

ELM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING

21 SEPTEMBER 2011 – 6.30 pm.

Present: Councillor Brand, Chairman; Councillors Mrs Hopkin, Mrs Johnson, Mrs Lankfer, Pinnock, Stokes and Tilney.

In attendance: District Councillor Sutton.

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

The minutes of the meeting of 16 August 2011 were confirmed and signed.

48/11 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.

49/11 Matters arising from minutes of last meeting

(1) Facilities for young people in the parish (minute 38/11 (1))

A number of residents attended the meeting to listen to any updates on this initiative and to express their concerns about the possible use of land at Grove Gardens for the siting of a skateboard park.

Given the absence from the meeting of Councillor Rogers, members were unable to be informed of any developments in respect of this initiative.

The Clerk read to members an e-mail from a resident of Grove Gardens, which set out the concerns of residents of this estate regarding the possible use of land at Grove Gardens for the siting of a skateboard park. In summary, these concerns relate to:

- such a use generating additional anti-social behaviour (including vandalism, under-age drinking, bad language) and the potential impact upon the resources of the Police to address the issues
- additional litter being generated on the estate
- the cost of any lighting to be provided and whether this would need to be met by the Parish Council (and, consequently, by the community)
- possible access and maintenance issues
- noise and disturbance that could be caused to nearby residents
- the possible need to provide fencing and the costs of both making this provision and any subsequent maintenance works
- the sustainability of such a facility and the potential for it to become an eyesore if it then fell into disrepair.

After reading the e-mail, the Clerk reminded members of the decisions made to date in respect of this initiative and sought, through this reminder, to enlighten the local residents who had attended the meeting of the current position. In summary, the Parish Council has merely supported the principle of providing a skateboard park in Elm but has not committed any financial resources or identified a potential site. With regard to the land at Grove

Gardens as a possible site for a skateboard park, this has merely been “flagged up” as an option worth exploring; the land is not in the ownership of the Parish Council.

The Clerk read to members the information that he had received from Fenland District Council in relation to the planning and ownership status of the open space area off Grove Gardens, as follows:

- Fenland District Council has been working with the developers of the site for the last 3 to 4 years to achieve an adoptable standard. It is hoped that this will happen soon. Until adopted by the District Council, the land remains in the ownership of the developers
- Two elements of public space have been provided as part of the development; one area is an equipped play area and the other is community open space (which could, in principle, be used for the siting of a skateboard park)
- It is possible that the Section 106 monies available to Elm (minute 49/11 (2) below refers) could be utilised as a contribution towards the cost of a skateboard park.

Members decided that the information reported by the Clerk be noted and that a copy of the local residents’ e-mail be forwarded by the Clerk to Parish Councillors

(2) Section 106 Planning Agreement monies relating to the parish of Elm (minute 44/11)

The Clerk reported the information requested by members at minute 44/11, as set out in the table below.

Planning application reference	Amount of funding	Purpose to which funding could be utilised	Body holding the funding
F/YR03/1149/F - Elm	£7,054.12	Public open space provision in the village	Fenland District Council (and has indicated that it would consider allocating this funding to the play equipment project)
F/YR01/0795 - Fridaybridge	£3,249.16	Public open space provision in the village	Fenland District Council
F/YR00/18/O - Fridaybridge	£20,400.00	Public open space provision in the village	Fenland District Council
F/YR01/1269/F - Coldham	£24,439.86	Renewable energy themed projects across the parish	Fenland District Council

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

50/11 Housing in Elm parish

(1) Proposals for re-development of The Dale, Elm

Members received a presentation from Darren Blake of Roddons Housing Association and Marcus Nelson of MEPK Architects in relation to a possible scheme for re-development of The Dale site at Elm.

Mr Blake explained that de-commissioning of The Dale, which had ceased to be fit for purpose because of the nature of the accommodation (i.e. bedsits), is almost complete. He informed members that part of the agreement for the transfer of Fenland District Council's housing stock to Roddons Housing Association (RHA) required RHA to build 500 additional properties over a five years period and that re-development of The Dale would produce some of those additional properties.

