabulary's Speed Watch Co-ordinator - to address issues relating to the training of volunteers and the risk assessment of new locations. Consequently, Councillor Pinnock would be writing to Inspector Will Davis in the hope that a positive outcome to the current difficulties could be achieved.

The Clerk read to members an e-mail from the Elm Parish Speed Watch Co-ordinator, in which she expresses her appreciation of the work undertaken by Councillor Pinnock in establishing Speed Watch in the parish and for devising the computer programme used for evaluating data and managing the sessions. She also wishes to thank Councillor Mrs Dalliday for the support that she provides to the Co-ordinator and the number of Speed Watch sessions in which she participates.

Members decided that the current situation be noted and that the Constabulary be thanked for both its support to the Speed Watch team and its action in relation to parking inconsiderate parking in the vicinity of Elm Primary School.

(4) Local Highway Improvements scheme 2016/17 (minute 55/16 (3))

Councillor Pinnock informed members that a meeting - involving Mr Pickering, the Headteacher at Elm Primary School and the Elm Parish Speed Watch Co-ordinator - had taken place yesterday to discuss the results of the monitoring of vehicle speeds and traffic volumes at certain locations in and around Elm. At that meeting Mr Pickering had presented a draft plan for a highway improvement scheme.

As a result of discussion at yesterday's meeting a number of amendments to the draft plan were suggested; scheme drawings had been forwarded to members in advance of this meeting of Elm Parish Council.

Councillor Pinnock informed members that the cost of the proposed scheme is estimated at £27,000; the County Council would provide £20,000, leaving Elm Primary School to provide funding of £1,000 and Elm Parish Council funding the balance of £6,000 (this could be funded from the ear-marked reserve within the Parish Council's accounts).

Councillor Pinnock stated that, subject to this council's early approval of the scheme (which is supported by the Headteacher at Elm Primary School) would, subject to the outcome of the necessary public consultation, enable the Local Highway Authority to deliver the scheme within the current financial year. He mentioned that the Constabulary had not responded to the suggestion that the speed limit be set at 30 mph for the

whole of the distance between Elm and Fridaybridge and that he would be writing to the Constabulary regarding the matter.

Councillor Pinnock suggested a small number of minor changes to the plans circulated, including re-location of speed cushions proposed for Begdale Road.

Members decided that the current situation be noted and that the plan circulated, subject to the minor changes suggested by Councillor Pinnock be approved.

67/16 Police matters

Although no member of the Wisbech and District Neighbourhood Policing Team was present at the meeting, PCSO Sue Clarke had provided to the Clerk a brief report on recent incidents of crime and disorder which had been reported to the Constabulary since the last meeting of the Parish Council, as follows:

- Elm - there had been very little crime in Elm, which PCSO Clarke considers may be due, in part, to the good work of the Neighbourhood Watch Team in reporting to the Constabulary any suspicious circumstances witnessed
- Fridaybridge – youth-related anti-social behaviour in the play area at Church Road; the PCSO had been visiting the play area and speaking with the youths and visiting the nearby care homes to give assurance that anti-social behaviour would not be tolerated. There have been a number a number of non-dwelling burglaries, thefts from motor vehicles and inconsiderate use of motorcycles
- Coldham – the only issue appears to be motorists' speeding.

In her report, PCSO Clarke mentions the excellent work being undertaken by the Elm Parish Speed Watch group, which had been supported on 5 October 2016 by the PCSO and members of the Special Constabulary; on that occasion, three speeding fines had been issued and words of advice given to twelve motorists within the period of one hour.

PCSO Clarke continues to undertake visits to schools and addresses the whole school regarding a number of topics, including road safety.

The PCSO reminded the council, through her report, that contact can be made with her by telephoning 07738 025220.

Members decided that the information reported by the Clerk, on behalf of PCSO Clarke, be noted.

68/16 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) Removal of condition 4 and variation of condition 11 of planning permission F/YR15/0424/F (Erection of a two-storey 5-bed dwelling with integral double garage) in relation to footway provision at plot 1, land south of 188 Fridaybridge Road, Elm – F/YR16/0840/F (applicant: Mr J Dardine).

