

ELM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING

16 DECEMBER 2014 – 7.00 pm.

Present: Councillor Brand, Chairman; Councillors Mrs Cotterell, Mrs Dalliday, Milham, Stokes and Webb.

Apologies: Councillors Hopkin, Mrs Hopkin, Mrs Lankfer, Pinnock, Softley and Miss Webb.

In attendance: District Councillors Sutton and Tanfield.

The minutes of the meeting of 18 November 2014 were confirmed and signed.

106/14 Open Forum

Fishing at The Leam, Fridaybridge

Further to minute 104/14 (2), the resident of The Leam addressed the council in relation to the e-mail that she had received from the Clerk, informing her of the decision of the Parish Council at minute 104/14 (2), i.e. that the council would investigate the possibility of installing a palisade security fence (as a physical means of preventing unauthorised activities) around the pond at The Leam.

The resident stated that, contrary to the apparent opinion of the Parish Council, her motivation for enforcement of the No Fishing rule at The Leam is not the safety of children but protection of the wildlife. She expressed the view that the installation of security fencing would be totally inappropriate in that location and would also cause difficulties for the wildlife at The Leam.

The resident enquired as to the anticipated height of the proposed fencing and where, exactly, it would be sited. She commented that it would not be possible for the council to investigate the installation of fencing in the absence of such information.

The resident requested, once again, that the Parish Council investigate the implementation of a byelaw, which could be enforced, subject to staffing resource permitting, by the Police, as a means of seeking to prohibit fishing activities at The Leam; not attempting to achieve such a situation by physical means.

Members decided that

- (1) the comments of the resident of The Leam be noted;
- (2) the decision at minute 104/14 (2), regarding investigating the possibility of installing a palisade security fencing at The Leam, be not actioned at this stage;
- (3) the council would investigate the process for the implementing of a suitable byelaw;
- (4) the matter be considered further at the next meeting of the council.

107/14 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.

108/14 Progress on actions from minutes of last meeting

(1) Play equipment provision in Elm and Fridaybridge (minute 91/14 (3))

With regard to the possible provision of play equipment at Elm, the Clerk reported the updated quotation, received from the play equipment supplier, to include the provision and installation of appropriate fencing. The contractor had provided a cost for gates and a price per metre for 1.2 metre high bow-top fencing. He had provided also, at the request of the Chairman, a quotation for a Crazy Cube Climber and safety surfacing, as an addition to the original scheme.

A number of members expressed the opinion that the pocket park adjacent to Chapel Lane at Elm would not, because of its distance from the centre of the village, be an appropriate location for the siting of play equipment. They agreed that it would be appropriate to identify a location which is located closer to the centre of the village and concluded that the feasibility of installing the proposed play equipment on the grassed verge area at Abington Grove, Elm (which is currently being caused by damage by the parking of vehicles on the land).

With regard to the provision of play equipment at Fridaybridge, the Clerk informed members that he had represented Elm Parish Council at a meeting - involving District Councillors Sutton and Tanfield, a number of relevant officers of Fenland District Council (including the Head of Leisure Services) – held at Fenland Hall, March on 12 December 2014, with the aim of developing a joined-up approach to the provision of an equipped play area at the playing field (which is leased by Elm Parish Council from Cambridgeshire County Council) at Maltmas Drove, Fridaybridge. Prior to that meeting, the Clerk had forwarded to the relevant team at Cambridgeshire County Council a copy of an outline scheme which had been produced by residents of Fridaybridge in liaison with District Councillor Tanfield, as to whether the such a scheme would comply with the terms of the lease.

The Clerk informed members of the nature of the discussions at 12 December 2014 meeting, the outcome of which, in summary, was that officers of Fenland District Council would produce cost estimates for the various items of play equipment included within the indicative scheme, identify potential sources of grant funding and then write applications for such funding (which would need to be submitted by Elm Parish Council); it was agreed at that meeting that progress on this work would be monitored (either through a meeting or e-mail exchange) on 16 January 2015.

