

ELM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING

16 FEBRUARY 2016 – 7.00 pm.

Present: Councillor Brand, Chairman; Councillors Mrs Cotterell, Mrs Dalliday, Miss Ferguson, Hopkin, Mrs Hopkin, Milham, Pinnock and Webb.

Apologies: Councillors Mrs Davis and Stokes.

In attendance: District Councillors Sutton and Tanfield.

The minutes of the meeting of 19 January 2016 were confirmed and signed.

126/15 Open Forum

(1) Highway-related issues at Coldham

A resident of Coldham mentioned to the Parish Council his concerns regarding the condition of the B1101, which has lengthy cracks in the surface, as it leaves Coldham (in the Wisbech direction). He mentioned also that the National Speed Limit sign (when heading out of Coldham towards Wisbech) – which is also a 40 mph speed limit sign upon entering the village when heading from Wisbech - had been pushed back, by a vehicle, into nearby hedging and is, consequently, less visible than it ought to be.

The resident expressed his dismay at the manner in which Balfour Beatty, the County Council's street lighting contractor, undertakes the works associated with street lamp replacements (numerous visits by a variety of contractors to each site). He mentioned particularly that a fire hydrant sign had been removed by Balfour Beatty from the lamp column on Overstone Drive which had been removed but had not been affixed to the replacement column.

Members decided that the comments of this resident be noted, that he be encouraged to report to the local County Councillor any concerns he has regarding the work methodology of Balfour Beatty and that the Clerk would report to the Local Highway Authority the repair and maintenance issues which had been raised.

(2) Speed Watch

The Speed Watch Coordinator for the Elm parish scheme provided the Parish Council with information on operation of the scheme to date.

The Speed Watch Coordinator for the Elm parish scheme expressed the opinion that the scheme had received positive support from a number of members of the Parish Council. She informed the Parish Council that the scheme started with 12 volunteers and that a further 3 had joined since. Between 29 January and 13 February 2016, 9 Speed Watch sessions had taken place. 13 locations within the parish had been identified as being suitable for Speed Watch activity; some of those are suitable for undertaking speed monitoring in both directions. She informed the council of the locations at which Speed Watch activity had been undertaken to date and made the point that the group had arranged some of the sessions to coincide with the opening and closing times of the two schools within the parish.

The Speed Watch Coordinator for the Elm parish scheme provided details of the number of vehicles checked and the speeds at which they had been travelling; 5.32% of vehicles were found to have been travelling at speeds which are eligible for reporting to the Constabulary. She mentioned that 2 sessions had been arranged for later this week and that the aim, going forward, is to undertake one session in each village every week; she commented that she would provide regular updates to Elm Parish Council.

Members decided that the information presented be noted.

127/15 vacancy in the membership of the Parish Council

Further to minute 114/15, the Clerk informed members that no applications for co-option to membership of Elm Parish Council had been received by the deadline within the formal notice of vacancy (that being 6 February 2016); however, he had received, earlier today, an e-mail from Mr D Patrick (whose resignation in November 2015 had caused the vacancy (minute 86/15 refers)), stating that he would be happy to become a member of Elm Parish Council once again if the council would be prepared to co-opt him to membership.

Members decided that Mr the vacancy in the Rings End ward of Elm Parish Council be filled by the co-option of Mr D Patrick.

128/15 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.

129/15 Progress on actions from minutes of last meeting

(1) Play equipment provision in Elm and Fridaybridge (minute 116/15 (1))

With regard to the provision of play equipment at Fridaybridge, the Clerk informed members that he had submitted to Fenland District Council, to support the application for £100,000 to that council's Rural Capital Grants Fund, a business plan for the project. He reported that he had been provided with three written quotations for the play equipment etc, copies of which he had subsequently forwarded to Fenland District Council (FDC) as part of the application. He has now been asked by FDC to provide letters of support from the Police and the Community Safety Partnership; the Clerk had forwarded that request to District Councillors Sutton and Tanfield and Parish Councillor Mrs Davis.

The Clerk reported that, on the basis of the lowest quotation received, FDC had suggested to him that the application to the Rural Capital Grants Fund be reduced to £75,000 and that he had agreed.

