

# ELM PARISH COUNCIL

## MINUTES OF MEETING

22 MAY 2012 – 7.05 pm.

**Present:** Councillor Cotterell, in the Chair; Councillors Mrs Cotterell, Mrs Hopkin, Mrs Johnson, Pinnock, Tilney and Webb.

**In attendance:** District Councillor Sutton.

**Apologies: Councillors:** Brand, Mrs Lankfer, Softley and Stokes plus County Councillor Mrs Tuck.

The minutes of the meeting of 17 April 2012 were confirmed and signed.

### **1/12 Appointment of Chairman**

Councillor Brand was appointed as Chairman of the Parish Council for the municipal year 2012/13; the Clerk will make arrangements for Councillor Brand to make his Declaration of Acceptance of Office in relation to that appointment.

### **2/12 Appointment of Vice-Chairman**

Councillor Stokes was appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Parish Council for the municipal year 2012/13; the Clerk will make arrangements for Councillor Stokes to make his Declaration of Acceptance of Office in relation to that appointment.

### **3/12 Appointment of Chairman for the meeting**

In the absence of both the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, Councillor Cotterell was appointed Chairman for the meeting.

### **4/12 Chairman's Allowance for 2012/13**

Members considered the setting of a Chairman's Allowance for the municipal year 2012/13.

The Clerk reminded members that the level of allowance in 2011/12 was £300 and that the same level of provision had been supported by members when agreeing the Parish Precept for 2012/13.

Members decided that the sum of £300 be allocated to meet the expenses of the Chairman of the Council during the municipal year 2012/13.

### **5/12 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.

## 6/12 Progress on actions from minutes of last meeting

### **(1) Facilities for young people in the parish (minute 147/11 (1))**

The Clerk reported that the current situation is no different to that reported at minute 147/11 (1).

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) Closed churchyard at St Mark's Church, Fridaybridge (minute 155/11)**

The Clerk informed members that he had served the requisite notice, under Section 215 of the Local Government Act 1972, upon Fenland District Council, requesting that it takes on the responsibility for maintenance of the closed churchyard at St Mark's Church, Fridaybridge instead of the Parish Council so doing.

Fenland District Council (FDC) has responded to the Clerk's letter, confirming that FDC acknowledges its obligation, subject to the St Mark's Church Parochial Church Council providing evidence that an order was made by the Privy Council to close the churchyard, to assume the maintenance responsibility for the closed churchyard.

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

### **(3) Cemetery memorials (minute 157/11 (2))**

The Clerk reported on the schedule of responses that had received from members.

The consensus view of the respondents is that all of the memorials within the brochure would be acceptable for use in Elm Cemetery, provided that any such memorial accords with the size restrictions contained within the Parish Council's cemetery regulations (minute 140/11 refers).

Members decided that the local Funeral Director be informed of the Parish Council's decision in this matter, as outlined above.

### **(4) Litter bin at Coldham playing field (minute 157/11 (3))**

The Clerk reported the response from Fenland District Council (FDC) to his enquiry as to whether FDC possesses a good second-hand bin that could be donated to the Coldham playing field, or, if not, requesting a quotation for the cost of FDC providing a new bin.

The Clerk has been informed that the District Council's Street Scene Team Leader would assess the situation and respond to him when this had taken place. FDC has stated that the cost of a new waste bin can range from £350 to £550 depending upon the style and construction material.

Members decided that the information reported by the Clerk be noted and that he would report further following his receiving contact from the District Council's Street Scene Team Leader.

### **(5) Elm Cemetery (minute 158/11)**

The Clerk reported on the observations and conclusions of the members who had inspected the cemetery on 15 May 2012 (between 6.30 pm and 7.20 pm). Members in attendance at the inspection were Councillors Brand, Cotterell, Mrs Cotterell, Mrs Hopkin, Mrs Johnson, Pinnock, Stokes and Tilney (an apology was received from Councillor Mrs Lankfer).

