

ELM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING

17 APRIL 2012 – 6.30 pm.

Present: Councillor Brand, Chairman; Councillors Cotterell, Mrs Cotterell, Mrs Hopkin, Pinnock, Stokes and Tilney.

In attendance: District Councillor Sutton.

Apologies: Councillors Mrs Johnson, Softley and Webb plus County Councillor Mrs Tuck.

The minutes of the meeting of 20 March 2012 were confirmed and signed.

145/11 Councillor Rogers - resignation of membership from Parish Council

The Clerk reported the resignation of Owen Rogers from membership of Elm Parish Council and that he had informed Fenland District Council (FDC) of this resignation; as a result, FDC had published formal notice of the vacancy with effect from 27 March 2012.

In accordance with the notice, given under The Local Elections (Parishes and Communities) Rules 1986, the opportunity exists, until 18 April 2012, for ten local electors for the parish to call for the vacancy to be filled by way of an election. In the absence of an election being called, the Parish Council must fill the vacancy by co-option.

The Clerk outlined very briefly the recommended process to be used in filling a Parish Council vacancy by co-option, as had been used in filling the two vacancies on Elm Parish Council which existed following the local elections in 2011 (minute 16/11 refers). 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

- (1) Councillor Rogers' resignation be noted and that he be thanked formally for his services to both the Parish Council and to the people of the parish;
- (2) the information reported by the Clerk with regard to filling the vacancy be noted and that, in the event of no election being called, co-option to membership of Elm Parish Council be undertaken at the next meeting.

146/11 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.

147/11 Progress on actions from minutes of last meeting

(1) Facilities for young people in the parish (minute 132/11 (2))

The Clerk reported that the latest situation in this matter is that, as a result of the meeting on 12 March 2012, the Parks and Open Spaces Manager at Fenland District Council (FDC) is working with the developer to establish prices for the outstanding works, necessary to achieve adoption by FDC, at the site.

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) Queen's Diamond Jubilee - grant aid (minute 132/11 (3))

The Clerk reported that the Coldham Residents' Action Group (CRAG) had now requested transfer of the Fenland District Council (FDC) grant (of £1,000) from the bank account of Elm Parish Council to that of CRAG.

In addition, the Coldham Residents' Action Group enquired as to the possibility of Elm Parish Council providing grant aid additional to that provided by FDC. CRAG has stated that a grant to cover the cost of the band and the hire of a disabled toilet, costing a total of £455.00, would be extremely helpful.

The Chairman updated members on the progress being made by the Coldham Residents' Action Group in preparing for the celebratory event.

Members decided that

- (1) the grant aid provided by Fenland District Council (of £1,000), currently being held by the Parish Council, be now paid to the Coldham Residents' Action Group;
- (2) a grant of £455.00, towards the cost of the celebratory event in Coldham, be made by the Parish Council to the Coldham Residents' Action Group.

148/11 Elm and Fridaybridge Youth Club

Further to minute 157/10 (4), members received a presentation from Laura Shreeve, Lizzi Wales and Lisa Shepherd of the County Council's Youth Service, together with two senior members of the Elm and Fridaybridge Youth Club.

Miss Shreeve informed members that the club operates each Thursday and attracts around 30 young people on a regular basis plus a number of others on an ad-hoc basis. She explained the activities which are undertaken at the club; these include cooking, quizzes, life skills and informal education. In addition, a number of agencies are invited to deliver specific information sessions (such as sexual health). The Elm and Fridaybridge Youth Club is open to any young person from the parish who is aged between 10 and 19 years.

One of the senior members explained that role; this involves running club activities, acting as a role model to help the development of younger youth club members etc. He stated that that undertaking the role of senior member aids personal development and is a useful for CV purposes.

The senior members of the youth club informed the Parish Council that the activities operated at the youth club include competitions with other youth clubs; this helps the development of team building skills and confidence boosting. One of the senior members made the point that he has learnt many new skills as a senior member of the youth club. He expressed the view that the club has contributed to a reduction in youth-related anti-social behaviour in the parish, because of the diversionary activity that it provides.

Miss Shepherd informed members that the staffing changes within the youth service, as a consequence of budget reductions at Cambridgeshire County Council, had impacted adversely upon the youth club's proposed fund-raising activities.

Miss Wales went through each of the requirements of the Partnership Agreement between Elm Parish Council and the County Council's Youth Service - these being: (1) the club making efforts to maximise income (e.g. through increased membership fees, sponsorships, fundraising activities); (2) reducing expenditure (e.g. increased use of volunteers for staffing, negotiating discounts on accommodation hire); (3) comprehensive marketing of the Youth Club across the parish of Elm) - and explained the youth club's achievements in meeting the requirements set by the Parish Council, as follows:

- Revenue has been increased by both raising the level of subscription paid by attendees and the operation of a tuck shop at the youth club.
- Expenditure has been reduced through no longer purchasing supplies via the County Council's procurement process but by using local suppliers and the Fenland Scrap Store instead.
- Promotion of the youth club has resulted in an increase in the number of members.

