

ELM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING

18 JANUARY 2011 – 6.30 pm.

Present: Councillor Stokes, Vice-Chairman in the Chair; Councillors Cotterell, Mrs Cotterell, Mrs Hopkin, Mrs Johnson, Softley, Tilney and Webb.

Apologies: Councillors Brand, Mrs Pinnock, Pooley and Rogers. An apology for absence was also received from County Councillor Mrs Tuck.

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

117/10 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.

Councillor Mrs Cotterell made an amendment to her register entry.

118/10 Matters arising from minutes of last meeting

(1) Elm Parish Council website (minute 105/10 (1))

Members considered a request from the Coldham Residents’ Action Group (CRAG) for its contact details to be included within the “local facilities and services” information, which is currently being collated by Councillor Rogers, element of the website.

Members decided that the request be approved and that CRAG be advised by the Clerk to provide to Councillor Rogers the information that it wishes to publicise on the Parish Council website.

(2) Facilities for young people in the parish (minute 105/10 (3))

Members decided that, given the absence of Councillor Rogers from the meeting, further discussion of this matter be deferred to the next meeting.

(3) Grove Gardens, Elm (minute 114/10)

The Clerk reported that he had raised this matter with the owners of the land, i.e. Kier Anglia, with a request that the company takes appropriate action to address the concerns of local residents.

The company subsequently sought advice from Fenland District Council (FDC) as to appropriate action to address this matter. Like the local resident who raised his concerns with FDC, the company was informed by the council that FDC is only able to take action in relation to fouling by dogs.

The attempted solution is that Kier Anglia will arrange for signs to be erected on site, asking people not to feed the wildfowl. It is anticipated that they will then move elsewhere to find food.

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

119/10 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 – no issues
- Fridaybridge – one allegation of sexual assault within a domestic situation; one dwelling burglary
- Elm – one theft; an incident of wounding; one burglary; theft from a vehicle; an incident of criminal damage.

In addition, Ms Coales informed members that the Police are currently receiving reports from across the Neighbourhood Policing Team area of thefts of catalytic converters (mainly from four-wheel drive vehicles and large vans) and metal drain covers. To attempt to address the situation, the Police are undertaking high-visibility patrols. Ms Coales suggested that members “spread the word” for local people to be vigilant and to report to the Police any behaviour that they consider to be suspicious.

Ms Coales informed the Parish Council that she would be retiring from the Police Force on 31 March 2011 and that her last working day would be 29 January 2011. Consequently, this would be her last attendance at a meeting of Elm Parish Council.

Ms Coales responded to members’ questions, including one in relation to how decisions are made in determining the sentences for those convicted of shoplifting.

Members decided

- (1) that the information provided by Ms Coales be noted;
- (2) to wish Ms Coales well in her retirement and to place on record their appreciation for the service that she has provided to the community of Elm Parish; that the Sector Inspector of the Wisbech and District Neighbourhood Policing Team be informed of the value that the Parish Council places on the work that Ms Coales has carried out; that the Chairman be requested to arrange the purchase a retirement gift for Ms Coales.

120/10 Community-led planning for Elm Parish

Further to minute 92/10, Mrs Wadsley of the Community Development Team at Fenland District Council attended the meeting to obtain any further comments from members in relation to the Elm Parish Plan, to enable her to produce a final version of the document.

Mrs Wadsley circulated a final draft version of the document, which had been updated to reflect comments made by members at minute 92/10, the results of further investigations that she had undertaken and consultation with the Clerk.

Mrs Wadsley explained to members the progress recording system (i.e. a “traffic lights” system; completed actions are shown in green) that had been used in the document and made the point that the Parish Council would need to determine, in production of the final document, the status of each of the actions within the plan and what will be done to deliver against any outstanding actions. It is acknowledged that it may not be possible, for various reasons (including the unavailability of financial resources), for some of the aspirational actions within the plan to ever be undertaken.

Members decided that they would each study the content of the final draft version of the document and raise any resulting issues and concerns at 22 March 2011 meeting of the Parish Council, at which a final version of the plan will be agreed.

121/10 Highway issues

(1) Low Road, Elm

Councillor Tilney expressed concern regarding the condition of the carriageway which links the Low Road with the High Road because of the existence of an old "trench", which he considers to be dangerous for motorists using this road.

Members decided that this matter be drawn to the attention of the Local Highway Authority.

(2) Highway re-surfacing works

Councillor Stokes informed members that he had raised with the Local Highway Authority (LHA) his concerns regarding the surplus chippings, resulting from carriageway re-surfacing works undertaken, on certain areas of carriageway within Elm and that, consequently, the LHA has agreed to undertake sweeping works to remove these chippings.

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

(3) Grove Gardens, Elm

Councillor Stokes expressed concern regarding the growth of trees/hedging at the junction of Grove Gardens with the main road, which is obscuring visibility, when looking right, for motorists leaving the estate.

Councillor Stokes made the point that this situation breaches condition number 14 of the planning permission for the estate, which states "visibility splays....shall be maintained free from any obstruction within an area of 4.0 metres x 7.0 metres measured along the channel line of the public highway from the centre line of the proposed access road".

Members decided that this matter be drawn to the owners of the land in question, i.e. Kier Anglia, with a request that appropriate action be taken to restore the necessary highway visibility.

(4) HGV advisory signs

Further to minute 96/10 (4), members were informed by the Clerk that the HGV advisory signs had now been installed at the locations agreed by the Parish Council.

Members decided that the information be noted.