With regard to the funding application to WREN for £75,000, the Clerk reported that now that he is in possession of three written quotations for the cost of the items of play equipment etc, he is able to finalise and then submit the application and supporting documentation

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

(2) Speeding across the parish (minute 116/15 (2))

Councillor Pinnock updated members on the operation of the Speed Watch scheme across the parish. He endorsed the comments made and the information reported by the Speed Watch Coordinator for the Elm parish scheme at minute 126/15 (2). He made reference to a summary report that he had circulated to

members in advance of the meeting, to which he had appended a report from Paul Cole, the local Speed Watch Co-ordinator who had addressed the council at minute 95/15, relating to various aspects of operating a Speed Watch scheme (such as data recording and management, recruitment of volunteers, publicity and Police involvement).

Councillor Pinnock expressed the opinion that the public had responded very positively to the Speed Watch initiative and he congratulated the volunteers for their time and commitment in its operation. He also expressed his appreciation of the support which had been provided by Paul Cole in the training of volunteers and arranging for the Elm parish Speed Watch group to borrow equipment until the beginning of March 2016.

The Chairman informed members that he had investigated the possibility of the purchase of Speed Watch equipment being funded by the Whitemill Local Environment Fund but had been informed that such a purchase would not be eligible for funding from this source.

Councillor Pinnock reminded members that he had circulated to them, in advance of the meeting, details of the Speed Indicator Device (SID) used for Speed Watch purposes and recommended that Elm Parish Council now purchases a SID, in readiness for expiry of the period of loan of the equipment by the Constabulary. He made the point that the council may wish to consider, at some future date, the purchase of Speed Watch signs for display in the villages (say 6 signs at an approximate cost of £80 each). In addition, Councillor Pinnock mentioned that administrative costs associated with the Speed Watch scheme had been incurred in the purchase of a printer cartridge (£13.00) and that two waterproof clipboards would be required (for use in the on-site recording of information); he suggested a particular type of clipboard (the cost of purchasing two would be £34.89).

Members decided that

- (1) the current situation be noted;
- (2) Elm Parish Council would meet the cost of purchasing a printer cartridge and the two waterproof clipboards;
- (3) the Clerk would place an order for a Speed Indicator Device, for use by the Elm parish Speed Watch group.

130/15 Police matters

Although no member of the Wisbech and District Neighbourhood Policing Team was present at the meeting, PCSO Sue Clarke had provided to the Clerk a brief report on recent incidents of crime and disorder which had been reported to the Constabulary since the last meeting of the Parish Council. PCSO Clarke's report mentioned that there had been one incident of theft of diesel from a tractor and two thefts of electronic equipment from tractors.

In her report, PCSO Clarke congratulated the Elm parish Speed Watch Coordinator and the volunteers who had undertaken Speed Watch activity on the excellent start that had been made. She made the point that there is much talk of this within the community and residents of Murrow and Tydd St Giles, having become aware of the activity in Elm parish, have sought advice from PCSO Clarke on how they could undertake such activity within their villages.

PCSO Clarke makes the point, in her report, that when there is a Police presence at Elm Primary School, at daily opening and closing times, the inconsiderate parking reduces considerably; however, the opportunity for such a presence on a regular basis does not exist; she, therefore, suggests that if problems are witnessed, photographs be taken by the community and sent to her by e-mail.

Councillor Pinnock mentioned that Councillor Stokes had been in correspondence with the local PCSO regarding damage which had been caused, by a motorist, on 19 January 2016, to one of the grassed areas at the junction of Abington Grove, Elm with the B1101. Councillor Stokes had provided to the PCSO a photograph of the vehicle and the damage that had been caused to the grassed area. He had received no update from the local PCSO.

Members decided that the situation be noted and that the Clerk would seek from the local PCSO an update, for reporting to the next meeting of the council, on action taken by the Constabulary in relation to the damage caused by a motorist to one of the grassed areas at the junction of Abington Grove, Elm with the B1101.

131/15 Planning and Fenland Local Plan Policy LP12

Councillor Pinnock informed members that the planning application for the erection of 30 x two-storey dwellings on land north of Henry Warby Avenue, Elm (F/YR15/0614/F refers) had been refused planning permission by Fenland District Council on the basis that such development would be contrary to the provisions of Local Plan Policy LP12. He commented that, based upon information that had been provided to him by District Councillor Sutton, the threshold with Policy LP12 had, given the number of new dwellings which been granted planning permission since 1 April 2014, been exceeded (by approximately 20 swellings).

