

ELM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING

19 APRIL 2016 – 7.00 pm.

Present: Councillor Brand, Chairman; Councillors Mrs Cotterell, Mrs Davis, Miss Ferguson, Pinnock, Stokes and Webb.

Apologies: Councillors Mrs Dalliday, Hopkin, Mrs Hopkin, Milham and Patrick plus District Councillor Sutton.

In attendance: District Councillor Tanfield.

The minutes of the meeting of 15 March 2016 were confirmed and signed.

153/15 Open Forum

(1) Vehicle-activated speed sign at Coldham

A resident of Coldham mentioned repair works being undertaken to the vehicle-activated (40 mph) speed sign, in the vicinity of the "bus stop" layby, at Coldham and his understanding that a certain replacement part is awaited by the Local Highway Authority (LHA) before the sign could be made operational again. He enquired as to whether Elm Parish Council could influence the relevant officer at the LHA to give priority to this work.

Members decided that the comments of the parishioner be noted and that the Clerk would pursue this matter with the Local Highway Authority.

(2) Elm Cemetery

A parishioner, whose mother is buried at Elm Cemetery, expressed her concern as to the proximity of the grave of her mother to that of the neighbouring grave and whether the situation would prevent the laying of a kerbstone on her late mother's grave.

The parishioner expressed the opinion that no two other graves in Elm Cemetery are as close to each other as the situation applying to the grave of her late mother. She circulated photographs to seek to demonstrate the points that she was making and mentioned that she had also met on-site with the Chairman to show him the situation.

The Chairman responded to the comments of the parishioner; he expressed the opinion that the situation on-site would not prevent the laying of a kerbstone on her late mother's grave.

Members decided that the comments of the parishioner and the response of the Chairman be noted.

154/15 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.

155/15 Progress on actions from minutes of last meeting

(1) Play equipment provision in Elm and Fridaybridge (minute 142/15 (1))

With regard to the provision of play equipment at Fridaybridge, the Clerk informed members of his understanding that Elm Parish Council's application for funding of £75,000 from Fenland District Council's Rural Capital Grants Fund would be considered by the Cabinet of that council on 26 May 2016.

With regard to the funding application to WREN for £75,000, the Clerk reported that he had been advised by the relevant officer of Fenland District Council to await the outcome of the application to that council's Rural Capital Grants Fund before submitting an application to WREN.

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

(2) Speeding across the parish (minute 142/15 (2))

Councillor Pinnock updated members on the operation of the Speed Watch scheme across the parish. He mentioned that a meeting of the volunteers and the local co-ordinator had taken place on 13 April 2016 to discuss operation and development of the scheme. He informed members that the volunteers had taken a break from activity over the Easter holidays. Some of the volunteers are finding it difficult to commit time to the scheme on a regular basis; however, four additional volunteers had been recruited and are awaiting training on the use of the equipment etc.

Councillor Pinnock informed members that the roads which appear to subject to the highest incidence of motorists exceeding the speed limit are The Stitch, Fridaybridge and Gosmoor Lane, Elm. He mentioned that the Clerk had contacted the Local Highway Authority, in accordance with minute 143/15, regarding the poor condition of the speed limit signs on Gosmoor Lane; this situation is having a detrimental impact upon the ability to operate Speed Watch effectively on Gosmoor Lane as any letter sent or penalty notice issued to a speeding motorist could be challenged on the basis of inadequate speed limit signage.

Members decided that the current situation be noted.

(3) Planning and Fenland Local Plan Policy LP12 (minute 144/15)

The Clerk informed members that he had sought from the Head of Planning Services at Fenland District Council copies of the planning law and other relevant guidance to which officers had given regard in the reaching their conclusion that re-development at The Dale does not constitute new development in planning terms and he read to members the e-mail response that he had received in that regard.

