

ELM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING

15 SEPTEMBER 2015 – 7.00 pm.

Present: Councillor Stokes, Vice-Chairman in the Chair; Councillors Mrs Cotterell, Mrs Dalliday, Mrs Davis, Miss Ferguson, Hopkin, Mrs Hopkin, Milham, Patrick (from 7.40 pm), Pinnock and Webb.

Apologies: Councillor Brand and District Councillor Tanfield.

In attendance: District Councillor Sutton.

The minutes of the meeting of 18 August 2015 were confirmed and signed.

58/15 Open Forum

(1) Stone damage to car

A resident of Elm informed the council that on 15 July 2015 a sub-contractor working for the council's grounds maintenance contractor had been undertaking strimming works at one of the Pocket Parks at Elm and that, as a result of that activity, a stone hit the resident's car, causing damage with an estimated repair cost of £500. The resident stated that he had made initial telephone contact with the office of the council's grounds maintenance contractor, to ask that the company meets the cost of the necessary repair work, but the contractor's staff had refused to speak with him further.

The resident, therefore, enquired as to whether, as this accident had occurred whilst the contractor had been working on behalf of Elm Parish Council, the Parish Council would try to persuade the contractor to meet the cost of the repair to his car. He made the point that he hoped to be able to achieve a resolution to this matter by agreement, as he did not wish to involve his insurance company.

Members decided that, although this matter is an issue between the resident and the sub-contractor working for the council's grounds maintenance contractor and the council has no responsibilities or liabilities in this matter, the Clerk would request the council's grounds maintenance contractor to engage with the resident to try to achieve a resolution to this issue.

(2) School safety

A resident of Elm informed the council of her concerns for the safety of pupils at the Elm C of E Primary School at opening and closing times because of the actions of motorists in the vicinity of the school entrance and when approaching the nearby zebra crossing on the B1101. She made the point that many motorists do not take sufficient care when driving in the vicinity of the school; they do not drive at speeds appropriate to the situation and some fail to stop at the crossing, even if it is being used by children at the time. She suggested that measures are necessary at that location to improve the safety of pupils.

The resident stated that she had started a campaign for the provision of highway safety measures in the vicinity of the Elm C of E Primary School and that she had begun collecting signatures to a petition. She expressed her views as to what measures would be necessary to improve the situation; these included a

reduction in the speed limit to 20 mph, traffic calming measures, SCHOOL AHEAD signs, pedestrian barriers on the footpath adjacent to the school.

Members decided that the comments and suggestions of the parishioner be noted and taken into account when discussing the submission of a Local Highway Improvements bid for 2016/17 (minute 66/15 refers).

59/15 Members' Code of Conduct

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.

60/15 Progress on actions from minutes of last meeting

(1) Condition of the road surface of the B1101 (minute 41/15 (2))

The Clerk reported that the Local Highway Authority had stated that the Coldham bends section of the B1101 is currently top of its list to be surface dressed in the summer of 2016.

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

(2) Play equipment provision in Elm and Fridaybridge (minute 44/15 (1))

With regard to the provision of play equipment at Elm, the Clerk reported the receipt of an e-mail from the contractor, in which it states that installation of the equipment and associated fencing is currently programmed for the middle of October 2015.

With regard to the provision of play equipment at Fridaybridge, the Clerk reminded members that he had completed the funding application to WREN for £75,000 and submitted a draft application for £100,000 to Fenland District Council's Rural Capital Grants Fund. He had forwarded both of these documents to the relevant officer at Fenland District Council for an initial assessment and had received some feedback on the content of the application forms. The Clerk informed members that quotations for the costs of the various elements of the project would need to be obtained for submission with the funding applications; he had been given to understand by District Councillor Sutton that officers of Fenland District Council would be obtaining for the Parish Council the necessary quotations. Officers at Fenland District Council had made the point, when discussing this project with the Clerk, that delivery of this scheme would need to be led by a local community group and the Clerk informed members of his understanding that Councillor Mrs Davis and District Councillor Tanfield would be working to establish such a project team.

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

(2) Abington Grove, Elm - parking on the grassed verge area (minute 44/15 (2))

The Clerk informed members that installation of the bollards had now been undertaken.

