

ELM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING

23 JULY 2013 – 7.00 pm.

Present: Councillor Brand, Chairman; Councillors Mrs Hopkin, Mrs Johnson Mrs Lankfer, Milham, Pinnock, Stokes and Webb.

In attendance: District Councillor Sutton.

Apologies: Councillors Cotterell, Mrs Cotterell, Softley and Miss Webb.

The minutes of the meeting of 18 June 2013 were confirmed and signed.

30/13 Open Forum

Cemetery memorial

A number of members of the family which holds the Exclusive Rights of Burial for the plot North B345 in Elm Cemetery attended the meeting to speak in support of their application for a cemetery memorial.

A member of the family referred to the size and designs of other memorials in close proximity to this particular grave and she circulated photographs to demonstrate the comments made in support of the family's application, particularly to show that there are other memorials in the cemetery which bear inscriptions on both sides of the headstone.

The family member informed councillors that, although action had not been taken by the family as promptly as had been desired by the Parish Council, they had reduced the area used for the placing of floral tributes etc so that it no longer exceeded the size of the burial plot. She, therefore, requested that the Parish Council does not rescind its previous decision to allow a memorial with a headstone height of 5.0 feet on plot North B345 and that her family be allowed to install a memorial of the size and design detailed on the application now submitted.

Members decided that the comments of the members of this family be noted and taken into account, at minute 32/13 (2), when considering this application for a memorial in Elm Cemetery

31/13 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.

Members decided the reminder from the Clerk be noted and acted upon.

32/13 Progress on actions from minutes of last meeting

(1) Facilities for young people in the parish (minute 18/13 (1))

The Clerk reported that the Parks and Open Spaces Manager at Fenland District Council is still liaising with the developers in an attempt to achieve the District Council's adoption of the site as soon as possible.

Further to minute 67/12 (1), the Clerk referred to an e-mail that he had forwarded to members in advance of the meeting from a resident of Grove Gardens, Elm (on behalf of a number of residents of the estate and the Neighbourhood Watch group). The resident states awareness of the current situation regarding the transfer of the play area at Grove Gardens to Fenland District Council and the recent request from the resident of another estate in the village for the provision of play equipment (minute 1/13 (1) refers).

In the e-mail, the resident of Grove Gardens suggests that there are other locations in Elm which are more suitable than Grove Gardens for the provision of play equipment (Henry Warby Avenue is mentioned specifically); he states that the residents of Grove Gardens and the Neighbourhood Watch group would oppose strongly any proposal to expand the play area at Grove Gardens and would be seeking legal advice in terms of what could be provided at the play area without contravening clauses within the residents' property deeds. According to the resident, the deeds state that: (1) no play area can be in the line of sight from certain aspects within the estate; (2) only apparatus of a certain size can be installed at the play area; (3) the current play area is for toddlers only.

The Clerk reported that, on the basis that decisions over the use of this play area would be a matter for Fenland District Council (following its adoption of the land), he had forwarded a copy of this e-mail to relevant officers at Fenland District Council.

In response to receiving a copy of this e-mail from the Clerk, the Chief Solicitor at Fenland District Council (FDC) has commented that, as the play area is still in the ownership of the developer, FDC has yet to see the title of the land and, consequently, is unaware at this stage as to whether there are any covenants which would limit the provision of play equipment on this land.

Members decided that

- (1) the information reported by the Clerk regarding the District Council's progress in achieving adoption of the play area be noted and that he would continue to seek updates from Fenland District Council for reporting to each meeting of the Parish Council;
- (2) the content of the e-mail from the resident of Grove Gardens be noted;
- (3) the Clerk would enquire of Fenland District Council as to the availability of other potential sites within Elm (as a possible alternative to Grove Gardens) for the provision of play equipment.

(2) Elm Cemetery – operational issues (minute 18/13 (2))

Members considered two applications for the installation of cemetery memorials in Elm Cemetery; one for a headstone and kerbstone on plot North B345 and the other for a headstone and kerbstone on plot South B267.