Object, on the basis that conditions 4 and 11 (as written) are still required; if the provision of a footway were deemed necessary at the time of granting planning permission F/YR15/0424/F, it is required now; nothing which would justify a change of approach has happened in the vicinity of the site since that time.

- (2) Erection of a two-storey side extension and single-storey rear extension, to include 2 bay windows to existing dwelling, at 1 Overstone Road, Coldham – F/YR16/0889/F (applicant: Mr and Mrs D Brand).

That the application be supported.

69/16 Planning appeal in relation to proposed residential development at Henry Warby Avenue, Elm

Councillor Pinnock reminded members that he had sent a submission to Sajid Javis, Secretary of State, Gavin Barwell, Minister of State, and Stephen Barclay MP in relation to the appeal decision. He commented that, apart from an automated acknowledgement from Mr Javis, he had received no response from any of the recipients of his correspondence. Instead, the Secretary of State had passed Councillor Pinnock's submission to the Planning Inspectorate - the very Department at which the complaint had been levied. Councillor Pinnock stated that he is very disappointed at this situation.

Councillor Pinnock had circulated to members, in advance of the meeting, a copy of his submission and the response from the Planning Inspectorate. He had circulated also a letter from the MP to a local resident who had expressed displeasure with the decision reached by the Planning Inspectorate in this matter.

Councillor Pinnock commented that, clearly, the Planning Inspector had chosen to ignore what Councillor Pinnock considers to be the true intent of the Fenland Local Plan and in particular the wording of Policy LP12. Consequently, Councillor Pinnock had sent a further letter.

Councillor Pinnock made the point that each Local Planning Authority (LPA) is required to produce a Local Plan - which must be agreed by the Planning Inspectorate prior to adoption by the LPA. It is understood that it costs in the region of £200,000 to produce a Local Plan, with amendments/updates costing between £100,000 and £150,000. He made the point that if a Planning Inspector is able to over-ride the policies with a Local Plan and the views of the Parish Council and residents in such an arbitrary way, there would appear to be little or no justification for the expense and burden of adopting Local Plans. If an appeal is allowed on a point of planning law, the Inspector had acted correctly. Councillor Pinnock expressed the opinion that the Planning Inspector had interpreted subjectively Policy LP12 of the Fenland Local Plan, exhibiting a degree of discretion that would appear to be inconsistent with the Local Plan.

Members decided that

- (1) the information reported by Councillor Pinnock be noted and that he would keep the council updated on the matter;
- (2) given the upset that this development proposal has caused to many parishioners, the applicant, Elm United Charities, be no longer permitted use of the Parish Council office on a free-of-charge basis for its meetings; any future use would be charged at a rate of £15 per hour.

70/16 Reports from District and County Councillors for the parish

Given the absence from the meeting of the County Councillor who represents the parish of Elm (Gordon Gillick), no report was received by the Parish Council in relation to current County Council issues.

Councillor Sutton, one of the two District Councillors who represents the parish of Elm, informed members that he had no specific matters in relation to the parish to draw to the council's attention. He did, however, mention that the two Conservative candidates for the March North and Waldersey electoral division in the Cambridgeshire County Council elections in May 2017 are Steve Count and Jan French and that Mr Count would like to address a meeting of Elm Parish Council in the near future.

Although not present at the meeting Councillor Tanfield, the other District Councillor who represents the parish of Elm, had informed the Clerk, for reporting to members, that she had nothing specific to draw to the Parish Council's attention at this time but wished to remind the council that Fenland District Council would be making a decision in November 2016 as to its support or otherwise for the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough devolution proposal.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

71/16 Open spaces (including the cemetery) under the Parish Council's control

Members considered whether there are any issues relating to the open spaces under the Parish Council's control which require discussion by the Parish Council.

Further to minute 59/16, Councillor Pinnock reminded members that he had transcribed the council's handwritten burial registers for the period 1913 to 2016 into a digital format and he asked members how they wish to proceed with publication of this information.