With the Chairman's consent, District Councillor Sutton responded to Councillor Pinnock's comments. District Councillor Sutton mentioned that a challenge had been lodged with Fenland District Council (FDC) as to whether re-development of The Dale site should be classified as a scheme of new dwellings or replacement dwellings; the legal position in terms of the classification is currently being investigated by FDC officers. In addition, officers of FDC had made some errors in their calculations as to new development in Elm; some of the properties which had been included within the figures provided to District Councillor Sutton are not actually within Elm parish but within the parish/town of Wisbech.

District Councillor Sutton undertook to report further to Elm Parish Council, to clarify the exact LP12 threshold situation, as soon as he receives the necessary clarification from FDC officers.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

132/15 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) Works to a Willow tree within a Conservation Area at 2 Grove Gardens, Elm – F/YR16/0047/TRCA (applicant: Mr M Pike).

That the application be supported.

- (2) Erection of a three-storey, 6-bed dwelling with detached single garage – Reserved Matters application relating to the detailed matters of access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale pursuant to outline permission F/YR12/1001/O (erection of 4 dwellings) at plot 2, land south of 188 Fridaybridge Road, Elm – F/YR16/0059/RM (applicants: Mr and Mrs J Clarke).

That the application be supported.

- (3) Erection of external staircase and formation of door to first-floor of existing building (part retrospective) at 6 March Road, Rings End – F/YR16/0066/F (applicant: Mr D Chang).

That the application be supported.

- (4) Erection of a two-storey/first-floor side extension to existing dwelling at 6 Peartree Way, Elm – F/Yr16/0076/F (applicants Mr and Mrs Points).

That the application be supported.

133/15 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

- he had intended to update the Parish Council on the situation with regard to Local Plan Policy LP12 but this had been done at minute 131/15
- the main area of activity at Fenland District Council currently is finalising the budget for 2016/17
- he wished to express his thanks to those members of Elm Parish Council, and the volunteers from within the community, who are participating in the Speed Watch activity
- there is lack of clarity from the Government in terms of what it is seeking from councils which wish to pursue devolution.

Councillor Tanfield, the other District Councillor who represents the parish of Elm, informed members that

- the Wisbech Garden Town proposal is progressing and is being well received by the public and stakeholders
- there is nothing further to report, at this time, in respect of Fenland District Council's Comprehensive Spending Review but she would keep the Parish Council informed of the situation as it develops
- it is proposed that the funding for the Fenland District Youth Council be reduced; an on-line petition, opposing the situation, had been set up and she expressed the view that the members of Elm Parish Council may wish to sign the petition.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

134/15 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.

The Chairman informed members of the theft the waste bin from the entrance to the playing field at Coldham and sought members' views as to whether a replacement should be purchased.

The Clerk reported to members an e-mail from the Fleet and Technical Manager at Fenland District Council (FDC), offering to provide a trade waste service (weekly emptying of a 1,100 litres wheeled bin) for Elm Cemetery at a cost lower than that of the contactor which is currently providing this service to Elm Parish Council. The Clerk informed members of the estimated annual savings which could be achieved by the Parish Council if it were to accept the offer from FDC.

Members decided that

- (1) the situation be noted;

- (2) the Clerk would obtain, from Fenland District Council, a quotation for the purchase and installation of a new waste bin;
- (3) the offer from Fenland District Council to provide a trade waste service for Elm Cemetery be accepted and that the Clerk would make the necessary contractual arrangements.

135/15 Parish Council IT provision

Further to minute 104/15 (2), Councillor Pinnock informed members that the Clerk is now in possession of the council's new laptop, which contains all of the necessary software (including the accountancy programme which been written by Councillor Pinnock).

Members decided that the situation be noted.

136/15 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
W Bailey and Son	Plot purchase and interment fee	£853.00
Total Income		£1,376.60

Expenditure

Glazewing	Wheelie bin emptying – Elm Cemetery (includes VAT of £18.60)	£111.60
R J Warren Ltd	Grounds maintenance contract (includes VAT of £249.14)	£1,494.84
T Jordan	Salary (less income tax of £149.40 and NI of £9.00) and reimbursement of expenses	£744.98
Glazewing	Annual EPA Charge (includes VAT of £12.00)	£72.00
Upwell Parish Council	Contribution towards cost of re-filling grit bin at Upwell Health Centre	£29.14
Anglian Water	Water for cemetery	£47.79
Mrs C Adcock	Purchase of printer cartridge, for use in the production of documentation in association with Elm parish Speed Watch scheme	£13.00
R Pinnock	Purchase of two water-proof clip boards, for use by Speed Watch volunteers	£34.89
Total Expenditure		£2,548.24

In addition, the Clerk reported on the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 31 January 2016 (in the total sum of £117,094.90), together with the figure as at 31 January 2015.