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

61/15 Police matters

No member of the Wisbech and District Neighbourhood Policing Team was present at the meeting and, consequently, members received no information relating to recent incidents of crime and disorder which had been

reported to the Constabulary, in relation to the geographical area covered by Elm Parish Council, since the last meeting of the council.

Members had no issues to raise, for reference by the Clerk to the local policing team.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

62/15 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 two-storey 2-bed dwelling with detached double garage on land south of 111 Fridaybridge Road, Elm – F/YR15/0706/F (applicant: Mr L S Lucas).

That the application be supported, subject to the approval of this application not resulting in the 10% threshold quoted within Local Plan Policy LP12 being exceeded.

- (2) Reserved Matters application relating to matters of access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale pursuant to outline permission F/YR14/0995/O (Erection of a dwelling) for the erection of a two-storey 3-bed dwelling and siting of two temporary static caravans on land north-east of Florence House, Back Road, Fridaybridge – F/YR15/0714/RM (applicant: Mr Stokes).

That the application be supported.

- (3) Erection of a single-storey rear extension to existing dwelling at 27 The Stitch, Fridaybridge – F/YR15/0730/F (applicants: Mr and Mrs M Crawford).

That the application be supported.

- (4) Erection of two-storey 3-bed dwelling involving formation of a new access on land west of 132 Fridaybridge Road, Elm – F/YR15/0750/F (applicant: Mr N Watson).

That the application be supported, subject to the approval of this application not resulting in the 10% threshold quoted within Local Plan Policy LP12 being exceeded.

63/15 Fenland Local Plan Policy LP12

Further to minute 48/15, Councillor Pinnock informed members that he had sought clarification from District Councillor Sutton in relation to the implications of Policy LP12 of the Fenland Local Plan Policy for planning applications for future residential development in Elm; in essence, whether this policy is in itself (without other grounds for refusal of a planning application) would be sufficient to justify the refusal of planning permission where the proposed development would result in the 10% threshold quoted within Local Plan Policy LP12 being exceeded.

In response to the question asked by Councillor Pinnock, District Councillor Sutton commented that Fenland District Council, as Local Planning Authority, had included the fact that the proposal would be contrary to provisions of Local Plan Policy LP12 as a reason for the refusal of planning permission for certain residential development proposals in the District. He added that the Head of Planning Services would, at his instigation, be producing a guidance document in relation to the interpretation and application of Policy LP12 of the Fenland Local Plan; as soon as this guidance is available it would be drawn to the attention of the local councils within Fenland.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

64/15 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 District Councillors who represents the parish of Elm, informed members that Fenland District Council would be trialling a scheme, through its refuse collection service, aimed at increasing the recycling rates across the district; the scheme would be applied to 6,000 properties across Fenland and would include a number of streets within Fridaybridge.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

65/15 Open spaces (including the cemetery) under the Parish Council's control

Members considered whether there are any issues relating to the open spaces under the Parish Council's control which required discussion by the Parish Council.

Further to minute 50/15, the Clerk reported that he arranged for the council's grounds maintenance contractor to undertake the necessary trimming works to the trees at The Leam.

The Clerk reported to members a quotation which had been obtained by the Chairman of the Council in relation to trimming works to additional trees at The Leam, Fridaybridge and to trees and hedgerows at one of the Pocket Parks in Elm.

The Clerk sought members' views as to whether the time had now been reached to no longer allow the pre-purchase of cremated remains plots in the garden of rest at Elm Cemetery. He informed members that the garden of rest provides a total of 158 cremated remains plots, of which 24 are still available for purchase; he added that the rate of interment of ashes in the garden of rest in recent years had been 4 or 5 per annum.

Members decided that

- (1) the situation in general be noted;
- (2) one more quotation be obtained in relation to trimming works to additional trees at The Leam, Fridaybridge and to trees and hedgerows at one of the Pocket Parks in Elm;
- (3) to preserve the supply of such plots, the practice of allowing persons to pre-purchase cremated remains plots in the garden of rest at Elm Cemetery be ceased with immediate effect.

66/15 Local Highway Improvements 2016/17

Further to minute 51/15, members gave further consideration to the submission of an application for highway works under the Local Highway Improvements (LHI) scheme.

In considering this matter, members had regard for the comments made by the resident of Elm at minute 58/15 (2).

