

ELM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING

18 NOVEMBER 2014 – 7.00 pm.

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

Apologies: Councillor Softley and District Councillor Sutton.

In attendance: District Councillor Tanfield.

The minutes of the meeting of 21 October 2014 were confirmed and signed.

89/14 Open Forum

Burial fees

The daughter of a person buried recently in Elm Cemetery spoke in support of her request for qualifying for payment of the parishioner rate of burial fees in respect of her late mother. She made the point that, although her mother did not meet strictly the council's residency criteria for the parishioner rate, her mother had spent the majority of her life living in the parish and her reasons for leaving the parish for certain periods of her life were because of matters outside of her control; also the majority of her family reside within the parish.

Members decided that the comments be noted and would be taken into account when determining this request (at minute 100/14).

90/14 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.

91/14 Progress on actions from minutes of last meeting

(1) Facilities for young people in the parish (minute 75/14 (3))

The Clerk informed members that the situation is unchanged from that reported at minute 75/14 (3).

Members decided that the information reported by the Clerk be noted and that, given the decision of the Parish Council (at minute 75/14 (4)) to no longer consider Grove Gardens as a possible location for the provision of play equipment, this item would not feature on future agendas.

(2) Grove Gardens, Elm (minute 75/14 (4))

Members decided that, given the decision of the Parish Council (at minute 75/14 (4)) to no longer consider Grove Gardens as a possible location for the provision of play equipment, this item would not feature on future agendas.

(3) Play equipment provision in Elm and Fridaybridge (minute 75/14 (5))

The Clerk reminded members again of the decisions which had been made by the Parish Council at minute 36/14 and the need for actions to be taken to deliver the proposals.

With regard to the possible provision of play equipment at the pocket park adjacent to Chapel Lane at Elm, the Chairman reported, further to minute 75/14 (4), that he had calculated the size of the area of land occupied by the equipment at the playing field in Coldham, to be able to estimate whether there would be sufficient land available at the pocket park to replicate at Elm the scheme at Coldham; he informed members that an area of approximately 36 yards by 10 yards would be required and that an area of that size is available at the pocket park; he suggested that any equipment provided at that location be enclosed by appropriate fencing.

With regard to the provision of play equipment at Fridaybridge, District Councillor Tanfield informed members that she had discussed recently with the Head of Leisure Services at Fenland District Council the manner in which the scheme could be progressed; the officer's suggestion is that a steering group (comprising the District Councillors for the ward, representatives of the local community, relevant officers of Fenland District Council and two members of Elm Parish Council be formed; she invited members to volunteer for membership of the steering group but no interest was expressed. The Clerk offered to represent the Parish Council on the steering group and members accepted that offer.

Members decided that

- (1) the information reported by the Chairman be noted and that he would obtain a quotation, from the supplier of the play equipment at Coldham, for replicating at Elm the scheme implemented at Coldham but with the addition of appropriate fencing;
- (2) the Clerk would represent Elm Parish Council on the steering group being established to "drive forward" a scheme of play equipment provision at Fridaybridge;
- (3) this item should feature as a "standing" item on agendas for meetings of the council.

(4) Finance Committee (minute 85/14)

The Clerk informed members that subsequent to minute 85/14 Councillor Pinnock (who had made the original suggestion that a meeting of the council's Finance Committee should meet in the near future) had suggested to the Clerk that it would be more appropriate for the next meeting of council's Finance Committee to take place closer to the meeting of Elm Parish Council at which the Precept and budget for 2015/16 would be agreed (i.e. the January 2015 meeting) instead of during November 2014. The Clerk expressed the view that there is logic to Councillor Pinnock's suggestion.

Members decided that a meeting of the council's Finance Committee be arranged for an appropriate date in January 2015, to enable the committee to consider the council's financial position prior to setting of the Precept and budget 2015/16 by Elm Parish Council.

92/14 Possible Wisbech to March rail line

Further to minute 73/14 (4), members considered briefly, having examined the information published on the website of Steve Barclay MP in relation to the initiative, the possible implications for the parish in the event of a new rail link between Wisbech and March becoming a reality.

Members were mindful of the views expressed by the Coldham resident at minute 73/14 (4) that such a proposal would a detrimental impact upon the village Coldham; for example, the railway track would prevent unrestricted access from the centre of the village to the playing field, as well as making the area more dangerous for children.

Some members commented that if this proposal were to become a reality it is unlikely to do so for a number of years and expressed the view that such a scheme would be subject to public consultation; at that time, the parishioners of Elm would be able to make their views known.

Members decided that Steve Barclay MP be invited (via District Councillor Tanfield (who had offered to do so), to attend a future meeting of Elm Parish Council to provide greater detail of the initiative and to hear the views of parishioners.

93/14 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.