With regard to the application for plot North B345, members had regard for their previous considerations of this matter (minutes 120/12 (3), 134/12 (4), 148/12 (3) and 6/13 (2) refer) and the comments made by the applicant family at minute 30/13 in support of the application. The Clerk had sent a copy of the application to each member in advance of the meeting. The reason for referral of this application to members for consideration is because of the council's decision at minute 148/12 (3) to rescind the decision it reached at minute 120/12 (3) to allow, as a one-off exception to the requirements of the Elm Cemetery Regulations, the installation on grave number North B345 of a memorial with a maximum headstone height of 5 feet (instead of 3 feet, 6 inches).

With regard to the application for plot South B267, the Clerk had sent a copy of the application, together with a copy of a letter from the stonemason setting out the applicant's desire for a memorial of the particular size and design, to each member in advance of the meeting. The reason for referral of this application to members for consideration is because it proposes the installation of a kerbstone in a part of the cemetery where headstones only are permitted as well as a headstone of a height which exceeds the maximum allowed under the Cemetery Regulations.

The Clerk informed members that the Chairman, a representative of the council's grounds maintenance contractor and he had inspected, on 17 July 2013, all of the grassed areas maintained under the contract. This inspection had included the cemetery; it had been concluded by all present at the inspection that the quality of grounds maintenance had reached the level expected. In addition, the Clerk informed members that he had taken the opportunity, during a recent visit to the cemetery, to obtain the opinions of persons present regarding the quality of the maintenance undertaken; both were very pleased.

With regard to removal of debris from the extended area of the cemetery, the Clerk reported that he is awaiting a response from the Manager of the Community Payback Service. This update from the Clerk led to general discussion regarding the extent of this issue and whether, in the event that there were significant amounts of debris buried within the soil, the council could face difficulties in the use of this land as burial plots. Some members mentioned that the soil used to provide the extended area at the cemetery had been tested by the Environment Agency; on that basis they had expected the soil not to contain the types of debris discovered.

It was suggested by one councillor that an appropriate means of estimating the amount and types of debris within the soil at the extended area at the cemetery could be by digging trial holes.

The Clerk read to members the quotation received for the construction (of wood or brick) and installation at the cemetery of a container for storage of water bottles. The contractor had also provided a quotation for the repair and re-painting of the existing storage container at the cemetery.

Members decided that

- (1) the information reported by the Clerk be noted;
- (2) the application for installation of a memorial on plot North B345 be approved;
- (3) the application for installation of a memorial on plot South B267 be refused, for the reasons that the height of the headstone exceeds the maximum allowed under the Cemetery Regulations and the fact that the part of the cemetery in which this plot is situated allows headstones only (the only memorial which could be placed on this grave is a headstone of no more than 42 inches in height);
- (4) they are now satisfied with level of grounds maintenance at Elm Cemetery but the situation continue to be monitored;
- (5) the quotations received for the construction (of wood) and installation at the cemetery of a container for storage of water bottles and for the repair and re-painting of the existing storage container at the cemetery (in the total sum of £255.00) be accepted and that the contractor also be engaged to undertake works to repair the leaking water tap;
- (6) the Clerk would examine the correspondence relating to the soil tests and undertake relevant actions to seek to establish whether the council could face difficulties in the use of the extended area at the cemetery as burial plots.

(Councillor Pinnock requested it be recorded that he abstained from voting on part (3) of this decision)

(3) Elm Parochial Church Council – request for financial support (minute 8/13 (3))

The Clerk reported that he had received no update from the Elm Parochial Church Council (PCC) in relation to obtaining further quotations for these works; he had, however, acquired legal advice from the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) in relation to the Parish Council's ability to re-claim VAT on this project if it were to pay the invoice for the restoration works.

The advice from the SLCC confirms that, provided that the Parish Council lets the contract for the works and pays the invoice, the VAT could be re-claimed; if the council were to make a financial contribution to Elm PCC and the PCC then let the contract, no VAT could be re-claimed by the Parish Council.

