

ELM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING

19 OCTOBER 2010 – 6.30 pm.

Present: Councillor Brand, Chairman; Councillors Cotterell (until 7.05 pm), Mrs Cotterell, Rogers, Softley, Stokes, Tilney and Webb.

Apologies: Councillors Mrs Hopkin, Mrs Johnson and Mrs Pinnock.

The minutes of the meeting of 21 September 2010 were confirmed and signed.

75/10 The Standards Board for England – Members' Code of Conduct

Members were reminded of the need to ensure that their register of Declarable of Interests is kept up-to-date.

No members had any amendments to make to their register entries.

76/10 Matters arising from minutes of last meeting

(1) The Leam, Fridaybridge (minute 61/10 (1))

The Clerk reported the comparative quotation that he had obtained for removal of the ivy from the fencing at The Leam.

Members noted that the second quotation exceeded significantly the initial quotation obtained and were of the opinion that there is no justification to accept other than the lower of the two quotations.

Members decided the lower quotation be accepted and the successful contractor be requested to undertake the works as a matter of priority.

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

(2) Elm Parish Council website (minute 61/10 (2))

The Clerk reported on the current position regarding the development of a website for Elm Parish Council.

In summary: the website went "live" on 8 October 2010 and includes:

- photographs of the villages and settlements within the parish
- contact details for the members and the Clerk of the Parish Council
- recent agendas and minutes of Elm Parish Council meetings.

Councillor Rogers reported on information that he would like to see added to the website, including useful telephone numbers (such as the non-emergency number of Cambridgeshire Constabulary), details of facilities available within the parish (including the playing fields owned by the Parish Council) and projects and initiatives being planned or delivered by the Parish Council. Councillor Rogers stated that he would be happy to collect this information.

Members decided that

- (1) the information reported by the Clerk in relation to the current status of the website be noted;
- (2) Councillor Rogers' suggestions regarding additional website content be supported and that his offer to collect the additional information be accepted.

(3) Gates at Maltmas Drove, Fridaybridge (minute 73/10)

Councillor Softley reported on his assessment of the situation.

As a result of his assessment, Councillor Softley has concluded that the gates are in good condition and do not require replacement; the works required are for the loose concrete gate post to be re-cemented into position and for the gates to be re-hung thereafter.

Councillor Softley offered to identify a suitable contractor to undertake this work.

Members decided that

- (1) the results of Councillor Softley's assessment be noted and that the necessary repair works be undertaken;
- (2) Councillor Softley would identify a suitable contractor and then arrange the works to be undertaken.

(4) Parish council office and adjoining land – maintenance and security (minute 66/10)

The Clerk reported on his investigations in relation to the decisions reached at minute 66/10.

Members were informed by the Clerk that he had

- made contact with the Manager of the Community Payback Team (CPT) regarding painting of the security fencing at the playing field and that he had confirmed that the CPT would be able to undertake the work, subject to the Parish Council purchasing the necessary materials in advance.
- attempted to obtain advice from the Property and Asset Manager at Fenland District Council in relation to a ventilation system for the pavilion and was awaiting a response.
- attempted, but without success, to contact the former Clerk to the Council to obtain information regarding both cleaning of the interior of the office building and of the dykes at the playing field. The Clerk informed members that the Parish Council's accounts do not show payments being made for cleaning of the building.

With regard to the decision to cease locking the outer gates to the office and playing field area, neither members nor PC Coales were aware of any incidents since the last meeting which required re-consideration of that decision.

Members decided that

- (1) the current situation be noted;
- (2) the Clerk would continue to seek to identify suitable ventilation systems for the office building and to make further attempts to ascertain from the former Clerk what arrangements were in place for cleaning out the dykes at the playing field and, if any, for cleaning of the interior of the building;
- (3) the Clerk would arrange to meet with the Manager of the Community Payback Team to discuss the operational arrangements in relation to painting of the security fencing.

(5) Grounds maintenance across the parish and in Elm Cemetery (minute 71/10)

The Clerk reported on the current situation in relation to the grounds maintenance across the parish and in Elm Cemetery. He explained that he had met with the new part-time, seasonal grounds person to explain the Parish Council's grounds maintenance expectations and to agree a weekly work programme with the aim of achieving those expectations.

The Chairman reported that it had not been possible to agree terms with the former Cemetery grounds person to return to his former role and that, consequently, the Clerk had arranged for a local contractor (whose company undertakes such work for a number of local councils in Fenland) to undertake this work for the time being. The Clerk informed members that the cost of this maintenance being undertaken by the contractor would be in excess of that paid by the Parish Council previously.

Members decided that

- (1) the current situation be noted;
- (2) the current arrangements be continued until the Spring of 2011;
- (3) the Parish Council would consider implementing arrangements for the delivery of a comprehensive grounds maintenance service across the parish in advance of Spring 2011.