The response from the Head of Planning Services at Fenland District Council, Mr Harding, makes the point that Policy LP12 is about growth in the rural areas and that with regard to the villages the policy concerns itself with 'increase(s) (in) the number of dwellings'. He states that as the re-development of The Dale site contained existing dwellings which were lost to the development, they must be 'netted off' against the new development as otherwise there would be double counting of the total number of dwellings in the village. Mr Harding comments that there is no planning law or guidance which establishes this methodology, it is just that it is considered to be a logical way to undertake the calculation.

Councillor Pinnock expressed the opinion that Mr Harding had failed to address the question asked; the Local Planning Authority had not taken into account the fact that The Dale had been a sheltered housing scheme and not mixed-use dwellings.

Councillor Pinnock also made the point that he had asked District Councillor Sutton to provide him with an update on the construction of the 500 dwellings across Fenland that Roddons Housing Association had been required to provide as a condition of the transfer of the housing stock from Fenland District Council. He stated that he had been informed that Roddons Housing Association has constructed 379 new dwellings to date, including 21 at The Dale site; this situation demonstrates that the Housing Service at Fenland District Council deems the re-development of The Dale site to constitute new dwellings.

Members expressed their disappointment with the response from the Head of Planning Services at Fenland District Council, as they had been informed by District Councillor Sutton, at minute 131/15, that the decision had been based upon a legal opinion rather than an assessment/calculation by officers of the Local Planning Authority (LPA).

Members decided that the information reported by the Clerk be noted and that he would seek to ascertain from the Head of Planning Services at Fenland District Council whether there is an independent body to which Elm Parish Council could apply to challenge this decision of the LPA.

156/15 Police matters

PCSO Sue Clarke reported on recent incidents of crime and disorder which had been reported to the Constabulary, and updated the council on other relevant matters, since the last meeting of the Parish Council.

PCSO Clarke expressed the opinion that the Elm parish Speed Watch scheme is very successful and stated that she is keen to support the scheme as far as she is able; she is of the belief that this activity is providing an effective means of achieving a reduction in the speeds of vehicles across the parish. The PCSO informed the council that the Constabulary would be undertaking a further speed monitoring exercise within the parish in the near future.

PCSO Clarke informed the council that the number of reported incidents of crime and disorder within the parish is extremely small; the only issue of note is one burglary which had taken place at Elm.

The PCSO responded to members' questions.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

157/15 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) Erection of a two-storey 4-bed dwelling with attached double garage at plot 2 land west of Appletree House, Begdale Road, Elm - F/YR16/0166/F (applicant: Mr W Wiles).

That the application be supported.

- (2) Erection of a two-storey 4-bed dwelling and conversion of existing log cabin to annexe/playroom ancillary to dwelling on land north-west of Florence House, Back Road, Fridaybridge – F/YR16/0173/F (applicants: Mr and Mrs C Davis).

That the application be supported.

(Councillor Mrs Davis declared her pecuniary interest in this application, by virtue of being the applicant for the proposal, and retired from the meeting for the discussion and voting thereon)

- (3) Erection of a two-storey 3 bed dwelling on land north of 337 Low Road, Elm – F/YR16/0203/F (applicant: Mrs S Warden).

That the application be supported.

- (4) Erection of a first-floor extension to front of existing dwelling at 3 Peartree Way, Elm – F/YR16/0226/F (applicants: Mr and Mrs J Cutting).

That the application be supported.

- (5) Erection of 2 dwellings (Outline application with all matters reserved) on land west of 141 March Road, Fridaybridge – F/YR16/0238/O (applicant: Mr G Clandillon).

