

ELM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING

27 JULY 2010 – 6.30 pm.

Present: Councillor Stokes, Vice-Chairman in the Chair; Councillors Cotterell, Mrs Cotterell, Mrs Johnson, Rogers, Softley, Tilney and Webb (from 7.00 pm).

Apologies: Councillors Brand, Mrs Hopkin, Mrs Pinnock and Pooley.

The minutes of the meeting of 15 June 2010 were confirmed and signed.

31/10 Clerk to Elm Parish Council

The Chairman introduced members to the new Clerk to Elm Parish Council, Mr T Jordan, who had taken on this role – following the retirement of the former Clerk, Mr J Smith, on 16 July 2010 - with effect from 19 July 2010.

Members welcomed Mr Jordan to his first meeting of Elm Parish Council.

32/10 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 and Councillor Rogers, who was attending his first meeting as a member of the Parish Council, stated that he has completed the necessary registration form and would send the document to the Clerk as a matter of priority.

33/10 Police matters

PC Julie Coales, of the Wisbech and District Neighbourhood Policing Team, attended the meeting to inform members of recent incidents of crime and disorder within the geographical area covered by Elm Parish Council, namely:

- Coldham – one small fire.
- Fridaybridge - thefts from vehicles and incidents of criminal damage.
- Elm - thefts of and from vehicles, one report of harassment, incidents of criminal damage and a small number of burglaries. Ms Coales stated that, in relation to the burglaries, a number of arrests have been made and enquiries are continuing.

Ms Coales responded to members’ questions.

Councillor Rogers expressed his appreciation of the efforts of the Neighbourhood Policing Team in addressing crime and disorder issues within the parish.

Members decided that the information provided by Ms Coales be noted.

34/10 Community-led Planning

Further to minute 20/10, Mr C Suckling and Mrs T Wadsley of the Community Development Team at Fenland District attended the meeting to update members on the review of the Elm Parish Plan and some of the community development activities affecting the parish.

Mr Suckling informed members that the meeting held on 29 June 2010 had been very useful in identifying that certain objectives within the Parish Plan are still to be achieved. The Community Development Team at Fenland District Council would, over the next month or so, identify the specific issues that require addressing. Once the outstanding issues have been identified, actions will be developed to address the issues. A further progress report will be made to the September 2010 meeting of the Parish Council.

Mr Suckling informed members that one of the issues within the Elm Parish Plan is the need for activities for children and young people; in this context, he circulated copies of a schedule of summer holiday activities which are to be delivered by the Community Development Team at Fenland District Council in partnership with the Locality Teams at Cambridgeshire County Council.

Mrs Wadsley informed the Parish Council that she will soon be taking on the responsibility for community development in the parish of Elm, instead of Mr Suckling.

Members decided that the information reported be noted.

35/10 Highway issues

(1) Jointly Funded Minor Highway Improvements 2011/12

Further to minute 19/10, members discussed a number of possible bids under this initiative.

Each of the potential schemes suggested by members, for various locations across the parish, had the aim of improving the safety of motorists and pedestrians by seeking to reduce vehicle speeds.

The Clerk informed members of the criteria applying to the submission of bids and the scoring system that is used by the County Council to determine the bids.

Members decided that a bid be submitted in respect of an appropriate means of reducing vehicle speeds (possibly a build-out into the carriageway) on March Road, Friday Bridge (in the stretch of road between Woodhouse Corner and the clock tower), plus the possible installation of an interactive speed limit sign.

(2) Surface dressing programme 2010

The Clerk reported the contents of an e-mail from the Local Highway Authority, in which it details the surface dressing works scheduled for a number of roads within Elm during the months of July and August 2010.

Members decided that the information provided by Local Highway Authority be noted.

(3) Street lighting audit

The Clerk reported on the results of the street lighting audit undertaken recently by Fenland District Council.

Generally, the existing street lamp columns and brackets within the parish are in good condition.

Members decided that the results of the street lighting audit be noted.

36/10 Elm Friendship Club – application for assistance

Members considered an application from Elm Friendship Club for either a financial contribution or use of the pavilion for club meetings.