Mr Nelson circulated copies of an initial draft plan for re-development of The Dale. The plan shows 21 properties (comprising houses with 2 or 3 bedrooms), 38 car parking spaces and retention of all of the existing trees on-site, additional tree planting and landscaping. It is proposed that although they would be constructed in a way which would maximise their environmental efficiency, the new dwellings would have a traditional appearance.

Mr Nelson explained the factors that had been taken into account in producing the draft scheme, including seeking to reflect the character of existing nearby properties, being able to achieve Roddons' requirements in addressing housing need in the district and complying with the development policies of the Local Planning Authority. He added that there would be consultation with Cambridgeshire Constabulary in terms of "designing out crime".

Mr Blake informed members that the new properties would let to people on Fenland District Council's housing waiting list; eligibility for occupation would not be limited to people with a local connection to the parish of Elm.

Mr Blake reported that Roddons Housing Association has submitted a bid to the Government for funding of new house building and that the bid includes this scheme.

In terms of the time scale for the project, Mr Nelson informed members that

- it is currently proposed that a planning application be submitted to Fenland District Council in November or December 2011 (prior to submission of a planning application, there would be further consultation with Elm Parish Council).
- the dwellings would be ready for occupation within 15 to 18 months of planning permission being granted.

Both Mr Blake and Mr Nelson responded to members' questions.

Members decided that the information presented by Mr Blake and Mr Nelson be noted and that the proposal for re-development of The Dale site be supported in principle.

(2) Rural Exception sites – affordable housing for local people

Further to minute 107/10, Mr Blake informed members that, although no housing needs survey had been undertaken, it had been established that 38 people on Fenland District Council's housing waiting list have a "local connection" with the parish of Elm and would, therefore, would meet the criteria for occupation of an affordable home built on a rural exception site within the parish.

Consequently, Mr Blake sought the Parish Council's assistance in identifying possible rural exception sites. He explained that Roddons Housing Association is looking for suitable sites of approximately one acre, to provide affordable housing for around one-third of those in need.

Members decided that the information reported by Mr Blake be noted and that they would be happy to assist him in identifying possible rural exception sites within the parish of Elm.

51/11 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 – vehicle seen being used suspiciously in a field off Station Road.
- Fridaybridge – one incident of theft from a vehicle; a number of incidents of theft from gardens, sheds and fields.
- Elm – one incident of theft from a vehicle; a number of incidents of theft from gardens, sheds and fields; reports of persons acting suspiciously at Abington Grove and Limes Avenue; two dwelling burglaries; two minor incidents of youth-related anti-social behaviour.

The PCSO also informed members of emerging and ongoing issues across the area covered by the Wisbech and District Neighbourhood Policing Team. He reported that there has, during the last month, been an increase in the number of dwelling burglaries across the Wisbech and District Neighbourhood; he informed members of the plan that has been implemented by the Neighbourhood Policing Team to combat the situation and he asked that members of the Parish Council “spread the word” regarding the need for the public to be vigilant and to take the necessary security measures to protect their property.

PCSO Bogunovic responded to members’ questions on his report.

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

52/11 Reports from District and County Councillors for the parish

Neither Councillor Mrs Tuck, the County Councillor for the parish of Elm, nor Councillor Cotterell, one of the two District Councillors for the parish of Elm, was in attendance at the meeting.

Councillor Sutton, the other District Councillor for the parish of Elm reported on matters of relevance to the local community, as follows:

- (1) Registration of septic tanks – further to minute 40/11, there has been a change recently to the requirement of the Environment Agency for the registration of septic tanks. The Government is currently reviewing the situation and provided that the user of a septic tank is able to comply with the position statement on the Environment Agency’s website, there is no need for a registration to be made.
- (2) District Councillor Cotterell – currently unwell; Councillor Sutton is concerned for Councillor Cotterell’s well-being.
- (3) Fenland District Council’s Rural Capital Grants Fund – this could be a potential source of funding towards the cost of providing a skateboard park and play area in Elm.
- (4) Fenland Communities Development Plan Core Strategy (minute 45/11 (3) refers) – Councillor Sutton suggested that Elm Parish Council should participate in the consultation process relating to the draft strategy

The Clerk reported that he had requested the attendance, at a future meeting, of an appropriate representative of the Environment Agency (EA) to explain the details of the septic tanks registration scheme and EA’s proposals for publicity in that regard; the Environment Agency had responded to the request by stating that, due to time and cost restrictions, the company would not be able to provide a presentation to the Parish Council but it suggested that members of the public may wish to view the information relating to septic tanks registration and discharges on its website, via the following link: <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/homeandleisure/118753.aspx>.

