

# ELM PARISH COUNCIL

## MINUTES OF MEETING

17 JULY 2012 – 7.00 pm.

**Present:** Councillor Brand, Chairman; Councillors Cotterell, Mrs Cotterell, Mrs Hopkin, Mrs Johnson, Milham, Pinnock, Stokes, Tilney and Webb.

**In attendance:** District Councillor Sutton.

**Apologies:** Councillor Mrs Lankfer and County Councillor Mrs Tuck.

The minutes of the meeting of 19 June 2012 were confirmed and signed.

### 31/12 Members' Code of Conduct

The Clerk reported on the changes to the conduct framework for members under the Localism Act 2011; the regulations in this regard came into effect on 1 July 2012.

Under the new regulations, there is no longer a national code of conduct; it is now a statutory requirement for each council to adopt its own code of conduct. A code of conduct can contain whatever rules a council wishes, provided that the code conforms to the seven principals of public life set out in the legislation.

Fenland District Council has produced a code of conduct for its members and makes the point that if a local council adopts the code of conduct used by the District Council, it can be assumed that the local council's code would be compliant with the principals.

The Register of Members' Interests has also changed; there are three important changes:

- There are criminal sanctions for failure to register properly.
- The registration of interests is for the member and those interests of which they are aware for their spouse, civil partner or person with whom they live as such.
- The law requires the register to be published on the District Council's website; also on the website of the local council if it has one.

The Clerk had circulated to members, in advance of the meeting, a copy of the new register form (and other guidance documents), which must be sent to the Monitoring Officer at Fenland District Council within 28 days of adoption of a code of conduct by a Town/Parish Council.

The Clerk explained to members the new framework for the declaration of interests; these relate principally to the declaration of disclosable pecuniary interests and the fact that complaints from the public regarding the failure of a member to declare an interest is no longer a matter for a Standards Committee of the District Council but for reporting to the Police. Any councillor found guilty of failure to disclose or declare a pecuniary interest could face a fine up to £5,000 and/or disqualification as a councillor for up to 5 years.

A member with a pecuniary interest may make application, in writing, for a dispensation to enable speaking or voting or both, to the nominated proper officer of the council of which he or she is a member. Therefore, it is necessary for a Town/Parish Council to formally appoint this person. A dispensation can be granted for a specific meeting or for any period of up to 4 years.

Complaints against Town and Parish Council members, with the exception of those in relation to failure to disclose or declare pecuniary interests, will continue to be dealt with at Fenland District Council; a Conduct Committee has been established to deal with these.

Members decided, unanimously, that

- (1) the information reported by the Clerk be noted;
- (2) a code of conduct for Elm Parish Council, based upon the one produced by Fenland District Council, be adopted with immediate effect;
- (3) the Clerk to the Council be appointed as the proper officer for the determination of applications from members for dispensations.

### **32/12 Progress on actions from minutes of last meeting**

#### **(1) Facilities for young people in the parish (minute 20/12 (1))**

The Clerk reported that it had been necessary, because of other priorities, for Fenland District Council (FDC) to put a number of projects, including the adoption of the open space at Grove Gardens, on hold. FDC anticipates that it will be able to make progress in relation to the "on hold" projects after the end of July 2012.

Members decided that the information reported by the Clerk be noted and that he would continue to seek updates from Fenland District Council for reporting to each meeting of the Parish Council.

#### **(2) Elm Cemetery – possible uses for former Chapel of Rest (minute 20/12 (3) refers)**

Members considered further the possibility of seeking planning permission for a suitable alternative of use of the former Chapel of Rest at Elm Cemetery.

The Clerk reminded members of the information that he had reported in this regard at minute 20/12 (3).

Members decided that, given the current economic situation, and its detrimental impact upon the property market, no action be taken to pursue an alternative use of this building at the current time; the matter would be re-considered when the economic situation improves.

#### **(3) Coldham playing field – electricity supply (minute 20/12 (5))**

Members received further information from Mr Hubbard of the Coldham Residents' Action Group Ltd (CRAG) in relation to the group's request to Elm Parish Council for financial support towards the cost of installing an electricity supply at Coldham playing field.

Mr Hubbard reminded members that the desire to provide an electricity supply at Coldham playing field is to support community events, such as the Annual Village Fun Day, without the need to hire an electricity generator on each occasion.