Members decided that

- (1) the information reported by the Clerk be noted;
- (2) the feasibility of installing the proposed play equipment on the grassed verge area at Abington Grove, Elm (which is currently being caused by damage by the parking of vehicles on the land) be investigated;
- (3) the financial reserve within the council's accounts for the provision of play equipment at Elm be increased by £10,000 to £30,000, to provide sufficient funding for the original scheme of play equipment (the same as at Coldham) plus fencing and gates and the addition of a Crazy Cube Climber;

(4) the Chairman would arrange for plotting of the area which would be covered by the play equipment, to enable the cost of fencing to be calculated;

(5) they would consider, at the next meeting of the Parish Council, adding to the play equipment provision at Coldham a Crazy Cube Climber.

(2) Possible Wisbech to March rail line (minute 92/14)

District Councillor Tanfield informed members that she had invited Steve Barclay MP to attend a future meeting of Elm Parish Council to provide greater detail of the initiative and to hear the views of parishioners and, in response, he had made the point that it is extremely difficult for him to attend meetings on a Tuesday evening but had undertaken to keep District Councillor Tanfield updated on any developments relating to the possible Wisbech to March rail line, so that she, in turn, could update Elm Parish Council in that regard.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

(3) Street lighting (FPC2 at Oldfield Avenue, Elm) (minute 99/14)

The Clerk reported that he had made contact with the council's insurance company regarding the possibility of making a claim for replacement of the lamp column; the insurance company had responded that, certain information would need to be provided, as outlined by the Clerk (including the date of the incident, details of the damage caused, evidence to prove the manner in which the damage had been caused), to substantiate an insurance claim. The Clerk reminded members that the insurers would apply the £250.00 standard policy excess to any successful claim.

Members decided that the information reported by the Clerk be noted and that he would seek to provide the information required by the insurance company.

(4) Allotments (minute 104/14 (1))

The Clerk informed members that Councillor Hopkin had inspected the condition of the gates at the council's allotments site at Meadowgate Field and concluded that replacement of the gates is necessary.

Members decided that the information reported by the Clerk be noted and that Councillor Hopkin be invited to arrange the manufacture and installation of new gates at the council's allotments site at Meadowgate Field.

109/14 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.

The Clerk had, however, received, from District Councillor Sutton, a report of crime and disorder incidents across the whole area covered by the Wisbech and District Neighbourhood Policing Team, which he undertook to forward to the members of this council.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

110/14 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) Variation of condition 09 (imposition of a condition listing approved plans) relating to planning permission F/YR12/0903/F (Erection of 21 x two-storey dwellings comprising 14 x 2-bed and 7 x 3-bed; 2.1 meter high fencing and landscaping involving demolition of existing sheltered accommodation and garage and alterations to the gardens of six bungalows) relating to change of facing brick, roof tile, hanging tile; fascias and rainwater goods; windows from timber to black UPVC; removal of six trees; change to undercroft wall to parking area to House Types A, B and C t brickwork with single window and change of 1.8 metre high brick boundary walls to close-boarded timber fence with trellis at The Dale, Begdale Road, Elm – F/YR14/0876/F (applicant: Roddons Housing Association).

Object on the basis that approval of the variation of the planning condition would result in a development which would be out of keeping with the character of the surrounding area. The Parish Council is strongly of the opinion that: the hanging tiles should be of a traditional material; the developer should be required to plant trees to replace those which have been removed; the use of black UPVC for windows is inappropriate, given the proximity of this site to the Elm Conservation Area; the provision of a close-boarded fence with trellis instead of brick boundary walls would have a further detrimental impact upon the surrounding area.

Members also commented that the Parish Council had strongly opposed this scheme from the beginning, when presented with an indicative scheme by Roddons (prior to the submission of a planning application) and its fears at how this development would look are becoming a reality.

Some members are also concerned as to why the Parish Council is only now being consulted on these changes (some of which are retrospective in nature) when it is understood that pre-application discussions on these changes took place in January of this year.

- (2) Erection of part single/part two-storey rear extension to existing dwelling and siting of a temporary mobile home during alterations at Red Ridges, 208 Fridaybridge Road, Elm – F/YR14/0909/F (applicant: Mr and Mrs K Cage).

That the application be supported.

- (3) Erection of a two-storey side and single-storey rear extensions to existing dwelling, involving the demolition of existing extensions and outbuildings, and further alterations to include insertion of a dormer window and external insulation to front at Margo, Colletts Bridge Lane, Elm – F/YR14/0916/F (applicant: Mr P Hawes).