Object to the application for the following reasons:

- *the site lies outside of the Development Area Boundary for Elm*
- *the site is located within the open countryside, not in a sustainable location.*

In addition, the Clerk reported that planning application F/YR15/0952/O (for the erection of 50 dwellings (max.) involving the demolition of existing buildings (Outline application with some matters committed – access) at 33 and land north of 17 to 31 Gosmoor Lane, Elm), which had been considered by Elm Parish Council at minute 91/15, had been withdrawn by the applicant.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

158/15 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 Tanfield, one of the District Councillors who represents the parish of Elm, informed members that

- further to minute 133/15, work is continuing on the production of business plans as part of Fenland District Council's Comprehensive Spending Review exercise
- as had been anticipated, the "devolution" proposal for a combined East Anglian authority, to embrace the counties of Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk, had been mentioned during the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget speech (minute 146/15 refers) and a number of the councils within the geographical area over which the combined authority would operate are discussing the implications of such an arrangement; she commented that although there is a "push" from Government to achieve a devolution arrangement for East Anglia, some of the councils are "pulling back" from the proposal. The main area of concern seems to be the proposal for such a governance arrangement to be led by an Elected Mayor. District Councillor Tanfield mentioned that the members of Fenland District Council would decide, at a meeting scheduled for 1 July 2016, its stance on the proposal
- further to minute 133/15, Greg Clark, the Secretary of State for the Department for Communities and Local Government, had visited Wisbech on 30 March 2016 to discuss the Wisbech Garden Town proposal. District Councillor Tanfield outlined briefly the Garden Town proposal, the purpose of which is to provide a significant amount of additional housing, supported by additional infrastructure which would not benefit only Wisbech but the surrounding area (this would include dualling sections of the A47, a railway service for Wisbech, new schools, medical facilities etc); such a massive change would impact upon the parishes in close proximity to Wisbech. District Councillor Tanfield informed the council that the Minister had commented that

Government support for a Wisbech Garden Town would not be dependent upon the introduction of a devolution deal for East Anglia.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

159/15 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.

Further to minute 147/15, the Clerk reported that the scheme for installation of a "matching set" of bollards around the grassed area at the junction of Abington Grove with the B1101 had now been undertaken.

Councillor Stokes informed members that he had, in accordance with minute 147/15, spoken with 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 vehicles being driven across that area. The villager had commented to Councillor Stokes that he would prefer the installation of bollards, as fencing would make the area difficult for access by a mower.

The Clerk reported a quotation received (from the contractor who had installed the bollards around the grassed areas at the junction of Abington Grove with the B1101) for the installation of bollards around the war memorial at Elm, in the sum of £895.00 (plus VAT).

Members considered a request for the pre-purchase of a burial plot at Elm Cemetery. The Clerk had forwarded to members, in advance of the meeting, the e-mail correspondence between the requester and he regarding the request and his provision to the requester of the council's policy on this matter. The e-mail from the requester detailed the reason (of a legal nature) for wishing to purchase a burial plot at Elm Cemetery prior to the death of her father.

Members decided that

- (1) the situation in general be noted;
- (2) the quotation for the installation of bollards around the war memorial at Elm, in the sum of £895.00 (plus VAT), be accepted;
- (3) the request for the pre-purchase of a burial plot at Elm Cemetery be refused, on the basis that they could see no justification for waiving the council's policy of not allowing the pre-purchase of burial plots.

160/15 Parish Council website

Members considered a proposal from the council's website host to upgrade the Elm Parish Council website to a Responsive design; this would enable improved viewing of the website contents on tablets and mobile devices; the cost of upgrading the website would be £245.00 (plus VAT).

A number of members commented that they experience no difficulty in being able to view on mobile devices the content of the Elm Parish Council website and, therefore, can see no reason to incur expenditure on upgrading the website at this time.

Members decided that the Elm Parish Council website be not upgraded to a Responsive design.