Members decided that the situation be noted and that the Clerk would seek to obtain from the Constabulary, for circulation to members, a report detailing recent incidents of crime and disorder within the geographical area covered by Elm Parish Council.

94/14 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) Construction of 3.5 mw (max) output solar farm, to include the installation of ground mounted solar panels, ancillary plant, 2.0 metre high security fencing, 19 pole mounted 3.5 meter high CCTV cameras and a 3.0 metre high pole mounted padcon monitoring camera on land north-west of Wales Bank junction, Begdale Road, Elm - F/YR14/0856/F (applicant: Big60Million Ltd).

Object, on the basis that

- *such a development would have a detrimental visual impact upon the rural character of that part of Elm*
- *the proposal, if approved, would result in the unacceptable loss of agricultural land within the parish*
- *this development would set a precedent for other proposals of a similar nature, which would lead to an inappropriate change in the character of the area.*

- (2) Erection of a dwelling on land east of 176 – 180 Fridaybridge Road, Elm - F/YR14/0862/O (applicant: Mr A Weaver).

Object, on the basis that

- *this proposal constitutes backland development, which the Parish Council considers to be an inappropriate form of development in this part of Elm*
- *this development would set a precedent for other proposals of a similar nature, which would lead to an inappropriate change in the character of the area.*

As a result of discussion of planning applications for new developments in the parish, mention was made by a number of members of the re-development of The Dale site at Elm (which the Parish Council opposed) and their views that what is being built is out of keeping with the area, is an “eyesore” and would become “slums of the future”.

Members decided that their views regarding what is being built on The Dale site at Elm be drawn to the attention of the Chairman of Fenland District Council’s Planning Committee.

95/14 Financial assistance to Elm Parochial Church Council for works to the bells at All Saints Church

Further to minute 79/14, members considered the signing of an agreement between Elm Parish Council (EPC) and the Elm Parochial Church Council (PCC) in relation to the financial support to be provided by EPC to the PCC to fund repair works to the bells at All Saints Church.

A copy of the proposed agreement had been circulated to all members of Elm Parish Council in advance of the meeting, with the invitation that they would forward to the Clerk in advance of this meeting any amendments they wished to see; the Clerk reported that all of the members who had responded had supported the document as written.

Mr Wilkes, representing the Parochial Church Council, expressed his thanks to Elm Parish Council for supporting this project and he read to members a letter from the Vicar of the All Saints Church, who is the Chairman of the Elm PCC, expressing the thanks of the PCC in that regard.

Members decided, unanimously, that

- (1) the agreement be approved; consequently, three copies were signed (by the Chairman and the Clerk (on behalf of Elm Parish Council) and Mr R Wilkes (on behalf of the Elm Parochial Church Council)); copies of the agreement would be held by Elm Parochial Church Council, Elm Parish Council and the council’s solicitors;
- (2) the Elm Parochial Church Council would provide to the Clerk (for reporting to the council) bi-monthly reports on the progress on this project.

96/14 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 Tanfield, one of the District Councillors who represents the parish of Elm

- reported that she had been approached by a number of Elm residents who oppose planning application F/YR14/0856/F on the grounds that the construction of a solar farm at the Wales bank Junction with Begdale Road would have a detrimental visual impact upon the rural character of that part of Elm. She is, therefore, supportive of the stance taken by the Parish Council in relation to that planning application (minute 94/14 refers)

- informed members that the Fenland Youth Council has funding available to award small grants to organisations which provide youth-related activities in Fenland.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

97/14 Parish Council agendas

Councillor Pinnock proposed that future agendas for meetings of Elm Parish Council include an additional “standing” item, whereby there would be a report by the Chairman of the Council in the same way that the council receives reports from the County and District Councillors for the parish. Such an item would provide a means of ensuring that other members of Elm Parish Council were not “out of the loop”, as had been the case with regard to the meetings which had been held regarding parish street lighting (minute 83/14 refers).

The Chairman expressed the opinion that such an agenda item would not be necessary; in cases where there is information provided to him which he feels needs to be reported to the council he would ask the Clerk to include a specific item on the agenda for the subsequent meeting of the council.

Members decided that future agendas for meetings of Elm Parish Council would not include an additional “standing” item relating to a report by the Chairman of the Council.

98/14 Concurrent Functions Grants

The Clerk reported, on behalf of District Councillor Sutton, that it is now proposed by Fenland District Council that Concurrent Functions Grants for 2015/16 and beyond would not be reduced below the 2014/15 level.

Members decided that the information reported by the Clerk, on behalf of District Councillor Sutton, be noted and that Elm Parish Council accepts the position in respect of the payment by Fenland District Council of Concurrent Functions Grants to the Parish Councils in Fenland.

