

# ELM PARISH COUNCIL

## MINUTES OF MEETING

18 SEPTEMBER 2012 – 7.00 pm.

**Present:** Councillor Brand, Chairman; Councillors Cotterell, Mrs Cotterell, Mrs Hopkin, Mrs Johnson, Mrs Lankfer, Milham, Pinnock, Softley, Stokes, Tilney and Webb.

**In attendance:** District Councillor Sutton.

**Apologies:** County Councillor Mrs Tuck.

The minutes of the meeting of 14 August 2012 were confirmed and signed.

### 53/12 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 that they would act accordingly.

### 54/12 Golden Age emergency planning

Members received a presentation from District Councillor Cotterell and Mr D Vincent, an officer of the Emergency Planning Team at Fenland District Council, on planning for emergencies involving the elderly residents – those in their Golden Age - within communities.

District Councillor Cotterell made the point that an emergency situation for an elderly person is not necessarily a "traditional" emergency - such as a major accident, flooding, freak weather conditions or other dangerous situations – but a less significant event which causes difficulties for people who are less able, because of their age, to cope with; such an emergency could be the temporary loss of an electricity supply.

Councillor Cotterell mentioned the fact that the population in Fenland is ageing and, consequently, the need to provide such a support service is becoming increasingly important. As part of this process, the District Council is looking to introduce a scheme whereby there would be at least one local emergency co-ordinator within each village – not necessarily a Parish Councillor, although it may be preferable because of the local knowledge held by such persons – who would act as a liaison point between the community and Fenland District Council's Emergency Planning Team.

It is proposed that the District Council would both publicise the contact details of the co-ordinators (who would each be provided by the District Council with an identification badge) on the Golden Age section of that council's website and hold, on one or two occasions each year, networking meetings (at which learning and best practice could be shared etc) for these co-ordinators. It is proposed that the first networking meeting would take place before the end of 2012.

Mr Vincent explained the role of the District Council's Emergency Planning Team, which acts as a central point of contact within Fenland with the emergency services and other relevant agencies in terms of responding to emergency situations. The team offers expert advice and ongoing support for anyone wishing to assist their community in preparing for an emergency and is able to arrange particular support services in emergency situations, such as the provision of rest centres in cases where it is necessary for people to be evacuated from their homes. In responding to

emergency situations, the Emergency Planning Team works in partnership with other agencies, including the Red Cross and the WRVS.

Members decided that the information provided by District Councillor Cotterell and Mr Vincent be noted and that the matter be considered at the next meeting of the Parish Council.

### **55/12 Progress on actions from minutes of last meeting**

#### **(1) Facilities for young people in the parish (minute 42/12 (1))**

The Clerk reported that, on the basis that he had been unable to obtain an update from Fenland District Council on progress since that reported at minute 42/12 (1), he had assumed that the current situation is no different to that reported at minute 42/12 (1).

Members repeated the disappointment that they had expressed at minute 42/12 (1) regarding the length of time that it appears to be taking Fenland District Council to address the adoption issues at this estate and the consequent impact that this lack of progress is having upon the Parish Council's ambition to provide of an equipped play area at this estate.

Members decided that

- (1) the information reported by the Clerk be noted and that he would continue to seek updates from Fenland District Council for reporting to each meeting of the Parish Council;
- (2) the Clerk would inform Fenland District Council (FDC) of the Parish Council's continued disappointment regarding the lack of progress in FDC's adoption of the public open space at this site and the consequent delivery of an equipped play area at Grove Gardens.

#### **(2) Coldham playing field – electricity supply (minute 42/12 (2))**

The Clerk reported that he had, in accordance with members' wishes, invited the Planning Agreements Officer at Fenland District Council to attend the this meeting of the Parish Council - to both explain the principles of Section 106 Planning Obligations funding and hopefully to relay the answer the specific response to the Coldham issue – but she is unable to attend. Because of this officer's inability to attend this meeting, she had provided two briefing papers to Clerk, who had forwarded these to members in advance of the meeting.

Mr T Hall, representing the Coldham Residents' Action Group Ltd (CRAG), informed the Parish Council that CRAG had obtained the additional quotations for the cost of installing an electricity supply at Coldham playing field. He informed members that the lowest quotation for the works, exclusive of the charges of UK Power Networks, is approximately £10,300. Mr Hall reminded members of the reason for CRAG wishing to provide an electricity supply at the playing field (as set out at minute 20/12 (5)).