The Clerk informed members that, further to minute 59/16, works to remove the tree at Elm Cemetery which overhung the vehicle-activated speed warning sign had been undertaken by a local contractor and the contractor which installed the bollards around the grassed areas at the Abington Grove/B1101 junction would be providing the council with a quotation for installation of a lockable, removable bollard at both of the locations mentioned at minute 59/16.

Members decided that

- (1) the digital copy of the council's burial records be published on the Elm Parish Council website and that Councillor Pinnock be requested to investigate, through dialogue with the council's website host, how best this could be achieved and then to implement such publication;
- (2) the information reported by the Clerk be noted.

72/16 Local Highway Improvements 2017/18

Further to minute 60/16, members considered the submission of a bid for highway improvement works.

Cllr Pinnock informed members that he had met with a member of staff at Meeko House, the children's home at March Road, Fridaybridge and Mr M Pickering, the Project Manager within the County Council's Highways Service and the Elm Parish Community Speedwatch Co-Ordinator regarding the concerns of Meeko House regarding the excessive speeding near its premises on the B1101. At that meeting it was agreed that Meeko House would submit an application for a LHI bid as there was, in the opinion of Mr Pickering, no advantage in the Elm Parish Council bidding for this scheme. He stated that it would possibly help Meeko House's bid if it were to receive the support of Elm Parish Council.

Councillor Mrs Davis expressed the opinion that there is a need for a LHI scheme to improve highway safety on the B1101 in the vicinity of Fridaybridge Primary School.

Members decided that Councillor Pinnock would make arrangements to meet with the Headteacher of Fridaybridge Primary School and Mr Pickering to discuss the feasibility of obtaining LHI funding for 2017/18 for a speed reduction scheme in the vicinity of the school and to report to the next meeting of Elm Parish Council on the outcome of the discussions.

73/16 Parish street lighting

Further to minute 38/16, the Clerk reported to members on a further meeting of Parish Council Chairmen and Clerks, convened by District Councillor King (Cabinet member with responsibility for Rural Affairs), hosted by Doddington Parish Council, which took place on 31 August 2016, with regard to parish street lighting in Fenland.

The Clerk mentioned that the current Balfour Beatty contract with Fenland District Council had expired earlier in the year but had been extended to the end of September 2016. District Councillor King informed the meeting that, because of company confidentiality, he was unable to provide attendees with detailed financial comparisons but was in a position to explain how the companies' quotes differed on a percentage basis. Balfour Beatty was the lowest of the three quotations received by Fenland District Council.

District Councillor King had informed the meeting that Fenland District Council (FDC) is still undertaking its Comprehensive Spending Review; however, based upon the quotations received, FDC would probably be re-appointing Balfour Beatty as the preferred supplier for street lighting services, despite the contractor's past poor performance. It is likely that a new 3 years repair and maintenance contract would be offered to Balfour Beatty to commence from 1 April 2017. There would be a requirement, as part of the new contract, for all Category 2 street lights would to be re-surveyed and a detailed condition report of each column to be provided to each Parish Council. The County Council's street lighting PFI contract is a major element in FDC's decision-making process.

The Clerk informed members that the representatives of Parish Councils at the meeting were still unhappy that they would need to deal with Balfour Beatty, going forward, and expressed forcibly that they were very disappointed with Balfour Beatty's performance to date and would not trust this contractor to improve in the future, even given the KPIs, penalty clauses and break clauses that were being suggested by FDC.

A number of points had been made during the meeting and District Councillor King undertook to make further enquiries and to report back to Parish Councils in due course.

The representatives of the Parish Councils at the meeting stated that they would be happy for the Chairman of Doddington Parish Council to progress a project that would ultimately "divorce" the Parish Councils' lighting stock from FDC and Balfour Beatty. The Clerk explained to members what was meant by the term "divorce" in this context; i.e. for the Parish Councils to enter into direct contractual arrangements with a lighting contractor; no longer operating maintenance arrangements via the District Council.

Members decided that the information reported by the Clerk be noted and that he would forward to members, when received, the further information promised by District Councillor King.

