

ELM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING

17 SEPTEMBER 2013 – 7.00 pm.

Present: Councillor Brand, Chairman; Councillors Mrs Hopkin, Mrs Lankfer, Milham, Pinnock, Softley, Stokes and Webb.

In attendance: District Councillor Sutton.

Apologies: Councillors Cotterell, Mrs Cotterell and Miss Webb.

The minutes of the meeting of 20 August 2013 were confirmed and signed.

56/13 Open Forum

(1) Incident of theft at Elm Cemetery

A number of members of the public attended the meeting to inform the Parish Council of a recent incident of theft of expensive silk flowers from one of the graves at Elm Cemetery and to enquire as to whether the Parish Council, as owner of the cemetery, would request the Constabulary to include the cemetery within its patrols of the village.

One of the members of the public stated that the theft had been reported to the Constabulary but she felt that the matter had not been taken seriously and that the Constabulary would not be taking any action to address the matter.

Members decided that the Clerk would contact the Constabulary, requesting that the cemetery be included within its patrols of the village.

(2) Provision of play equipment at Coldham

A number of residents of Coldham attended the meeting to show their support for the Chairman's proposal to provide play equipment at Coldham, as had been discussed most recently by the Parish Council at minute 47/13 (6). One of the residents commented that this is a facility needed for the village, which would be used by not only the children of Coldham but also those who are visitors to the village.

The resident reiterated the comments made by a resident at the last meeting of the Parish Council (minute 45/13 (1) refers) that the only piece of play equipment in the village is the unsafe swing rope; he made a plea that the Parish Council provides a safe play situation at Coldham by providing purpose-built play equipment.

Members decided that the comments of the resident be noted and taken into account, at minute 59/13 (4), when considering this matter further.

(3) Coldham layby

A resident of Coldham enquired as to whether he would be permitted to lay a few slabs on the grassed area within the layby (opposite the bus shelter) at Coldham, so that people would have a hard surface, rather than

grass, upon which to stand when getting on and off the bus. Would that be acceptable to the Local Highway Authority.

Linked to this, one member commented that the hedging along the layby (in the grounds of the former Overstone Arms public house) at Coldham is in need of cutting back.

Members decided that that the Clerk would contact the Local Highway Authority, requesting that it

- gives consent for the laying of slabs, by the local resident, on the grassed area within the layby (opposite the bus shelter) at Coldham;
- sends a letter to the owner of the hedging alongside the layby at Coldham, requesting the cutting back of that hedging.

57/13 Resignation from membership of the Parish Council

The Clerk reported that Gillian Johnson had resigned her membership of Elm Parish Council, with effect from 23 August 2013, and that he had informed Fenland District Council (FDC) of that fact and, as a result, FDC had published formal notice of the vacancy with effect from 28 August 2013.

In accordance with the notice, given under The Local Elections (Parishes and Communities) Rules 1986, the opportunity exists, until 17 September 2013, for ten local electors for the parish to call for the vacancy to be filled by way of an election. If no election is called, the Parish Council must fill the vacancy by co-option.

The Clerk outlined briefly the recommended process to be used in filling a Parish Council vacancy by co-option, as had been used on previous occasions by the Parish Council in filling casual vacancies. On that basis, the vacancy would be advertised via publication of a notice on the Parish Council's website and its notice boards.

Members decided that the information reported by the Clerk be noted and that, in the event of no election being called, co-option to membership of Elm Parish Council, using the process utilised by the Parish Council previously, be undertaken at the October 2013 meeting.

58/13 Members' Code of Conduct

Further to minute 31/12, the Clerk reminded members of the need for them to submit to the Monitoring Officer at Fenland District Council any changes to the content of their Register of Member Interests forms.

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

59/13 Progress on actions from minutes of last meeting

(1) Facilities for young people in the parish (minute 47/13 (1))

The Clerk read to members an e-mail from the Parks and Open Spaces Manager at Fenland District Council (FDC) in relation to both the current progress situation regarding FDC's adoption of the open space area at Grove Gardens and setting out the District Council's suggested approach to identifying other potential sites (as a possible alternative to Grove Gardens) for the siting of play equipment within Elm (minute 32/13 (1) refers).