77/10 Police matters

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

- Coldham – two cases of possession of controlled drugs
- Elm and Fridaybridge – arrest warrant issued at Kirhams Lane; a number of shed and garage burglaries.

Ms Coales responded to members' questions.

Members requested that action be taken by the Police in respect of the parking of vehicles on pavements in Fridaybridge and that there be a Police presence at the War Memorial in Elm for the wreath laying on Remembrance Sunday (14 November 2010). Ms Coales undertook to arrange Police action in both cases.

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

78/10 Community-led planning for Elm Parish

Further to minute 63/10, Mrs Wadsley of the Community Development Team at Fenland District Council reported to members on the latest position in terms of updating the Elm Parish Plan. She provided each member with a copy of the updated document.

Mrs Wadsley informed members that since her attendance at the July 2010 meeting of the Parish Council, she had investigated the progress that had been achieved in addressing the actions within the plan. To assist in this process, she had met, firstly, with the Chairman and, subsequently, with the Clerk. She thanked the Clerk for obtaining responses from the County Council (both from the Highways and Public Transport teams).

Members decided that the update report, from Mrs Wadsley, on the delivery of actions within the Elm Parish Plan be received and that members would read the document between this meeting of the Parish Council and the next, to enable any issues/comments to be raised at the next meeting.

79/10 Facilities for young people in the parish

Further to minute 64/10, Councillor Rogers informed members of his belief that there is a need for additional play equipment around the parish; he feels that the current level of provision is inadequate to serve the needs of the children within the community.

Councillor Rogers suggested that the Parish Council should consider developing, initially, a number of small play areas - for example, providing one piece of play equipment, for young children, at the Pocket Park at Elm – and, in the longer-term, a project for providing a larger scheme for a range of ages.

Councillor Rogers stated that he had identified four possible locations within the village of Elm that would, in his opinion, be suitable for providing one piece of play equipment for young children.

Members decided

- (1) to indicate their support for the suggestions and ambitions of Councillor Rogers with regard to the provision of play equipment for young children;
- (2) that Councillor Rogers would mark his proposed locations for play equipment on a map, for members' consideration at the next meeting.

80/10 Rural Exception sites – affordable housing for local people

Members received a presentation from Catherine Shilton, a Rural Housing Enabler at Cambridgeshire ACRE, and Karen Freya, Senior Housing Strategy and Enabling Officer at Fenland District Council, on this initiative. Both officers explained their respective roles in this initiative.

Mrs Shilton informed members that ACRE's Affordable Rural Housing Service aims to increase the provision of affordable housing in rural areas and that this service is supported by a partnership of local authorities and registered social landlords, to help develop affordable rural homes under the Rural Exception Sites Policy of the Local Planning Authorities within the County. She made the point that Fenland District Council, as the Local Planning Authority and Housing Authority for Elm, considers there to be a lack of affordable housing in Elm. This comment was endorsed by Ms Freya.

Mrs Shilton explained the general reasons, both economic and social, why there is a lack of affordable housing in rural areas and the consequences for individuals and communities of this situation. She produced statistics of the levels of household incomes that would be required to be able to purchase different sizes of property in Elm, which demonstrated the need for provision of additional affordable housing in the village.

From the statistics provided by ACRE, 58% of residents in Elm would not be able to afford the purchase of a two-bedroom house, given the estimated price of such a property and the levels of income that would be required to be able to meet mortgage re-payments for such a property price – the average price of a house in Fenland is £151,255 and the average income is £19,289.

Members were informed by Ms Freya of the manner in which affordable rural housing would be provided, i.e. built by a Housing Association on land that the Local Planning Authority would not normally allocate for residential purposes; the houses built could only be occupied by persons with a "local connection". The properties would be available for rent (at approximately 60% of market rent) or shared-ownership. Ms Freya explained the definitions of "exception

site" and of "local connection". She explained also the process that would be followed in identifying suitable development sites and the manner in which land purchase and housing construction would be funded.

Ms Freya explained also details of the quality of any affordable housing that would be constructed, making the point that the properties would have a very high level of energy efficiency.

Mrs Shilton explained the four categories of housing need that apply to this initiative and that the level of such need in a village is identified by way of a survey form sent by Cambridgeshire ACRE, with a supporting letter from the Parish Council, to all households. Members were provided with copies of an example survey form and associated correspondence.

Mrs Shilton and Ms Freya responded to members' questions.

At this stage, members are not convinced that a housing needs survey is necessary. Some members expressed the view that the existing housing waiting list maintained by Fenland District Council should be able to provide the evidence of any housing need in the parish.

Members decided that

- (1) before reaching a decision on whether or not to proceed with a housing needs survey, they would like to see details of those living within the parish of Elm who are on the housing waiting list; Ms Freya undertook to produce this information;
- (2) this matter be considered further at the next meeting, in the light of the information to be provided by Ms Freya.