Mr Hubbard circulated copies of the quotations that had been obtained by CRAG for the provision of the electricity supply. He informed members that the Co-operative Society had promised some money (but the amount is unknown) to CRAG in the near future.

Mr Hubbard informed members that CRAG currently possesses funds of approximately £11,000 and proposes to use some of those funds to meet the £7,286 cost of achieving an electricity supply to the field. The outstanding cost will then be for getting the supply from the field to the cabin. He expressed the hope that Elm Parish Council would feel able to help CRAG meet the shortfall in funding.

District Councillor Sutton reported that he had attended a meeting involving representatives of the Coldham Residents' Action Group Ltd and the relevant officer of Fenland District Council, with the aim of seeking to obtain funding via Section 106 Planning Obligation monies held by that council. Unfortunately, because of the very specific nature of the criteria for accessing this funding, this scheme does not meet the criteria. He stated that the District Council had indicated that it may be possible, with the support of Elm Parish Council, to broaden the criteria for accessing this Section 106 Obligation money.

Members feel that the criteria for accessing this money should be broadened. Currently, it is almost impossible to produce a scheme which meets the criteria; members are of the view that no community benefit is being achieved by this money remaining in the bank accounts of Fenland District Council.

Members decided that

- (1) CRAG be requested to obtain further quotations for this work;
- (2) CRAG would provide the Parish Council with details of the other funding applications it had submitted and the outcomes of these applications;
- (3) the Clerk would write to Fenland District Council, requesting that the criteria for accessing this Section 106 Obligation money be broadened, so that this funding could be used in ways which would achieve greater community benefit;
- (4) this matter be considered at the each meeting of the Parish Council until a final decision in relation to the request for financial support is taken.

*(Councillor Brand declared his non-pecuniary interest in this item, by virtue of his membership of the Coldham Residents Action Group, and retired from the meeting for the duration of the discussion and voting thereon)*

**(4) Speed limit on March Road, Coldham (minute 23/12 (1))**

The Clerk reported that he and the Chairman had met, in Coldham, with the relevant officer of the Local Highway Authority on 3 July 2012 and agreement had been reached on the exact locations for speed limit signs and road markings in relation to the proposal for a reduction in the speed limit along the B1101 through Coldham. Following the site meeting, the officer of the Local Highway Authority had produced a plan showing the agreed speed limit sign locations; the Clerk showed the plan to members.

The Clerk reminded members that the Local Highway Authority would be publicising the Parish Council's proposal for a speed limit change, in a combined press advertisement with a number of other such proposals, next month.

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

**(5) Elm Parish Council website (minute 26/12)**

The Clerk informed members of the response from the website host/administrator in relation to the questions asked by Councillor Pinnock at minute 26/12.

The Parish Council's website host/administrator states that

- there is no use of cookies on the website.
- the facility to obtain usage statistics in respect of the website could be made available at a cost of £50 per annum.
- the only way that people could subscribe to the website is by providing a registration form which could be completed by anyone who wished to be notified of updates to website content. However, this would then require the Clerk to e-mail those persons when updates are published. The cost to the Parish Council of introducing a registration form would be £36.00.
- with regard to the annual cost to Elm Parish Council of the website, the Parish Council is sent an invoice every two years, not annually, as the domain name is renewed for two year periods. The cost for two years is: Domain name £30, Hosting £120, 3 x Web pages including updates £120 per page; this makes a total charge every two years of £510 plus VAT. There may also be the occasional charge for additional updates requiring extra content.
- with regard to making the website more interactive, the website host/administrator would require an indication of what might be required by the Parish Council if he were to be able comment as to the feasibility or cost.

Members decided that the information reported be noted and that the Parish Council would purchase the facility to obtain usage statistics in respect of the website.

**(6) Grove Gardens, Elm (minute 29/12)**

The Clerk reported that as a result of his referring this matter to Fenland District Council (FDC), and FDC's consequent liaison with the land owner (Kier Anglia), the algae had been removed from the pond. This approach had also proved successful in relation to achieving subsequently the removal of articles that had been deposited, by persons unknown, into one of the ponds at the entrance to Grove Gardens, Elm.