(5) The Leam, Fridaybridge

Further to minute 76/10 (1), the Clerk informed members that the Local Highway Authority (LHA) has confirmed that, now that the ivy and vegetation removal works have been completed, it will soon be undertaking repair works to the highway fencing at The Leam.

Members decided that the current situation be noted and that the LHA's attention be drawn to the fact that there is now a large hole in the fencing, at a point opposite West Drive.

122/10 Planning applications

The Clerk reported that no planning applications had been received from the District Council, for reference to the Parish Council.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

123/10 Finance

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

Income

Fenland District Council	Concurrent functions grant – second payment	£4,000.00
A R Clingo	Interment fee - Rowlett	£440.00
J G Cross	Memorial fee	£275.00
Total Income		£4,715.00

Expenditure

Mrs S Woodhouse	Playing field security (quarterly payment to 31 December 2010)	£100.00
R J Warren Ltd	Removal of ivy and vegetation at The Leam, Fridaybridge	£1,586.70
Wildlife Gardening Services Ltd	Grounds maintenance works	£92.14
Anglian Water	Water for cemetery	£66.24
T Jordan	Salary (less income tax of £112.92), Broadband and other expenses)	£505.45
Total Expenditure		£2,350.53

In addition, the Clerk reported on the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 31 December 2010 (in the total sum of £149,801.16).

Members decided that

- (1) the income of £4,715.00 be noted and that the expenditure of £2,350.53 be authorised;
- (2) the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 31 December 2010 be noted.

124/10 Cemetery Cottage, Elm

Further to minute 112/10, the Clerk reported on the latest position regarding the refurbishment of this property.

The Clerk informed members that the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman and he had met at the cottage with the selected contractor, to confirm the exact works to be undertaken to each room (including agreeing the design of the kitchen layout) and to discuss a time scale for undertaking the works. It is proposed that the works will be undertaken during February, to enable the property to be placed with letting agents during March, with the aim of receiving rental income no later than the beginning of April 2011.

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

125/10 Correspondence

(1) Great Poppy Party Weekend.

The Clerk reported receipt of a letter, with enclosed brochure, from the Royal British Legion (RBL), in which the RBL is encouraging individuals and groups across the UK to hold Poppy Parties over the weekend 10 to 12 June 2011 in celebration of the British Legion's 90th birthday.

Members decided that the letter be referred to the Coldham Residents' Action Group.

(2) Local council elections 2011.

The Clerk reported receipt of an e-mail from Fenland District Council, enquiring as to whether or not the Parish Council would require the issue of poll cards for contested seats in the May 2011 local elections.

Members decided that, given the current financial pressures and the fact that poll cards will be issued to all voters for the referendum, expenditure on Parish Council poll cards would not be justified; in the event of a Parish Council contest, members consider that candidates would draw voters' attention to the fact that local elections would be taking place on 5 May 2011.

(3) Fenland Citizens' Advice Bureau – request for financial assistance.

Further to minute 101/10 (4), the Clerk read to members of a letter of thanks from the Fenland Citizens' Advice Bureau, expressing its gratitude for the Parish Council's support to the organization.

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

126/10 Additional street lighting in the parish

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).

The Clerk reported that Councillor Brand had informed him that Coldham residents would like the additional street lamp for that village to be provided on Overstone Road.

Members decided to note the suggested location for an additional street lamp in Coldham and to give consideration, between this meeting and the next, to potential locations in for an additional lamp in each of the villages of Fridaybridge and Elm.

(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)

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

Further to minute 76/10 (5), members considered the approach to achieving effective grounds maintenance of its playing fields and open spaces across the parish and at Elm Cemetery.

Members remain of the opinion, as expressed at minute 76/10 (5), that the most appropriate means of delivering these grounds maintenance activities in the future – with effect from the next grass cutting season – would be through a single contract (awarded to a contractor which is able to provide all of the necessary equipment, insurances etc).

Councillor Webb informed members that Fenland District has received an overwhelming response to the recent re-tendering of its grounds maintenance contract, which suggested to him that there is no shortage of appropriate contractors for this type of work.

Members decided that

- (1) the Clerk be requested to identify suitable contractors, taking advice from the Parks and Open Spaces Manager at Fenland District Council, and to subsequently invite them to submit a quotation for this work;
- (2) following award of the grounds maintenance contract, they would consider disposal of the grass cutting and other grounds maintenance equipment owned by the Parish Council; such action would not only provide a capital receipt which could be used for the benefit of the local community but also relieve the Parish Council of the burden of maintenance, storage and insurance of this equipment.

(The Chairman agreed to this item of business being discussed as a matter of urgency to enable a grounds maintenance contract to be awarded in time for the next grass cutting season)

128/10 Bus services affecting Coldham

Councillor Mrs Hopkin informed members of issues relating to the bus services affecting Coldham.

Councillor Mrs Hopkin stated that the majority of bus drivers employed by Norfolk Green are now using the layby at Coldham as a pick-up point. There is, however, one driver does not. The main concern raised by Councillor Mrs Hopkin was that on more than one occasion in recent weeks the 9.45 am bus had not appeared, which had resulted in an elderly resident (in her 80's) walking to the bus stop and then not being able to make her intended journey.

Members decided that the Clerk would contact Norfolk Green and ask the company to, firstly, look into this matter and, secondly, provide an assurance that there should be no further reliability issues with this particular service.

(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)

129/10 Next meeting

Members were reminded that the next meeting of the Parish Council has been scheduled for 15 February 2011, commencing at 6.30 pm, at the Parish Council office, Begdale Road, Elm.

.Meeting finished at 7.30 pm

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

Date:.....