

ELM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING

15 JANUARY 2013 – 7.00 pm.

Present: Councillor Stokes, Vice-Chairman in the Chair; Councillors Cotterell, Mrs Cotterell, Mrs Lankfer, Milham, Pinnock, Softley and Webb.

In attendance: District Councillor Sutton.

Apologies: Councillors Brand and Mrs Johnson plus County Councillor Mrs Tuck.

The minutes of the meeting of 18 December 2012 were confirmed and signed, subject to some minor revisions to the wording of minute 94/12 (4) (which will be made to those minutes prior to publication).

105/12 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.

The Clerk reported that, further to minute 92/12, all of the members who had made application had been granted a dispensation to participate in the Precept-setting process (minute 111/12 refers). All of the Parish Council members present at this meeting is in possession of a dispensation.

Members decided that the information reported by the Clerk be noted and acted upon.

106/12 Progress on actions from minutes of last meeting

(1) Resignation from membership of the Parish Council (minute 94/12 (1))

The Clerk reported that had advertised the vacancy by way of publication of a notice on the Parish Council's website and its notice boards. The deadline for receipt of applications for co-option to membership of Elm Parish council is 10 February 2013, to enable the co-option process to be undertaken at 19 February 2013 meeting of the Parish Council.

Members decided that the information reported by the Clerk with regard to filling the Parish Council vacancy be noted.

(2) Obstructive parking around Elm Primary school (minute 94/12 (2))

The Clerk reported that, in accordance with minute 98/12, the Local Highway Improvement bid for the introduction of on-street parking restrictions (yellow lines) on the B1101 on both sides of the road, between the All Saints Church and the entrance to the Elm Centre, had been submitted to the Local Highway Authority.

With regard to the suggested "Keep Your Child Safe" poster competition, the Clerk reported information provided by the Headteacher of the Elm C of E Primary School in relation to the current progress situation, as follows:

- The Headteacher, Mrs F McCallum, had met with PCSO David Russ to plan the poster campaign

- on 22 January 2013, PCSO Russ would be attending the school assembly to both launch the poster competition and talk with the children about the road safety issues outside the school
- publicity for the poster competition would be given through the school newsletter
- the closing date for the competition would be 6 February 2013
- PCSO Russ would visit the school on 8 February to judge the competition entries.
- PCSO Russ has undertaken to try to obtain some small 'freebies' which could be given to each child who takes part in the completion
- at the end of the competition, the school would invite the local press to produce a small article.

Mrs McCallum comments that it would be much appreciated if the Parish Council were able, as had been indicated at the December 2012 meeting, to fund small prizes for the competition winners. She suggests three possible arrangements for the award of prizes; these being:

- 1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes for the best poster in Key stage 1 and key stage 2 (a total of 6 prizes)
- a prize for the best poster in each class (a total of 7 prizes)
- 1st, 2nd and 3rd in every class (a total of 21 prizes).

Members would like to see 21 prizes awarded (1st, 2nd and 3rd in each class); although they have a view as to the level of prizes that could be awarded - 1st prize to the value of £20, 2nd prize to the value of £10, 3rd prize to the value of £5 - they feel that the actual value of each prize should be determined by the school's Headteacher.

Members decided that

(1) the information reported by the Clerk be noted;

(2) a donation of £250 be made to the Elm C of E Primary School to fund prizes for the poster competition.

(3) Facilities for young people in the parish (minute 94/12 (3))

The Clerk reported that although he had received no update from the Parks and Open Spaces Manager at Fenland District Council, that officer had given an undertaking, as had been reported at minute 94/12 (3), to try to achieve progress in this matter during January 2013.

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.

(4) Elm Cemetery – maintenance and request to purchase burial plot (minute 94/12 (4))

The Clerk reported that he had written to the family which holds the Exclusive Rights of Burial for the plot North B345 informing the family of the decisions reached by the Parish Council at minute 94/12 (4), which included the requirement for removal by no later than 31 January 2013 of the floral tributes etc from the areas of land outside of the burial plot.