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

Further to minute 80/14, the Clerk reported that he had requested Fenland District Council (FDC) to inform Balfour Beatty of the Parish Council’s views in this matter - that Elm Parish Council is not minded to spend in excess of £1,200.00 on the replacement of this street lamp unless Balfour Beatty, the District Council’s street lighting contractor, is able to demonstrate an over-riding safety need (such as the potential for electrocution of a member of the public) for works to be carried out - and FDC to subsequently inform the Clerk of the response from Balfour Beatty in that regard.

As a result of the Clerk’s communication with Fenland District Council (FDC), FDC had obtained from Balfour Beatty (BB) some photographs showing the extent of the damage to the lamp column and an assessment from BB that, because the column is now twisted which has created a gap between the column and the door to the electricity supply, it would not be safe to leave the lamp working (BB has removed the electrical fuse and covered the door opening with emergency bags on a temporary basis).

Members decided that

- (1) the information reported by the Clerk be noted;
- (2) given the response from Balfour Beatty, via Fenland District Council, lamp column FPC2 at Oldfield Avenue, Elm be replaced;

- (3) prior to placing of an order with Fenland District Council for this work to be undertaken (by Balfour Beatty), the Clerk would investigate the possibility, because the need for the works had resulted from impact damage) of the cost of the works being met by the Parish Council's insurers.

100/14 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 informed reported to members on a request from the daughter of a deceased person who had been buried in Elm Cemetery recently for the council to consider levying the parishioner fees rate in relation to the purchase of the burial plot and the interment fee, instead of the 250% parishioner fee applicable to those who do not meet the criteria set out in the council's Cemetery Fees document for the parishioner rate.

Members had been sent, by the Clerk, in advance of the meeting, a copy of the e-mail (dated 3 November 2014) from the requester.

The requester had detailed in her e-mail to the Clerk a case as to why the (lower) parishioner rate should be charged. In summary, the requester's mother provided details of her mother's residency during her life, which showed that she had been an Elm parishioner for 48 of her 86 years; also, her remaining siblings and most of her children are residents of Fridaybridge.

Members decided, having regard for the content of the requester's e-mail of 3 November 2014 and the information that she presented at minute 89/14, that the Parish Council would require payment of only the parishioner rate for the burial plot and interment fees at Elm Cemetery in relation to the burial of the requester's late mother.

101/14 Land at Abington Grove/Main Road, Elm

Councillor Pinnock referred to minute 30/14 (4), at which the Clerk had reported the following comment from the County Council's District Highways Manager (DHM): "that he had investigated the subsidence and the presence of a filled-in dyke on the grassed area at Abington Grove; he had examined various historic mapping and was unable to find any dyke; the situation would be monitored by the Local Highway Authority"

Councillor Pinnock expressed the opinion that the conclusion reached by the DHM is incorrect. He suggested that the County Council should be informed that the Parish Council believes that a watercourse does exist in that area.

In addition, the Clerk reported a letter from a resident of Abington Grove, Elm in relation to the damage which is being caused to the grassed verge areas as a result of vehicles being parked (by parents of children at the Elm C of E Primary School) on that area; the resident mentions also the general inconsiderate and dangerous parking (by parents of children at the Elm C of E Primary School) at the junction of Abington Grove and Main Road.

Members decided that

- (1) Councillor Pinnock's suggestion, that the County Council's District Highways Manager be informed of the Parish Council's view in relation to the existence of a watercourse in this area, be supported;
- (2) In relation to the letter from the resident, the Clerk would draw to the attention of the Local Highway Authority and Cambridgeshire Constabulary the issues raised by the parishioner.

102/14 Grants to voluntary and charitable bodies

(1) Elm Friendship Club

Members considered, in accordance with the policy adopted at minute 23/13, an application for financial assistance from the Elm Friendship Club.

The total sum requested is £1,590.00, 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 Secretary of the Elm Friendship Club has stated in the application that Elm Friendship Club receives no funding from any other source.

The Clerk reminded members that the Parish Council had provided financial support of £336 in both the financial years 2011/12 and 2012/13 and £1,505.00 in 2013/14.

Members decided that the application be approved in full, meaning that the Elm Friendship Club be awarded the sum of £1,590.00.

(2) Rural Cambs Citizens' Advice Bureau

Members considered a request from the Rural Cambs Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB) for financial assistance towards the cost of operating its services in the financial year 2015/16.

The CAB states that it dealt with 8,750 different issues, particularly in relation to problems associated with personal debt and queries relating to benefits, in Fenland over the last twelve months; in Elm parish, the CAB dealt with 167 residents having 385 problems.

The CAB makes the point that demand for its services is increasing at a time when financial support from some its sources of funding is reducing. The CAB is requesting financial support of £500.00 from Elm Parish Council.

Members decided that financial support in the sum of £250.00 be awarded to the Rural Cambs Citizens' Advice Bureau.

(3) Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal 2014

Members considered making a donation, in addition to purchase of the annual Poppy Wreath, to this year's British Legion Poppy Appeal.

