

ELM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING

15 FEBRUARY 2011 – 6.30 pm.

Present: Councillor Brand, Chairman; Councillors Mrs Hopkin, Mrs Johnson, Pooley, Rogers, Softley, Stokes, Tilney and Webb.

Apologies: Councillors Cotterell, Mrs Cotterell and Mrs Pinnock.

The minutes of the meeting of 18 January 2011 were confirmed and signed.

130/10 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.

131/10 Matters arising from minutes of last meeting

(1) Facilities for young people in the parish (minute 118/10 (2))

Councillor Rogers reported that he had sought quotations from three contractors for the provision and installation of two items of play equipment and associated safety surfacing at the Pocket Park, adjacent to Chapel Lane, in Elm. He informed members that he had received two of the quotations and the third is expected in the very near future.

Councillor Rogers informed members that the Chairman, the Clerk and he would be meeting, at the Pocket Park, on 17 February 2011, with a representative of Cambridgeshire ACRE (who would be able to provide advice, including the availability of grant funding, on the project).

Some members raised issues in relation to the need for this play equipment provision and the appropriateness of the location proposed.

Members decided that this matter be discussed further at the next meeting, in the light of the outcome of the meeting with the representative of Cambridgeshire ACRE.

(2) Great Poppy Party Weekend (minute 125/10 (1))

The Chairman reported that the Coldham Residents’ Action Group, having considered the information within the letter and brochure from the Royal British Legion, has concluded that it is unlikely to be able to support this event.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

(3) Additional street lighting in the parish (minute 126/10)

The Clerk sought suggestions from members for possible locations for additional street lamps, in the event of the Parish Council receiving the necessary Concurrent Functions Grant funding from Fenland District Council in 2011/12 for three additional street lamps in the parish (minute 98/10 refers).

Members decided to give consideration, between this meeting and the next, to potential locations for an additional lamp in each of the villages of Fridaybridge and Elm and that a decision be reached at the next meeting.

(4) Maintenance of playing fields and open spaces across the parish and at Elm Cemetery (minute 127/10)

The Clerk reported that, in accordance with the decision at minute 127/10, he had taken advice from the Parks and Open Spaces Manager at Fenland District Council and had subsequently invited quotations from the contractors recommended by that officer.

As a result, two quotations had been received. The Clerk reported to members the detail, including the annual cost, of those quotations.

In addition, Councillor Pooley reported an expression of interest from the Parish Council's former cemetery grounds person in undertaking the work that would comprise the new parish-wide grounds maintenance contract. The Clerk informed members of the likely cost, based upon monies paid in a full year (in terms of wages, materials and equipment maintenance), of taking such an approach. In addition, the pursuance of such an option would remove the ability to dispose of the grass cutting and other grounds maintenance equipment owned by the Parish Council.

Arising from the discussion of this matter, members highlighted the benefit that would be derived from the Parish Council having the services of an odd-job person, which would enable minor repair and maintenance works to be undertaken in a timely and relatively inexpensive manner.

Members decided

(1) having considered the advantages and disadvantages of the options available, that the lowest quotation received for the grounds maintenance contract, in the annual sum of £11,890.00 (plus VAT), be accepted and that the Clerk be authorised to both finalise the contractual details (including start date, frequency and nature of invoicing etc) with the appointed contractor and to ascertain whether a price reduction could be achieved by awarding a longer-term contract;

(2) that they would each seek to identify individuals who may be able and willing to undertake the duties of an odd-job person for the parish.

132/10 Police matters

In the absence from the meeting of a representative of the Wisbech and District Neighbourhood Policing Team, members were unable to receive information in relation to incidents of crime and disorder within the parish since the last meeting of the Parish Council.

Further to minute 119/10, members supported the suggestion of the Chairman that gift vouchers, of the type and value proposed (the cost being met from the Chairman's Allowance), be purchased as a retirement gift for PC Coales.

Members decided that they had no issues for reporting, by the Clerk, to the Neighbourhood Policing Team for investigation.

133/10 Highway issues

Members decided that they had no issues for reporting, by the Clerk, to the Local Highway Authority at this time.

