

ELM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING

19 JUNE 2012 – 7.00 pm.

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

In attendance: County Councillor Mrs Tuck District Councillor Sutton.

Apologies: Councillor Webb.

The minutes of the meeting of 22 May 2012 were confirmed and signed.

18/12 The Standards Board for England – Members' Code of Conduct

Members were reminded of the need to ensure that their Register of Declarable Interests is kept up-to-date.

No members had any amendments to make to their register entries.

19/12 Co-option of councillor

Further to minute 15/12, the Clerk reported that he had received an application for co-option to the membership of Elm Parish Council.

The Clerk confirmed, in response to a question from one member, that no other person had expressed an interest in being co-opted to membership of the Parish Council.

The Clerk read to members the letter of application, from Mr R Milham, prior to inviting members to nominate this candidate as well as any other person that they may wish to propose. The applicant, who meets the qualification criteria for membership of the Parish Council, had been invited, by the Clerk, to attend the Parish Council meeting.

The candidate (but no other person) was proposed and seconded.

Members decided, unanimously, that Mr Milham be co-opted to membership of Elm Parish Council; following his signing of a Declaration of Acceptance of Office, Councillor Milham participated in the meeting.

20/12 Progress on actions from minutes of last meeting

(1) Facilities for young people in the parish (minute 6/12 (1))

The Clerk reported that, on the basis that he had been unable to obtain a response to his enquiries of Fenland District Council, he had assumed that the current situation is no different to that reported at minute 6/12 (1).

Members decided that 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) Litter bin at Coldham playing field (minute 6/12 (4))

The Clerk reported that Fenland District Council has stated that, as soon as a litter bin becomes available, its Street Cleansing Supervisor would arrange installation at Coldham playing field.

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

(3) Elm Cemetery – possible uses for former Chapel of Rest (minute 6/12 (5) refers)

The Clerk reported that he had met on site (on 25 May 2012) with an officer of the District Council's Development Services Team to discuss suitable alternative uses for the former Chapel of Rest and that he had subsequently circulated to each member of the Parish Council in advance of the meeting a copy of an e-mail from the officer setting out her opinion on suitable alternative uses for this building.

The officer of the District Council considers that the building is capable of residential conversion, although this would be as a result of careful consideration and significant works. She detailed the works that she considers would be required to provide living accommodation and associated amenity space. She makes the point that an alternative may be to change the use of the building to an office (A2 professional and financial services) or a non-residential institution (D1 day centre, public hall, art gallery etc) or a small retail unit.

Members decided that they would consider the information reported by the Clerk and discuss, at the next meeting, what action to take in this matter.

(4) War memorials in Elm parish (minute 14/12 refers)

The Clerk reported that the restoration works to the war memorials at Elm and Fridaybridge have now been completed.

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

(5) Coldham playing field – electricity supply (minute 16/12 (2))

Members received a presentation from two representatives of the Coldham Residents' Action Group Ltd (Mr M Hubbard and Mr D Brand) in support of the group's request to Elm Parish Council for financial support towards the cost of installing an electricity supply at Coldham playing field.

The Clerk had circulated, prior to the date of the meeting, financial information provided by the Coldham Residents' Action Group Ltd (CRAG) in the form of its abbreviated income and expenditure accounts for the year 1 July 2010 to 30 June 2011 and details of the income and expenditure from 1 July 2011 to the current date.

Mr Hubbard explained that the desire to provide an electricity supply at Coldham playing field is to support community events, such as the Annual Village Fun Day, without the need to hire an electricity generator on each occasion. He informed members that CRAG had, over time, installed a water supply, toilet facilities, sewerage disposal and fencing at the site. He added that CRAG has a long-term plan to construct a community building and to provide play equipment. CRAG leases the playing field from the Co-operative Society.

The representatives explained to members the manner in which the electricity supply would be provided at the site and reminded them of the estimated total cost of the works. The representatives detailed the other potential sources of funding that CRAG is pursuing; this includes Awards for All, the Co-operative Society and the District Council's Rural Capital Grants scheme.

To assist members' deliberations, the Clerk informed 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 commitments.

Councillor Mrs Johnson expressed the view that it is only because of the actions of CRAG that the village of Coldham possesses any facilities.