Members considered the appointment of an Internal Auditor for the audit of the Parish Council's 2015/16 accounts. The Clerk informed members that the person who undertook this role for the purpose of the Parish Council's 2014/15 accounts (and for a number of financial years prior to that), Mr Stephen Cowell, is willing to do likewise for the 2015/16 accounts.

Further to minute 122/15, members reviewed cemetery fees and allotment rents. In undertaking the review, they had regard for the level of cemetery fees levied by Fenland District Council and both the levels of allotment rents charged by other local councils in Fenland and agricultural rents charged locally by the private-sector.

Members decided

- (1) that the income of £1,376.60 be noted and that the expenditure of £2,548.24 be authorised;
- (2) that the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 31 January 2016 and the position as at 31 January 2015 be noted;
- (3) to note that, after allowing for the Parish Council's ear-marked reserves (totalling £62,595.00) at 31 January 2016, the actual balance available to the Parish Council at 31 January 2016 was £54,399.90; 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 January 2016 to approximately £2,528.00;
- (4) that Mr Stephen Cowell be appointed as the Parish Council's Internal Auditor for the 2015/16 audit of accounts;
- (5) that all cemetery fees be increased by 50% with effect from 1 April 2016;
- (6) allotment rents be increased to £125.00 (from £100.00) per acre with effect from October 2017 and that the tenants be given the necessary notice of this increase by the Clerk.

137/15 Grants to voluntary and charitable bodies

(1) Elm Friendship Club

Members considered an application for financial assistance from the Elm Friendship Club.

The club is seeking financial support to cover the annual cost of hiring accommodation for the club's fortnightly meetings, insurances, three outings (involving coach hire and fees for entrance to activities) and meeting the cost of speakers/presenters attending some club meetings.

The Clerk reminded members that the Parish Council had provided financial support to the Elm Friendship Club each year since the financial year 2011/12 and that it had awarded the sum of £1,590.00 in 2014/15.

Members decided, having regard for the information provided within the application, that the Elm Friendship Club be awarded the sum of £1,500.00 for the financial year 2016/17.

(2) Citizens' Advice Rural Cambs

Members considered a request from the Citizens' Advice Rural Cambs for financial assistance of £500 towards the £675 cost of engaging one volunteer adviser.

Members decided that, in the absence of any information within the application as to the benefit which would be derived by Elm parishioners from such funding, no financial support be awarded to the Rural Cambs Citizens' Advice.

138/15 Annual risk assessments

Members considered, in accordance with the advice of the Council's Auditors that local councils should assess and take mitigating actions, the risks to the Parish Council.

Members are of the view that all of the risks faced by the Council are covered by the necessary measures, including:

- insurance policies in respect all assets and public liability
- regular inspections by the Clerk and members of the Parish Council of all assets
- monthly reporting by the Clerk of all items of income and expenditure and monies held in bank accounts
- all expenditure is approved at Parish Council meetings and cheques require three signatures
- monthly verification by a member of the Parish Council of the council's bank statements against the records of income and expenditure
- the Clerk reports to members at quarterly intervals on the Parish Council's overall financial position
- Annual Accounts are approved by the Parish Council
- all activities are governed by Standing Orders and Financial Regulations
- monitoring of the financial aspects of the council's activities is undertaken by the Finance Committee
- the Parish Council possesses a prudent level of financial reserves to be able to fund any unforeseen eventualities
- health and safety inspections are undertaken each time that grounds maintenance activities are undertaken on behalf of the Parish Council.

Members decided that appropriate risk management measures are in place currently but the situation be kept under constant review and considered formally by the Parish Council at the February meeting each year.

139/15 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.

140/15 Date of next meeting

Members were reminded that the next meeting of the Parish Council had been scheduled for 15 March 2016, commencing at 7.00 pm, at the Parish Council office, Begdale Road, Elm.

Meeting finished at 8.25 pm

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

Date:.....