Members decided that the information reported by the Clerk be noted and that this matter be considered further at the next meeting.

(5) Elm and Fridaybridge Youth Club (minute 94/12 (5))

The Clerk reported that he had reminded the Youth Development Co-ordinator of the need to submit, in advance of this meeting of the Parish Council, an application for continued funding from the Parish Council towards the cost of operating the Elm and Fridaybridge Youth Club.

Because of a period of absence from work, the Youth Development Officer had been unable to submit a funding application to the Parish Council in time for this meeting.

As a result of the Clerk attempting to obtain the necessary information from other officers within the County Council's Youth Service, a colleague of the Youth Development Officer had provided income and expenditure figures for operation of the youth club for a full year; the Clerk had circulated these to members in advance of the meeting.

It was apparent to members from their examination of the income and expenditure figures that they are identical to those produced around two years ago, which were used by the Youth Service at that time to support for the request for funding for the financial years 2011/12 and 2012/13 and which are included within the Partnership Agreement relating to the Parish Council's current financial support for the Elm and Fridaybridge Youth Club.

On the basis of the only information currently available, members are not convinced that serious attempts have been made by the Youth Service to increase income and reduce expenditure, which are requirements contained within the Partnership Agreement between the Parish Council and the County Council's Youth Service in relation to the financial support being provided currently by the Parish Council.

Members commented that they support the principle of youth service provision in the parish and wish to assist the youth club where possible but need to be able to justify to parishioners any funding which they allocate to supporting operation of the youth club, as opposed to, potentially, other sections of the parish community; members need to feel confident that the public in the parish are receiving "a return on investment" in activities for young people.

Members decided that

- (1) the information reported by the Clerk be noted;
- (2) a decision on the provision of financial support to the Elm and Fridaybridge Youth Club beyond 31 March 2013 be deferred to the next meeting;
- (3) the Youth Development Co-ordinator be invited to attend the next meeting of the Parish Council to present a case for continued funding by the Parish Council of the Elm and Fridaybridge Youth Club.

(6) Local Scout and Guides groups (minute 94/12 (6))

The Clerk reported that the Chairman had still been unable to make contact with representatives of the local Scout and Guides groups but that he would make further attempts between this meeting and the next.

Members decided that the information reported by the Clerk, on behalf of the Parish Council Chairman, be noted.

107/12 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
- Fridaybridge – one incident of criminal damage; four reports of persons acting suspiciously; two thefts of wheeled bins from residential properties; two incidents of rowdy behaviour; one report of a panther-like animal entering a garden; one incident of poaching

- Elm – one incident of theft (of metal fence panels from an empty property on Begdale Road)
- Rings End – no incidents.

In his report, PCSO Russ confirmed that he had been working with the school regarding the road safety competition, which will be judged on 8 February 2013 (minute 106/12 (2) refers).

The PCSO's report included the results of Speed Watch activity undertaken in Elm on 9 January 2013 and in Coldham and Fridaybridge on 10 January 2013. Of the total of 81 vehicles observed during the exercises, only one was being driven in excess of the speed limit.

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

108/12 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.

Councillors Cotterell and Sutton, the two District Councillors who represent the parish of Elm, informed the Parish Council that the District Council is still in the process of producing a budget for 2013/14. Through that process, Fenland District Council needs to achieve reductions in expenditure of the order of £1.2 m for 2013/14; this will have implications for all grants awarded by the Council, which will include a review of the Concurrent Functions Grants awarded to Parish Councils. The District Council's element of the Council Tax for 2013/13, which is likely to increase by 2.0%, would be agreed by that council on 21 February 2013.

Members decided that the information reported be noted.

109/12 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 detached two-storey 3-bed annexe with balcony to rear at Meadowfield, Outwell Road, Elm – F/YR12/0979/F (applicant: Mr R Crawford).

That the application be supported.

- (2) Erection of four dwellings on land south of 188 Fridaybridge Road, Elm – F/YR12/1001/O (applicants: Mr and Mrs B J Ingham).