The Clerk informed the Parish Council that the members present at the inspection had

- (1) expressed their satisfaction with the current standard of grounds maintenance work being carried out at the cemetery;
- (2) noted the fencing and planting works which had been undertaken since the last inspection (in August 2011);
- (3) noted, from the cemetery plans, the number of available burial plots and that it may be possible to provide a maximum of one more row of "traveller" plots (on the northern side) at the cemetery;
- (4) agreed to recommend to the Parish Council that both the unused section of the southern side of the cemetery and the whole of the extended area be designated as lawn section;
- (5) noted that the Clerk is in the process of seeking to arrange a meeting with an officer of the Local Planning Authority to discuss suitable alternative uses for the former Chapel of Rest and that he would subsequently report to the Parish Council on the outcome of such discussions;
- (6) agreed to recommend to the Parish Council that the oil tank (stored within the garage), which has been surplus to requirements since commencement of the grounds maintenance contract in 2011, be advertised (locally) for sale.

Following the inspection of the cemetery, some members examined the condition of the grassed area (highway verge) at the entrance to Abington Grove – the area considered at minute 154/11 as a possible site for the provision of a car park - and a nearby footpath. Consequently, the Clerk has reported to the Local Highway Authority the defects – those being apparent subsidence within the grassed area and damage/cracking of the footway – identified by members.

Members decided that

- (1) the content of the report from the Clerk be noted;
- (2) both the unused section of the southern side of the cemetery and the whole of the extended area be designated as lawn section;
- (3) the oil tank (stored within the garage), which has been surplus to requirements since commencement of the grounds maintenance contract in 2011, be advertised (locally) for sale.

### **7/12 Proposed new Elm Pre-school**

Members received a presentation from Mrs McCallum, the Headteacher of Elm C of E Primary School, in relation to the school's proposal to establish a new pre-school, to "fill the gap" caused by closure of the pre-school which operated, at the Elm Centre, until January of this year.

Mrs McCallum informed members briefly of the manner in which the new pre-school, scheduled to open in September 2012 using the Elm Centre, would be operated by the Elm C of E Primary School. She stated that the County Council has awarded a start-up grant of £12,500 and that within this grant there is an allocation of £3,000 to meet the costs of furnishing and resourcing the pre-school. Mrs McCallum made the point that the sum of £3,000 is not sufficient to meet all of those costs; a further £3,000 is needed. Mrs McCallum enquired as to the possibility of the Parish Council making a financial contribution towards the costs of furnishing and equipping the room and the purchase of toys. She circulated a document showing the types of toys that would be purchased.

Councillor Pinnock made the point that although he accepts that the young should be encouraged from an early age, he is concerned about agreeing to requests for financial support in the absence of Parish Council cash flow projections for, say, three years (so that the ability to make contributions to such projects is based upon facts relating to the council's future finances). He stated his concern that at some point in the future the Parish Council may find it difficult to support local causes and to meet its operational costs if expenditure decisions are made by the Parish Council in an unplanned manner.

In response to members' questions as to the availability of Elm Parish Council financial resources to support a funding request, the Clerk informed members that, by changing the provider, he had been able to secure a reduction of more than £3,700 in the Parish Council's 2012/13 insurance costs.

Members decided that the information reported by Mrs McCallum be noted and that a donation of £3,000 be made to Elm C of E Primary School towards the set-up costs of the new Elm Pre-school.

*(Councillor Pinnock requested that his dissent from this decision, because of his concerns regarding the uncertainty of the Parish Council's future financial resources, be recorded)*

### **8/12 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 – two incidents of anti-social use of motorcycles on farmland; one theft of agricultural machinery
- Fridaybridge – one incident of persons acting suspiciously
- Elm – one theft from a vehicle; one dwelling burglary; two incidents of criminal damage; one shed burglary; one incident of anti-social behaviour
- Nettle Bank – one shed burglary.

PCSO Bogunovic responded to members' questions.

