

ELM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING

19 AUGUST 2014 – 7.00 pm.

Present: Councillor Brand, Chairman; Councillors Mrs Cotterell, Mrs Dalliday, Mrs Lankfer, Milham, Pinnock (until 8.10 pm), Stokes and Webb.

In attendance: District Councillor Sutton.

Apologies: Councillors Hopkin, Mrs Hopkin, Softley and Miss Webb plus District Councillor Tanfield.

The minutes of the meeting of 22 July 2014 were confirmed and signed, subject to inclusion of the textual amendments to minutes 34/14, 35/14 and 36/14 proposed by Councillor Pinnock and agreed by the council.

46/14 Open Forum

(1) Halfpenny Lane, Elm

A resident of Elm expressed his concern with regard to overgrown vegetation along certain areas of Halfpenny Lane, which is impacting upon the public highway, and enquired as to whether the Parish Council would be able to assist in addressing the situation.

Members decided that the concerns of the local resident be noted and that the Clerk would refer this matter to the Local Highway Authority.

(2) Fridaybridge Clocktower

A parishioner informed the council that he had witnessed a lack of internal illumination of the clock faces on the clocktower at Fridaybridge.

Members decided that the situation would be investigated by the Clerk and, if necessary, referred to the company which undertakes the maintenance of the clock on behalf of the Parish Council.

47/14 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.

48/14 Progress on actions from minutes of last meeting

(1) Facilities for young people in the parish (minute 30/14 (2))

The Clerk informed members that the situation is unchanged from that reported at minute 30/14 (2).

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

(2) Elm Cemetery – operational issues (minute 30/14 (3))

The Clerk informed members that there are no matters of which he is aware in relating to operation and management of Elm Cemetery that require reference to the Parish Council at this time.

Members decided that the current situation be noted.

(3) Grove Gardens, Elm (minute 34/14)

The Clerk reported the responses that he had received from Fenland District Council (FDC) in relation to

(1) why it had not enforced the requirements of the Section 106 Planning Obligation in relation to transfer of the community open space from the developer of the estate to FDC;

(2) requesting the land owner to undertake the necessary works to address the weed growth in the ponds at the entrance to the Grove Gardens estate.

With regard to (1) above, an officer of the District Council's Legal Services Team has stated that the team is liaising with the council's Development Services Team and with the Parks and Open Spaces Manager to address this matter. The officer goes on to say that the District Council has been corresponding with the land owner to agree the adoption plan in compliance with those areas set out as public open space and community open space within the Planning Agreement dated 15 May 2003. The officer adds that once the adoption plan is agreed, the District Council's Legal Services Team would undertake the conveyancing work on behalf of the council to achieve transfer of ownership of the land to the council and the Parks and Open Spaces Team would be responsible for future responsibility for maintenance in accordance with the Planning Agreement.

Councillor Pinnock stated that, in terms of item (1), the Clerk had forwarded to Fenland District Council a number of specific questions that he had asked in relation to the issue and he expressed the opinion that the answers to these questions had not been provided by the response given by the Legal Services Team at Fenland District Council (FDC). Councillor Pinnock suggested that FDC should be requested to provide a response which answers the questions asked by him.

With regard to (2) above, the Parks and Open Spaces Manager at Fenland District Council (FDC) states that the necessary works to address the weed growth in the ponds at the entrance to the Grove Gardens estate would be included within those required of the developer to bring the site up to a standard capable of adoption by FDC.

Members decided that the information reported by the Clerk be noted and that he would request the District Council's Legal Services Team to provide a response which answers the questions asked by Councillor Pinnock.

(4) Play equipment provision in Elm and Fridaybridge (minute 36/14)

The Clerk reminded members 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; hence, he suggested that this matter should feature as a "standing" item on agendas for meetings of Elm Parish Council until such time as the schemes had been delivered.

Members decided that this item should feature as a "standing" item on agendas for meetings of the council.

(5) Memorial to the late Mac Cotterell (minute 41/14)

Councillor Pinnock informed members that he had obtained brochures from four manufacturers/suppliers of memorial benches, which had been viewed by Councillor Mrs Cotterell (the widow of the late Mac Cotterell). As a result, Mrs Cotterell had identified a particular bench which she feels would be appropriate; this is a Bridgeford seat in green with a memorial plaque in brass (the wording of the plaque to be "Elm Parish Council; in memory of Councillor Mac Cotterell MBE; 14 June 1932 – 23 October 2013").