Councillor Pinnock proposed that CRAG should continue to pursue the other potential sources of funding and then approach the Parish Council again once the outcome of those bids is known; the Parish Council could then consider meeting any shortfall in funding. He also suggested that CRAG should ascertain the possibility of accessing Section 106 Planning Obligation monies held by Fenland District Council.

District Councillor Sutton offered to work with the Coldham Residents' Action Group Ltd to investigate the possibility of obtaining funding via Section 106 Planning Obligation monies held by Fenland District Council.

Members decided that

- (1) the offer of District Councillor Sutton, to work with the Coldham Residents' Action Group Ltd to investigate the possibility of obtaining funding via Section 106 Planning Obligation monies held by Fenland District Council, be accepted;
- (2) this matter be considered further, in the light of the outcome of (1) above, at the next meeting.

(Councillor Brand declared his personal interest in this item, by virtue of his membership of the Coldham Residents Action Group, and retired from the meeting for the duration of the discussion and voting thereon)

(Councillor Mrs Johnson declared her personal interest in this item, by virtue of being a resident of Coldham)

21/12 Police matters

The Clerk reported that PCSO Martin Bogunovic, 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:

- Elm – one incident of criminal damage to a vehicle; two dwelling burglaries and one shed burglary; one theft of property from the porch of a dwelling
- Fridaybridge – youths fishing in the pond at The Leam
- B1101 – one report of cars racing between Coldham and Fridaybridge
- Coldham – two incidents of motor cross bikes being ridden across farmland.

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

22/12 Reports from District and County Councillors for the parish

Councillor Mrs Tuck, the County Councillor for the electoral division which includes the parish of Elm informed members of the Wisbech 2020 Vision project, which is being co-ordinated by the County Council, the District Council and the Member of Parliament. She described briefly the eight focus themes of the project.

Councillor Mrs Tuck mentioned specifically a Wisbech 2020 workshop, held on 18 June, which focussed upon the future economic role of Wisbech and expressed the opinion that any business growth in Wisbech is likely to have

economic benefits for the surrounding area, including the parish of Elm. She mentioned that another key aspect of the project is enhancing community cohesion.

Councillor Mrs Tuck informed members that she is collecting data on community and voluntary groups within the area and is hoping to achieve the assistance of Parish Council members in helping to identify groups that she had not already discovered. Councillor Cotterell made the point that, under the District Council's Golden Age initiative, he is able to provide access to such data and that he would happily share this information with Councillor Mrs Tuck.

Councillor Sutton, one of the two District Councillors who represent the parish of Elm, informed the Parish Council that the current Standards Board regime ceases on 30 June 2012 and new arrangements come into effect on 1 July 2012. He outlined briefly some of the new arrangements, including the fact that any breaches of the code of conduct would in future become a criminal offence, as opposed to matters for consideration by a local Standards Committee. Councillor Sutton informed members that the Monitoring Officers across Cambridgeshire are working together to develop a model code for all of the councils within the County.

Councillor Cotterell, the other District Councillor who represents the parish of Elm, informed the Parish Council that he had nothing specific to report.

Members decided that the information reported by the County and District Councillors be noted.

23/12 Highway issues

(1) Speed limit on March Road, Coldham

Further to minute 10/12, the Clerk reported receipt of confirmation from the Local Highway Authority that the Parish Council's proposal for a speed limit change would form part of an "all embracing" press advertisement covering a number of such proposals (including Christchurch, Guyhirn and Westry (March)).

Members decided that the information reported by the Clerk be noted

(2) Local Minor Highway Improvements

Further to minute M110/11 (1), the Clerk reported on the outcome of the Parish Council's application for highway works under the Local Minor Highway Improvements scheme; this application being for the provision of additional speed reduction measures, to supplement the scheme implemented by the Local Highway Authority (LHA) in 2008/09.

The Parish Council's application for this scheme was unsuccessful.

Some members expressed their disbelief and disappointment that this application had been unsuccessful, given that these works had originally been proposed by the LHA as a second phase of the scheme implemented in 2008/09.

The Clerk informed members that the total amount of funding available to the LHA, except for the contributions which would need to be made by those Town and Parish Councils which had been successful, was £50,000 for the whole of Fenland. Within the funding allocation, the LHA had been able to support only seven schemes.

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

24/12 Planning applications

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

Erection of two-storey and single-storey extensions, involving formation of a sunken loading area and demolition of existing buildings, at Fenmarc Produce Limited, 178 Gosmoor Lane, Elm - F/YR12/0419/F (applicant: Fenmarc Produce Limited).