134/10 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) Conversion of existing dwelling to 2 x 3-bed dwellings, involving erection of three-storey and single-storey extensions, demolition of outbuildings and partial demolition of south elevation extension (amendment to planning permission F/YR09/0490/F) at Rookery Farmhouse, Well end, Fridaybridge - F/YR11/0007/F (applicants: Mr P Edgeley, Mr J Edgeley and Mrs G Mayfield).

That the application be supported.

(Councillor Mrs Hopkin declared her personal interest in this application, by virtue of a business link with the applicants for the proposal)

- (2) Conversion of existing dwelling to 2 x 3-bed dwellings, involving erection of three-storey and single-storey extensions, demolition of outbuildings and partial demolition of south elevation extension (amendment to Listed Building Consent F/YR09/0491/LB) at Rookery Farmhouse, Well end, Fridaybridge - F/YR11/0011/LB (applicants: Mr P Edgeley, Mr J Edgeley and Mrs G Mayfield).

That the application be supported.

(Councillor Mrs Hopkin declared her personal interest in this application, by virtue of a business link with the applicants for the proposal)

- (3) Installation of an air source central heating pump to rear elevation of existing dwelling at 8 Long Drove, Waldersea, Fridaybridge – F/YR11/0022/F (applicant: Mr G Breame).

That the application be supported.

- (4) Erection of a block of 16 stables, tack/store and lecture rooms, reception/tack shop building and formation of lunge area and ménage with 8 x 6m high flood lights to create equestrian training centre at Greaves Farm Livery Stables, Redmoor Lane, Elm – F/YR11/0028/F (applicant: Mrs A Pinder).

That the application be supported.

- (5) Erection of 1.8m close-boarded fence with 0.45m trellis above at Waldersea House, 172 March Road, Fridaybridge – F/YR11/0032/F (applicant: Mr D Sharpe).

That the application be supported.

- (6) Erection of a 3-bed single-storey dwelling on plot 1, land north-east of Florence House, Back Road, Fridaybridge – F/YR11/0038/F (applicants: Mr and Mrs S and C Holloway).

That the application be supported.

(Councillor Stokes declared his personal interest in this application, by virtue of friendship with the applicants for the proposal)

- (7) Erection of a 3-bed single-storey dwelling and detached garage on land east of 5 Gosmoor Lane, fronting St Giles Grove, Elm – F/YR11/0072/F (applicant: Mr R Klimczuk).

That the application be supported.

135/10 Finance

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

Income

A R Clingo	Burial plot purchase and interment fee - Bates	£1,090.00
Anglia Regional Co-operative Society td	Memorial fee – C Middleton	£135.00
Total Income		£1,225.00

Expenditure

Singh (UK) Ltd	Skip hire - Cemetery	£186.00
DM Builders	Cemetery Cottage refurbishment works – deposit payment	£5,977.00
DM Builders	Cemetery Cottage refurbishment works – second stage payment	£5,977.00
British Damp Proofing	Cemetery Cottage refurbishment works- damp proofing	£1,044.00
Lombardo Plumbing and Heating	Cemetery Cottage - Boiler service and gas safety check.	£90.00
P Swann	Cemetery Cottage – new UPVC side porch	£1,988.00
Wildlife Gardening Services Ltd	Grounds maintenance works	£52.50
T Jordan	Salary (less income tax of £115.15), Broadband and other expenses)	£619.04
Total Expenditure		£15,933.54

In addition, the Clerk reported on the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 31 January 2011 (in the total sum of £152,311.19).

The Clerk sought the views of members as to whether they required additional financial information to that currently reported at each meeting.

Further to minute 111/10, members reviewed, for the financial year 2011/12, the Parish Council's cemetery fees. To inform members' deliberations, the Clerk provided each member with details of the current fees levied by Elm Parish Council, another Parish Council within the district and the 2011/12 fees agreed by Fenland District Council.

Members decided that

- (1) the income of £1,225.00 be noted and that the expenditure of £15,933.54 be authorised;
- (2) the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 31 January 2011 be noted;
- (3) the level of financial information reported, by the Clerk, currently at each meeting is sufficient to enable them to both make effective spending decisions and to understand the ongoing financial position of the Parish Council;
- (4) minor increases be made to only three of the fees within the cemetery fees schedule (relating to interments and purchase of grave spaces) and that the revised fees, to be effective from 1 April 2011, be made available to the local companies which provide funerals and memorials services.