When asked by a member as to the level of financial support sought by the Coldham Residents Action Group Ltd, Mr Hall responded that CRAG would be appreciative of any financial support that could be provided by Elm Parish Council.

The Chairman informed members that he had received information from Fenland District Council that it is not possible because of the specific requirements applying to the use of such funding, to make available any of the Section106 Obligation money currently held by that council. The situation explained by the Chairman was confirmed by District Councillor Sutton. The Chairman added that further Section 106 Planning Obligations money would be available to Coldham, as part of the next phase of wind turbines in that village, but CRAG wishes to

utilise that money, when it becomes available, as match funding for funding bids in relation to providing a community building at the playing field.

To assist members' deliberations, the Clerk reminded members of the total level of spending that the Parish Council is permitted to incur under Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 in the current financial year (based upon £6.44 per elector in the parish), together with the existing expenditure to date and commitments in 2012/13 for such funding. The level of funding still available under the Section 137 powers in the current financial year is approximately £7,500.

Councillor Mrs Johnson expressed the view that it is only because of the actions of CRAG that the village of Coldham possesses any facilities and she asked other members of the Parish Council to support CRAG's request for funding.

Members decided (by a majority of seven votes in favour and three against) that

(1) the information reported by the Chairman, the Clerk, District Councillor Sutton and Mr T Hall be noted;

(2) a contribution of £5,000 be made to the Coldham Residents Action Group Ltd towards the cost of installing an electricity supply at Coldham playing field.

*(Councillor Pinnock requested that his dissent from part (2) of this decision be recorded)*

**(3) Speed limit on March Road, Coldham (minute 42/12 (3))**

The Clerk reported that the Local Highway Authority (LHA) had publicised the Parish Council's proposal for a speed limit change, in a combined press advertisement with a number of other such proposals, on 24 August 2012 and that the closing date for the submission of objections to the proposal of 14 September 2012 had now passed with no objections having been received by the LHA.

Consequently, the LHA is, subject to agreement of the Parish Council, now able to make the necessary Traffic Regulation Order and arrange for the provision and installation of the new highway signage and road markings.

Members decided that the Local Highway Authority be authorised to undertake the necessary arrangements, both legal and operational, to implement the new speed limit.

**(4) Elm Cemetery – maintenance (minute 42/12 (4))**

The Clerk informed members that he had referred to the Parish Council's grounds maintenance contractor the suggestion that the use of mowers with mulching decks could provide a solution to the issue of cut grass lying on the ground following cutting at the cemetery. In response, the contractor states that he would not recommend such as an approach, because

- the mowers cost almost double the amount of a conventional mower; this would have an impact upon the cost of the contract
- the weight of such a mower is almost double that of a conventional one and, consequently, has a potential impact upon the health and safety of the operator
- the design of the mowing deck does not enable the grass to be cut as short as it is currently
- the mulching deck pushes the grass cuttings back into the grass; this not only encourages excessive weed growth, which would look more unsightly than loose grass, but also causes the grass to grow more quickly.

The Chairman suggested that the Parish Council should consider having produced a burial plots layout plan for the new area; it was also suggested by a member that the time had come for this area to be sown with grass seed.

Some members raised concerns regarding the extent of the floral tributes and associated articles placed on and around one particular grave in the cemetery, whereby an adjoining vacant plot is also being used by the family of the deceased for that purpose.

One member mentioned that on the occasion of a recent burial at the cemetery, some of the mourners had parked cars on the grassed area surrounding the village war memorial; it was concluded that the erection of some form of fencing around that area could provide a means of preventing such incidents in future.

Members decided that

- (1) the information reported by the Clerk be noted;
- (2) no action be taken at this time regarding the production of a burial plots layout plan for the new area at the cemetery but the matter be discussed at an appropriate time in the future;
- (3) the Clerk would arrange for the Parish Council's grounds maintenance contractor to undertake the sowing of grass seed at the new area of the cemetery;
- (4) the Clerk would write to the holder of the Exclusive Rights of Burial for the particular grave discussed by members, requesting that family of the deceased restricts the area of the floral tributes and other articles to that particular plot (and not to use also any adjoining land);
- (5) the Chairman would seek of the villager who cuts the area of grass around the war memorial regarding the possibility of fencing being erected around that area, as a means of preventing vehicle parking on that area.

**(5) Elm and Fridaybridge Youth Club (minute 48/12)**

Councillors Pinnock and Stokes reported on their attendance at the Elm and Fridaybridge Youth Club on 13 September 2012. They mentioned that the level of attendance by young people was relatively low – which could have been because this was the first club meeting of the new school term – and that none of those in attendance is a resident of Fridaybridge.