Miss Wales informed members that future plans for additional fund raising include:

- holding a talent show
- car washing (possibly on a monthly basis)
- running a DJ workshop
- running raffles.

Miss Wales made the point that although the youth club has not been able, within the first year of funding support from Elm Parish Council, to achieve as much as had been hoped in meeting the requirements of the Partnership Agreement, she hopes that the Parish Council is satisfied that appropriate benefits to the youth club members, sufficient to justify the financial support, are being delivered. She added that it is as a consequence of the financial support from Elm Parish Council that the Elm and Fridaybridge Youth Club is still in existence and she is hopeful that the Parish Council would be able to continue to support the youth club beyond the current financial year.

The staff of the Youth Service and the senior members of the youth club responded to members' questions.

Members decided that

- (1) the information presented be noted;
- (2) the Parish Council be provided with details of the youth club's income and expenditure figures for the financial year 2011/12 and at the half-year of 2012/13, to enable consideration to be given, prior to setting of the Parish Precept (in December 2012), to the possible continuation of financial support to the Elm and Fridaybridge Youth Club beyond the financial year 2012/13.

149/11 Police matters

The Clerk reported that PCSO Martin Bogunovic, 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:

- Fridaybridge – one theft from an outbuilding; one arson; one suspected case of poaching; one incident of criminal damage.

- Elm – five incidents of criminal damage (mainly to crops); a row of sheds entered.
- A47 Nettle Bank – one theft from an agricultural building.

The PCSO's report also provided information regarding arrests made in relation to the production of cannabis.

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

150/11 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 one issue affecting the whole district, i.e. that the Government has produced proposals for the localisation of business rates and Council Tax benefits. Councillor Cotterell stated that there would be consultation on the proposals prior to implementation. He expressed the view that, because of the rural nature of Fenland, the new arrangements could have a detrimental financial impact upon the district. He undertook to encourage Fenland District Council to organise an awareness event, possibly in September 2012.

Further to minute 109/11, Councillor Sutton reported briefly on the current situation regarding the Local Government Boundary Commission review of electoral wards in Fenland. He informed members that the Boundary Commission has proposed some amendments to District Ward Boundaries and that the local councils in Fenland would be consulted upon the proposals in the very near future.

Members decided that the information reported by District Councillors Cotterell and Sutton be noted.

151/11 Highway issues - speed limit on March Road, Coldham

Further to minute 135/11 (1), the Clerk reported that he had met with the relevant officer of the Local Highway Authority (LHA) to discuss progressing the proposal of achieving a 40 mph speed limit on the B1101 through the whole of Coldham. As a result of that meeting, a plan showing the proposal (to accompany the consultation letters) has been produced by the LHA and the Clerk has drafted a consultation letter, to be sent to the persons/agencies/service providers recommended by the LHA.

The Clerk informed members that he anticipated being able to despatch the consultation letters and plan within the next few days, with the intention of enabling the Parish Council to consider the consultation responses at the next meeting.

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

152/11 Planning applications

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

- (1) *Erection of a single-storey rear extension to existing dwelling (retrospective) at Saxby Cottage, 131 March Road, Fridaybridge – F/YR12/0196/F (applicant: Mr T Dean).*

That the application be supported.

- (2) Erection of 2 x 3-bed two-storey dwellings, involving the demolition of existing outbuildings, at Fern Cottage, Begdale Road, Elm – F/YR12/0215/RM (applicant: Mr D M Bell).

That the application be supported.

153/11 Financial matters

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

Income

Anglia Memorials	Memorial fee	£135.00
Kent Memorials	Memorial fee	£275.00
A R Clingo	Interment of ashes fee	£250.00
Maxey Grounds	Cottage rent (less fees and cost of annual gas safety check)	£523.60
Total Income		£1,183.60

Expenditure

R J Warren Ltd	Grounds maintenance contract, hedge planting at cemetery and weed clearance at The Leam	£2,846.32
King's Lynn IDB	Agricultural Drainage Rates	£64.04
Coldham Residents Action Group Ltd	Forwarding of Diamond Jubilee grant from FDC	£1,000.00
T Jordan	Salary (less income tax of £114.04), Broadband and other expenses	£546.79
Mrs S Woodhouse	Playing field security (quarterly payment to 31 March 2012)	£100.00
Total Expenditure		£4,557.15

In addition, the Clerk reported on the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 31 March 2012 (in the total sum of £122,915.24), together with the month-end figures for each of the preceding six months and as at 31 March 2011.