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

(4) Cambridgeshire Shrievally Trust – request for financial assistance (minute 18/13 (4))

The Clerk reported further financial information (i.e. quarterly management accounts as at March 2013) provided by the Cambridgeshire Shrievally Trust in support of its application for financial assistance towards the operating costs of the Cambridgeshire Bobby Scheme.

Councillor Pinnock commented that he had visited the website of the Cambridgeshire Shrievally Trust and examined the financial information published, which suggests to him that the trust is in a healthy financial position.

Members decided that the information reported by the Clerk and Councillor Pinnock be noted and that no financial assistance be provided towards operation of the Cambridgeshire Bobby Scheme.

(5) Street lighting in Elm (minute M25/13)

The Clerk reported that a letter had been sent to Balfour Beatty in relation to the street lighting issues mentioned by Councillor Pinnock at the last meeting but, to date, no response had been received from the company.

Members decided that the information reported by the Clerk be noted and that he would pursue a response from Balfour Beatty to the letter he had sent on behalf of the Parish Council.

33/13 Police matters

PCSO Garry Banks, of the Wisbech and District Neighbourhood Policing Team, reported on recent incidents of crime and disorder within the geographical area covered by Elm Parish Council, including:

- Coldham – one non-dwelling burglary
- Fridaybridge – one incident of criminal damage to motor vehicles
- Elm – two incidents of criminal damage to a residential property; one report of persons acting suspiciously; one incident of rowdy behaviour; one theft of items from the yard at a sewage treatment works; one report of anti-social use of a motor cycle; one incident of criminal damage to a motor vehicle
- Rings End – no incidents.

The PCSO informed members of the results of Speed Watch activity undertaken in Elm and Fridaybridge on 28 June 2013. Of the total of 134 vehicles observed during the exercises, only 14 were being driven in excess of the speed limit.

PCSO Banks mentioned that the New Horizon Outreach Vehicle (formerly the CrimeBUSTer) would be used for the Rural South Neighbourhood Forum on 18 September 2013; the vehicle would be located in Church Road, Christchurch between 12.00 noon and 6.00 pm with the meeting taking place between 6.00 pm and 7.00 pm.

The PCSO responded to members' questions.

Members decided that the information reported by PCSO Banks be noted.

34/13 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 two-storey rear extension and conversion of loft to form additional living accommodation to existing dwelling at Regona, 50 Fridaybridge Road, Elm – F/YR13/0327/F – revised proposal = dormer window removed and external balcony replaced with juliet balcony (applicants: Mr and Mrs M Parrin).

That the application be supported.

- (2) Erection of a two-storey 3-bed dwelling with attached garage on land east of Bungalow, Waldersea Farm, March Road, Rings end – F/YR13/0387/F (applicant: Mr P Crowson).

That the application be supported.

- (3) Erection of a dwelling on land east of The Cottage, Begdale Road, Elm – F/YR13/0420/O (applicant: Mr B Wright).

That the application be supported.

- (4) Erection of a two-storey 3-bed dwelling on land west of Stone Cottage, 82 March Road, Fridaybridge – F/YR13/0432/F (applicant: Mr A Clark).

That the application be supported.

- (5) Erection of 2 x two-storey 3-bed dwellings with parking and temporary siting of a mobile home on land south of 19 Oldfield Avenue, Elm – F/YR13/0436/F (applicants: Mr P Halliday and Ms T Ablett).

That the application be supported.

35/13 Local Highway Improvements 2013/14

Further to minute 98/12, the Clerk reported on the outcome of the 2013/14 bidding process.

The Clerk informed members that the total budget allocation for the district of Fenland was £100,000 and that the district area assessment panels (comprising County Councillors representing electoral divisions within the district) were asked to consider bids and make recommendations on how the budget should be allocated in respect of the scheme bids submitted.

In most cases, the assessment panels adopted a simple scoring system with a maximum of 10 points per scheme. Using this assessment system, the scheme submitted by Elm Parish Council (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) scored 7.5 points out of a maximum of 10; the bid was ranked in fourth place out of the twelve submitted throughout Fenland. The County Council has decided that the top eight ranking schemes in Fenland would be allocated funding.