Members decided that the current situation be noted and that the Chairman and Councillors Pinnock and Stokes would attend, separately, future sessions of the youth club and report their observations/conclusions at the subsequent meeting(s) of the Parish Council.

**(6) Proposal for an Elm Football Club and use of the playing field at Begdale Road, Elm (minute 49/12)**

The Clerk informed members that the football club's portacabin is now sited at the agreed location and that the club had played its first Home match at the Begdale Road playing field on 9 September 2012.

In response to a member's question, the Clerk confirmed that the current arrangement is at no cost to the Parish Council.

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

## **(7) Highway safety in Elm (minute 51/12)**

The Clerk reported on site meeting – involving two officer representatives (Mr P Vale and Mr M Pickering) of the Local Highway Authority, the Chairman, Councillors Cotterell, Mrs Cotterell and Stokes and himself (with the aim of discussing possible measures to reduce the potential for accidents at the Halfpenny Lane/B1101 junction) - held on 14 September 2012.

The Clerk informed members of the opinion of the Local Highway Authority officers is that it would not be possible, because of the highway configuration, to introduce any engineering solutions (such as a mini-roundabout or traffic calming features) in the vicinity of this junction. Their advice is that the introduction of signage and other “warning” measures could be considered.

The officers of the Local Highway Authority undertook to produce some plans of potential measures (with estimated costs), which the Parish Council may wish to use as the basis for a bid under the next round of the County Council's Local Minor Highways Improvements Scheme (for 2013/14) or to fund itself.

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

## **56/12 Police matters**

PCSO Dave Russ, of the Wisbech and District Neighbourhood Policing Team, reported on recent incidents of crime and disorder within the geographical area covered by Elm Parish Council, including:

- Coldham – no incidents reported
- Fridaybridge – one incident of rowdy behaviour; one incident of persons acting suspiciously; one dwelling burglary; one theft from a vehicle; one theft from a property (suspected to be of a domestic nature)
- Elm – one theft from a vehicle; one theft from the cemetery; one incident of horses loose on the highway; a body found in a field; one theft from a dwelling; an allegation of an attack of one dog by two others
- Rings End – no incidents reported.

PCSO Russ also informed members of the results of Speed Watch activity undertaken in Elm and Fridaybridge on 10 September 2012.

PCSO Russ responded to members' questions.

Members decided that the information reported by PCSO Russ be noted.

## **57/12 Reports from District and County Councillors for the parish**

Given the absence from the meeting of the County Councillor (Mrs Tuck) who represents the parish of Elm, no report was received by the Parish Council in relation to current County Council issues.

Councillors Cotterell and Sutton, the two District Councillors who represent the parish of Elm, both informed the Parish Council that they had nothing specific to report.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

## **58/12 Planning application**

Members considered the following planning application and decided to submit to the Local Planning Authority the comments set out (in italics) below:

Erection of a single-storey side extension to existing dwelling at 5 Rose Lane, Elm – F/YR12/ 0621/F (applicant: Mr A Wilder).

*That the application be supported.*

### 59/12 Financial matters

The Clerk reported on the Parish Council's income and expenditure since the last meeting, as follows:

#### Income

N Hopkin	Purchase of surplus diesel tank	£105.00
S Perry	Scattering of ashes	£50.00
Co-operative Funerals	Plot purchase (double depth) and interment fee - Nicholls	£775.00
A R Clingo	Plot purchase (double depth) and interment fee - Scott	£775.00
W M Green	Interment of ashes - Green	£125.00
A R Clingo	Plot purchase and interment fee - Keightley	£600.00
Baileys	Interment fee - Sewell	£250.00
Maxey Grounds	Cottage rent (less fees and boiler repair)	£523.60
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>£3,203.60</b>

#### Expenditure

Coldham Residents Action Group Ltd	Donation – meeting the cost of hiring disabled toilet for Coldham Village Fun Day	£132.00
Glazewing	Wheelie bin emptying – Elm Cemetery	£36.00
R J Warren Ltd	Grounds maintenance contract	£1,465.42
T Jordan	Salary (less income tax of £133.04), Broadband and other expenses	£665.01
Cambridgeshire County Council	Contribution towards cost of advertisement relating to Coldham speed limit review	£279.15
HM Revenue and Customs	Clerk's Income Tax (June, July and August 2012)	£363.35
Wisbech Youth Clubs	Financial support to Elm and Fridaybridge Youth Club (July to September 2012)	£2,135.50
Anglian Water	Water for cemetery	£53.60
Smith of Derby	Fridaybridge clock – annual service	£202.80
<b>Total Expenditure</b>		<b>£5,332.83</b>

In addition, the Clerk reported on the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 31 August 2012 (in the total sum of £125,135.19), together with the month-end figures for each of the preceding six months and as at 31 August 2011.