That the application be supported. Members do, however, have concerns that approval of this proposal would result in an increase in the number of HCV movements in and around the village and that these vehicles would cause further damage to local rural roads.

Further to minute 54/11, the Clerk reported the outcome of an appeal to the Planning Inspectorate against Fenland District Council's refusal of planning application F/YR11/0650/F (which sought variation of condition 4 of planning permission F/YR10/0050/F (change of use of land and buildings to form a health and safety training centre, involving siting of associated equipment and portacabin for use as a testing centre) to allow opening of eastern access for use by bungalow only at Goosetree Farm, Goosetree Estate, Rings End).

The Planning Inspector dismissed the appeal; this was on the basis that retention of the eastern access to serve the bungalow would be severely detrimental to road safety and which would be contrary to the highway safety objectives of Policy E8 of the District-wide Local Plan and Policy ENV7 of the East of England Plan 2008.

Members decided that the outcome of this planning appeal be noted.

25/12 Financial matters

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

Income

Richard King Memorials Ltd	Additional memorial inscription	£60.00
P Barnes	Interment of ashes	£125.00
Kent Memorials	Memorial fee - Taylor	£550.00
Maxey Grounds	Cottage rent (less fees and cost of roof repairs)	£463.60
Total Income		£1,198.60

Expenditure

R J Warren Ltd	Grounds maintenance contract	£1,381.42
Elm Primary School	Donation towards purchase of equipment/toys for new Elm Pre-school	£3,000.00
Chairman's Allowance	Allowance for 2012/13	£300.00
Anglian Water	Water usage at cemetery	£87.27
Wisbech Youth Clubs	Financial support to Elm and Fridaybridge Youth Club (April to June 2012)	£2,135.50
Fairhaven and Woods Ltd	Works to war memorials in Elm and	£2,227.20

	Fridaybridge	
T Jordan	Salary (less income tax of £114.04), Broadband and other expenses	£574.70
H M Revenue and Customs	Clerk's Income Tax (March, April and May 2012)	£370.07
Total Expenditure		£10,076.16

In addition, the Clerk reported on the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 31 May 2012 (in the total sum of £131,130.63), together with the month-end figures for each of the preceding six months and as at 31 May 2011.

Members decided that

- (1) the income of £1,198.60 be noted and that the expenditure of £10,076.16 be authorised;
- (2) the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 31 May 2012, together with the month-end figures for each of the preceding six months and as at 31 May 2011, be noted.

26/12 Elm Parish Council website

Councillor Pinnock raised a number of questions in relation to operation and potential development of the Parish Council's website; namely:

1. Does the Parish Council's website comply with the new "cookie law" which came into force on 27 May 2012 as part of the amendment to the Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulation 2011?
2. Is it possible to obtain information in relation to the number of "hits" on the site?
3. Could the Parish Council offer the facility for people to subscribe to the website, so anyone subscribing could receive an alert when an agenda is published or new content is added?
4. What is the annual cost to the Parish Council of operating the website?
5. Could the website be made more interactive?

Members decided that

- (1) the Clerk would raise these questions with the website host/administrator;
- (2) this matter be considered further at the next meeting, in the light of the responses from the website host/administrator.

27/12 Begdale Road playing field - security

The Chairman reported on a recent incident involving youngsters gaining access to the playing field and then riding motorcycles across it.

Given that incident, the Chairman sought members' views as to whether the Parish Council should consider measures to increase the security (perhaps a different inner fencing and gating arrangement) at the playing field site.

It was concluded that access to the field had been achieved as a result of the grounds maintenance contractors not locking the inner access gate securely. The Clerk had subsequently stressed to the contractors the need to ensure that the gate is secure before leaving the site. In addition, the local resident who locks and unlocks the exterior gates at the

Begdale Road site has been provided with the contact details of the PCSO in case other anti-social acts take place at this site in the future.

Members decided that no action be taken in relation to enhancing the security measures in force at the playing field at this time but to monitoring the situation; if further anti-social behaviour takes place at the site, the matter can be re-visited.

28/12 Correspondence

(1) Guyhirn Churchyard – request from Wisbech St Mary PCC for financial assistance.