Councillor Pinnock suggested that the council should purchase the bench (with memorial plaque) selected by Councillor Mrs Cotterell and that it should be installed, when received from the manufacturer/supplier, in place of an existing bench, which would be re-located, in the Garden of Rest at Elm Cemetery.

Members decided that a memorial bench, as described above, be purchased and installed at Elm Cemetery.

(6) Begdale Road playing field (minute 43/14)

The Clerk reported that Councillor Stokes had been able to make alternative arrangements for the unlocking and locking of the gates at the Begdale Road playing field by a local resident. The Clerk also informed members that he had arranged for a representative of the Elm Football Club to attend 16 September 2014 meeting of Elm Parish Council to enable members to receive an update on the activities and success (or otherwise) of the football club.

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

49/14 Police matters

The Clerk reported that PCSO Dave Russ, of the Wisbech and District Neighbourhood Policing Team, was unable to attend the meeting, This officer had, however, provided a report detailing recent incidents of crime and disorder within the geographical area covered by Elm Parish Council, which the Clerk presented to members, including:

- Coldham – no incidents reported
- Fridaybridge – one incident of vehicle nuisance, involving a vehicle causing obstruction to a pavement; one report of a group of youths being rowdy and throwing items
- Elm – one incident of criminal damage caused to signage boards advertising a restaurant
- Rings End – no incidents reported.

The PCSO's report mentioned that, in relation to complaints from a member of the public regarding persons regarding this unauthorised activity, he had given words of advice to a youth caught fishing at The Leam. The PCSO has given a commitment that he would continue to monitor the situation and take appropriate action.

The report from PCSO Russ states that he had had undertaken investigations into reports of persons sleeping rough at Coldham but had found no evidence in that regard.

The PCSO's report included a reminder that the next meeting of the Rural South Neighbourhood Forum would take place on 10 September 2014; this would operate on the basis of the New Horizon outreach vehicle being located at Maltmas Drove, Fridaybridge from 12 noon and concluding with a meeting (to decide the neighbourhood policing priorities for the next six months) on the vehicle commencing at 5.00 pm.

Members decided that the information reported by the Clerk, on behalf of PCSO Russ, be noted.

50/14 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 3-bed dwelling with integral car port on land east and south of Fiveways, Main Road, Fridaybridge – F/YR14/0547/RM (applicant: Mr I M Chase).

That the application be supported.

- (2) Extension of single-storey courtyard extension and detached single-storey visitors' lodge to care home at Waldersey House, 172 March Road, Fridaybridge – F/YR14/0550/F (applicant: Mr D Turner).

That the application be supported.

- (3) Erection of three-storey 5-bed dwelling with attached garage, involving the formation of a new access at plot 1, land north of Old Killeen, 172 Fridaybridge Road, Elm – F/YR14/0559/F (applicant: Mr J Hubbard).

That the application be supported.

- (4) Erection of 2 x two-storey 3-bed dwellings on land north of 5 March Road, Rings End – F/YR14/0554/RM (applicant: Mr K Baxter).

That the application be supported.

- (5) Erection of a single-storey side and rear extension to existing dwelling at 41 the Stitch, Fridaybridge – F/YR14/0570/F (applicant: Mr P Wiskin).

That the application be supported.

- (6) Internal alterations to Listed building at Waldersey House, 172 March Road, Fridaybridge – F/YR14/0585/LB (applicant: Mr D Turner).

That the application be supported.

- (7) Erection of two-storey 4-bed dwelling with a detached garage and 1.5 meter (maximum height) front boundary fence and gates on land north of La Chaumiere, Back lane, Colletts Bridge Lane, Elm – F/YR14/0616/F (applicant: Dr J Harrall).

That the application be supported.

- (8) Change of use of land to residential cartilage and erection of a shed/store on land east of 166 Fridaybridge Road, Elm – F/YR14/0620/F (applicant: Mr A Edgoose).

That the application be supported.

- (9) Erection of a single-storey rear extension to existing dwelling at 29 Peartree Way, Elm – F/YR14/0630/F (applicants: Mr and Mrs Frear).

That the application be supported.

51/14 Local Highway Improvements 2015/16

Further to minute 37/14, members gave further consideration to the submission of an application for highway works under the Local Highway Improvements (LHI) scheme.