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

**33/12 Police matters**

The Clerk reported that PCSO Martin Bogunovic, of the Wisbech and District Neighbourhood Policing Team, was unable to attend the meeting, This officer had, however, provided a report detailing recent incidents of crime and disorder within the geographical area covered by Elm Parish Council, which the Clerk presented to members, including:

- Elm – four incidents of criminal damage (one of which related to articles on a grave at elm Cemetery); one burglary at a residential at a residential property; one shed burglary; two incidents of persons acting suspiciously; one incident of anti-social behaviour
- Fridaybridge – two thefts of milk from outside residential properties; one incident of criminal damage; evidence of a person sleeping rough in the greenhouse of a residential property; two incidents of anti-social behaviour
- Coldham – no reported incidents

- Rings End - no reported incidents.

The Clerk reported also that PCSO Bogunovic had now transferred to the March and Chatteris Neighbourhood Policing Team and, consequently, the new PCSO for the geographical policing area which includes the parish of Elm is PCSO Dave Russ.

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

### **34/12 Reports from District and County Councillors for the parish**

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

Both Councillors Cotterell and Sutton, the two District Councillors who represent the parish of Elm, informed the Parish Council that they are currently unaware of any specific District Council matters affecting the parish.

District Councillor Sutton did, however, mentioned that he had met the PCSO who would be replacing PCSO Martin Bogunovic (who is in the process of transferring to the March and Chatteris Neighbourhood Policing Team) and commented that this officer seems keen to make an impact upon crime and disorder issues across the parish.

Members decided that the information reported be noted.

### **35/12 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 three-storey, 5-bed dwelling and detached double garage on land east of Soffits, Halfpenny Lane, Elm – F/YR12/0482/F (applicants: Mr and Mrs M Gower).

*That the application be supported.*

- (2) Erection of single-storey extension to rear of existing dwelling at 2 Kilderkin Close, Fridaybridge – F/YR12/0489/F (applicant: Mr M Francis).

*That the application be supported.*

- (3) Erection of a single-storey front extension to existing dwelling at Bungalow, Goosetree Farm, Goosetree Estate, Rings End – F/YR12/0493/F (applicant: Mr L Smith).

*That the application be supported.*

### **36/12 Financial matters**

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

#### **Income**

P Barnes	Burial plot (double depth) purchase	£525.00
Fenland District Council	Concurrent Functions grant – first half	£3,970.00

W and W G West	Interment of ashes and plot purchase	£235.00
Maxey Grounds	Cottage rent (less fees)	£523.60
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>£5,253.60</b>

**Expenditure**

Wisbech St Mary PCC	Donation towards the cost of maintaining Guyhirn Cemetery	£150.00
Upwell Parish Council	Contribution to cost of filling grit bins at Townley Close car park in Upwell	£29.14
Mrs S Woodhouse	Playing field security (quarterly payment to 30 June 2012)	£100.00
R J Warren Ltd	Grounds maintenance contract	£1,381.42
Fenland District Council	Fees for May 2011 elections	£240.00
Hundred of Wisbech IDB	Agricultural drainage rates	£58.18
T Jordan	Salary (less income tax of £116.27), Broadband and other expenses	£596.38
Glazewing	Emptying of skip at Elm Cemetery	£200.40
Moore Stephens	Audit fee 2011/12	£480.00
<b>Total Expenditure</b>		<b>£3,235.52</b>

In addition, the Clerk reported on the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 30 June 2012 (in the total sum of £126,604.76), together with the month-end figures for each of the preceding six months and as at 30 June 2011.

In accordance with minute 21/11, the Clerk reported on the management accounts that he had produced for the first quarter of the 2012/13 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 the financial year to date.

Further to minute 12/12, the Clerk reported that the Parish Council's accounts for 2011/12 had been "signed off" by the External Auditor.

Members decided that

- (1) the income of £5,253.60 be noted and that the expenditure of £3,235.52 be authorised;
- (2) the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 30 June 2012, together with the month-end figures for each of the preceding six months and as at 30 June 2011, be noted;
- (3) the financial information within the first quarter's management accounts be noted;
- (4) the situation regarding the Parish Council's accounts for 2011/12 be noted.