The Clerk reported a request from the Wisbech St Mary Parochial Church Council (PCC) for Elm Parish Council to consider making a financial contribution towards the cost of maintaining Guyhirn Churchyard, in which a number of former residents of Rings End are buried.

Upon receipt of the request, the Clerk sought from the PCC further information to assist members' consideration of the request. The PCC responded as follows:

- the annual cost of cutting the grass and maintaining graves at the churchyard is around £6,500. In addition, there are some urgent works required to the mature trees on the site which are expected to cost in the region of £5,000 to £8,000.
- the annual income of the churchyard is minimal; in recent years there have been no more than three burials per annum
- given the size of the hamlet, the number of Rings End residents buried in Guyhirn Churchyard is very small
- Wisbech St Mary Parish Council makes a substantial grant each year.

The PCC states that it does not expect that any financial assistance from Elm Parish Council would be other than a token acknowledgment of the church's intention to provide space for Rings End residents and to care for their graves.

Members decided that a financial contribution in the sum of £150 be made to Wisbech St Mary Parochial Church Council towards the cost of maintaining Guyhirn Churchyard for the financial year 2012/13.

(2) Post Office re-location in Elm.

The Clerk reported a letter from the Post Office, through which it is consulting Elm Parish Council on its proposal to re-locate the village Post Office from its current location on High Road to the shop premises at Birch Grove.

The Post Office explains the rationale for this proposal and details the proposed new service (in terms of opening hours, the range of facilities, access, car parking facilities etc).

Members are extremely pleased that the Post Office is committed to retaining the delivery of its services in Elm.

In terms of the new arrangements, members

- are supportive of the opening hours, which are greater than those (both in relation to days of the week and hours during those days) provided at the current site; this means increased availability of Post Office Services to the community
- have no concerns to raise regarding the access arrangements, the facilities to be offered at the new premises or the availability of car parking space

- feel that the location of the proposed site is an improvement on the existing one, as it is closer to the centre of the population of the village and located in an area of greater highway safety.

Members decided that their views on the proposal, as outlined above, be forwarded to the Post Office as the Parish Council's response to the consultation.

(3) Street lamp FPC8, Fridaybridge Road, Elm.

The Clerk informed members that Fenland District Council had identified a street lamp – FPC8 on Fridaybridge Road, Elm – which requires attention; it has been deemed by the District Council as structurally unsafe. The cost of a new lamp column is £1,039.65.

In responses to members' concerns regarding the availability of Parish Council funding to meet the cost of replacing this street lamp, the Clerk reminded members that provision of £2,590 (for purchase of additional street lamps, not purchased in 2011/12) had been made in the Parish Council's accounts and that the receipt of a similar sum is anticipated as part of the Concurrent Functions Grant 2012/13. On the basis of the estimated funding available, it should be possible to meet the costs of the street lighting works required currently and leave funding for the provision of additional street lamps during 2012/13.

Members decided that Fenland District Council be authorised to arrange the required works to street lamp FPC8 (Fridaybridge Road).

(4) Assistance with PhD research.

The Clerk reported a letter from a student at Plymouth University, enquiring as to whether the Parish Council would be interested in assisting her with a research project on the themes of landscape, community and rural place; she is considering selecting Elm as an example of a rural area with a scenic landscape.

In her letter, the student explains the manner in which the research would be undertaken; this would include a number of face-to-face interviews of local people and holding a focus group in the village.

Members decided that the Parish Council is unable, because of lack of capacity, to provide the assistance sought by the student.

(5) Elm Friendship Club – card of thanks.

Further to minute 157/11 (2), the Clerk circulated amongst members a card of thanks from the Elm Friendship Club in relation to the continued financial support provided to the club by the Parish Council.

Members decided that the comments on the card be noted.

29/12 Grove Gardens, Elm

Councillor Cotterell repeated concerns that he had raised at the Annual Parish Assembly regarding the algae on the surface of the water on one of the ponds at the entrance to Grove Gardens, Elm.

Members decided that the Clerk would refer the matter to the Environmental Health service at Fenland District Council, with the request that the situation be investigated from a public health perspective and the land owner be requested to remove the algae.

30/12 Date of next meeting

Members were reminded that the next meeting of the Parish Council had been scheduled for 17 July 2012, commencing at 7.00 pm, at the Parish Council office, Begdale Road, Elm.

Meeting finished at 8.15 pm

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

Date:.....