Members decided that

- (1) the income of £3,203.60 be noted and that the expenditure of £5,332.83 be authorised;
- (2) the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 31 August 2012, together with the month-end figures for each of the preceding six months and as at 31 August 2011, be noted.

### **60/12 Provision of new street lighting in Elm parish**

Further to minute 28/12 (3), the Clerk reported on a meeting, attended by the Chairman and him, with a representative of the County Council's street lighting contractor (Balfour Beatty) which took place on 6 September 2012, to discuss and obtain quotations for the provision of new street lamps at three locations within the parish (i.e. Overstone Road, Coldham; Flint's Corner, March Road, Fridaybridge; Gosmoor Lane (in the vicinity of the junction with Colletts Bridge), Elm).

The Clerk informed members of the nature of the discussions at the three sites, including the potential technical (and, consequently, costly) difficulties of providing a new street lamp at the proposed location in Fridaybridge.

As a result of the meeting, the relevant officer at Balfour Beatty would be arranging the production of quotations for the Parish Council in relation to the proposed new street lamps.

Members decided that the information reported by the Clerk be noted and that this matter be considered further upon receipt of the written quotations from Balfour Beatty.

### **61/12 Cemetery regulations – memorial tablets**

The Clerk reported a request from a local Funeral Director, on behalf of one of its clients, for permission to install a double-width memorial tablet (i.e. 36 inches, instead of 18 inches wide, to cover the adjoining cremated remains plots of two members of the same family) in the Garden of Rest at Elm Cemetery.

The Clerk reminded members that the Elm Cemetery Regulations, adopted at minute 140/11, state that "The cemetery contains a specified area for the interment of cremated remains, referred to as the Garden of Rest. The only monuments allowed on these plots, which measure 2 feet by 2 feet, shall be flat stone tablets set flush with the ground; the maximum measurements for these memorials are 18 inches by 18 inches by 2 inches".

Members decided that the request for installation of a double-width memorial tablet (i.e. 36 inches, instead of 18 inches wide, to cover two adjoining cremated remains plots) in the Garden of Rest at Elm Cemetery be approved and that the Elm Cemetery Regulations be updated accordingly.

### **62/12 Public attendees at Parish Council meetings**

Further to minute 47/12, members considered whether to introduce a process whereby members of the public attending Elm Parish Council meetings would be requested to complete an attendance sheet (asking them to provide name, address and, where applicable, any organisation or body which they are representing) and for this sheet to be circulated amongst councillors during the meeting.

A number of members expressed the view that they could see no benefit to the Parish Council in the introduction of such a process

Members decided that a process whereby members of the public attending Elm Parish Council meetings would be requested to complete an attendance sheet be not introduced.

### **63/12 Parish Council meetings agendas**

Members considered the suggestion of Councillor Pinnock that agendas for meetings of Elm Parish Council should include an item under which members could raise at the meeting matters which were not covered by an item on the published agenda.

Councillor Pinnock informed members that he had been involved in an exchange of e-mail correspondence with the Clerk regarding this matter.

The Clerk confirmed that he had exchanged e-mails with Councillor Pinnock regarding this suggestion and that he had informed the councillor that such an item would, in his opinion, have the effect of re-introducing to agendas "any other business", which the Parish Council agreed at minute 93/11 should not – because it is not considered to be good practice – feature as an item on the agendas of Elm Parish Council meetings.

In response to the comment made by Councillor Pinnock that The Good Councillors Guide (which had been taken into account by the Parish Council in the decisions it reached at minute 93/11) merely provides guidance and not instruction, the Clerk made the point that Investigating Officers dealing with allegations relating to breaches of the code of conduct expect local councils to operate in accordance with the guide.

The Clerk reminded members of the meetings procedures and practices adopted by the Parish Council at minute 93/11 and the rationale behind the decisions in that regard; he referred particularly to the part of the decision which reads "Members decided that....future agendas for meetings of the council do not include an Urgent Business or any other "in case" item".