In his e-mail, FDC's Parks and Open Spaces Manager makes the point that the Grove Gardens development has been a difficult one to progress to adoption; there have been many issues to resolve, both complex and minor; however, they have all taken a good deal of time to resolve. The District Council is, however, working to progress this adoption as quickly as possible.

With regard to seeking to identify other potential sites for the siting of play equipment within Elm, the District Council suggests that it would be appropriate to undertake a consultation within the community, before devoting time to such an identification exercise. Such an exercise would not be embarked upon until conclusion of the process to adopt the public open space and community open space at the Grove Gardens estate.

The District Council apologises for the length of time that the adoption process is taking but this is down to the need to ensure that the correct process is followed in finalising adoption of these areas of open space.

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 the Parish Council.

(2) Elm Cemetery – operational issues (minute 47/13 (2))

With regard to removal of debris from the extended area of the cemetery, the Clerk reported that he had met with the Manager of the Community Payback Service on 23 August 2013, had purchased (on behalf of Elm Parish Council) equipment needed by the Community Payback Team (CPT) to be able to undertake this work effectively and that the removal of debris by the CPT would commence later this month.

Further to minutes 30/13 and 32/13 (2), the Clerk reported that the approved memorial for burial plot North B345 in Elm Cemetery had been installed recently. However, despite the assurances given by the family which holds the Exclusive Rights of Burial for this plot, at minute 30/13, that all other articles would be removed from the plot and adjoining land upon installation of the memorial, some of those articles remain on land outside of the area covered by the memorial. During a recent inspection of the cemetery, the Clerk had witnessed the following articles on land outside of the area covered by the memorial: a beer can, a beer bottle, two large lanterns, two solar-powered lights and an ornamental van. In addition, the family had laid the artificial grass on the land between burial plot North B345 and the cemetery roadway.

Given the family's failure to honour its promise that all unauthorised articles would be removed from the cemetery upon installation of the memorial, the Clerk wrote to the widow of the deceased (on 29 August 2013), instructing the removal of these articles within 7 days of receipt of his letter and that failure to comply with the instruction would result in discussion of the matter at this meeting of the Parish Council. The Clerk informed members that, as a result of his letter, the family had removed the two large lanterns only; in addition, the Clerk had been informed in a telephone call from a member of the family that the family does not intend to remove any further items.

Members decided that

- (1) the information reported by the Clerk be noted;
- (2) given the refusal of the family which holds the Exclusive Rights of Burial for plot North 345 to honour its promise that all unauthorised articles would be removed from the cemetery upon installation of the memorial, the remaining unauthorised items be removed by the Parish Council.

(3) Local Highway Improvements 2013/14 (minute 47/13 (4))

The Clerk reported on the process for implementation of an approved local highway improvements scheme (including the need for consultation by the Local Highway Authority (LHA) on the introduction of a new Traffic Regulation Order and the LHA's subsequent consideration of any representations received from members of the public in that regard) and the possible implications of preventing the parking of vehicles in the vicinity of Elm C of E Primary School (such as an increase in traffic speeds as a result of the removal of parked

vehicles from the public highway and the displacement of vehicle parking to other roads in the vicinity of the school).

Councillor Pinnock expressed his concern regarding the likelihood of an increase in traffic speeds in the vicinity of the school as a result of the removal of parked vehicles from the public highway, and the consequent potential danger for persons crossing the road at that point, but this concern was not shared by other members. He stated also that vehicles could be displaced onto side roads, thereby replicating the problems now being experienced.

The Clerk had circulated, in advance of the August 2013 meeting, two possible scheme designs produced by the Local Highway Authority (LHA); one of the schemes shows the yellow lining works requested through the Parish Council's bid (minute 98/12 refers) and the other scheme provides for that lining plus additional lining (in a northerly direction) to a point just beyond Church Grove. In addition, the LHA is seeking confirmation from the Parish Council that it is happy to meet 10% (estimated at £200) of the cost of implementing either of these schemes.