Further to minute 21/11, the Clerk reported on the management accounts that he had produced for the fourth (year-end) quarter of the 2011/12 financial year; he gave explanations as to variances between the estimated income and expenditure for the year and the actual levels of income and expenditure in the financial year to date.

Members decided that

- (1) the income of £1,183.60 be noted and that the expenditure of £4,557.15 be authorised;

- (2) the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 31 March 2012, together with the month-end figures for each of the preceding six months and as at 31 March 2011, be noted;
- (3) the financial information within the fourth quarter's management accounts be noted.

154/11 Abington Grove, Elm

Further to minute 141/11, members gave further consideration to the Chairman's suggestion of providing car parking facilities on part of the current grassed area (highway verge) at the entrance to Abington Grove, as a means of both addressing the highway safety problems caused by on-street parking in the vicinity of Elm C of E Primary School and providing a parking area for visitors to the cemetery.

The Chairman drew members' attention to the documentation which had been circulated by the Clerk following the last meeting. He reiterated the points he had made at the previous meeting and asked for members' views as to whether the Parish Council should proceed with provision of the car parking facilities that he has suggested.

Councillor Pinnock stated that he could not support the Chairman's suggestion for the provision of such a parking facility for the following reasons:

- Photographs that he had taken of the grassed area over a year ago showed apparent subsidence of the land. This had worsened over the last year; he suggested that a survey by an independent, qualified surveyor should be undertaken before Elm Parish Council considers undertaking any responsibility for the land in question.
- Cambridgeshire County Council (the owners of the land) would not install or maintain the car park, which he considers to be unreasonable.
- This area of land, which was part of an old water course, is often water logged and, in his opinion, parents would not walk across waterlogged grass to access the school.
- Because of the water logging, the most expensive of the indicative quotations (£35,000) would be more appropriate to reduce possibility of flooding. He, therefore, felt that the lowest indicative quotation of £21,000 was not appropriate.
- Given that the Parish Council does not produce cash flow forecasts, he is concerned that Council cash balances were reducing and the Council may find itself unable to meet its commitments to staff and contracted agreements in future years and, therefore, be unable to assist the local economy.
- He has concerns as to how such a car parking area would be "policed" over night to prevent anti-social behaviour and/or the selling of vehicles.

Councillor Pinnock stated that he had been asked by various residents how they could canvass for a petition or a Parish Poll regarding this proposal. He added that a number of residents are concerned about the detrimental effect that the provision of a car park could have upon the value of their property.

Councillor Pinnock pointed out that the responsibility for schools lies with the Government and the County Council and that it is the responsibility of those bodies - not the Parish Council - to ensure that the necessary infrastructure for schools is in place. He pointed out also that Elm Primary School had recently received £52,000, which it chose not to spend on addressing parking issues.

Councillor Pinnock stressed his opinion that Elm parishioners should not be expected to bear the initial capital costs of constructing such a car park or its on-going maintenance costs.

Members decided, on a proposal from Councillor Pinnock, seconded by Councillor Stokes, that the provision of car parking facilities on part of the current grassed area (highway verge) at the entrance to Abington Grove be not pursued by Elm Parish Council.

(Councillor Stokes declared his personal interest in this item, by virtue of residing in close proximity to the area of land being discussed)

(Councillor Pinnock declared his personal interest in this item, by virtue of ownership and residency of a property at Abington Grove)

155/11 Closed churchyard at St Mark's Church, Fridaybridge

The Clerk informed members that the Chairman of the Parish Council had received, on 6 April 2012, a letter from the Secretary of the St Mark's Church Parochial Church Council (PCC) requesting Elm Parish Council to take on the maintenance of the closed churchyard at this church. The PCC states, in the letter, its belief that the churchyard was closed for burials in 1911.

The Clerk informed members of the legal position in this matter, as set out in Section 215 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Section 215 of the Local Government Act 1972 provides that a PCC with responsibilities for maintaining a closed churchyard may serve a written request upon the Parish Council to take over maintenance of that churchyard. The Act describes maintenance as "keeping the churchyard in decent order and its walls and fences in good repair".

Section 215 of the 1972 Act provides that if the Parish Council does not wish to take on this maintenance responsibility from the PCC, it can, within three months of it receiving notice from the PCC, serve written notice upon the District Council requesting that the District Council takes on this responsibility instead of the Parish Council so doing.

Members decided that the requisite notice, under Section 215 of the Local Government Act 1972, be served upon Fenland District Council, requesting that it takes on the responsibility for maintenance of the closed churchyard at St Mark's Church, Fridaybridge.

156/11 Annual Parish Assembly 2012 – agenda items

Members discussed possible agenda items for the Annual Parish Assembly arranged for 22 May 2012.