136/10 Risk Assessments

Members considered, in accordance with the advice of the Council's Auditors that local councils should assess and take mitigating actions, the risks to the Parish Council.

Members are of the view that all of the risks faced by the Council are covered by the necessary measures, including:

- insurance policies in respect all assets and public liability
- regular inspections by the Clerk and members of the Parish Council of all assets
- monthly reporting by the Clerk of all items of income and expenditure and monies held in bank accounts
- all expenditure is approved at Parish Council meetings and cheques require three signatures
- the Clerk reports to members at regular intervals on the Parish Council's overall financial position
- Annual Accounts are approved by the Parish Council
- all activities are governed by Standing Orders and Financial Regulations
- the Parish Council possesses a prudent level of financial reserves to be able to fund any unforeseen eventualities
- health and safety inspections are undertaken, and record sheets completed, each time that grounds maintenance activities by or on behalf of the Parish Council.

Members decided that appropriate risk management measures are in place currently but the situation be kept under constant review and considered formally by the Parish Council at the February meeting each year.

137/10 Cemetery Cottage, Elm

Further to minute 124/10, the Clerk reported on the latest position regarding the refurbishment of this property.

The Clerk informed members that works to the property began during week commencing 31 January 2011 and that both he and the Chairman had subsequently met, on-site, with the builder to discuss additional works felt to be necessary to address issues that had come to light during the refurbishment activities to date; this includes repairs to floorboards, additional plastering following the removal of kitchen units and bathroom suite, replacement of the bathroom door, improving the level of loft insulation to bring it up to current standards.

For the benefit of some members, the Clerk reminded the Parish Council of the details of the refurbishment works agreed previously.

Members decided that the information reported by the Clerk be noted and to acknowledge that the cost of the project will increase from that specified in the contractor's original quotation because of both the additional works now deemed necessary and the increase in the level of VAT on building materials since the quotation was submitted.

138/10 Elm Cemetery extension

The Chairman reported to members on a meeting that had taken place at Elm Cemetery on 4 February 2011, with the aim of progressing the planned extension.

Attendees at the meeting, in addition to the Chairman, were representatives of the Local Highway Authority, the architect who had been engaged by the Parish Council to submit the planning application for this proposal and a representative of the company which had been awarded the contract, in September 2009, to undertake the extension works.

The Chairman explained that the delay in bringing this scheme to fruition had been due to the difficulty in obtaining discharge, by the Local Highway Authority, of the planning condition relating to highways issues associated with the proposal. As a result of the meeting at the cemetery, the Local Highway Authority has discharged the planning condition and works can now take place.

Consequently, the company which had been awarded the contract, in September 2009, to undertake the extension works has now been requested to proceed with this work as a matter of priority. Because of the time that has passed since the date of the original quotation from the company, the cost of this work will increase from £9,819.00 to £10,365.00.

Given the condition of the existing roadway within the cemetery and the potential deterioration that could be caused as a result of the works to achieve the cemetery extension, it is considered desirable to consider replacement of the roadway following completion of the extension works.

Members decided that the current position regarding extension of Elm Cemetery be noted and that quotations for replacement of the roadway be sought.

139/10 Correspondence

(1) Fenland Association for Community Transport – request for financial assistance.

The Clerk reported a letter from the Fenland Association for Community Transport (FACT), seeking a financial donation towards the cost of purchasing a new minibus. The request detailed the cost of the new vehicle and FACT's assessment of the benefit to local communities of such a purchase.

Some members were aware that FACT had submitted applications for funding by way of the community grants scheme administered by Fenland District Council and were surprised that this was not mentioned in the organisation's request to Elm Parish Council.

Members decided that, given the lack of any evidence that residents of Elm Parish would benefit from this minibus purchase, that they could not justify donating any of its funds, which come from the residents of the parish, to this project.

(2) Elm and Fridaybridge Youth Club – financial assistance.