Councillor Pinnock made the point that the Parish Council had, in the past, operated at meetings a "round the table session" which gave members the opportunity to mention "operational" matters, such as the existence of pot holes in the highway. In response, the Clerk made the point that such an approach within meetings is not good practice and, furthermore, all members have the opportunity to raise such matters with the Clerk any time outside of formal meetings of the Parish Council.

Members decided that the meetings procedures and practices adopted at minute 93/11 remain the most appropriate and, therefore, should not be revised in any way.

### **64/12 Correspondence**

(1) Appointment of External Auditor from 2012/13.

The Clerk read to members a letter from the Audit Commission, informing Town and Parish Councils of the identity of the company – Littlejohn LLP – which has been appointed (with effect from 1 September 2012) to audit the annual return of local councils for a period of five years from 2012/13. The letter also details the scale of audit fees for 2012/13 to 2016/17, which are, in the case of Elm Parish Council, at a lower level than those which were in force for 2011/12.

Members decided that the information provided by the Audit Commission be noted.

(2) Boundary Commission review of Fenland District Council's electoral wards.

The Clerk reported a letter from Fenland District Council detailing the current situation in relation to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's review of the electoral wards in Fenland.

Following Fenland District Council's submission of recommendations in relation to Council size, in terms of the future number of District Councillors and future District warding arrangements, the LGBCE is considering what its draft scheme should be in that regard. The LGBCE will be conducting a 12 weeks public consultation on its draft scheme; this will take place between 23 October 2012 and 7 January 2013.

All documentation regarding the consultation, the LGBCE's draft scheme for Fenland and how to respond to the consultation will be available on the LGBCE's website: [www.lgbce.org.uk](http://www.lgbce.org.uk).

It is important for local councils to consider the LGBCE's draft scheme for Fenland as it may make recommendations in relation to Town and Parish Council warding arrangements in areas where the District Council ward boundaries change.

The District Council understands that the LGBCE has the jurisdiction to amend the ward boundaries of warded parishes but cannot amend the external boundary of a Town or Parish area. The LGBCE may also re-allocate the number of Town/Parish Councillors to the new Town/Parish wards but will not alter the overall total number of councillors.

Following the outcome of the LGBCE Fenland Electoral Review in March 2013, Fenland District Council (FDC) may conduct a Community Governance Review with the aim of ensuring that the new District ward boundaries and Town/Parish ward boundaries are coterminous. If a Community Governance Review is to be undertaken, FDC will communicate this to Town and Parish Councils nearer the time.

Members decided that the information provided by Fenland District Council be noted.

(3) Changes to bus services.

The Clerk read to members a letter from Norfolk Green, giving notification of changes to the times, with effect from 1 October 2012, of the number 60 service. The letter states that the changes are necessary to address the increase in the company's operational costs and reductions in its income.

Members decided that the information provided by Norfolk Green be noted.

(4) Parish Council website.

The Clerk reported an enquiry from the Orchard Gardens (Elm) Neighbourhood Watch group as to whether the Parish Council would be prepared to publish the minutes of the group's meetings on the Parish Council's website.

Members are keen to develop the Parish Council's website, to increase its benefit to the community, and consider that publication of information of the type now suggested would assist in that regard.

To enable such an arrangement to happen, the Neighbourhood watch group would need to provide documents to the Clerk, who would then forward them to the website host/administrator for publication.

Members decided that the minutes of the meetings of the Orchard Gardens Neighbourhood Watch group be published on the Parish Council's website.

(5) Coldham United Football Club – request for financial support.

The Clerk reported a request from Coldham United Football Club for financial support towards the cost of purchasing netting, the aim of which is to prevent footballs leaving the playing field and going on to adjoining land and roads. The cost of the netting would be approximately £286.00.

Members decided that a contribution of 50% of the cost of purchasing this netting (i.e. £143.00) be made to Coldham United Football Club

**65/12 Parish Council Clerk**

Members considered, at the request of Councillor Pinnock, an employment matter in relation to the Parish Council Clerk.

Members decided that the recommendation from Councillor Pinnock in relation to the Parish Council Clerk’s contract of employment and performance appraisal of this officer be not supported.

*(The Clerk withdrew from the meeting for the duration of the discussion and voting on this item of business)*

*(Members resolved to exclude the public for this item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended)*

**66/12 Date of next meeting**

Members were reminded that the next meeting of the Parish Council had been scheduled for 16 October 2012, commencing at 7.00 pm, at the Parish Council office, Begdale Road, Elm.

**Meeting finished at 9.20 pm**

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

Date:.....