Members are of the view that, to enable them to be in a position to give this request proper and full consideration, they need further information in relation to the manner in which Elm Friendship Club operates and the activities that it provides.

Members decided that

- (1) the Vice-Chairman would make contact with the Treasurer of the Elm Friendship Club to obtain the additional information required by the Parish Council to determine the request;
- (2) the Treasurer of the Elm Friendship Club be invited to attend the next Parish Council meeting to speak, during the Open Forum element of the meeting, in support of the club's request.

37/10 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) Formation of a vehicular access at Waldersea House, 172 March Road, Fridaybridge – F/YR10/0248/F (revised).

That the Parish Council has no additional comments to make in respect of the revisions to the application.

- (2) Change of use of first-floor accommodation to 4 x bedrooms and en-suites in connection with existing public house at the Artful Dodger public house, Low Road, Elm – F/YR10/0409/F (applicant: Mr A Edgoose).

That the application be supported.

- (3) Fell one Holy tree within a Conservation Area at Elm Manor, Main Road, Elm – F/YR10/0462/TRCA (applicant: Mr P Blackmore).

That the application be supported.

(Councillor Webb declared his personal interest in this application, by virtue of a friendship with the applicant)

- (4) Erection of a two-storey, 3-bed detached dwelling with associated parking on land east of 3 Overstone Road, Coldham - F/YR10/0496/F (applicant: Mrs P Hunns).

That the application be supported.

In addition, members noted that planning application F/YR10/0419/RM (proposing the erection of a 3-bed detached house with associated parking on land east of Fern Cottage, Begdale Road, Elm), which appeared on the agenda for the meeting, had been withdrawn by the applicant.

M38/10 Finance

The Clerk reported on the Parish Council's expenditure since the last meeting.

Members decided to note the details of the various items of expenditure, both in terms of cheques issued and payments made in cash, in the total sum of £7,030.99, and to approve such expenditure.

39/10 Elm Primary School Travel Plan

Further to minute 26/10, the Clerk drew members' attention to the Elm C of E Primary School Travel Plan, which has been produced, at the request of Cambridgeshire County Council, with the intention of setting in place measures to: increase the number of children walking to school; increase the number of children cycling to school; improve road safety; reduce car travel.

Members decided that the existence of the travel plan be noted and that the Parish Council would lend its support to the school in meeting the aspirations set out therein.

40/10 Elm Centre Management Committee

The Clerk reported an invitation from Fenland District Council for Elm Parish Council to appoint a representative to serve upon the Elm Centre Management Committee.

Members decided, given the number of Parish Councillors who were absent from this meeting, that consideration of this matter be deferred to the next meeting of the Parish Council.

41/10 Cemetery Cottage, Elm

Further to minute 28/10, members considered the latest position in this matter, in terms of

- the tenancy issue
- the dampness at the property
- the testing of the electrical system at the property.

Members decided, based upon the information reported by the Clerk in respect of each of the three issues and the comments made by the tenant of the property during the Open Forum element of the meeting (minute 47/10 (1) refers), to

- (1) continue with the action to achieve possession of the property;
- (2) take the approach now specified in relation to the tenant's rent arrears;
- (3) undertake no further repair or improvement works to the property at this time but to make an assessment of the condition of the property once back in possession of the Parish Council and to thereafter make a decision as to the future of the property as an asset of the Parish Council;
- (4) note the report produced by a local electrical contractor in relation to the condition of the property's electrical system;
- (5) note that the works to address the dampness of the property had been undertaken.

(Members resolved to exclude the public from the meeting for this item of business on the grounds that it involved the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 3 and 6 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended))

42/10 the Leam, Elm

Further to minute 25/10, the Clerk reported on the latest position regarding the decisions made at that minute; the situation being that the works to provide an entrance gate at Back Road and a driveway to Mr Bennett's home had been undertaken and that a meeting between the Chairman of the Parish Council and officers of the relevant agencies – to address the fencing/ivy issues – is currently being arranged.

Members decided to note the information reported.