Further to minutes 95/10 and 105/10 (4), the Clerk circulated to members of a letter of thanks from members of the Elm and Fridaybridge Youth Club, expressing their gratitude for the Parish Council's support to the club

Members decided that the club's appreciation of the financial assistance given by the Parish Council be noted.

(3) Fenland Arts Association.

The Clerk read to members a letter from the Fenland Arts Association, in which the organisation gave an insight into the work that it carries out in promoting arts events in the district and the assistance and advice that it can provide to communities in relation to organising and managing such events.

Members decided that the information provided by the Fenland Arts Association be noted.

(4) War Memorials.

The Clerk reported a letter from Mr B Krill, local War Memorial Advisor, informing the Parish Council that 2014 will see the centenary of the outbreak of World War Two and the consequent possibility that the Parish Council may receive enquiries from the public regarding the war memorials in the parish.

Mr Krill also suggested that war memorials should be: maintained in good and safe condition; accurate and up-to-date in relation to the names that they display; readily accessible to the public. In his letter, Mr Krill offered to provide advice, on a free-of-charge basis, to Elm Parish Council in respect of war memorial issues.

Members decided to accept the offer from Mr Krill to become the Parish Council's War Memorial Advisor and that the Clerk would seek advice from him in relation to the need for works to the war memorials in Elm and Fridaybridge.

(5) The Localism Bill and the County Council's budgetary position.

The Clerk read to members an e-mail from the Chief Executive at Cambridgeshire County Council, outlining briefly the impact that the Government's funding cuts will have upon its delivery of public services across the County and explaining, via a briefing paper attached to the e-mail, how The Localism Bill provides opportunities for different methods of delivering services to local communities. The point is made that Parish and Town Councils may be able to provide certain local services in cases where the County Council is no longer able to do so.

The e-mail states that, because of budget reductions, the County Council will, among a series of measures, be

- reducing the level of grass cutting to minimum standards
- phasing-out subsidized bus services; moving towards a greater emphasis on community transport
- transforming the way in which library services are delivered
- reducing services for children and young people; for example, moving from the provision of a universal youth service to providing a service which targets areas of greatest need.

The briefing paper on The Localism Bill makes the point that "Parish Councils, as the most local tier of government, are well placed to respond to the localism agenda, together with their communities. Parish Councils represent their community, provide services to meet local needs and play a central role in improving quality of life and community well-being."

The briefing paper summarises each of the six key announcements within The Localism Bill, namely to:

- Lift the burden of bureaucracy (including abolition of the Standards Board regime)
- Empower communities to do things their way
- Increase local control of public finance (including the introduction of Council tax referendums instead of the current "capping" regime)
- Diversify the supply of public services

- Open-up Government to public scrutiny (including a requirement for local authorities to publish every item of expenditure over £500)
- Strengthen accountability to local people.

Members decided that the information provided by the Chief Executive at Cambridgeshire County Council be noted.

140/10 Redmoor Bank, Elm – fly tipping

One member mentioned fly tipping that had occurred at Redmoor Bank, Elm.

Members decided that the matter be drawn to the attention of Fenland District Council, with a request that action be taken to remove the debris that had been dumped in this area.

(The Chairman agreed to this item of business being discussed as a matter of urgency to enable the situation to be addressed at the earliest opportunity)

141/10 Salt bins

Further to minute 108/10 (2), the Clerk informed members that the County Council is ready to deliver the five salt bins ordered by Elm Parish Council but has asked whether the Parish Council would prefer to have them delivered to the agreed highway locations at this time or delivered to a point of safe storage within the parish, for subsequent siting closer to next winter. The County Council recommends the latter option on the basis that if the bins were sited and filled with salt now, the salt could have a corrosive effect on the bin; if the bins were sited without any content, they would not be secure (the weight of salt prevents them being removed).

Members decided that the Clerk would arrange for the County Council to deliver the five salt bins to the Cemetery Chapel at Elm, for safe storage until next winter.

(The Chairman agreed to this item of business being discussed as a matter of urgency to enable the situation to be addressed at the earliest opportunity)

142/10 Next meeting

Members were reminded that the next meeting of the Parish Council has been scheduled for 22 March 2011, commencing at 6.30 pm, at the Parish Council office, Begdale Road, Elm.

.Meeting finished at 8.05 pm

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

Date:.....