The Clerk reminded members of the decision at the Annual parish Assembly in 2011 (minute EA02/10 refers) that, with effect from 2012, local organisations within the parish be invited to present or submit an Annual Report to the Annual Assembly and that, to facilitate this, members would provide the Clerk with the names and contact details of the local organisations which they feel should be invited to present or submit a report to the Annual Assembly; he stated that, to date, no such information had been provided by members.

Members consider that, through the information provided by letter from Elm Friendship Club (minute 157/11 (1) refers) and the presentation from the Elm and Fridaybridge Youth Club (minute 148/11 refers) - the two local groups which receive financial support from the Parish Council – no additional presentations or reports are required at the Annual Parish Assembly.

Members decided that

- (1) the agenda for the 2012 Annual Parish Assembly would contain the “standard” items which featured in the 2010 and 2011 meetings;
- (2) publicity for the event be given via posters on the parish notice boards, on the Parish Council website and through mention in a local newspaper.

157/11 Correspondence

- (1) Elm Friendship Club – request for continued financial support.

Further to minute 102/11 (2), the Clerk reported a request from Elm Friendship Club for financial support in the 2012/13 financial year. The letter of request detailed some of the activities and events which had been enjoyed by the members of the Elm Friendship Club and the value that they place upon the funding provided by the Parish Council.

The Clerk reminded members of the level of financial support provided to the club in 2010/11 and 2011/12, i.e. at the rate of 28 per month (to cover the cost of the club holding its meetings at the Elm Centre) and informed members that, according to the Secretary/Treasurer of the club, the Elm Friendship Club’s meeting costs had not increased in the current financial year.

Members decided that the Parish Council would provide financial support to the Elm Friendship Club for the financial year 2012/13, the level of funding to be on the same basis as in 2010/11 and 2011/12 (i.e. at the rate of £28 per month) (payable in two instalments of 168.00)).

- (2) Cemetery memorials.

The Clerk referred to a brochure produced by a local Funeral Director showing the cemetery memorials that it is able to offer to clients. The local Funeral Director has asked that the Parish Council studies the brochure, with a view to indicating whether there are any memorials within the brochure that the Parish Council would not allow at Elm Cemetery.

Members decided that the brochure be circulated among the members of the Parish Council, between this meeting and the next, with the aim of agreeing, at the next meeting, a response to the local Funeral Director.

- (3) Litter bin at Coldham playing field.

The Clerk reported an e-mail from the Coldham Residents’ Action Group (CRAG) regarding the fact that litter is being left in and around the playing field at Coldham.

CRAG feels that this problem may exist because the bin that is sited just outside the field is also designated as a dog waste bin and, consequently, some people may not be happy to use it as a litter bin. Therefore, CRAG is enquiring as to the possibility of either having a separate designated dog waste bin outside the playing field (move the existing bin inside the field) or have a new bin inside the playing field.

Members decided that the Clerk would refer the matter to Fenland District Council (FDC); enquiring as to whether FDC possesses a good second-hand bin that could be donated to the Coldham playing field, or, if not, it provides the Parish Council with a quotation for the cost of FDC providing a new bin.

(Councillor Brand declared his personal interest in this item, by virtue of his membership of the Coldham Residents Action Group)

(4) Rings End Nature Reserve.

The Clerk read to members a briefing paper, prepared by the Community Green Spaces Manager at Cambridgeshire County Council, regarding proposals to establish a "Friends of Rings End Nature Reserve" group.

The briefing paper states that Cambridgeshire County Council has seven Local Nature Reserves throughout the County, including the site at Rings End. The County Council has a programme of establishing "Friends Groups" for its nature reserves, where appropriate and where the local community expresses a wish to be more involved in site management and influence decisions about its management. As part of that programme, the County Council now wishes to begin a community consultation process to establish support for setting up a group for the Rings End site.

The paper makes the point that Fenland District Council is supportive and is very keen to be involved proactively in this process and its ongoing support and development.

A 'Walkabout' has been arranged for 28 April 2012, as a means of consulting the local community on their ideas/concerns, gauging interest and identifying management objectives. A subsequent indoor meeting, at Fenland Hall, March will take place on 22 May 2012 to formalise the group and agree management objectives.

Members decided that the content of the briefing paper be noted.

158/11 Elm Cemetery

Arising from the discussion at minute 157/11 (2) above, a number of other cemetery-related issues were raised by members (such as reaching agreement as to the designation/layout (of lawn and traditional sections) of the currently unused and new parts of Elm Cemetery.

Members decided that a visit to Elm Cemetery be arranged, to take place between this meeting and the next, with any resultant issues being discussed at the next meeting of the Parish Council.

159/11 Next meeting

Members were reminded that the next meeting of the Parish Council had been scheduled for 22 May 2012, commencing at conclusion of the Annual Parish Assembly, which commences at 7.00 pm, at the Parish Council office, Begdale Road, Elm.

Meeting finished at 8.00 pm

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

Date:.....