Members decided that the information reported by Councillor Sutton and the Clerk be noted.

53/11 Highway issues

Councillor Pinnock commented that he had never seen the new street lamp at the top of Abington Grove – installed in March 2011 – illuminated.

The Chairman referred to the unfinished condition of the footpath adjacent to Bramley Court, Coldham and enquired as to whether the Parish Council would be prepared (because of the unadopted nature of that development) to fund the necessary works to complete this footpath, in the interests of public safety.

Members decided that

- (1) the street lighting issue at Abington Grove, Elm be brought to the attention of the Street Lighting Team at Cambridgeshire County Council;
- (2) the Chairman would obtain three quotations for the necessary works to the footpath adjacent to Bramley Court, for further consideration of this matter at the next meeting.

54/11 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 two-storey front extension and alteration of flat roof to mono-pitched roof of existing dwelling at Rookery Farm, Maltmas Drove, Fridaybridge – F/YR11/0617/F (applicant: Cambridgeshire County Council).

That the application be supported.

- (2) Erection of two x two-storey, 3-bed dwellings on land north of Jarlyn, Low Road, Elm – F/YR11/0618/F (applicant: Mr A Traquair).

That the application be supported.

- (3) Erection of a single-storey rear extension and detached garage/store to existing dwelling at 1 Wales bank, Elm – F/YR11/0628/F (applicant: Mr M Lakey).

That the application be supported.

- (4) Variation of condition 4 of planning permission F/YR10/0050/F (change of use of land and buildings to form a health and safety training centre, involving siting of associated equipment and portacabin for use as a testing centre) to allow opening of eastern access for use by bungalow only at Goosetree Farm, Goosetree Estate , Rings End – F/YR11/0650/F (applicant: Mr P Smith).

That the application be supported.

- (5) Erection of a two-storey side extension to form annexe to existing dwelling as 16 Abington Grove, Elm – F/YR11/0664/F (applicants: Mr and Mrs M and C Holland).

That the application be supported but raise concern, because of the location of the property, regarding the adequacy of the on-site car parking facilities.

(Councillor Pinnock declared his personal interest in this application, by virtue of his ownership and residency of a property at Abington Grove)

- (6) Works to one London Plane within a Conservation Area at Elm House, Main Road, Elm – F/YR11/0698/TRCA (applicant: Mrs D Bullard).

That the application be supported.

In addition, the Clerk reported that planning application F/YR11/0591 (Erection of 5 x 5-bed, three-storey dwellings on land west of Townfield House, Low Road, Elm), considered by the Parish Council at minute 42/11, had been withdrawn by the applicant.

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

55/11 Finance

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

Income

A R Clingo	Interment of ashes fee - Edgeley	£125.00
Richard King Memorials	New memorial tablet and additional inscription.	£160.00
Grounds & Co.	Cottage rent (less fees)	£524.00
M J Coates	Memorial inscription	£60.00
A R Clingo	Purchase of garden of Rest plot and interment fee - Jeffs	£235.00
Mrs J Craven	Purchase of Garden of Rest plot	£110.00
Total Income		£1,214.00

Expenditure

R J Warren Ltd	Grounds maintenance contract	£1,226.41
Aon	Additional insurance premium due to increase in cover	£31.22
Wisbech Youth Clubs	Financial support for Elm and Fridaybridge Youth Club: April – September 2011	£4,271.00
HM Revenue and Customs	Clerk's Income tax (June, July and August 2011)	£383.47
T Jordan	Salary (less income tax of £150.93), Broadband and other expenses	£742.34
Moore Stephens	Audit fee 2010/11	£494.40
Total Expenditure		£7,148.84

In addition, the Clerk reported on the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 31 August 2011 (in the total sum of £120,997.65), together with the month-end figures for each of the preceding six months.

