

# ELM PARISH COUNCIL

## MINUTES OF MEETING

20 MAY 2014 – 7.15 pm.

**Present:** Councillor Stokes, Vice-Chairman in the Chair; Councillors Mrs Cotterell, Mrs Dalliday, Hopkin, Mrs Hopkin, Mrs Lankfer, Milham, Pinnock and Webb.

**In attendance:** District Councillors Sutton (from 8.15 pm) and Tanfield and County Councillor Gillick.

**Apologies:** Councillors Brand, Softley and Miss Webb.

The minutes of the meeting of 15 April 2014 were confirmed and signed.

### 1/14 Open Forum

#### Coldham layby

Further to minute 97/13 (2), the resident of Coldham who had proposed laying a few slabs on the grassed area within the layby (opposite the bus shelter) at Coldham asked whether the Parish Council had been informed yet by the Local Authority (LHA) as to when the LHA's contractors would be providing a hard standing at Coldham layby.

The Clerk informed the council and the resident that he had sought, on a number of occasions, to obtain this information from the relevant officer of the LHA but had received no further information other than that an order had been placed with the LHA's contractors on 12 December 2013.

Members decided that the comments of the resident and the Clerk be noted and that the Clerk would again seek to obtain information from the Local Highway Authority as to when it expects this work to be undertaken.

### 2/14 Election of Chairman

Councillor Brand was appointed as Chairman of the Parish Council for the municipal year 2014/15; the Clerk will make arrangements for Councillor Brand to make his Declaration of Acceptance of Office in relation to that appointment.

### 3/14 Election of Vice-Chairman

Councillor Stokes was elected as Vice-Chairman of the Parish Council for the municipal year 2014/15 and made his Declaration of Acceptance of Office in relation to that appointment.

### 4/14 Chairman's Allowance for 2014/15

Members considered the setting of a Chairman's Allowance for the municipal year 2014/15.

Councillor Pinnock suggested that, being mindful of the economic difficulties being faced by the community, the Parish Council should not pay a Chairman's Allowance for 2014/15.

The general view of members is that it would be more appropriate to pay an allowance at a reduced rate (less than the £300 paid in previous years) than to pay no allowance in 2014/15.

The Clerk reminded members that the Parish Council budget for 2014/15 contains a provision of £300 for the payment of this allowance.

Members decided, unanimously, that the sum of £100.00 be allocated to meet the expenses of the Chairman of the Council during the municipal year 2014/15.

#### **5/14 appointment of membership of the Finance committee for the municipal year 2014/15**

Members decided that membership of the Finance Committee for the municipal year 2014/15 be Councillors Brand, Mrs Cotterell, Milham, Pinnock and Webb.

#### **6/14 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.

#### **7/14 Rural Digital Clubs**

Members received a presentation from Mrs N Scott, the County Council's Project Manager for Digital Inclusion, on the County Council's ambition to establish Digital Clubs within the rural parts of Cambridgeshire.

Mrs Scott informed members that she works within the Adult Learning and Skills Team at the County Council and her role is to help those living in rural communities to get on-line; she made the point that approximately six million United Kingdom residents are not on-line, the majority of whom live in rural communities. The establishment of Digital Clubs – a project funded by UK Online - is one method of seeking to address this situation; the primary aim of the project is to keep people safe on-line.

Mrs Scott explained that Digital Clubs operate on the basis of groups of people meeting at a convenient (Wi-Fi enabled) venue, where volunteers within that community help to provide IT learning to others. She informed members that she had approached the landlords of two of the public houses within the parish to ascertain whether either or both public houses could be used as venues for Digital Clubs; one of the landlords is very keen to assist in the delivery of this project, the other is not able to assist. Mrs Scott has also had discussions with a representative of the Elm Centre, for uses as a possible venue, and a representative of the Wisbech and District Stroke Club, regarding possible members of a Digital Club; she commented that the majority of members of Digital Clubs tend to be more than sixty years of age.

Mrs Scott informed members that a particular company in Cambridge, which replaces its IT equipment on a regular basis, makes available its surplus laptops to the community and that she is able to acquire such equipment for use by Digital Clubs. She commented that she is aiming to establish Digital Clubs within the parish within the next two to three weeks. The key to their sustainability is the recruitment of volunteers, who would be known as Digital Champions, to spend some time once a week helping people to use the Internet.

Mrs Scott responded to members' questions.

Members decided that the information presented by Mrs Scott be noted and that the Parish Council would assist in "spreading the word"; this would include publication of a poster on the Parish Council's website and display on its notice boards.

## 8/14 Minutes of the Finance Committee

Members received the minutes of the meeting of the Finance Committee held on 1 May 2014.

Members decided that the content of the minutes be noted.

## 9/14 Progress on actions from minutes of last meeting

### (1) Facilities for young people in the parish (minute 152/13 (1))

The Clerk informed members that the situation with regard to Fenland District Council's adoption of the open space land at Grove Gardens is unchanged from that reported at minute 152/13 (1).