That the application be supported.

- (3) Variation of condition 6 of planning permission F/YR11/0830/F (Erection of an extension and fence enclosed substation to rear of existing agricultural building) to change height of materials to be stacked from the existing ground level from 2.5 metres to 6.0 metres on land south of Everglens, Outwell Road, Elm – F/YR13/0009/F (applicant: Mr K Lawrence).

That, in the absence of a site plan and photographs of the current situation on site, the Parish Council feels it is not in possession of sufficient information to be able to make a comment upon the application.

110/12 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 for management and set up of new tenancy)	£343.60
Fenland District Council	Concurrent Functions Grant – second instalment	£3,970.00
A R Clingo	Purchase of cremated remains plot and interment fee	£235.00
Total Income		£4,548.60

Expenditure

Glazewing	Wheelie bin emptying – Elm Cemetery	£36.00
R J Warren Ltd	Grounds maintenance contract	£1,381.42
Mrs S Woodhouse	Playing field security (quarterly payment to 31 December 2012)	£100.00
Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal	Donation	£25.00
T Jordan	Salary (less income tax of £111.80), Broadband and other expenses	£562.00
Wisbech Youth Clubs	Financial support to Elm and Fridaybridge Youth Club (October to December 2012)	£2,135.50
Total Expenditure		£4,239.92

In addition, the Clerk reported on the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 31 December 2012 (in the total sum of £134,314.47), together with the month-end figures for each of the preceding six months and as at 31 December 2011.

In accordance with minute 21/11, the Clerk reported on the management accounts that he had produced for the third quarter of the 2012/13 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.

The Clerk made the point that, given its level of financial resources, the Parish Council should seek to identify projects or schemes for which funding could be designated as an ear-marked reserve in the 2012/13 accounts; he reminded members of comments made by the External Auditor, when "signing off" the Parish Council's 2009/10 accounts, with regard to holding financial reserves (minute 83/10 refers).

Members decided that

- (1) the income of £4,548.60 be noted and that the expenditure of £4,239.92 be authorised;
- (2) the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 31 December 2012, together with the month-end figures for each of the preceding six months and as at 31 December 2011, be noted;

(3) the financial information within the third quarter's management accounts be noted.

111/12 Parish Precept 2013/14

Members considered the level of Parish Precept for the financial year 2013/14.

The Clerk presented a detailed report on the Parish Council's income and expenditure as at 31 December 2012, the financial position as at that date, estimates of income and expenditure for 2013/14 and various notes to aid members' deliberations regarding the level of Parish Precept to be set, including the facts that

- Elm Parish Council Precept had remained at £27,500 since the financial year 2010/11.
- Fenland District Council would be awarding Concurrent Functions Grants to Parish Councils in 2013/14 at the same level as for 2012/13 but it would be reviewing the process, as part of its requirement to make significant financial savings, prior to the financial year 2014/15.
- the budget figures presented to the Parish Council did not include provision for continued funding of the Elm and Fridaybridge Youth Club; the cost of such funding for 2013/14 could be met from financial reserves, as had been the case in the financial years 2011/12 and 2012/13.
- although there would be no capping of Parish Council Precepts for 2013/14, the Government has not ruled this out for future years; there is a view that capping of local councils may be introduced for the financial year 2014/15.
- As a result of recent changes made by the Government regarding the Council Tax Support Scheme, the local councils within Fenland are being allocated grant funding by the District Council to offset the reduction in the Parish Council's Net Council Tax Base (which has reduced from 1,260 in 2012/13 to 1,045 for 2013/14). The level of grant which has been allocated to Elm Parish Council for 2013/14 is £4,455.00; this amount needs to be deducted from the sum that Parish Council directs the District Council to collect on its behalf.