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

### **9/12 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.

Councillor Cotterell did, however, inform members of the success of the Golden Age Fair which took place at Fridaybridge on 17 May 2012. He praised the efforts of Councillor Brand in assisting with the publicity for the event, including the delivery of leaflets at Coldham; he stated how pleased he was with the level of attendance at the event by Elm Parish Council members. Councillor Cotterell concluded that this event had been very successful and had, once again, identified for a number of attendees their entitlement to claim certain benefits.

Members decided that the information reported by District Councillor Cotterell be noted.

### **10/12 Highway issues - speed limit on March Road, Coldham**

Further to minute 151/11, the Clerk reported that he had sent consultation letters (and a copy of the plan showing the proposed speed limit extension) to the ten organisations/agencies/authorities/individuals suggested by the Local Highway Authority and that, as a result of the consultation exercise, four responses (from Cambridgeshire Constabulary, Fenland District Council, County Councillor Mrs Tuck and the Norfolk Green bus company) had been received. None of these consultees had raised any objections.

Within its consultation response, the Constabulary draws the Parish Council's attention to the fact that experience and research suggests that lowering an existing speed limit, by itself, would not necessarily achieve lower vehicle speeds or reduce accidents and that, consequently, the Parish Council's may fail to meet the community's expectations unless there were suitable investment by the council in physical speed reduction measures.

The Local Highway Authority has confirmed that it considers that this level of response is sufficient for the Parish Council to conclude that support exists for it to progress to the next stage of the process, i.e. public notice in the local press and on-street.

The Local Highway Authority (LHA) makes the point that it included within its costs a sum of just under £300 to contribute towards advertisement costs; this figure does not cover the full cost of placing an advertisement in the press. It is anticipated that the LHA will be advertising a number of similar proposals this summer and that of Elm Parish Council could be included within the same advertisement. If Elm Parish Council wished to "go it alone" with an advertisement, the cost could be of the order of £1,500.

Members decided that the information reported by the Clerk be noted and that the Local Highway Authority be informed that Elm Parish Council wishes to proceed with this proposal on the basis of being part of an "all embracing" press advertisement.

### 11/12 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) Works to two Ash Trees within a Conservation Area at Tarrara, Main Road, Elm – F/YR12/0244/TRCA (applicant: Mr D Sands).

*That the application be supported.*

- (2) Change of use of former canal to domestic cartilage and extension of parking area to serve three dwellings on land east of 225 to 229 Elm Low Road, Wisbech – F/YR12/0254/F (applicant: Mr I M Chase).

*That the application be supported. In addition, there is a need to ensure that the existing right-of way across this site is preserved.*

- (3) Erection of a single-storey extension to existing dwelling at 3 Bullfinch Way, Fridaybridge – F/YR12/0263/F (applicant: Mr Roughton).

*That the application be supported.*

- (4) Conversion of buildings to residential (1 x 3-bed, 3 x 2-bed and 1 x 1-bed) incorporating extensions and garages, retention of 2-bed residential dwelling and erection of a two-storey 3-bed dwelling with garage, involving demolition of two barns and piggery at Woodhouse Farm, Jew House Drove, Fridaybridge – F/YR12/0275/F (applicant: Mr and Mrs S Flint).

*That the application be supported.*

- (5) Erection of 4 two-storey 4-bed dwellings with detached garages on land north of Old Killeen, 172 Fridaybridge Road, Elm – F/YR12/0312/F (applicant: Mr S Wadsley).

*That the application be supported.*

(Councillor Webb declared his personal interest in this application, by virtue of a previous businesses arrangement (i.e. a land transaction) with the applicant)

- (6) Erection of a two-storey 3-bed dwelling on plot1, land north-east of Florence House, Back Road, Fridaybridge – F/YR12/0331/F (applicants: Mr and Mrs Holloway).

*That the application be supported.*

- (7) Erection of part two-storey/single-storey side/rear extensions, involving part demolition of existing dwelling, and temporary siting of a mobile home at 38 Station Road, Coldham – F/YR12/0347/F (applicant: Mr R Lowe).