The Clerk read to members an e-mail from a local youngster requesting that the council considers the provision of a skateboard park in Elm. The Clerk reminded members that a similar request had been made to the council in the past and it had decided, at minute 63/11 (2), that it would not be leading on the provision of a skateboard park in Elm; it would, however, support the community if it wished to develop such a project. In addition, members are aware that the master plan for play equipment provision at Fridaybridge includes the possible inclusion of a skateboard park (minute 157/13 refers).

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

### (2) Elm Cemetery – operational issues (minute 152/13 (2))

The Clerk reported that there had been no further reports of thefts of flowers from graves at Elm Cemetery, since those which occurred over the weekend of Mother's Day (29/30 March 2014).

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

### (3) Maintenance of water courses (minute 152/13 (3))

Councillor Hopkin reported that he hopes to be in a position to undertake the cutting back of vegetation at the dykes adjoining the cemetery and the playing field at Begdale Road, Elm later this week.

Members decided that the information reported by Councillor Hopkin be noted.

### (4) Parking on the grassed verge at Abington Grove, Elm (minute 160/13)

The Clerk reported on the outcome of his meeting with the County Council's District Highways Manager with the purpose of obtaining further details of the possible scheme for installation of bollards - to prevent the parking of vehicles on the grassed verge at Abington Grove, Elm - and clarification as to the level of financial contribution that the Local Highway Authority (LHA) would be expecting from the Parish Council towards the cost of such a scheme.

In summary, the stance of the LHA is that

- it does not have the resources to produce a speculative draft scheme plan but is able to say that the cost estimate supplied (in the sum of £3,019.20) assumes the installation of 20 (timber-effect) bollards, approximately 4 metres apart
- it has no funding available for "desirable" (but not essential) works such as this

- the scheme could only progress if the Parish Council or some other third-party within the community were able to provide all, or a very significant amount of, the funding required.

In response to the information reported by the Clerk, members expressed the view that, as this land is in the ownership of the Local Highway Authority (LHA), it should be the LHA (and not the Parish Council) which meets most of the cost of any scheme. They are of the opinion that a potential scheme to address the parking situation needs greater thought on the part of the LHA; members feel that the installation of bollards placed 4 metres apart would not actually prevent vehicles from accessing this land.

In addition, members are concerned that the parking of vehicles on this grassed area will increase as a result of implementing the Cambridgeshire County Council (Various Streets, Elm) (Prohibition of Waiting) Order 2014, which became operational on 22 April (to allow implementation of a successful LHI bid to prevent on-street parking in the vicinity of Elm C of E Primary School).

The Clerk explained to members his understanding of the financial pressures under which the LHA is operating, the need for it to prioritise spending and the LHA's localism approach to the delivery of local highway schemes. In response, Councillor Pinnock mentioned that the St Raphael Club, off Love Lane, Wisbech has recently had wooden (not plastic) bollards installed by the Local Highway Authority at no cost to the St Raphael Club. The question then arose as to why this action was deemed to be necessary expenditure for the LHA, whereas a scheme for Abington Grove project would not.

Councillor Pinnock made the point that when he had met on-site with the District Highway Manager regarding this matter he had mentioned concerns regarding subsidence at this location and he enquired as to whether the District Highway Manager had mentioned this issue during his meeting with the Clerk. The Clerk responded that this matter had not been mentioned during his meeting with the District Highways Manager.

Members decided that the information reported by the Clerk be noted and that he would forward the comments, views and concerns of the Parish Council to the County Council's District Highways Manager for consideration and response.

### **10/14 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 burglary of a dwelling; one theft of diesel and forced entry to a storage building
- Elm – one theft of a motor vehicle; one incident of a goose being shot with a one-inch bolt
- Rings End – no incidents reported.

The PCSO's report mentioned that, although no such incidents had been reported in the parish of Elm, there had been a number of thefts of garden ornaments across other rural parts of the district; the PCSO suggests that people should take measures to prevent themselves being the victims of such thefts.

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.

## 11/14 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 three-storey 5-bed dwelling (with additional basement) on land east of The Cottage, Begdale Road, Elm – F/YR14/0277/F (applicant: Miss J Brightey).

*That the application be supported.*

- (2) Erection of a two-storey 2-bed dwelling on land west of Stone Cottage, 82 March Road, Fridaybridge – F/YR14/0301/F (applicant: M J Gibbs).

*That the application be supported.*

- (3) Erection of an agricultural shed at Bankside Nursery, March Road, Rings End – F/YR14/0319/F (applicant: Mr D Crockford).

*That the application be supported.*

- (4) Erection of a dwelling on land south of Gaywood, Fridaybridge Road, Elm – F/YR14/0345/O (applicant: Mr Whatley).

*That the application be supported.*

- (5) Erection of two-storey 4-bed dwelling with detached garage and store above, involving the formation of a new access and paddocks to the rear, at plot 1 land north of 89-95 The Stitch, Fridaybridge – F/YR14/0363/F (applicant: Mr M Lemon).

*That the application be supported.*

- (6) Formation of a menage at Gosmoor House, 35 Gosmoor Lane, Elm – F/YR14/0367/F (applicant: Mr J Newport).