74/16 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
M J Coates Memorials	Cemetery memorial	£222.00
Richard King Memorials	Memorial inscription	£99.00
Richard King Memorials	Memorial inscription	£99.00
Richard King Memorials	Cemetery memorial	£1,137.50

Fenland District Council	Precept: second 50%	£24,575.00
Fenland District Council	Council Tax Support Grant: second 50%	£1,719.50
Turner and Son	Interment fee	£517.50
UK Power Networks	Electricity wayleaves	£244.11
J P Smith	Allotment rent	£1,750.00
Total Income		£30,887.21

Expenditure

PKF Littlejohn LLP	External Audit 2015/16 (includes VAT of £60.00)	£360.00
R J Warren Ltd	Grounds maintenance contract (includes VAT of £263.58)	£1,581.47
T Jordan	Salary (less income tax of £193.15 and NI of £35.25) and reimbursement of expenses	£898.66
C Brennan	Playing field security (quarterly payment to 30 September 2016)	£100.00
Tuck Tree Services	Works to conifer and tree at Elm Cemetery	£250.00
Fenland District Council	Wheeled bin emptying at Elm Cemetery	£184.27
Fen Fencing Ltd	Supply and fit bollards around Elm war memorial (includes VAT of £179.00)	£1,074.00
Total Expenditure		£4,448.40

In addition, the Clerk reported on the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 30 September 2016 (in the total sum of 167,717.02), together with the figure as at 30 September 2015.

The Clerk reported on the management accounts that he had produced for the second quarter of the 2016/17 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.

Further to minute 14/16, the Clerk reported that the Parish Council's accounts for 2015/16 had been "signed off" by the External Auditor.

Members decided

- (1) that the income of £30,887.21 be noted and that the expenditure of £4,448.40 be authorised;
- (2) that the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 30 September 2016 and the position as at 30 September 2015 be noted;
- (3) to note that, after allowing for the Parish Council's ear-marked reserves (totalling £93,595.00) at 30 September 2016), the actual balance available to the Parish Council at 30 September 2016 was £47,210.19; making further allowance for a general contingency of £55,000 reduces the actual balance available to the Parish Council at 30 September 2016 to approximately - £19,122.00;

- (4) that the financial information within the second quarter's management accounts be noted;
- (5) that the situation regarding the Parish Council's accounts for 2015/16 be noted.

75/16 Grants to voluntary and charitable bodies – Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal 2015

Members considered making a donation, in addition to purchase of the annual Poppy Wreath, to this year's British Legion Poppy Appeal.

The Clerk reminded members that the Parish Council had made such a donation in 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015 (minutes 99/12, 90/13 102/14 (3) and 81/15 refer).

Members decided that a donation of £30.00 (the same level of funding as provided in 2015) be made to the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal 2016.

76/16 Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places in Fenland

Members considered responding to Fenland District Council's consultation exercise in relation to its review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations within the district; the review is necessary because of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's review of the electoral divisions for Cambridgeshire County Council.

Any changes to polling districts and polling places within Fenland would take effect from the County Council elections in May 2017 and the Town and Parish Council elections in May 2019.

The consultation period closes on 4 November 2016.

Members decided to note the consultation exercise and to make no comments to Fenland District Council in that regard.

77/16 Correspondence

Elm Friendship Club – financial assistance

Further to minute 15/16 (1), the Clerk read to members a Thank You card from the Secretary of the Elm Friendship Club expressing the club's appreciation of the financial assistance provided by Elm Parish Council towards its annual operating costs and informing the council that as a result of the funding which had been provided by the council, the club had enjoyed five coach trips (to Grimsby and Cleethorpes, Skegness (twice), Great Yarmouth, Sheringham and Cromer) over the summer.

Members decided that the content of the card be noted.

78/16 Date of next meeting

Members were reminded that the next meeting of the Parish Council is scheduled for 15 November 2016, to commencing at 7.00 pm, at the Parish Council office, Begdale Road, Elm.

Meeting finished at 8.10 pm

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

Date:.....