Members decided that

- (1) the information reported by the Clerk be noted;
- (2) the enhanced scheme - which provides not only the yellow lining works requested through the Parish Council's bid (minute 98/12 refers) but also lining (in a northerly direction) to a point just beyond Church Grove – be selected at the Parish Council's preferred option;
- (3) the Local Highway Authority be informed of both the Parish Council's decision at (2) above and its agreement to meet 10% of the cost of the Local Highway Improvement scheme.

(Councillor Pinnock requested that his dissent from this decision be recorded)

(4) Provision of play equipment at Coldham (minute 47/13 (6))

Members considered further, in the light of a five years cash forecast produced jointly by Councillor Pinnock and the Clerk and the three quotations obtained by the Chairman, the possible provision of play equipment at Coldham. The lowest of the three quotations is £18,500 plus VAT.

The Chairman informed members that, to provide evidence of the level of desire for play equipment in Coldham, a questionnaire had been circulated around the village; the responses show 90% support for such. He made the point that a number of the respondents do not live in Coldham but elsewhere within the parish of Elm, which demonstrates wider community support for such investment.

With regard to the five years cash forecast produced jointly by Councillor Pinnock and the Clerk, which had been provided to all members of the council, the Clerk endorsed the comment made by Councillor Pinnock that, as with all projections, these projections, which are based upon historical data relating to the income and expenditure of the council, are as accurate as they could be

The Chairman expressed the opinion that the forecasted income from cemetery fees, i.e. at £8,000 per annum, is too low. Both Councillor Pinnock and the Clerk made the point that it is not possible to predict with accuracy the likely level of income from such fees; however, the examination of income figures over a period of eleven years suggested that an estimated annual income from cemetery fees of £8,000 would be a reasonable assumption.

The Chairman commented also upon the fact that the cash forecasts do not include an annual increase in rental income from the Cemetery Cottage; in response, the Clerk commented that the agent acting on behalf of the council has advised that rent levels for this type of property have not increased over the last two years and has recommended that the Parish Council does not consider increasing the rent in the near future; also, it is possible that that over the period of the cash forecasts there could be times when the property is untenanted (thus, generating no income). The Clerk commented that the only annual income which could be guaranteed is the Parish Council Precept (£30,000 for 2013/14).

Councillor Pinnock explained to members that although the Clerk reports, each month, that funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts is generally between £120,000 and £130,000, not all of this money is available for day-to-day expenditure as a total of almost £100,000 is held as earmarked (for specific items of expenditure) and general (a contingency at the level of 150% of the Precept) reserves and, therefore, the Parish Council should expect an actual available balance of £20,000 £30,000.

Further to minute 41/13, the Clerk reminded members that the council would be responsible for the costs of annual safety inspections, maintenance and insurance of any play equipment purchased.

Members decided that the Parish Council would provide play equipment at Coldham and that the quotation in the sum of £18,500, the lowest of the three obtained, for the provision and installation of that equipment, be accepted.

(Councillor Pinnock requested that his total disagreement with this decision, for the reasons stated at this meeting and during the discussion of this matter at previous meetings, be recorded)

60/13 Police matters

The Clerk reported that PCSO Dave Russ, 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:

- Coldham – no incidents reported
- Fridaybridge – one incident of criminal damage
- Elm – one incident of criminal damage; one report of theft of silk flowers from a grave in the cemetery; one report of theft of items from an unsecured shed; two incidents of vehicle nuisance; one report of three youths acting suspiciously
- Rings End – no incidents reported.

The PCSO's report mentioned that there had been no Speed Watch activity in the parish since the last meeting of the Parish Council and invited members to consider establishing community Speed Watch teams in Elm and Fridaybridge.

PCSO Russ' report included a reminder that the New Horizon Outreach Vehicle (formerly the CrimeBUSTer) would be used for the Rural South Neighbourhood Forum on 18 September 2013; the vehicle would be located in Church Road, Christchurch between 12.00 noon and 6.00 pm with the meeting taking place between 6.00 pm and 7.00 pm. The neighbourhood policing priorities for the following six months period would be set at that meeting.

