

ELM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING

17 FEBRUARY 2015 – 7.00 pm.

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

Apologies: Councillors Mrs Lankfer, Pinnock and Miss Webb.

In attendance: District Councillors Sutton and Tanfield.

The minutes of the meeting of 20 January 2015 were confirmed and signed.

138/14 Open Forum

(1) Coldham playing field

A resident of Coldham informed the council of discussions which had been undertaken by a small number of residents of the village regarding possible environmental community projects for Coldham. As a result of these discussions, the suggestion of creating a sensory garden on an area of land at Coldham playing field had emerged. The resident commented that it should be possible for funding for such a scheme to be obtained from the Whitemill Local Environment Fund Committee. She alleged that the Chairman of the Coldham Residents' Action Group (CRAG), which holds the lease for the playing field had rejected the possibility of any of the land at the playing field being made available for the creation of a sensory garden.

Members listened to the comments of the resident of Coldam, following which it was made clear to her that this is not a matter over which Elm Parish Council has any control; it was suggested that she should write to the Secretary of CRAG, requesting that a meeting be arranged for the purpose of considering this matter..

Members decided that the comments of the resident be noted and that there is no role to be played by Elm Parish Council in this matter.

(2) Sources of funding for the provision of bollards at Abington Grove, Elm

A parishioner expressed the opinion that if the Parish Council were to install, at Abington Grove, bollards made from recycled plastic, instead of wood or metal, it may be possible of obtain funding for the cost of the bollards from the Whitemill Local Environment Fund Committee.

Members decided that the comments of the parishioner be noted and they be taken into account at minute 140/14 (3).

139/14 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.

140/14 Progress on actions from minutes of last meeting

(1) Play equipment provision in Elm and Fridaybridge (minute 124/14 (1))

With regard to the possible provision of play equipment at Elm, the Clerk reported that he had placed an order for the manufacture and installation of the play equipment, as agreed at minute 124/14 (1), and had obtained information from the Local Highway Authority in relation to progressing with a safety audit for the provision of an equipped play area on the grassed verge area at Abington Grove, Elm; he had forwarded the information to all members of the council in advance of the meeting.

With regard to the provision of play equipment at Fridaybridge, the Clerk informed members that he would be meeting with the relevant officers of Fenland District Council and District Councillor Tanfield on 25 February 2015 to progress the submission of an application to WREN for funding towards the provision of play equipment at the playing field at Maltmas Drove, Fridaybridge.

Members decided that the information reported by the Clerk be noted and that he would arrange for the LHA's receipt of the information required for the purpose of a safety audit for the provision of an equipped play area on the grassed verge area at Abington Grove, Elm.

(2) Fishing at The Leam, Fridaybridge (minute 126/14)

The Clerk reported to members on the draft byelaw that he had prepared in respect of the No Fishing rule applying to the pond at The Leam, Fridaybridge. He had circulated a copy of the document to all members of the council in advance of the meeting.

One member expressed the view that the No Camping rule at The Leam should also be included in the proposed byelaw if it were possible to include that prohibition in an Open Spaces byelaw.

Members decided that

- (1) the draft byelaw produced by the Clerk be approved for submission to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) for provisional approval;
- (2) the Clerk would investigate, prior to submission of the draft byelaw to the DCLG, the possibility of including within that byelaw the No Camping rule which applies to The Leam and to make such inclusion within the draft byelaw if possible and appropriate (according to the DCLG's guidance on the making of byelaws).

(3) Abington Grove, Elm - parking of the grassed verge area (minute 135/14)

The Chairman reported the two quotations (both contractors had provided costs for the bollards to be made from wood or metal) that he had obtained for the manufacture and installation of bollards (to prevent the parking of vehicles on the grassed verge areas) at the Abington Grove/Main Road junction, Elm.

The Clerk reminded members that the council is already in possession of a quotation for the manufacture and installation of timber bollards at this location.

Members had regard for the comments made by the parishioner at minute 138/14 in relation to considering the use of bollards made from recycled plastic, instead of wood or metal, and the possibility of obtaining funding for the cost of such bollards from the Whitemill Local Environment Fund Committee.

Members decided that the information reported by the Chairman and the Clerk be noted and that the Chairman would both obtain a quotation for the supply and installation of bollards made from recycled plastic and ascertain from Fenland District Council whether Elm Parish Council would be eligible to make an application to the Whitemill Local Environment Fund Committee for funding to meet the cost of such bollards.

141/14 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 reminded members of the recent staff changes within the Wisbech and District Neighbourhood Policing Team, which had resulted in PCSO Dave Russ no longer covering Elm parish; the PCSO who would be taking on responsibilities for Elm parish is PCSO Andy Bush. Consequently, the Clerk had now sent PCSO Bush copies of the agenda for this meeting as well as the previous one but had heard nothing from the PCSO in response.

Members decided that the situation be noted and that the Clerk would seek to ascertain from PCSO Bush whether he would be attending meetings of Elm Parish Council or at least providing a monthly update report, for presentation to council by the Clerk (as had been the case with PCSO Russ).