The County Council has commented that, at this stage, the scheme costs are indicative and further work will be required to provide detailed cost estimates. On that basis, only a proportion of each district area budget has been committed initially. Once the costings for the approved schemes are confirmed, the County Council would consider allocating any uncommitted funding to the currently unsuccessful bids up to the value of the budget available and in accordance with the ranking of the bids.

Members decided that the outcome of the 2013/14 bidding process be noted.

36/13 Highway signage

The Clerk reported a request from a resident of Molls Drove, Fridaybridge for the Parish Council to consider the provision of a warning sign on this road (alerting motorists to the uneven road, the blind bend and that children and animals are present), in an attempt to reduce the likelihood of further road accidents along Molls Drove; the resident had provided details of accidents which had happened along Molls Drove in recent months and had commented in his letter of request that he does not feel that a reduction in speed limit would serve any purpose.

The requester has commented that although his address is in Cambridgeshire, he believes that the appropriate location for the provision of a warning sign lies within Norfolk.

Members decided, on the basis that, in their opinion, the provision of highway signage as suggested by the resident would be unlikely to influence the manner in which motorists drive their vehicles along this road, that no action be taken to seek to encourage the relevant Local Highway Authority (whether that be Cambridgeshire County Council or Norfolk County Council) to consider the installation signage on Molls Drove.

37/13 Reports from District and County Councillors for the parish

Given the absence from the meeting of the County Councillor who represents the parish of Elm (Gordon Gillick) no report was received by the Parish Council in relation to current County Council issues.

Councillor Sutton, one of the two District Councillors who represent the parish of Elm, informed the Parish Council that they had nothing specific to report on Fenland District Council issues at this time. Councillor Sutton did, however, provide contact details for the officer at the County Council who is responsible for the street lighting service (in case it becomes necessary to refer the issue at minute 32/13 (5) to the County Council) and provided additional information in relation to adoption by Fenland District Council (FDC) of the play area at Grove Gardens (minute 32/13 (1) refers); he had been informed by FDC that it expects to have all of the issues and costings resolved within the next month, with public consultation regarding play equipment taking place shortly after that.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

38/13 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)	£523.60
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Richard King Memorials Ltd	Additional memorial inscription	£66.00
Fenland District Council	Concurrent Functions grant – first half	£3,970.00
P Barnes	Cremated remains plot purchases and interment fees	£656.00
A R Clingo	Plot purchase and interment fee	£647.50
W Bailey and Son	Interment fee	£687.50
M J Coates Memorials	Cemetery memorial	£148.00
Total Income		£6,698.60

Expenditure

Glazewing	Wheelie bin emptying – Elm Cemetery	£60.44
R J Warren Ltd	Grounds maintenance contract	£1,483.96
T Jordan	Salary (less income tax of £166.84 and NI of £23.14), Broadband, telephone and other expenses	£765.03
Mrs S Woodhouse	Playing field security (quarterly payment to 30 June 2013)	£100.00
Total Expenditure		£2,409.43

In addition, the Clerk reported on the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 30 June 2013 (in the total sum of £126,328.37), together with the month-end figures for each of the preceding six months and as at 30 June 2012.

In accordance with minute 21/11, the Clerk reported on the management accounts that he had produced for the first quarter of the 2013/14 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 £6,698.60 be noted and that the expenditure of £2,409.43 be authorised;
- (2) the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 30 June 2013, together with the month-end figures for each of the preceding six months and as at 30 June 2012, be noted;
- (3) the financial information within the first quarter's management accounts be noted.

39/13 Cemetery Cottage, Elm

Members considered a request from the tenant of the cottage, via the letting agent, for the Parish Council to consider replacement of the floor covering in the kitchen of the cottage with one which would be harder wearing than the current floor covering. The tenant has informed the letting agent that he wishes to remain living at the cottage for the foreseeable future and had offered to meet 50% of the cost of new floor covering for the kitchen at the cottage.

The letting agent has offered to obtain quotations for different types of floor covering,

One councillor mentioned a couple of issues regarding actions required of the tenant, in accordance with the tenancy agreement; the Clerk undertook to draw these matters to the letting agent.