81/10 Highway issues - B1101 through Coldham

Further to minute 65/10, the Clerk reported the response from the Local Highway Authority (LHA) in relation to his letter concerning the speeds at which vehicles travel along the B1101 through Coldham.

The Clerk read to members the letter that he had sent to the LHA and the response from the relevant officer from within the Highways Service at the County Council.

In summary, the Local Highway Authority states that

- the County Council has undertaken work previously to alter the character of the road environment and encourage lower speeds through the village
- a review of speed limits on all built-up and rural A and B class roads across Cambridgeshire is, in line with Government requirements by 2011-12, currently underway. The B1101 route is priority number 30 out of 87 and the outcomes should be known later this year. The County Council will ensure that the outcomes of the speed limit review for the B1101 are conveyed to the Parish Council
- although the County Council is the authority responsible for setting speed limits on local roads, their enforcement is the responsibility of Cambridgeshire Constabulary. The County Council will continue to work with the Constabulary to ensure that any changes to speed limits are likely to be complied with
- there may be benefit in local people engaging with the Constabulary to establish a Speed Watch group
- communities are being encouraged to contribute towards the cost of what they see as priority improvements to highway infrastructure, known as Third party Funding Measures.

Enclosed with the letter of response were copies of the Local Highway Authority's information documents on the Speed Limit Review and Third Party Funding Measures.

Members decided that the response from the Local Highway Authority be noted.

82/10 Planning applications

Members considered the following planning applications and decided to submit to the Local Planning Authority the comments set out (in italics) below:

- (1) Erection of a 2-bed detached house involving demolition of garage (renewal of planning permission F/YR07/0569/F) on land south of 2 Rookery Cottages, Well End, Fridaybridge – F/YR10/0705/EXTIME (applicant: Mrs J Wainwright).

That the application be supported.

- (2) Erection of two dwellings with associated garages (renewal of planning permission F/YR07/0863/O) on land north of 5 March road, Rings End – F/YR10/0710/EXTIME (applicant: Mr M Whittlesey).

That the application be supported.

- (3) Erection of a single-storey rear extension involving demolition of existing extension at Elm Manor, Main Road, Elm – F/YR10/0713/F (applicant: Mr P Blackmore).

That the application be supported.

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

- (4) Erection of a single-storey rear extension involving demolition of existing extension at Elm Manor, Main Road, Elm – F/YR10/0714/LB (applicant: Mr P Blackmore).

That the application be supported.

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

- (5) Change of use of agricultural land to private equestrian yard, including the erection of stables and implement store/shed on land west of Longdale, Back Road, Fridaybridge – F/YR10/0745/F (applicant: Mr B J Dove).

That the application be supported.

M83/10 Finance

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

Income

A Clingo	Cremated remains plot purchase and interment fees – Roy Green	£235.00
Fenland District Council	Parish precept – second payment	£13,750.00

J P Smith	Agricultural holdings rent	£1,312.50
EDF Energy	Wayleave payments	£160.06
A Fitzjohn	Agricultural holdings rent	£1,575.00
Total Income		£17,032.56

Expenditure

Ms V Morton	Re-payment of tenancy deposit for Cemetery Cottage, Elm	£700.00
Fraser Dawbarns	Legal advice/proceedings regarding Cemetery Cottage	£207.97
Moore Stephens	Annual Audit 2009/10	£498.20
ATS Euromaster	Tractor tyre repair	£58.64
Singh (UK) Ltd	Skip hire	£182.13
SLCC	Clerk's membership (50% of cost)	£59.00
M Hartigan	Grounds maintenance works	£218.75
T Jordan	Salary (less income tax of £153.17), Broadband and other expenses)	£774.48
Total Expenditure		£2,699.17

In addition, 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 2010.

Although he had "signed off" the Council's accounts for 2009/10, the External Auditor made the following comments:

- "1. We reported to the Council on the 2009 Annual Return that it should agree contractual terms with the Internal Auditor. This recommendation has not been implemented.
2. Councils do not have a general power to hold reserves. Reserves must, therefore, be held only for one of the following reasons: as working capital to enable day-to-day operations; as part of the build-up towards approved projects (ear-marked reserves); as a contingency against risks, as found necessary in the risk assessment process. The Council should allocate its resources accordingly and return any surpluses to parishioners."

Members decided

- (1) that the income of £17,032.56 be noted and that the expenditure of £2,699.17 be authorised;
- (2) to note, and take the necessary in relation to, the comments made by the External Auditor in respect of the Parish Council's Annual Return 2009/10.

84/10 Cemetery Cottage, Elm

Further to minute 69/10, the Clerk reported on the latest position regarding the proposals to refurbish this property, following departure of the former tenant.