Members decided, unanimously, that

- (1) the Parish Council's income and expenditure as at 31 December 2012 and the financial position as at that date and be noted;
- (2) the estimates of income and expenditure for 2013/14 be noted and approved as the basis of the Parish Council's budget for 2013/14;
- (3) being mindful of the current economic circumstances, the Parish Council's financial position and its desire to be able to continue to meet the needs of the community, the level of Parish Precept for 2013/14 be set at £25,545 (on the basis of a financial requirement of £30,000 less the grant from Fenland District Council of £4,455.00).

112/12 Street lamps in Elm parish

(1) FPC8, Begdale Road, Elm

Further to minute 101/12, the Clerk informed members that, having informed Fenland District Council (FDC) that the Parish Council had decided not to fund repair works to this street lamp, he had been sent a quotation from FDC, in the sum of £762.37, for removal of the lamp column (including disconnection of the electricity supply and making good the carriageway).

In the light of the costs of removing this lamp column, members re-considered the decision not to fund repair works (at a cost of £1,039.65).

With regard to funding this work, the Clerk informed members that the amount still available to the Parish Council, from the Concurrent Functions Grant allocations for street lighting in 2011/12 and 2012/13, is, following the

decision at minute 70/12 (6) to procure two new street lamps and the decision at minute 88/12 to undertake repair work to an existing street lamp, is £704.76.

Members decided that, in the interests of obtaining best value in using the Parish Council's financial resources, as well as the community benefit that would result from repairing (instead of removing) the lamp column, Fenland District Council now be authorised to arrange, via its street lighting contractor, the required work to street lamp FPC8 (Begdale Road, Elm).

(2) FPC2, Limes Avenue, Elm

The Clerk informed members that Fenland District Council had identified a street lamp – FPC2 on Limes Avenue, Elm – which requires attention; it has been deemed by the District Council as requiring a new lantern and photocell, at a total cost of £442.28.

With regard to funding this work, the Clerk informed members that following the decision at minute 70/12 (6) to procure two new street lamps and the decisions at minutes 88/12 and 112/12 (1) to undertake repair work to existing street lamps, none of the funding which was available to the Parish Council, from the Concurrent Functions Grant allocations for street lighting in 2011/12 and 2012/13, is available. It is, however, expected that further funding will be available through the Concurrent Functions Grant allocation in 2013/14.

Members decided that Fenland District Council be authorised to arrange, via its street lighting contractor, the required work to street lamp FPC2 (Limes Avenue, Elm).

(3) Lighting to signage at Fridaybridge Agricultural Camp

Some members expressed concern regarding the lighting which had been installed to illuminate the new signage at Fridaybridge Agricultural Camp. They feel that this lighting causes dazzle to motorists and, hence, poses a highway safety issue.

Members decided that the Clerk would ascertain from the Local Planning Authority (LPA) whether the signs and associated illumination need or have been granted planning permission and that if the signs and associated illumination do have the necessary consent, is there a role for the LPA in assessing subsequently the impact that the proposal has upon road users?

113/12 Fridaybridge Clocktower

The Clerk reported the suggestion of the Chairman, in his absence from the meeting, that the Parish Council arranges for cleaning works be undertaken, to remove algae deposits etc, to the external surface of Fridaybridge Clocktower.

Members share the view of the Chairman of the Council that undertaking works to enhance the appearance of the clocktower would be desirable and feel that re-painting of the structure is the appropriate course of action.

Members decided that the Clerk would engage a suitable contractor to undertake the re-painting of Fridaybridge Clocktower.

114/12 Tower Hall, Fridaybridge

Councillor Cotterell mentioned briefly that the Tower Hall at Fridaybridge is facing an uncertain future and, consequently, the hall's management committee may be making an approach to Elm Parish Council for support.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

115/12 Correspondence

Magpas - financial donation.

Further to minute 90/12 (1) the Clerk read to members a letter of thanks from Magpas in relation to the financial donation provided by the Parish Council.

Members decided that the content of the letter be noted.

116/12 Date of next meeting

Members were reminded that the next meeting of the Parish Council had been scheduled for 19 February 2013, commencing at 7.00 pm, at the Parish Council office, Begdale Road, Elm.

Meeting finished at 8.35 pm

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

Date:.....