161/15 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	Cremated remains plot purchase and interment fee	£259.00
Total Income		£782.60

Expenditure

Glazewing	Wheelie bin emptying – Elm Cemetery (includes VAT of £18.60)	£111.60
R J Warren Ltd	Grounds maintenance contract (includes VAT of £263.64)	£1,581.84
T Jordan	Salary (less income tax of £149.40 and NI of £9.00) and reimbursement of expenses	£731.86
D A Pest Control	Control of moles at Coldham and Fridaybridge	£60.00
King's Lynn IDB	Agricultural drainage rates	£64.49
Elm Friendship Club	Financial support	£1,500.00
C Brennan	Playing field security (quarterly payment to 31 March 2016)	£100.00
Fen Fencing Ltd	Supply and fit bollards at Abington Grove, Elm (includes VAT of £271.64)	£1,629.84
Total Expenditure		£5,779.63

In addition, the Clerk reported on the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 31 March 2016 (in the total sum of £111,715.74), together with the figure as at 31 March 2015.

The Clerk reported on the management accounts that he had produced for the fourth quarter (year-end) of the 2015/16 financial year; he gave explanations as to variances between the estimated income and expenditure for the year and the actual levels of income and expenditure in that financial year.

Members decided

- (1) that the income of £782.60 be noted and that the expenditure of £5,779.63 be authorised;
- (2) that the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 31 March 2016 and the position as at 31 March 2015 be noted;
- (3) to note that, after allowing for the Parish Council's ear-marked reserves (totalling £62,595.00) at 31 March 2016, the actual balance available to the Parish Council at 31 March 2016 was £49,120.74; 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 March 2016 to approximately - £2,851.00;

- (4) that the financial information within the fourth quarter's management accounts be noted.

162/15 Correspondence

(1) Fenland Twinning Association

The Clerk read to members a letter from the Secretary of the Fenland Twinning Association (FTA), detailing the background to the FTA and the twinning links which it supports and informing the council of the visit to Stadt Nettetal (in Germany) which had been arranged for the period 8 to 12 September 2016.

In his letter, the Secretary of the Fenland Twinning Association makes the point that the twinning visit to Germany is open to all residents of Fenland (at a cost of £100 per adult and £80 per student); visitors from Fenland would "homestay" with families living in Stadt Nettetal.

Anyone interested in participating in this visit, should contact the Secretary of the Fenland Twinning Association, Mike Cornwell (at 107 Station Road, March, PE15 8NH, or 01354 653757, or fenlandtwinning@gmail.com).

Members decided that the content of the letter from the Secretary of the Fenland Twinning Association be noted.

(2) Annual Coldham Fun Weekend

The Clerk reported a request from the Coldham Residents Action Group Ltd (CRAG) for financial support towards the cost of hiring disabled toilet facilities for the annual Coldham Fun Weekend, which would take place on 28 and 29 May 2016.

The cost of providing one disabled toilet at the event is anticipated to be the same as in 2015; that being £120.00 (plus VAT).

The Clerk reminded members that the Parish Council had provided such financial support for this event in 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015.

Members decided that the Parish Council would meet the cost of providing a disabled toilet for the Coldham Fun Weekend 2016 and that the council would fund such provision in future years without requiring the submission of an application from the Coldham Residents Action Group Ltd for such funding.

(3) Elm Friendship Club

Further to minute 137/15, the Clerk read to members a brief note from the Secretary/Treasurer of the Elm Friendship Club (EFC), informing the council of the excitement within the membership of the club that Elm Parish Council had, once again, awarded financial support to EFC and they are looking forward to being able to book outings as a consequence of that funding.

Members decided that the comments of the Secretary/Treasurer of the Elm Friendship Club be noted.

(4) Wisbech and District Stroke Club

Further to minute 170/14, the Clerk read to members a letter from the Secretary of the Wisbech and Stroke Club expressing appreciation of the financial support awarded to the club by Elm Parish Council in the financial year 2015/16 and providing details of the manner in which the money had been spent.

Members decided that the content of the letter be noted.

163/15 Date of next meeting

Members were reminded that the next meeting of the Parish Council had been scheduled for 24 May 2016, commencing at conclusion of the Annual Parish Assembly, which takes place at 7.00 pm, at the Parish Council office, Begdale Road, Elm.

Meeting finished at 8.10 pm

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

Date:.....