*That the application be supported.*

## 12/12 Financial matters

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

### Income

HM Revenues and Customs	VAT refund for 2011/12	£2,901.99
Kent Memorials	Memorial tablet	£100.00
Fenland District Council	Parish Precept – first half	£13,750.00
Maxey Grounds	Cottage rent (less fees)	£523.60
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>£17,275.59</b>

### Expenditure

R J Warren Ltd	Grounds maintenance contract	£1,379.41
Elm Friendship Club	Donation – 1 April to 30 September 2012	£168.00
Coldham Residents Action Group Ltd	Grant towards Diamond Jubilee celebrations	£455.00
Fenland Fire Appliances	Servicing of fire extinguishers	£68.46
Mr S Cowell	Internal Audit fee	£65.00
T Jordan	Salary (less income tax of £141.99), Broadband and other expenses	£685.98
Cambridgeshire County Council	Fridaybridge playing field – annual lease payment	£375.00

Came and Company	Parish Council insurance 2012/13	£2,500.63
<b>Total Expenditure</b>		<b>£5,697.48</b>

In addition, the Clerk reported on the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 30 April 2012 (in the total sum of £136,063.94), together with the month-end figures for each of the preceding six months and as at 30 April 2011.

The Clerk reported on the Annual Audit of Accounts return, informing members that the document had been examined and approved, without recommendations as to action in relation to the Parish Council's governance processes, by the Council's Internal Auditor. The Clerk read to members the Internal Auditor's report on his audit of the Parish Council's accounts 2011/12. In response to a question from Councillor Pinnock, the Clerk informed members that there is no requirement to make provision for depreciation when valuing the Parish Council's assets.

Members decided that

- (1) the income of £17,275.59 be noted and that the expenditure of £5,697.48 be authorised;
- (2) the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 30 April 2012, together with the month-end figures for each of the preceding six months and as at 30 April 2011, be noted;
- (3) the Audited Accounts for 2011/12 be approved and submitted to the External Auditor.

### 13/12 Neighbourhood Forums in Fenland

Further to minute 136/11, the Clerk updated members on the Constabulary's new approach to Neighbourhood Forums, following the recent consultation exercise.

The Constabulary makes the point that, not unexpectedly, a number of different views were received from consultees; these have been taken into account in finalising a process, for which initial arrangements are currently being made. It has not proved possible to use local council meeting venues for all the forums but the Constabulary still intends to provide the opportunity for the community to consult with the Constabulary, councillors and partner organisations through organising a visit by the Crime BUSter on the date of the relevant local council meeting.

In summary, the new process will be

- dates and times of forum meetings linked to a parish or town council meeting, to help promote involvement by partners and councillors
- community views/opinions being canvassed through internet mediums such as the Shape Your Place website, proactive canvassing within the communities, visits to council meetings and use of the Crime BUSter
- all issues raised being subject to a personal update to the person who raised the concern
- after the forum event or the following morning, all the community issues raised will be reviewed. This review process will determine the most significant issues raised and will, in turn, inform the adoption of priorities. The end result will mean the adoption of priorities that are of concern to the community who live, work and visit the particular area
- feedback on what activity has taken place on the adopted priorities will be through updates to parish/town councils, internet updates (websites and e-mail) and meetings such as Neighbourhood Watch.

The Constabulary is currently finalising dates, times and venues for the forum meetings/events; it is currently proposed that a Wisbech Rural South Forum will take place on 18 September 2012 in Elm (venue to be finalised).

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

### **14/12 War memorials in Elm parish**

Further to minute 101 /11, the Clerk reported on the latest position regarding the restoration of the war memorials at Elm and Fridaybridge.

The Clerk reminded members of the decisions reached at minutes 70/11 and 101/11 - in summary, that the quotation submitted by Fairhaven and Woods Limited, for undertaking the agreed restoration works, be accepted and that an application for grant funding towards the cost of the works be made to the War Memorials Trust – and informed them of the outcome of the grant application process, i.e. that the War Memorials Trust considers the agreed works to the memorials at Elm and Fridaybridge to constitute general maintenance rather than essential repair works and, consequently, are not eligible for funding through the War Memorials Trust's grant scheme.