The Clerk informed members that, as a result of a detailed inspection of the empty property by the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman and himself, he had produced a specification of necessary improvement works. The specification had been sent subsequently to 11 local building contractors, with a letter of invitation to submit a quotation for the work.

The situation to date is that:

- three contractors had declined the invitation to submit a quotation because of existing work commitments
- two contractors had not responded to the invitation
- four contractors had visited the property
- arrangements were in hand for the two remaining contractors to visit the property
- three quotations have been received by the Clerk.

The Clerk gave members of an indication of the financial range of the quotations received so far.

Members decided that

- (1) the current situation be noted;
- (2) the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and the Clerk be delegated the authority to accept the quotation which provides best value – not necessarily the cheapest – in terms of refurbishment of this property.

85/10 Correspondence

- (1) Community ACTION (Autumn 2010) magazine.

The Clerk reported receipt of the latest edition of this magazine.

Members decided that the magazine be circulated amongst members of the Parish Council.

- (2) Access to Bridleways in Elm.

The Clerk reported a letter from a local resident, enquiring as to whether the Parish Council could identify the bridleways and permissive routes in Elm and also asking the Parish Council, firstly, whether it is aware of any land owners who would be prepared to allow horse riding on their land and, secondly, whether the Parish Council would give consent for use of the playing field at Begdale Road for horse riding purposes.

The local resident had included with her letter, copies of responses that she had received from the relevant officers at Fenland District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council in this matter.

Members were neither aware of any permissive routes in the Elm area nor any land owners who would be prepared to allow the riding of horses on their fields. Furthermore, they do not consider it would be appropriate to allow the riding of horses on the playing field at Begdale Road.

Members decided that a response be sent, in the above terms, to the local resident.

- (3) Third Peterborough Local Transport Plan.

The Clerk reported the invitation from Peterborough City Council to make comments on the third Peterborough Local Transport Plan, which is the subject of public consultation between 14 September and 7 December 2010.

Members decided that they had no comments to make in relation to the plan's proposals.

(4) The future of The Dale, Elm.

The Clerk read to members a letter from Roddons Housing Association, in which it details its proposals for the future of this housing scheme. In summary, the six bungalows will remain (although they will be re-designated as general needs housing) but the main complex will be demolished. All existing residents will be transferred to alternative accommodation.

Members decided that the content of the letter from Roddons Housing Association be noted.

(5) Shape Your Place website.

The Clerk reported on the new Shape Your Place website, which has been developed over recent months by a number of public agencies (including Cambridgeshire County Council, Fenland District Council and Cambridgeshire Constabulary) and has now gone "live" in the Wisbech and the northern villages in Fenland.

The site is being administered by the Rosmini Centre in Wisbech, which is asking local councils to help "spread the word" to the communities that they represent. To this end, a number of posters and flyers have been provided to the Parish Council

Members decided that the information reported be noted and that the website be promoted by the Parish Council, via the posters and flyers provided, to residents within the parish.

86/10 The Leam, Fridaybridge

Councillor Webb raised concerns regarding some people fishing in The Leam, given the potential health and safety obligations upon the Parish Council as land owner. He expressed his belief that the prohibition of fishing was a requirement of the Parish Council's insurers.

Members are aware of the existence of a No Fishing sign at The Leam and of their health and safety obligations.

Members are aware also that the issue of enforcing any breaches of the No Fishing rule is a matter for the Parish Council.

The Clerk reported that the Parish Council's policy of insurance, which provides public liability cover, does not refer specifically to preventing fishing at The Leam but there is an expectation that the Parish Council would take appropriate measures to minimise the potential for a claim against the policy of insurance; the erection of the warning sign would qualify as an action in that context.

Members decided that the situation be monitored and, if it persists, efforts be made to identify those who are fishing at The Leam with a view to reporting their actions to the body which issues rod licences.

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

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

87/10 Remembrance Sunday

Members discussed the Parish Council's participation in the Remembrance Sunday service at Elm church and the subsequent wreath laying at the war memorial on 14 November 2010.

Councillor Cotterell undertook to ascertain the times of the church service and the wreath laying, so that the information could be provided to councillors and advertised to parishioners.

Members discussed also the arrangements for readings, on behalf of the Parish Council, at the church service and the purchase of a wreath.

Members decided that

- (1) Councillor Cotterell would ascertain the times of the church service and the wreath laying;
- (2) the Clerk would order a wreath and advertise the times of the service and wreath laying;
- (3) Councillors Cotterell and Softley would give readings, on behalf of Elm Parish Council, at the church service.

88/10 Next meeting

Members decided that the next meeting of the Parish Council be held on 23 November 2010, commencing at 6.30 pm, at the Pavilion, Begdale Road, Elm.

Meeting finished at 8.45 pm

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

Date:.....