Councillor Softley mentioned the number of vehicles which are being parked on pavements in Fridaybridge (particularly on March Road) and Elm. The Clerk undertook to draw this issue to the attention of the Constabulary at the Rural South Neighbourhood Forum meeting.

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

61/13 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 first-floor side extension to form annexe to existing dwelling at Braybrook, Low Road, Elm – F/YR13/0621/F (applicant: Mrs R Branch).

That the application be supported.

- (2) Conversion of barn to form 2-bed dwelling (renewal of planning permission F/YR10/0518/EXTIME) on land west of The Coach House, Needham bank, Fridaybridge – F/YR13/0625/EXTIME (applicant: Mr P Dunton).

That the application be supported.

- (3) Erection of a two-storey 3-bed dwelling on land east of Railway Cottage, Back Road, Elm – F/YR13/0640/F (applicant: Mr and Mrs N Watson).

That the application be supported.

- (4) Removal of condition 7 of planning permission F/YR12/0312/F (Erection of 4 x two-storey 4-bed dwellings with detached garages) relating to the footpath on land north of Old Killean, 172 Fridaybridge Road, Elm – F/YR13/0659/F (applicant: Mr S Wadsley).

That the application be supported.

- (5) Works to six Lime trees and three London Planes within a Conservation Area at Tall Timbers, Main Road, Elm – F/YR13/0665/TRCA (applicant: Mrs J Scott).

That the application be supported.

In addition, the Clerk informed members of the lodging of an appeal to the Planning Inspectorate in relation to refusal by Fenland District Council (FDC) of planning permission for the erection of 2 x two-storey dwellings, comprising of 1 x 2-bed and 1 x 3-bed, with parking and temporary siting of a mobile home on land south of 19 Oldfield Avenue, Elm (application F/YR013/0191/F refers) and of the opportunity to make further comments (in addition to those submitted to Fenland District Council previously) to the Planning Inspectorate.

Members decided that no representations be made to the Planning Inspectorate in respect of this appeal.

62/13 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 represent the parish of Elm, informed the Parish Council that he had nothing specific to report on Fenland District Council issues at this time. Councillor Sutton did, however, comment that he had, as he had agreed at minute 47/13 (7), discussed with the relevant Corporate Director at the District Council the Chairman's concerns regarding operation of the Whitemoor Local Environment Fund Committee.

District Councillor Sutton stated that the Corporate Director at Fenland District Council had invited the Parish Council to submit in writing its concerns regarding operation of the committee and the restrictions that would apply in terms of accessing the funding; the District Council would then seek to address those concerns.

District Councillor Sutton also mentioned that he would be meeting the County Council's new District Highways Manager for East Cambridgeshire and Fenland and Councillor Sutton invited members to inform him of any issue that they would like him to draw to the attention of this officer.

Members decided that the situation be noted and that the Clerk would write to Fenland District Council regarding the Parish Council's concerns in relation to the powers of the Whitemoor Local Environment Fund Committee in terms of the allocation of funding.

63/13 Cutting of trees etc in the parish

Councillor Pinnock suggested to members that cutting works are required to the Pyracantha and the Willow trees at the Pocket Parks in Elm and he reported a quotation that he had obtained for such works.

The Clerk informed members that cutting of the Pyracantha is included within the Parish Council's grounds maintenance contract and is scheduled for cutting in the autumn.

The Chairman commented that he is aware of other areas within the parish where there is a need for tree cutting works.

Members decided that the Chairman and Councillor Pinnock would identify jointly all of the areas across the parish where tree cutting works are required and that Councillor Pinnock would subsequently obtain a quotation for the whole package of works.

64/13 Parish Council notice board at Rings End

The Clerk informed members of repair and improvement works required to the notice board at Rings End.

Councillor Pinnock had obtained a quotation, from the contractor who had recently undertaken repair works to the Elm village sign and maintenance works at the cemetery, for undertaking the works to the notice board.