Members decided that the tenant's request be approved and that the offer of the letting agent to obtain quotations for different types of floor covering be accepted.

40/13 Parish Council's policies and procedures

Further to minute 26/13, members considered draft versions of a Complaints Procedure and a Freedom of Information Publication Scheme for Elm Parish Council, which had been produced by the Clerk and circulated to members in advance of the meeting.

The Clerk informed members that had sent earlier draft versions of these documents to Councillor Pinnock (who had offered at the last meeting to produce draft versions of these documents); the minor revisions suggested by Councillor Pinnock had been incorporated within the documents circulated to members.

Members decided that the Complaints Procedure and the Freedom of Information Publication Scheme be adopted by the council and published on its website.

41/13 Provision of play equipment at Coldham

Further to minutes 140/12 and 148/12 (5), the Chairman requested members to give further consideration to funding the provision of play equipment at Coldham.

The Chairman informed members that, to provide evidence of the level of desire for play equipment in Coldham, a questionnaire is currently being circulated around the village; the responses so far, show 85% support for such provision. He added that it is unlikely that funding towards the cost of play equipment could be obtained from other sources. Therefore, the cost to the council of purchasing and installing play equipment would be of the order of £18,000, rather than the £12,000 to £14,000 mentioned at minute 140/12.

In response to a member's question, the Chairman responded that there are currently 25 children living in Coldham and a number of others visit regularly (to visit grandparents, accompanying those attending the football matches held in the village etc).

Councillor Pinnock commented that such a large investment for such a small number of beneficiaries is unrealistic, especially as Coldham, which has a significantly smaller population, had received considerably more financial assistance from the council than had been provided to Fridaybridge. In addition, Councillor Webb commented that Coldham had received Section 106 Planning Obligation monies as a result of the wind farm developments.

Councillor Pinnock suggested that prior to any decision being made in this matter, due regard should be given to the possible need for expenditure at the cemetery and that, additionally, members should be aware that continuation of current spending levels would diminish the council's financial resources significantly over the next five years. He commented that he had made the point about the lack of forecasting on cash resources on previous occasions.

The Clerk informed members that the council would be responsible for the costs of annual safety inspections, maintenance and insurance of any play equipment purchased.

Members decided that

- (1) the information reported by the Chairman be noted;
- (2) the Chairman would obtain three quotations for provision and installation of the play equipment sought by the community of Coldham;
- (3) Councillor Pinnock and the Clerk would produce jointly a five years cash forecast;
- (4) this matter be considered further, having regard for (2) and (3) above, at the next meeting.

42/13 Correspondence

- (1) Whittlesey Washes: South Barrier Bank works.

The Clerk read to members a document from the Environment Agency, explaining the strengthening works which it would be undertaking to maintain the structural stability of the South Barrier Bank; the works, which are programmed for the period July 2013 to the autumn of 2014, are anticipated to cause a minimal amount of disruption to some of the properties at Rings End.

The Environment Agency is planning a public drop-in session at Guyhirn Village Hall for 24 September 2013.

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

- (2) Coldham windfarm extension.

Further to minutes 90/11 and 107/11 (1) (at which Elm Parish Council appointed Councillors Brand and Mrs Johnson to represent the council on the committee), the Chairman reported to members on an e-mail that he had received from Fenland District Council (FDC) in relation to the current position in setting up the committee and operating the fund.

The District Council is now proposing that the committee should comprise two representatives from each of the villages of Coldham, Elm and Fridaybridge and the settlement of Rings End and that the first meeting would take place on 12 September 2013; the fund would be open to bids on 1 October 2013, with a deadline of 13 January 2014 for the submission of bids. The committee would assess the bids during week commencing 3 February 2014.

FDC suggests that the committee be named the Whitemoor Local Environment Fund.

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

43/13 Date of next meeting

Members were reminded that the next meeting of the Parish Council had been scheduled for 20 August 2013, commencing at 7.00 pm, at the Parish Council office, Begdale Road, Elm.

Meeting finished at 8.40 pm

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

Date:.....