Members decided, having considered the highway safety situation across the parish and the potential for the council to face a significant financial burden in relation to the replacement of street lamps owned by the Parish Council, no application for a LHI scheme be submitted for 2015/16.

52/14 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,

- reported that the officer of the Local Highway Authority with whom he and the Chairman had met to identify the areas within the parish where there is a need for action to address the problems of overgrown vegetation had informed him that the necessary trimming/cutting works would be undertaken by the Community Payback Team before the end of the school summer holiday
- informed members that he had discussed with Fenland District Council's Head of Planning Services and the Chairman of the Planning Committee the possibility of that council delivering to the members and clerks of Town and Parish Councils a training session on planning matters; he has suggested that the event be run on two occasions to maximise the opportunity for attendance
- reported that, following the resolution of confusion at FDC as to the location concerned, that council's Rapid Response Team now has in hand arrangements to clear from Elm Cemetery the laurel bushes which had been deposited by a member of the public (identity unknown) beside the wheeled bin
- mentioned, further to minute 12/14, the two meetings which had taken place between certain members and officers of Fenland District Council with Chairmen of the Parish Councils in the district (the most recent being on 21 July) in relation to the future of Concurrent Functions Grants and the likely requirements for spending by Parish Councils in terms of repair and maintenance works to street lamps; he expressed the opinion that the discussions should not be linked; they should be dealt with as two separate issues. Councillor Sutton informed members that the latest thinking of the District Council is to make no further reductions to its budget for Concurrent Functions Grants; with regard to the need for works to street lamps, it would not be possible to quantify the exact requirements and costs until the final report is provided by the contractor which is undertaking the survey work on behalf of the District Council
- commented that, in relation to minute 48/14 (6), it is common practice for Parish Councils to levy a charge for the use of their football pitches and suggested that Elm PC may wish to consider such an approach.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

53/14 Concurrent Functions Grants and Parish Council street lighting (provisional liability of £75,000)

Councillor Pinnock had asked for the following item to be placed on the agenda for this meeting of Elm Parish Council:

"Councillor Pinnock to raise the following issues: (1) examination of the procedure and results of meetings held by Fenland District Council (FDC); (2) taking action to ensure that the Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) is

kept fully informed of all administrative and financial matters affecting Elm Parish Council; (3) requesting formally from FDC confirmation of the purpose of the survey of street lamps and to request that, in future, all correspondence be addressed to the Clerk/RFO of Elm Parish Council; (4) ensuring that the Chairman informs the Clerk/RFO of all matters relating to the operational running of the council".

Councillor Pinnock, however, requested that this item be deferred to the next meeting of the council because, as he had expected that he would not be in attendance, he had not prepared for a debate on this matter. He stated that he is appalled that Elm Parish Council could be faced with a bill of as much as £75,000 for the repair and replacement of street lamps but no information had been provided directly to the council by Fenland District Council in that regard.

Members decided that the request of Councillor Pinnock, that this item be deferred to the next meeting of the council, be approved.

54/14 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
Richard King Memorials	Memorial tablet (double width)	£220.00
M J Coates	Additional memorial inscription	£66.00
D Barton	Interment of ashes fee	£138.00
Total Income		£947.60

Expenditure

Glazewing	Wheelie bin emptying – Elm Cemetery (includes VAT of £17.63)	£105.78
Cambridgeshire County Council	Contribution towards cost of 2013/14 LHI scheme	£109.52
R J Warren Ltd	Grounds maintenance contract (includes VAT of £241.88)	£1,451.29
T Jordan	Salary (less income tax of £149.12 and NI of £9.91), Broadband and other expenses	£653.82
Anglian Water	Water for Begdale Road playing field/pavilion	£53.96
Anglian Water	Water for cemetery	£40.61
Mrs D Brand	Purchase of new padlock and keys for allotments site at Gosmoor Lane, Elm	£21.48
Total Expenditure		£2,436.46

In addition, the Clerk reported on the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 31 July 2014 (in the total sum of £131,171.36), together with the month-end figures for each of the preceding six months and as at 31 July 2013.