Members decided that a bid be submitted for a scheme to improve the safety of children in the vicinity of the two primary schools in the parish (through increasing drivers' awareness of the school); this would, the council

suggests, be through the installation of SCHOOL AHEAD signs with lights which flash at school opening and closing times, as well as SCHOOL road markings on the approaches to both Elm and Fridaybridge Primary Schools.

67/15 Parish street lighting

Further to minute 129/14, members considered the latest proposal from Fenland District Council (FDC) - as set out in a letter (with attachments) from District Councillor King, the Cabinet member for Rural Affairs - in relation to replacement of Parish Council-owned street lighting across Fenland. The Clerk had circulated to members, in advance of the meeting, a copy of the letter (and attachments) from FDC.

The letter states that Fenland District Council had allocated £250,000 to replace the Category 1 street lights (i.e. those requiring immediate replacement) and that the Parish Councils would be responsible for replacement of the Category 2 street lights (i.e. those requiring replacement within three years). The letter goes on to say that FDC had decided that any under-spending of the £250,000 allocation for Category 1 street lights would be allocated proportionately by FDC to Parish Councils to assist them in meeting the costs of replacing the Category 2 street lights. Also, since the time of the time that the survey of the street lights had been undertaken, a number of Category 2 street lights had been re-classified as being in category 1 and, consequently, the costs of replacing those lights had been met by Fenland District Council.

According to the information provided by Fenland District Council, there are 89 Category 2 street lamps in the parish of Elm and the estimated cost of their replacement is £106,800. The District Council would be making a contribution, from under-spending on its £250,000 budget allocation, of £13,449 towards the costs faced by Elm Parish Council. This means that that Elm Parish Council would need to provide funding of £93,351 over a period of three years to meet the costs involved. The Clerk reminded members that the estimated cost provided to this council by Fenland District Council in December 2014 (minute 112/14 refers) was £73,921.

District Councillor King has invited Parish Councils in Fenland to inform him of their comments in relation to this matter, which he would draw to the attention of the District Council's Cabinet (which will consider this matter as part of its meeting taking place on 17 September 2015).

The Clerk reported on a meeting, convened by the Chairman of Doddington Parish Council, held on 4 September 2015, at which he had been in attendance, to discuss the implications for Parish Councils of the need to replace street lighting.

The actions agreed at the joint meeting of Parish Councils were that each Parish Council in Fenland be asked to consider:

- requesting Fenland District Council to consider providing interest-free loans, over extended periods, to Parish Councils to cover the cost of replacing Category 2 street lights
- requesting Fenland District Council to consider withdrawing the Concurrent Functions Grants payments to Parish Councils and using that funding instead to meet the cost of replacing the Category 2 street lights
- making a contribution to the cost of a sample survey of street lamps being undertaken by an independent contractor to test the validity of Balfour Beatty's survey results findings. It was suggested that each Parish Council would choose up to 10% of its Category 2 lights for inspection.
- express to Fenland District Council concerns regarding the ethics of using the same contractor to both undertake the condition survey of the parish street lights and the consequent replacement works.

Members decided that the Clerk would

- (1) inform District Councillor King that Elm Parish Council is aware that a number of the Parish Councils within Fenland have agreed to ask Fenland District Council (FDC) to meet the cost of replacing the Category 2 street lights through ceasing, with effect from 1 April 2016, the payment to Parish Councils of Concurrent Functions Grants and using that money to fund street lights replacement; those councils estimate that the money which would be paid to Parish Councils in Concurrent Functions Grants over the next 10 years would be sufficient to meet the cost of replacing all of the category 2 lights across all 12 parishes. Elm Parish Council asks the Cabinet at Fenland District Council to give serious consideration to such an approach. There is also concern across the Parish Councils within Fenland regarding the ethics of a single contractor – Balfour Beatty – undertaking both the condition survey of the lighting stock and the consequent replacement works; does this not constitute a conflict of interest?;
- (2) Inform the Chairman of Doddington Parish Council that Elm Parish Council does not wish to be part of the proposed independent survey of 10% its Category 2 lights;
- (3) seek clarification from Fenland District Council as to why the cost of the works that it is expected to fund has increased since information was last provided - in December 2014, the information provided by Fenland District Council indicated that there were 91 Category 2 street lights and the cost to Elm Parish Council of replacement would be £73,921; the information now provided states that there are now 89 such lights and the cost to Elm Parish Council of their replacement would be £93,351 (based upon a total cost of £106,800 less a contribution of £13,449 from Fenland District Council) – fewer lights but greater cost?