The Clerk informed members that he had informed the Parish Council's War Memorials Advisor, Mr B Krill, of the outcome of the application for funding and he read to members a letter of response from Mr Krill. In his letter, Mr Krill detailed his recent experience of another occasion (in Sandringham) where the War Memorials Trust had rejected an application for grant aid towards the cost of maintenance works to a war memorial. Mr Krill expressed his appreciation of the Parish Council's decision to undertake works to the war memorials at Elm and Fridaybridge.

In pursuance of minute 101/11, the Clerk had given the contractor the "go ahead" to undertake the works and is awaiting confirmation from the company as to when works will commence.

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

### **15/12 Co-option of councillor**

Further to minute 145/11, the Clerk reported that there had been no election called to fill the vacancy on Elm Parish Council and, consequently, he had undertaken the process that he had outlined at minute 145/11 in relation to filling the vacancy by co-option.

The Clerk informed members that persons interested in filling the vacancy were invited to make application in writing (setting out why he or she would be suitable for co-option to membership of Elm Parish Council, as well how he or she meets the qualification criteria for membership of a Parish Council); as a result of this process, no applications were submitted.

Given the absence of any applications, the Clerk had sought advice from Fenland District Council (FDC) and from attendees at 18 May 2012 meeting of the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC). The advice from FDC is for the Parish Council to keep making attempts to attract an interested person. Suggestions from the SLCC meeting included holding a Parish Council "open evening", including in all correspondence with parishioners the fact that a councillor vacancy exists and suggesting to the public that the Parish Council might be about to make a controversial or unpopular decision.

The Clerk sought members' views on a way forward and whether the recent "expression of interest" process should be repeated at this time.

Members decided that

- (1) the information reported by the Clerk be noted;
- (2) the recent "expression of interest" process be not repeated at this time;



- (3) they would, when “going about their business”, draw the councillor vacancy to the attention of local people who they feel could be interested in becoming a Parish Councillor;
- (4) this matter be considered further at the next meeting.

**16/12 Correspondence**

- (1) Cambridgeshire ACRE Community Oil Buying Scheme.

The Clerk read to members a letter from Cambridgeshire ACRE, giving details of its new bulk-buying scheme for heating oil and seeking the assistance of local councils in both publicising the scheme and identifying a member of the community who would be prepared to take on the role of co-ordinator.

Members decided that the contents of the letter be noted and that the Parish Council would provide the assistance sought by Cambridgeshire ACRE.

- (2) Coldham playing field – electricity supply.

The Clerk reported an e-mail from the Coldham Residents’ Action Group Ltd (CRAG) enquiring as to the possibility of Elm Parish Council providing financial support towards the cost of installing an electricity supply at Coldham playing field; the aim is to have a supply in place in time for the Village Fun Day in August 2012.

The e-mail explained the manner in which the electricity supply would be provided at the site and detailed the quotations received for the necessary installation work (the costs to date - and quotations for further work are still awaited - total almost £11,000); it also states that CRAG is pursuing other potential sources of funding.

Members decided that they wish to hear from a member of CRAG (but not the Chairman of the Parish Council) regarding the plans for development of the Coldham playing field and details of the other possible funding sources for this project; they also wish to see information relating to the financial standing of CRAG (e.g. 2011/12 accounts) before making a decision on awarding (or not) grant aid towards the cost of this electricity supply.

**17/12 Date of next meeting and start time of future meetings**

Members were reminded that the next meeting of the Parish Council had been scheduled for 19 June 2012, commencing at 6.30 pm, at the Parish Council office, Begdale Road, Elm. They decided, however, that the commencement time of that meeting and all future meetings of Elm Parish Council would be 7.00 pm.

**Meeting finished at 8.30 pm**

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

Date:.....