Members decided

- (1) that the income of £947.60 be noted and that the expenditure of £2,436.46 be authorised;
- (2) that the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 31 July 2014, together with the month-end figures for each of the preceding six months and as at 31 July 2013, be noted;
- (3) to note that, after allowing for the Parish Council's ear-marked reserves (totalling £56,135.50) at 31 July 2014), the actual balance available to the Parish Council at 31 July 2014 was £75,035.86; 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 July 2014 to approximately £30,000;
- (4) that, given the potential for considerable expenditure required of this council in terms of meeting the cost of works to its street lamps (minute 53/14 refers), the Clerk would ascertain from the Secretary of the Elm Parochial Church Council (PCC) whether the PCC is still in need of financial assistance from the Parish Council for repair works to the six bells at All Saints Church, Elm (minute 116/13 (3) refers).

55/14 Applications for financial assistance

(1) Fenland Association for Community Transport (FACT)

Further to minute 31/14, members re-considered the application from FACT towards the cost of operating the Dial-a-Ride service.

Councillor Pinnock informed members that it had been alleged that the operations of FACT are the subject of an investigation and suggested that it would not be appropriate for the council to consider an application from FACT for financial assistance at this time.

Members decided that council would consider no application from FACT for financial assistance until the outcome of the alleged investigation is known.

(2) The Big Knit 5,000

Further to minute 28/14 (3), members considered a request for a contribution of £150 towards the cost of running this charitable venture.

Although members accept that although such a grant would help to support, to some extent, community cohesion within the parish, the primary beneficiaries of this project would be a national charity and an international drinks retailer, rather than the parishioners. On that basis, members consider that it would be inappropriate to use public money to support this initiative.

Members, therefore, decided that the application be refused.

(3) Annual Coldham Fun Day

The Clerk reported a request from the Coldham Residents Action Group Ltd (CRAG) for financial support towards the cost of hiring disabled toilet facilities at the annual Coldham Fun Day, which takes place on 6 and 7 September 2014.

The cost of providing one disabled toilet at the event is £120.00 (plus VAT).

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

Members decided that the Parish Council would meet the cost of providing a disabled toilet for the Coldham Fun Day 2014.

56/14 Correspondence

Drainage at The Leam, Fridaybridge

The Clerk read to members an e-mail from a resident of The Leam, stating that the recent incident of very heavy rainfall in Fridaybridge (and other parts of the district) had raised again concerns in the minds of her and her partner regarding the maintenance of the drains in the pond at The Leam. In her e-mail, the resident reminded the council of the concerns she had raised with the council in December 2012 regarding the surface water on the grass at The Leam and the council's response to those concerns.

The Clerk had circulated to members, in advance of the meeting, a copy of the latest e-mail from this resident.

The resident comments that, having read again the Parish Council's previous response and, in the light of the drainage problems experienced recently as a result of the recent rainfall, she and her partner are concerned that Elm Parish Council has in place no fixed maintenance schedule for the drains at the pond.

Referring to the council's response to her e-mail of December 2012 the resident asked the following questions of the council:

- How does the overflow from the pond work and to what dyke it is connected?
- What drainage qualifications are possessed by the councillors who inspect the drainage at The Leam?
- How can the council be satisfied that the drainage of the pond is working unless a qualified person inspects the drainage beyond the grill, and along its course to the dyke?
- Is the dyke to which the drainage system is linked inspected at any point and, if so, by whom?

In addition, the resident asks for details of any drainage problems that had been reported to the council since December 2012 and the actions that had been taken to remedy any defects reported.

The resident and her partner request that the council considers implementing a formal, regular maintenance service undertaken by qualified professionals, so that the council would be able to say that it is fulfilling its legal duty in this matter

The Clerk informed members that there had since December 2012 been no drainage issues reported to him by councillors or by the staff of the grounds maintenance contractor.

Members are of the opinion that any surface water flooding problems which may occur at The Leam would not be caused by a build-up of water in the pond but because of land drainage issues at the individual properties.

On the basis of the situation regarding drainage of the pond at The Leam to date, members can see no justification for implementing a formal maintenance service in that regard.

Members decided that

- (1) the comments of the resident and her partner be noted and that they be thanked for bringing their concerns to the attention of the Parish Council;
- (2) there is, in their opinion, no issue which needs to be addressed in terms of the drainage of the pond at The Leam; it had been observed by one councillor that the heavy rainfall to which the resident had referred in her e-mail had not increased the water level in the pond.

57/14 Date of next meeting

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

Meeting finished at 8.40 pm

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

Date:.....