The Clerk reminded members that the Parish Council had made such a donation in 2012 and 2013 (minutes 99/12 and 90/13 refer).

Members decided that a donation of £25.00 be made to the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal 2014.

103/14 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
D Bates	Allotment rent	£250.00
A Fitzjohn	Allotment rent	£1,700.00
Thornalley Funeral Services	Interment fee	£687.50
A R Clingo	Plot purchase and interment fee	£660.00
Anglia Co-operative Funerals	Interment fee	£687.50
Total Income		£4,508.60

Expenditure

Glazewing	Wheelie bin emptying – Elm Cemetery (includes VAT of £17.63)	£105.78
R J Warren Ltd	Grounds maintenance contract (includes VAT of £247.13)	£1,482.79
T Jordan	Salary (less income tax of £146.20 and NI of £8.16), Broadband and other expenses	£699.19
Kierman Window Cleaning	Clean parish notice and information boards	£45.00
Cambridgeshire County Council	Funding for Elm and Fridaybridge Youth Club – second quarter 2014/15	£1,000.00
Elm Parochial Church Council	Donation – works to bells at All Saints Church, Elm	£6,700.00
Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal	Poppy wreath	£17.00
Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal	Donation	£25.00
Anglian Water	Water for cemetery	£50.09
Total Expenditure		£10,124.85

In addition, the Clerk reported on the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 31 October 2014 (in the total sum of £138,705.96), together with the month-end figures for each of the preceding six months and as at 31 October 2013.

Members decided

- (1) that the income of £4,508.60 be noted and that the expenditure of £10,124.85 be authorised;
- (2) that the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 31 October 2014, together with the month-end figures for each of the preceding six months and as at 31 October 2013, be noted;
- (3) to note that, after allowing for the Parish Council's ear-marked reserves (totalling £55,745.50) at 31 October 2014), the actual balance available to the Parish Council at 31 October 2014 was £82,960.46; 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 October 2014 to approximately £37,960.00.

104/14 Correspondence

(1) Allotments

The Clerk read to members a note from the tenant of one of the council's allotments site at Meadowgate Field enquiring as to the possibility of the council replacing the gates to these allotments and expressing an interest in purchasing the allotments for which he currently has a tenancy.

Members decided that

- (1) the offer of Councillor Hopkin, to inspect the condition of the gates and make a recommendation to the next meeting of the Parish Council as to what action should be taken, be accepted;
- (2) they have no wish to sell any of the council's allotments land at this time; members are aware that if the council were to decide, at a future date, to dispose of allotment land, it would be under an obligation to achieve the best possible price for the land and it is, therefore, likely that it would be marketed by a local estate agent;
- (3) the Clerk would inform the allotment tenant of the council's decision in this matter.

(2) Fishing at The Leam, Fridaybridge

Further to minute 44/14 (1), the Clerk informed members again of the resident's correspondence relating to this issue and referred to the photograph (provided by the resident) which he had circulated to members in advance of the meeting. The resident has suggested that the Parish Council should consider, again, introducing a means (perhaps a byelaw) of prohibiting fishing at The Leam.

Members acknowledge the resident's fears regarding the safety aspects of fishing activities at The Leam and are of the view that only a physical means of preventing access to the pond at The Leam would prevent fishing activities.

Members decided that the possibility of installing a palisade security fence (as a physical means of preventing unauthorised activities) around the pond at The Leam be investigated and that the resident be informed of this decision.

(3) Scouting in the parish

The Clerk read to members a letter from a representative Scouts, Cambridgeshire.

The letter sets out the current scouting arrangements operating in the parish and asks that the Chairman of Fenland District Scout Association and the District Commissioner of the association be given the opportunity to attend a future meeting of Elm Parish Council to keep the council informed of the situation.

Members decided that the content of the letter be noted and the council would be happy to receive at a future meeting a presentation from the Chairman of Fenland District Scout Association and the District Commissioner of the association on the scouting situation in the parish.

(4) Cemetery Cottage, Elm

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 to him laying slate tiles in the bathroom, hall and conservatory of the property.

The tenant states that he is happy to undertake the floor tiling works, with the assistance of friend in the building trade, and is prepared to meet the costs of the work, as he sees it as upkeep of the property, unless the council, as landlord, wishes contribute.

Members are aware that the council had agreed previously to contribute towards the cost of replacing the floor coverings in the living area and the kitchen.

Members decided that the tenant be given permission to undertake the floor tiling works and if, when works are completed, he provides the council with copies of the receipts relating to this expenditure, the council will consider what level of contribution to make.

105/14 Date of next meeting

Members were reminded that the next meeting of the Parish Council had been scheduled for 16 December 2014, commencing at 7.00 pm, at the Parish Council office, Begdale Road, Elm.

Meeting finished at 9.00 pm

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

Date:.....