142/14 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) Erection of a single-storey rear extension with terrace above, involving the insertion of an external spiral staircase to rear of existing dwelling, at 6 Bramley Court, Coldham – F/YR15/0016/F (applicant: Mr M Pilling).

That the application be supported.

- (2) Erection of a dwelling on land north of 132 Fridaybridge Road, Elm – F/YR15/0048/O (applicant: Mr D Warby).

That the application be supported.

- (3) Erection of a grain storage building at Coldham Bank, Coldham – F/YR15/0068/F (applicant: Mr S Dickinson).

That the application be supported.

- (4) Erection of a two-storey 5-bed dwelling with detached double garage (retrospective) at plot 2 land north of Redmoor Farm, Main Road, Fridaybridge – F/YR15/0088/F (applicant: Mr L Russell).

Object on the basis that, because of the proposal to erect a garage to the front of the dwelling, the development would not be in keeping with the street scene and the character of the area.

143/14 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, informed members that

- he had investigated further, at the request of Councillor Pinnock, the current position regarding Fenland District Council's adoption of the open space areas at Grove gardens, Elm. Fenland District Council has stated that it would not adopt these areas until such time as the ponds situation has been resolved by the land owner (see minute 145/14)
- the Government's Department for Communities and Local Government is keen that neighbourhood planning be taken up across the country and, consequently, is making available £22.5 million over a period of three years from April 2015 to support more communities to take up neighbourhood planning in their area. Councillor Sutton enquired as to whether Elm Parish Council had considered the production of a neighbourhood plan for the parish; he made the point that neighbourhood plans in Fenland would need to align with the policies of the Fenland Local Plan; he mentioned that March Town Council, Tydd St Giles Parish Council and Parson Drove Parish Council are each progressing with a neighbourhood plan.
- with regard to planning application F/YR14/0876/F (seeking consent for variation of certain conditions attached to a previous planning permission for re-development of the site of The Dale, Begdale Road, Elm), Fenland District Council, as Local Planning Authority, has now deemed it necessary for the applicant to submit a new planning application for the development, rather than to determine application F/YR14/0876/F.

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

- a very successful charity fund-raising event, organised by the local community and at which in excess of 200 people had attended, had taken place recently at the Tower Hall, Fridaybridge. As a result of the event, £1,736.00 had been raised for the Billy Lee Appeal
- the inconsiderate parking of vehicles by contractors working on the scheme for re-development of the site of The Dale, Begdale Road, Elm is causing difficulties for local residents.

Members decided that the situation (including the fact that District Councillor Sutton would raise with the land owner the inconsiderate parking of vehicles by contractors working on the scheme for re-development of the site of The Dale, Begdale Road, Elm) be noted.

144/14 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 130/14, the Clerk reported the quotation received from the grounds maintenance contractor which had asked to be given the opportunity to tender for undertaking this council's grounds maintenance works.

Members decided, on the basis that acceptance of the quotation would result in an increased annual cost to the Parish Council of undertaking its grounds maintenance works, as well as the quality of the work and efficiency of this contractor being unknown to the council, that this quotation be not accepted and that the contract with the council's existing contractor would remain in place

145/14 Ponds at Grove Gardens, Elm

The Clerk informed members that Councillor Pinnock, who was absent from the meeting, had requested that this matter be the subject of an item on the agenda for this meeting of Elm Parish Council.

The Clerk reported that, at the request of Councillor Pinnock, he had sought to ascertain, via the Parks and Open Spaces Manager at Fenland District Council, the plans of the land owner, Kier Living, to clear the ponds at Grove gardens of the weed growth.

In response, the Parks and Open Spaces Manager at Fenland District Council has stated that Kier Living had been in discussion with landscaping contractors and the local Environmental Health Officer regarding the ponds.

Kier Living has said that the best it can do currently is to continue to spray the invasive weed to keep it under control (this is, however, achieving very limited success due to the nature of the weed and the chemical required to control it only really effective above water). The land owner states that it does, however, have plans to identify a more permanent solution in the spring, because of the drier weather, as it may require emptying the ponds briefly to remove the weed; however, this will require permissions and licences to be obtained, which Kier Living is currently investigating.

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

146/14 Streetlife community website

The Clerk informed members that Councillor Pinnock, who was absent from the meeting, had requested that this matter be the subject of an item on the agenda for this meeting of Elm Parish Council. The Clerk reminded members that he had circulated to them, a number of weeks ago, details of this website (via the link forwarded to the Clerk by the company which operates the website). The operator of the website states that the aim of the website is to enable local residents to get more involved in their community; this could be through publicising events, sharing views and ideas, recruiting volunteers etc.

At the request of Councillor Pinnock, the Clerk had sought to obtain further information from the operators of this website and had also enquired of the company as to whether a representative would be able to attend a future meeting of Elm Parish Council, if members so wished. The operators of the website had provided no further information to the Clerk and made the point that, as the company is based in London, it would not be possible to send a representative to a future meeting of Elm Parish Council

Members decided that the information of the Clerk be noted and that no further action be taken in this matter.