Further to minute 31/11, the Clerk presented the report of the External Auditor in relation to the Parish Council's Annual Return for the financial year ended 31 March 2011.

Although he had "signed off" the Council's accounts for 2010/11, the External Auditor made the point that "the Council did not approve the statement of accounts until 19 July 2011, in contravention of the Audit and Accounts Regulations 2003 (as amended), which requires approval by 30 June 2011".

Further to minute 43/11, members discussed the level of increase to be applied to allotment rents.

Members decided that

- (1) the income of £1,214.00 be noted and that the expenditure of £7,148.84 be authorised;
- (2) the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 31 August 2011, together with the month-end figures for each of the preceding six months, be noted;
- (3) the comments made by the External Auditor in respect of the Parish Council's Annual Return 2010/11 be noted;
- (4) allotment rents be increased to £100.00 (from £75.00) per acre with effect from October 2012 and that the tenants be given the necessary notice of this increase by the Clerk.

56/11 Correspondence

- (1) Review of hackney carriage and private hire licensing conditions.

The Clerk reported on the consultation exercise currently being undertaken by Fenland District Council, between 8 August and 24 October 2011, in relation to a review of its hackney carriage and private hire driver, vehicle and operator licensing conditions.

The Clerk informed members of the ways in which interested parties are able to participate in this consultation exercise.

Members decided to note the information reported by the Clerk and that they had no comments to make in relation to Fenland District Council's hackney carriage and private hire driver, vehicle and operator licensing conditions.

- (2) Victim Support - request for a financial donation.

The Clerk reported a request from Victim Support for a financial donation towards the cost of providing support to people whose lives have been affected by crime.

Members decided, in the absence of any evidence that people in the parish of Elm had received assistance from this organisation, that no financial donation be made to Victim Support.

- (3) North East Cambridgeshire: Review of polling districts and polling places.

The Clerk reported on the consultation exercise currently being undertaken by Fenland District Council (FDC), between 26 August and 30 September 2011, in relation to a review, in accordance with Section 16 of the Electoral Administration Act 2006, of where FDC locates its polling districts and polling places in North East Cambridgeshire for the purpose of Parliamentary and local government elections.

The consultation letter from Fenland District Council (FDC), which was read to members by the Clerk, gave a definition of the terms of polling district, polling place and polling station; the letter was accompanied by a consultation feedback form.

Members provided responses to each of the questions asked on the form. In summary, members feel that the current polling places in the parish of Elm are suitable. Members feel unable to suggest potential polling stations that would be better than those used currently by Fenland District Council; they are all located well to the electorate that each station serves and, in general, provide appropriate facilities for voters' access needs to be met.

It is not ideal that voters living in Rings End need to travel out of the settlement to cast their vote but members recognise that little alternative exists. With regard to the polling station in Coldham, the only possible difficulty is the absence of any off-street car parking facilities and the consequent need for voters to park their vehicles on the B1101; once again, the Parish Council is aware that alternative options are limited.

Members decided that their responses to the consultation questions asked by Fenland District Council be forwarded by the Clerk to FDC no later than 30 September 2011.

(4) Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Local Development Framework.

The Clerk read to members a joint letter from Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council detailing the current situation regarding development of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Local Development Framework, including the fact that consultation on the associated Waste Management Design Guide is currently underway.

Consultation on the Waste Management Design Guide runs between 5 September and 17 October 2011 and the Clerk informed members of the various means by which the public are able to participate in this exercise.

Members decided that the content of the letter be noted.

(5) Consultation on the County Council's review of its decision to remove all subsidised bus service funding.

The Clerk read to members a letter from Cambridgeshire County Council regarding the review of its decision to remove all subsidised bus service funding.

The letter makes the point that the County Council currently provides financial subsidy to around 20% of bus services across Cambridgeshire but, because of the need for the County Council to make total budget reductions of approximately £540 million over the next five years, this financial support may not be possible in future.