That the application be supported.

- (4) Erection of a single-storey rear extension and access ramp to existing dwelling, involving change of use of land to extend the residential curtilage at Bankside Nursery, March Road, Rings End – F/YR14/0927/F (applicant: Mr D Crockford).

That the application be supported.

- (5) Erection of a single-storey 3-bed dwelling on land east and south of Fiveways, Main Road, Fridaybridge – F/YR14/0930/RM (applicant: Mr I M Chase).

That the application be supported.

Further to minute 50/14 (at which the Parish Council had supported the proposal), the Clerk informed members of lodging of an appeal to the Planning Inspectorate in relation to Fenland District Council's (FDC) refusal of planning permission for the erection of two-storey 4-bed dwelling with a detached garage and 1.5 metre (maximum height) front boundary fence and gates on land north of La Chaumiere, Back lane, Colletts Bridge Lane, Elm (application F/YR14/0616/F refers) and of the opportunity for the Parish Council to make further comments (in addition to those submitted to FDC previously), if it wished to do so, to the Planning Inspectorate.

Members decided that no representation be made to the Planning Inspectorate.

111/14 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

- reported that the budget-setting process for the financial year 2015/16 is underway at Fenland District Council; that council is striving to achieve a balanced-budget for that financial year
- informed members that the District Council had produced an offer, subject to approval by the council's Cabinet later this month, to seek to address the outcome of the condition survey of the street lighting (minute 112/14 refers).

Councillor Tanfield reported that she had nothing to add to the information provided by District Councillor Sutton.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

112/14 Street lighting in the parish

Further to minute 83/14, members considered a letter from Fenland District Council, a copy of which had been circulated, by the Clerk, to all members in advance of the meeting, regarding that council's proposed approach to addressing the outcome of its condition survey of the street lighting which is owned by the District Council and the Parish Councils within Fenland.

In the letter, Fenland District Council (FDC) makes the point that it has continued to liaise with its street lighting contractor, Balfour Beatty, since the meetings that it has held with Parish Council Chairmen during recent months, to finalise the survey data and to ensure that what is provided to local councils is as accurate as possible and gives the necessary level of detail required. FDC states its realisation that this process had taken longer than envisaged but its officers have been working hard to reach a position where FDC can base any proposal on more accurate data in advance of all councils' respective budget-setting activities.

Recognising the financial challenges faced by all councils, FDC now makes the following 'without prejudice' offer to Parish Councils:

Fenland District Council obligations

- Fenland District Council (FDC) will provide a funding package of £250,000 across all parishes. This will mean that all of the Cat 1 lights are replaced and the remaining funding will contribute to a proportion of the Cat 2 lights. Funding will be split on a pro-rata basis to each parish across the total Cat 1 and 2 light repairs.
- FDC will arrange and deliver the Cat 1 repairs, if Cabinet approves the approach outlined above, in December 2014 in order to remove any imminent safety liability on the parish councils.

- FDC will continue to fund the energy and maintenance costs for the existing lighting stock for the next 10 years.
- FDC will undertake, free of charge, the management of the parish councils' lighting for a period of 10 years.
- FDC will arrange and manage, free of charge, the various replacement programmes for both FDC and PC funded works.

Parish Council Obligations

- Parish Councils (PCs) will be required to plan for and fund the balance of the Category 2 lights along with the future replacement of all Category 3 street lighting in their areas subject to the condition in subsequent surveys. By FDC dealing with the Cat 1's and the initial phase of the cat 2's this give the parishes time to consider and put in place the most appropriate funding package to deal with the residual lighting repairs.
- PCs will be responsible for the costs of replacement lights that are damaged or become defective during the next 10 years.
- If the PC requires any additional lights during the next 10 years from December 2014, the cost of these lights along with the ensuing energy and maintenance costs will be met by the PCs.

Under this proposal, FDC would provide funding to Elm Parish Council of £48,479 towards the replacement of the Category 1 street lamps (those requiring replacement within 12 months) and a proportion of the Category 2 lamps (requiring replacement within 1 to 3 years); this would leave Elm Parish Council to make available funding of £73,921 to fund the replacement of the remainder of the Category 2 lamps.