147/14 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
Peter Barnes	Interment fee	£275.00
Total Income		£798.60

Expenditure

Glazewing	Wheelie bin emptying – Elm Cemetery (includes VAT of £10.58)	£63.47
Glazewing	Annual EPA charge (includes Vat of £12.00)	£72.00
R J Warren Ltd	Grounds maintenance contract (includes VAT of £271.08)	£1,626.49
T Jordan	Salary (less income tax of £157.52 and NI of £14.95), Broadband and other expenses	£730.26

Fridaybridge Community First Responders	Financial assistance for the purchase of medical equipment	£115.15
N Hopkin Machinery	Provision and installation of new gates at allotments (includes VAT of £172.00)	£1,032.00
Fenweb Limited	Renewal (for 2 years from September 2014) of website hosting plus cost of content pages (includes VAT of £122.00)	£732.00
Anglian Water	Water for cemetery	£46.79
Upwell Parish Council	Contribution towards cost of gritting car park at Upwell Health Centre	£29.14
Total Expenditure		£4,447.30

In addition, the Clerk reported on the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 31 January 2015 (in the total sum of £130,539.39), together with the month-end figures for each of the preceding six months and as at 31 January 2014.

Members considered the appointment of an Internal Auditor for the audit of the Parish Council's 2014/15 accounts. The Clerk informed members that the person who undertook this role for the purpose of the Parish Council's 2013/14 accounts (and for a number of financial years prior to that), Mr Stephen Cowell, is willing to do likewise for the 2014/15 accounts.

Members decided

- (1) that the income of £798.60 be noted and that the expenditure of £4,447.30 be authorised;
- (2) that the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 31 January 2015, together with the month-end figures for each of the preceding six months and as at 31 January 2014, be noted;
- (3) to note that, after allowing for the Parish Council's ear-marked reserves (totalling £57,745.50) at 31 January 2015), the actual balance available to the Parish Council at 31 January 2015 was £72,793.89; 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 31 January 2015 to approximately £27,794.00;
- (4) Mr Stephen Cowell be appointed as the Parish Council's Internal Auditor for the 2014/15 audit of accounts.

148/14 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.

149/14 Correspondence

(1) Elm and Fridaybridge Youth Club

The Clerk read to members a letter (dated 4 February 2015) which had been sent by the County Council's Youth Development Co-ordinator to attendees of the Elm and Friday Bridge Youth Club, informing those young people that the youth club would not be re-opening again, after the 12 February, until the Youth Service had agreed its future direction with Elm Parish Council. The letter states that this decision has not been an easy one; however, staffing levels and the reduction in numbers of young people attending the youth club had been contributing factors.

The Youth Service makes the point that the Elm and Fridaybridge Youth Club had received generous financial support from Elm Parish Council over the years, for which it was very thankful, and has had tremendous support by way of a volunteer from the village of Elm.

The Clerk reported that, subsequent to his receipt of the letter, he had met with the County Council's Youth Development Co-ordinator, on 16 February 2015, to gain a greater knowledge of the issues currently being faced by the County Council's Youth Service and the implications for provision of youth-related activities within Elm parish.

The Clerk's conclusions from his meeting with the County Council's Youth Development Co-ordinator are that

- there would very shortly be a significant reduction, because of the requirement upon the County Council to achieve significant financial savings, in the number of staff delivering Youth Services across Cambridgeshire
- under the revised staffing arrangements, there would no longer be a specific focus upon youth activities; the revised service would deal with all children (aged between 0 and 19 years)
- it is unlikely that the County Council would be able to continue to operate, with or without the provision of funding by the Parish Council, a youth club within the parish of Elm
- the most likely means of supporting youth participation in the parish would be by supporting engagement and consultation with young people and helping them to participate in projects being delivered by the community or various agencies.

The Youth Development Co-ordinator had asked the Clerk to invite Elm Parish Council to give thought to what it would like to see in terms of support to young people in the parish and to forward those thoughts to her; she would then make an assessment of what role the County Council could play in that regard.

Members decided that the information reported by the Clerk be noted and that they would give thought to what they would like to see in terms of support to young people in the parish.

(2) Street lighting and Concurrent Functions Grants

The Clerk read to members a letter from Fenland District Council updating Parish Councils on the situation with regard to street lighting and Concurrent Functions Grants.

The letter states that all relevant Parish Councils had accepted in writing the offer of Fenland District Council (FDC) to arrange and deliver the category 1 street lamp repairs (minute 129/14 refers) and orders for these works are now being placed by FDC. With regard to the category 2 and 3 street lamp repairs and future payment to Parish Councils of Concurrent Functions Grants, Fenland District Council had decided that, as these matters are sensitive and key financial decisions for all concerned, decisions on these matters should be undertaken by the new District Council and Parish Councils which would be in place as a result of the May 2015 elections.

Members decided that the information contained within the letter from Fenland District Council be noted.

150/14 Date of next meeting

Members were reminded that the next meeting of the Parish Council had been scheduled for 17 March 2015, commencing at 7.00 pm, at the Parish Council office, Begdale Road, Elm.

Meeting finished at 8.05 pm

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

Date:.....