The Cabinet at the County Council has recently decided to review last year's budget decision to cut the £2.7 million spent currently on subsidising bus journeys across Cambridgeshire over the next four years.

As well as looking again at the funding provided to subsidised bus services, the County Council is working with bus operators, community transport providers, local councils and businesses to see if it is possible to provide alternative and viable ways of meeting transport needs of communities.

The Clerk informed members of the various means by which the public are able to participate in this review (one of those methods being the on-line questionnaire at www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/busreview), which runs until 9 December 2011.

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

(6) Fenland Strategic Partnership Transport and Access Group – Fenland Rail Development Strategy.

The Clerk reported a letter from the Fenland Strategic Partnership Transport and Access Group, informing of the consultation exercise in relation to its Fenland Rail Development Strategy; the consultation exercise runs from 10 September to 2 December 2011.

The strategy, which is scheduled for adoption in 2012, aims to achieve service improvements, better stations, more community involvement and influence the terms of the new rail franchises between now and 2015.

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

(7) Elm Cemetery.

The Clerk read to members a letter requesting consent to place temporarily a bench on a burial plot which had been purchased by residents of the parish.

The Clerk reminded members of the circumstances in which the requesters had purchased two adjoining burial plots in Elm Cemetery recently. Although sympathetic to those circumstances, members were, however, very concerned about the precedent that approval of this request could set; if the Parish Council were to allow the requesters to place a bench or any other structure on a vacant burial plot, it would be difficult to resist other similar requests.

Members felt that not only could such approvals result in various and numerous structures being located throughout the cemetery but could cause difficulties for the grounds maintenance contractors in cutting the grass etc.

In addition, the Clerk reported a request from a disabled visitor to Elm Cemetery for a key to the gate; the reason for the request being that the visitor, who has difficulty in walking, wishes to access the cemetery by car. Although sympathetic to the circumstances of the visitor, members were, however, very concerned about the precedent that approval of this request could set; if the Parish Council were to provide this person with a key and allow her vehicular access to the cemetery, it would be difficult to resist other similar requests. Furthermore, members consider that, with the exception of those used by funeral directors and the Council's grounds maintenance contractor, there should be no vehicular access to Elm Cemetery.

Members decided, for the reasons mentioned above, not to approve the request for consent to place temporarily a bench on a burial plot in Elm Cemetery or the request for a key to the cemetery gate.

(8) Queen's Diamond Jubilee.

The Clerk reported a letter from Fenland District Council, offering advice and guidance on events management to those councils which are considering organising a commemorative event.

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

(9) Community-led planning support in Fenland.

The Clerk read to members a letter from Fenland District Council explaining that the support which had been provided to the community-led planning process in Fenland by the District Council would now be delivered by Cambridgeshire ACRE instead.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

57/11 Elm war memorial

Councillor Pinnock mentioned a recent incident of a vehicle being parked on the grassed area adjacent to the war memorial and efforts that had been made to prevent the situation occurring again.

As a result of the incident, it had become apparent that the ownership of the grassed area is unclear.

Members decided that the Clerk would seek to clarify the ownership of this grassed area.

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

58/11 Land at the rear of Grove Gardens, Elm

Councillor Pinnock suggested that it may be possible for the land which is allocated for community open space at this development to be used for other purposes, which could result in benefits for Fenland District Council, Elm Parish Council and, consequently, the residents of Elm parish.

Members decided that the Clerk would seek to obtain from Fenland District Council the wording of the element of the Section 106 Planning Obligation relating to the community open space provision at this site.

(The Chairman agreed to this item of business being discussed as a matter of urgency to enable the suggestion to be examined without delay)

59/11 Parish Council assets

In response to Councillor Pinnock's enquiry as to whether the Parish Council's "spare" laptop computer was still in the possession of a former member of the Parish Council, Councillor Stokes stated that he had collected the computer from the former councillor.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

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

60/11 Next meeting

Members were reminded that the next meeting of the Parish Council had been scheduled for 18 October 2011, commencing at 6.30 pm, at the Parish Council office, Begdale Road, Elm.

Meeting finished at 8.30 pm

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

Date:.....