(Councillor Webb declared his personal interest in this item of business, by virtue of his residing at The Leam)

43/10 Elm Parish Council website

The Clerk proposed to members that a website for Elm Parish Council be developed, as an additional means of providing public access to information relating to the Parish Council; the types of information would include agenda and minutes of meetings, contact details of Parish Councillors, statutory notices, fees and charges for services delivered by the Parish Council.

The Clerk informed members of costings, for the creation and ongoing maintenance of a Parish Council website, which he had obtained from the company that provides this facility for another Parish Council within the district; it is estimated that the costs for the first year would total £410 (plus VAT) and that the annual running costs for subsequent years would be of the order of £180 (plus VAT).

Members decided that the Clerk be authorised to progress the development and implementation of a website for Elm Parish Council, on the basis that he had outlined to the Parish Council.

(The Chairman agreed to this item of business being discussed as a matter of urgency to enable a website to be developed as a matter of priority)

44/10 Norfolk Green bus services affecting the parish of Elm

The Clerk reported a letter from Norfolk Green, in which the company details the changes that it will be making to the 46 and the 56 services and the consequences (in terms of minor changes to bus times) for bus travellers living between March and Wisbech.

Members decided that the information be noted.

(The Chairman agreed to this item of business being discussed as a matter of urgency to enable members to be kept informed of the latest situation)

45/10 Grass cutting within the village

The Clerk reported that an advertisement would appear in the Fenland Citizen newspaper on 28 July 2010 for the recruitment of a new part-time, seasonal grounds person and that it is proposed that the Chairman and the Clerk would undertake interviewing of candidates on 12 August 2010.

In addition, some members mentioned the need for cutting of the grass at the entrance to Grove Gardens, Elm.

Members decided that the current situation in relation to the recruitment of a grounds person be noted and that the developer of Grove Gardens be requested to arrange the necessary grass cutting.

46/10 Former Clerk to the Council

The Clerk reported a request from the former Clerk to the Council, who retired from post on 16 July 2010, for agreement to pay him for additional hours that he had worked immediately prior to his leaving the Parish Council's employ and to meet the cost of his purchasing a printer to replace (because of wear and tear) the personal one that he had used on Parish Council business.

Members decided that the request be approved, the Clerk to the Council being authorised to agree the exact details with the former Clerk to the Council.

(Members resolved to exclude the public from the meeting for this item of business on the grounds that it involved the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended))

47/10 Open Forum

(1) Cemetery Cottage, Elm

Mrs V Morton, the tenant of this property, explained why she had not been living at the property; this is because of its damp condition. Mrs Morton circulated photographs of the interior of the property to demonstrate the existence of mould in certain areas.

Mrs Morton expressed the opinion that the property, because of its current condition, is not habitable and, hence, why she had not been paying the rent. She circulated a number of documents relating to the responsibilities of landlords and tenants etc.

Members agreed to take into account both the comments made and the documentation provided by Mrs Morton when discussing the agenda item relating to this matter (minute 41/10 refers).

(2) Co-operative Society – strawberry farm planning proposals

Mr Howard informed members that he had met last week with representatives of the Co-operative Society regarding its planning proposals for the strawberry farm in Coldham and made the point that the proposals had not yet been referred to the Parish Council for consideration.

Mr Howard challenged the claims being made by the Co-operative Society regarding both the estimated number of vehicle movements that would take place in relation to this site and the number of residential caravans that would be located at the site.

Mr Howard requested that when the Parish Council is consulted formally by Fenland District Council on a planning application for this proposal, it asks for a planning condition restricting the number of persons allowed to occupy caravans to 432 (not the 648 currently being sought) and expresses concern regarding the absence of footpaths and street lighting. He made the plea that if the Parish Council recommends approval of the proposal, it asks for a planning condition requiring the provision of tree planting on commencement (not upon completion) of the development.

Councillor Mrs Johnson reported briefly on a meeting that she and Councillor Brand had attended recently in relation to this matter.

Members decided to note the comments made by Mr Howard and to take them into account at the time of considering a planning application for this proposal.

48/10 Next meeting

Members decided that the next meeting of the Parish Council be held on 24 August 2010, commencing at 6.30 pm, at the Pavilion, Begdale Road, Elm.

Meeting finished at 8.30 pm

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

Date:.....