### 37/12 Highway verges at the entrance to Abington Grove, Elm

Councillor Pinnock mentioned recent incidents of unauthorised activities on the highway verges at the entrance to Abington Grove, Elm - these incidents related to car sales and the placing of an advertisement hoarding – which he had reported to the Clerk.

As a result of the Clerk's reporting these incidents to the Local Highway Authority (LHA), swift action had been taken by Mr C Bedford (an officer of the LHA), to secure cessation of the unauthorised activities.

Councillor Pinnock expressed his thanks for the efficient manner in which this matter had been addressed and suggested that the Parish Council should express its appreciation accordingly.

Members decided that it would place on record its appreciation of the action taken by Mr C Bedford in this matter and that the Clerk would send a Thank You letter to this officer.

### 38/12 Correspondence

#### (1) Street lamp FPC7, Low Road, Elm.

The Clerk informed members that Fenland District Council had identified a street lamp – FPC7 on Low Road, Elm – which requires attention; it has been deemed by the District Council as structurally unsafe. The cost of a new lamp column is £1,039.65.

With regard to the availability of Parish Council funding to meet the cost of replacing this street lamp, the Clerk reminded members that provision of £2,590 (for purchase of additional street lamps, not purchased in 2011/12) had been made in the Parish Council's accounts and that confirmation had now been received from Fenland District Council that a similar sum would be made available to the Parish Council as part of the Concurrent Functions Grant 2012/13. On the basis of the funding available, it should be possible to meet the costs of the street lighting works required currently and leave funding for the provision of additional street lamps during 2012/13.

Members decided that Fenland District Council be authorised to arrange the required works to street lamp FPC7 (Low Road, Elm).

#### (2) Rural Cambridgeshire Citizens' Advice Bureau.

The Clerk reported a letter from the new Rural Cambridgeshire Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB), in which it details the creation of the new bureau and invites Elm Parish Council to appoint a councillor as a member of the bureau.

The letter from the CAB explains that the new Rural Cambridgeshire bureau has been created by merger of the Ely and Fenland bureaux on 1 April 2012, with work still in hand to include the Huntingdonshire bureau as soon as certain legal processes have been concluded. The letter also sets out the benefits of the merger - such as reductions in staffing costs, introducing improvements in communications technology and increasing access to funding sources – and the opportunity for stakeholders (which includes local councils) to become members of the bureau. The Clerk read to the Parish Council the powers/duties of bureau members.

Members decided that the information reported by the Clerk be noted and that any Parish Councillor interested in becoming a representative of the Parish Council as a member of the bureau would inform the Clerk of that interest.

(3) Application to the NHS for preliminary consent for a pharmacy in Elm – consultation.

The Clerk reported a letter of consultation from the NHS Anglia Support Partnership in relation to an application from Medicines 4 U for preliminary consent to be included in the Cambridgeshire PCT pharmaceutical list in the vicinity of Main Road, Elm (but no specific address is provided). The Parish Council is invited to submit any representations regarding the application by 19 August 2012.

Appended to the letter of consultation was a copy of the application, which detailed the proposed opening hours of the new pharmacy and the services which would be provided

Although some members expressed concern that the introduction of a pharmacy in Elm could have a detrimental impact upon the financial viability of services provided at the Upwell Health Centre, the majority felt that if such a facility were operated in the village, it would provide an additional facility for residents of the parish.

Members decided that the application be supported in principle.

*(Councillors Milham and Pinnock requested that their dissent from this decision be recorded)*

(4) Elm C of E School – letter of thanks.

Further to minute 7/12, the Clerk read to members a letter of thanks from the Head teacher of the Elm C of E Primary School in relation to the financial support provided to the school by the Parish Council towards the set-up costs of the new Elm Pre-school.

Members decided that the content of the letter be noted.

**39/12 Elm Cemetery – maintenance**

One member suggested that, to improve the appearance of Elm Cemetery, minor tidying works (necessary because of recent weed growth) should be undertaken to the extended area at the rear of the site.

Members decided that the Clerk would issue the necessary request to the Parish Council's grounds maintenance contractor.

**40/12 Date of next meeting**

Members were reminded that the next meeting of the Parish Council had been scheduled for 14 August 2012, commencing at 7.00 pm, at the Parish Council office, Begdale Road, Elm.

**Meeting finished at 8.20 pm**

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

Date:.....