This offer will be considered by the Cabinet at Fenland District Council on 18 December 2014 and, consequently, FDC has requested Parish Councils' responses to this offer by 17 December 2014.

Members expressed their disappointment that this situation will lead to a financial burden being placed upon the parishioners of Elm but understand the financial constraints being faced by Fenland District Council; given that particular situation, members are of the view that Fenland District Council has made a realistic offer to Elm Parish Council in terms of financial assistance in this matter and, consequently, accept the situation.

Members decided that Fenland District Council be informed of their views, as set out above, in relation to that council's offer.

113/14 Open spaces (including the cemetery) under the Parish Council's control

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

The Clerk reported that he had no issues requiring members' consideration at this time.

The Chairman commented that the council's grounds maintenance contractor had not, so far, undertaken the annual cutting of the boundary hedging and the pyracantha at the cemetery. In addition, he mentioned his awareness of a local grounds maintenance contractor which would be interested in submitting a quotation for undertaking this council's grounds maintenance works.

Members decided that the situation be noted and that

- (1) the Clerk would draw to the attention of the grounds maintenance contractor the fact that the annual cutting of the hedging and pyracantha at the cemetery needs to be undertaken;

- (2) the Chairman would invite a quotation from the local grounds maintenance contractor for undertaking this council's grounds maintenance works.

114/14 Street naming

Members considered a letter of invitation from Fenland District Council (FDC) to suggest a street name for a new housing development on the site of The Dale, on Begdale Road, at Elm.

With the letter, Fenland District Council had provided two practice notes containing advice to district ward members and local councils regarding the relevant factors to be taken into account when proposing street names.

The developer does not wish to suggest any names; therefore, FDC has offered Elm Parish Council the opportunity to do so.

Members decided to propose to Fenland District Council that this new development be named The Dale.

115/14 Electoral Review of Cambridgeshire

Members considered the submission of a response to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's consultation on its Electoral Review of Cambridgeshire; the aim of the review is to achieve electoral equality, whereby each County Councillor would represent roughly the same number of electors as others across the County.

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England proposes to publish, for consultation purposes, draft recommendations in May 2015 and final recommendations in September of that year.

The Clerk had circulated to members, in advance of the meeting, details of the review process and the potential implications for the electoral division of relevance to the parish of Elm. He informed members of the possible changes to electoral division boundaries across the County, which would result in a reduction in the total number of County Councillors, with effect from the next County Council elections in 2017, from 69 to 63.

The Clerk commented that the information available from the Local Government Boundary Commission for England would seem to suggest that the reduction from 69 to 63 Cambridgeshire County Councillors would result in the number of in Fenland reducing by one (from 11 to 10) and that, from his reading of the indicative revised County Council electoral division maps, it would appear that the this reduction would be in March (reducing from the current three to two County Councillors for the town).

In terms of the specific implications for the parish of Elm, the indicative revised maps show an increase in the size of the current Waldersey division (which includes the parish of Elm) to include part of the current Wisbech South division.

Responses to the current consultation exercise must be received by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England by 19 January 2015.

Members decided that the information reported by the Clerk be noted and that the council would make no submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in relation to its Electoral Review of Cambridgeshire.

116/14 Grants to voluntary and charitable bodies

(1) Tower Hall, Fridaybridge

Members considered an application for financial assistance from the Tower Hall Management Committee for financial assistance towards the cost of replacing (to accord with current legislative requirements) the emergency lighting, as well as the undertaking of other lighting improvement works at the hall; the lowest quotation obtained by the Tower Hall Management Committee for the package of works is £2,305.77.

Members decided that financial assistance in the sum of £1,000.00 be awarded to the Tower Hall Management Committee to contribute towards the cost of lighting improvement works at the Tower Hall, Fridaybridge.

(2) Fridaybridge Community First Responders

Further to minute 143/13 (1), members considered a further application from the Fridaybridge Community First Responders (CFR) group for financial assistance to purchase (via the NHS) a certain piece of medical equipment, at a cost of £108.76.

Councillor Milham proposed that the application be deferred to the next meeting of the Parish Council, to enable him to undertake some investigations into the appropriate use of the piece of medical equipment for which financial assistance from this council is being sought.

Members decided that consideration of this application from the Fridaybridge Community First Responders be deferred to the next meeting of Elm Parish Council.