Members decided that the details of the repair and improvement works required to the notice board at Rings End be noted and that the quotation for this work, in the sum of £150.00, be accepted.

65/13 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
P Barnes	Interment fee	£275.00
J Scott	Cemetery memorial	£303.00
Richard King Ltd	Additional memorial inscription	£66.00
Kent Memorials	Cemetery memorial	£148.00

P Barnes	Interment fee	£275.00
Total Income		£1,590.60

Expenditure

Glazewing	Wheelie bin emptying – Elm Cemetery (includes VAT of £13.43)	£80.59
R J Warren Ltd	Grounds maintenance contract (includes VAT of £235.33)	£1,411.96
T Jordan	Salary (less income tax of £142.00 and NI of £7.68), Broadband and other expenses	£680.48
R Pinnock	Purchase of paint for storage box at cemetery (includes VAT of £2.25)	£13.48
T Jordan	Purchase of equipment for use by Community Payback Team for work at cemetery (includes VAT of £15.33)	£92.00
Wisbech Youth Clubs	Funding for Elm and Fridaybridge Youth Club – second quarter 2013/14	£1,000.00
A1 Fencing Ltd	Repairs to entrance gate at Begdale Road playing field (includes VAT of £69.00)	£414.00
HM Revenue and Customs	Clerk's Income Tax and NI (June, July and August 2013)	£550.40
J W Brand	Clearance and disposal of green waste from Pocket Park, Elm	£50.00
Total Expenditure		£4,292.91

In addition, the Clerk reported on the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 31 August 2013 (in the total sum of £130,054.72), together with the month-end figures for each of the preceding six months and as at 31 August 2012.

Councillor Pinnock suggested that, to ensure that it has in place arrangements which are the most efficient and effective for its purposes, the Parish Council should review its current banking and savings arrangements; for example, he questioned the need for the council to operate two separate (but identical in nature) Business Accounts. He also questioned whether the council is covered by the Financial Services guarantee scheme, as it appears to him that the £85,000 guarantee does not apply to Parish Councils; it was agreed that the Clerk would verify whether the position.

Councillor Pinnock urged members to take the time to study the five years cash forecast produced jointly by him and the Clerk (minutes and 47/13 (6) and 59/13 (4) refer).

Members decided that

- (1) the income of £1,590.60 be noted and that the expenditure of £4,292.91 be authorised;
- (2) the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 31 August 2013, together with the month-end figures for each of the preceding six months and as at 31 August 2012, be noted;

- (3) the Clerk and Councillor Pinnock be authorised to review jointly the Parish Council's current banking and savings arrangements, to ensure that the council has in place arrangements which are the most efficient and effective for its purposes, and to report back to the Parish Council on their conclusions;

66/13 Correspondence

- (1) Fridaybridge Clocktower - contract for servicing the clock.

The Clerk read to members an offer from the company which undertakes the annual servicing of the clock within the Fridaybridge Clocktower for the Parish Council to enter into a service agreement - for a period of either 3, 4, 5 or 6 years - which provides an annual discount of 15%, as well as protection from inflationary increases over the chosen period of the agreement, on the cost of servicing the clock.

To secure the discounted rate, payment of the contract sum for the term selected needs to be paid to the company in advance. The Clerk informed members that the cost of servicing the clock in 2012 was £174.00.

Members decided that the company's offer be accepted and that the Parish Council would opt for a contract period of 6 years.

- (2) Wisbech and District Stroke Club.

Further to minute 134/12 (1), Councillor Pinnock reported that he had been informed via an e-mail from the Wisbech and District Stroke Club that the club had arranged an event for 20 September 2013 and would be using the donation from Elm Parish Council to meet the costs involved.

Members decided that the information reported by Councillor Pinnock be noted.

67/13 Date of next meeting

Members were reminded that the next meeting of the Parish Council had been scheduled for 22 October 2013, commencing at 7.00 pm, at the Parish Council office, Begdale Road, Elm.

Meeting finished at 8.30 pm

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

Date:.....