68/15 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 |
| A R Clingo | Interment of cremated remains | £345.00 |
| W & W G West | Interment fee | £275.00 |
| Total Income | | £1,143.60 |

Expenditure

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|----------------|--|-----------|
| Glazewing | Wheelie bin emptying – Elm Cemetery (includes VAT of £14.88) | £89.28 |
| R J Warren Ltd | Grounds maintenance contract (includes VAT of £281.95) | £1,691.71 |
| T Jordan | Salary (less income tax of £177.79 and NI of £26.03), Broadband and other expenses | £816.21 |
| Anglian Water | Water for playing field | £25.35 |

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|--------------------------|--|------------------|
| Richard Kierman | Cleaning of notice boards etc | £45.00 |
| DNA Installations | Provide and install new boiler at Cemetery Cottage (includes VAT of £266.66) | £1,600.00 |
| A-Lock-And-Key | Welding works to cemetery gate post | £60.00 |
| Fen Fencing | Supply and installation of bollards at Abington Grove, Elm (includes VAT of £609.94) | £3,659.64 |
| Total Expenditure | | £7,987.19 |

In addition, the Clerk reported on the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 31 August 2015 (in the total sum of £143,523.87), together with the figure as at 31 August 2014.

Councillor Pinnock expressed the opinion that the Parish Council needs to be mindful, when reviewing and planning its spending, of the fact that local councils may be called upon to provide funding to support continuance of services to the local community which, as a result of budget reductions implemented by principal authorities, could be reduced or ceased.

Members decided

- (1) that the income of £1,143.60 be noted and that the expenditure of £7,987.19 be authorised;
- (2) that the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 31 August 2015 and the position as at 31 August 2014 be noted;
- (3) to note that, after allowing for the Parish Council's ear-marked reserves (totalling £79,765.00) at 31 August 2015), the actual balance available to the Parish Council at 31 August 2015 was £63,758.87; making further allowance for a general contingency (at the level of 150% of the 2015/16 Precept, which equates to £51,972.00) reduces the actual balance available to the Parish Council at 31 August 2015 to approximately £11,787.00;
- (4) that the pledge of £1,000 to the Friends of Rings End Nature Reserve (as a contribution towards the cost delivering a project of maintenance and development at the nature reserve) (minute 37/15 refers) be added to the list of the council's ear-marked reserves.

69/15 Application for financial assistance – Orchard Gardens Neighbourhood Watch group

Members considered an application from the Orchard Gardens Neighbourhood Watch group for financial assistance to meet the cost of purchasing of 6 signs and 2 notices, at a total cost of £184.00.

Members are of the opinion that the Orchard Gardens Neighbourhood Watch group should seek to raise the funding for the signs/notices itself and that one of the opportunities for raising such funds would be through the proposed community event mentioned in the letter which accompanied its application form. Members also feel that it would not be appropriate for the cost of these signs/notices, which they consider would benefit only the residents of a single estate in Elm, to be met by residents of the whole parish.

Members are of the opinion that approval of this application would set a dangerous precedent for similar applications from other estates within the parish.

Members decided, unanimously, that, for the reasons set out above, the grant application from the Orchard Gardens Neighbourhood Watch group be refused.

70/15 Golden Age Event

Members considered a request from District Councillor Sutton that Elm Parish Council considers the provision of funding towards the cost of delivering a (Fenland District Council) Golden Age Event, to be held at the Tower Hall in Fridaybridge on 17 December 2015.

Any funding provided by the Parish Council would be used to meet the cost of hiring the venue; this is estimated at £50.00.

Members decided, unanimously, that Elm Parish Council would meet the cost of hiring the Tower Hall, Fridaybridge for this Golden Age Event.

71/15 Correspondence

The Clerk informed members that there are currently no items of correspondence for reporting to the council.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

72/15 Date of next meeting

Members were reminded that the next meeting of the Parish Council had been scheduled for 20 October 2015, commencing at 7.00 pm, at the Parish Council office, Begdale Road, Elm.

Meeting finished at 8.40 pm

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

Date:.....

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