117/14 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
Turner and Son	Plot purchase and interment fee	£660.00
Richard King	Cemetery memorial	£148.00
Peter Barnes	Plot purchase and interment fee	£647.50
Total Income		£1,979.10

Expenditure

Glazewing	Wheelie bin emptying – Elm Cemetery (includes VAT of £14.10)	£84.62
R J Warren Ltd	Grounds maintenance contract (includes VAT of £241.88)	£1,451.29

T Jordan	Salary (less income tax of £157.90 and NI of £15.18), Broadband and other expenses	£769.63
H M Revenue and Customs	Clerk's Income tax and NI (September, October and November 2014)	£685.41
D A Pest Control	Control of moles at Coldham	£60.00
Elm Friendship Club	Financial assistance	£1,590.00
Rural Cambs Citizens' Advice Bureau	Financial assistance	£250.00
Cambridgeshire ACRE	Membership renewal for 2014/15 (includes VAT of £9.00)	£54.00
Fenland District Council	Replacement of pole bracket for street lamp FPC8 (Fridaybridge Road, Elm) (includes VAT of £105.01)	£630.06
Anglian Water	Water for playing field	£27.70
John Williams and Son	Various maintenance works	£200.00
D A Pest Control	Control of moles at Elm and Fridaybridge	£60.00
Shaw and Sons	Grant of Exclusive Rights of Burial register (includes VAT of £19.65)	£117.88
Total Expenditure		£5,980.59

In addition, the Clerk reported on the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 30 November 2014 (in the total sum of £133,603.96), together with the month-end figures for each of the preceding six months and as at 30 November 2013.

Members decided

- (1) that the income of £1,979.10 be noted and that the expenditure of £5,980.59 be authorised;
- (2) that the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 30 November 2014, together with the month-end figures for each of the preceding six months and as at 30 November 2013, be noted;
- (3) to note that, after allowing for the Parish Council's ear-marked reserves (totalling £47,745.50) at 30 November 2014), the actual balance available to the Parish Council at 31 October 2014 was £85,858.25; making further allowance for a general contingency (at the level of 150% of the 2014/15 Precept, which equates to £45,000) reduces the actual balance available to the Parish Council at 30 November 2014 to approximately £40,858.00;
- (4) further to minute 91/14 (4), that they could see no need to hold a meeting of the Finance Committee.

118/14 Abington Grove, Elm - parking of the grassed verge area

The Clerk informed members that Councillor Pinnock had requested an item on the agenda for this meeting to enable to him to raise an issue in relation to seeking to address situation relating to the parking of vehicles on the grassed verge area at Abington Grove, Elm.

Members decided, given the absence from the meeting of Councillor Pinnock and the decision at minute 108/14 (1), that this item of business be deferred to the next meeting of Elm Parish Council.

119/14 Correspondence

(1) Elm Friendship Club – financial assistance

Further to minute 102/14 (1), the Clerk read to members a letter of thanks from the Elm Friendship Club in relation to the financial assistance to be provided by the Parish Council.

Members decided that the content of the letter be noted.

(2) Cemetery Cottage, Elm

Further to minute 104/14 (4), the Clerk read to members an e-mail from the tenant of Cemetery Cottage, via the letting agents, enquiring as to whether the Parish Council would give consent for him to arrange (and meet the cost of) installing a wood-burning stove in the living room of the property, to enhance the heating within the property. Members are aware of concerns raised by the tenant previously regarding the adequacy of the central heating system within the property.

The tenant expresses the opinion, within his request to the council, that undertaking such works would be an asset to the property and increase its appeal to other potential tenants if he were ever to decide to move.

Members decided that the tenant be given permission to arrange (and meet the cost of) installing a wood-burning stove in the living room of the property.

120/14 Dates of meetings for 2015

Members decided that meetings of the Parish Council in 2015 (all commencing at 7.00 pm and taking place in the Parish Council office on Begdale Road, Elm) be held on the following dates: 20 January, 17 February, 17 March, 21 April, 19 May (Annual Meeting of the Council, following the Annual Assembly), 16 June, 21 July, 18 August, 15 September, 20 October, 17 November and 15 December.

Meeting finished at 8.35 pm

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

Date:.....