*That the application be supported.*

Further to minute 61/13 (at which the parish Council had supported the proposal), the Clerk informed members of the lodging of an appeal to the Planning Inspectorate in relation to the refusal by Fenland District Council (FDC) of planning permission for the erection of a two-storey 3-bed dwelling on land east of Railway Cottage, Back Road, Elm (application F/YR13/0640/F refers) and of the opportunity for the Parish Council to make further comments (in addition to those submitted to FDC previously), if it wished to do so, to the Planning Inspectorate.

Councillor Stokes referred to one of the reasons that had been used by Fenland District Council (FDC) in refusing to grant planning permission for this proposal, i.e. that allowing this proposed development could lead to the ultimate disappearance of the visual break between the villages of Elm and Fridaybridge, and expressed the view that FDC should “bin” the policy of seeking to retain a gap between the two villages.

Members decided that the comments of Councillor Stokes be noted and that no representation be made to the Planning Inspectorate in relation to the refusal by Fenland District Council of planning application F/YR13/0290/F.

## 12/14 Reports from District and County Councillors for the parish

Councillor Gillick, the County Councillor who represents the electoral division which includes the parish of Elm, informed members that the Cabinet system of governance at the County Council has now come to an end and a system of governance by Service Committees now operates in its place; he informed members of the committees to which he had been appointed. He mentioned that the new system of governance allows the involvement of all political groups in decision-making and is, therefore, in his opinion, a more transparent and effective process than the former Cabinet system; he added that the County Council now has a new Leader, Councillor Steve Count of March, who Councillor Gillick believes will ensure that the interests of Fenland residents are well represented at the County Council.

Councillor Gillick made reference to the Wisbech 2020 Vision, suggesting that this project had delivered little in terms of benefit to the community but had resulted in approximately £60,000 being spent on public relations/publicity/communications.

Councillor Tanfield, one of the two District Councillors who represents the parish of Elm, informed the Parish Council that since 8 May 2014 there has been a new Leader of Fenland District Council; the Leader is now Councillor John Clark; he will shortly be inviting the Chairmen of Parish Councils to meet with him to discuss the future of Concurrent Functions Grants.

District Councillor Tanfield commented that both District Councillor Sutton and she had been appointed to membership of the District Council's Cabinet with effect from 8 May 2014 and expressed her hope that this situation would mean that there could be greater influence in addressing issues affecting the parish of Elm as well as a good flow of information between the District Council and the Parish Council.

With regard to the possible provision of play equipment at the playing field at Fridaybridge, Councillor Tanfield informed members that applications for funding are currently being prepared and a consultation event in the village is being arranged.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

## 13/14 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
H M Revenue and Customs	VAT refund	£1,069.55
Peter Barnes Funerals	Burial fees	£385.00
Lincolnshire Co-operative Funerals	Interment fee	£345.00
Fenland District Council	Parish Precept 2014/15 – first 50%	£15,000.00
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>£17,323.15</b>

## Expenditure

Glazewing	Wheelie bin emptying – Elm Cemetery (includes VAT of £17.63)	£105.78
Kierman Window Cleaning	Clean parish notice and information boards	£45.00
R J Warren Ltd	Grounds maintenance contract (includes VAT of £241.88)	£1,451.29
T Jordan	Salary (less income tax of £200.29 and NI of £40.62), Broadband and other expenses	£878.65
Anglian Water	Water for cemetery	£43.01
S Cowell	Internal Audit fee	£65.00
D. A. Pest Control	Control of moles at The Leam, Fridaybridge	£50.00
Came and Company	Insurance for 2014/15	£2,472.59
Fenland District Council	Replacement of street light FPC 21 on March Road, Fridaybridge (includes VAT of £216.22)	£1,297.33
<b>Total Expenditure</b>		<b>£6,408.65</b>

In addition, the Clerk reported on the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 30 April 2014 (in the total sum of £136,934.34), together with the month-end figures for each of the preceding six months and as at 30 April 2013.

The Clerk reported on the Annual Audit of Accounts return, informing members that the document had been examined and approved, without recommendations as to action in relation to the Parish Council's governance processes, by the Council's Internal Auditor. The Clerk read to members the Internal Auditor's report on his audit of the Parish Council's accounts 2013/14. In addition, the Clerk made the point that the 2013/14 accounts documentation that he had produced for the purpose of the annual audit process had been scrutinised by the Finance Committee (minute 8/14 refers).

Members decided

- (1) that the income of £17,323.15 be noted and that the expenditure of £6,408.65 be authorised;
- (2) that the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 30 April 2014, together with the month-end figures for each of the preceding six months and as at 30 April 2013, be noted;
- (3) to note that, after allowing for the Parish Council's ear-marked reserves (totalling £57,095.50) at 30 April 2014, the actual balance available to the Parish Council at 30 April 2014 was £79,838.84; 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 30 March 2014 to approximately £34,838.34;
- (4) that the Audited Accounts for 2013/14 be approved and submitted to the External Auditor.

## 14/14 Correspondence

### (1) Cambridgeshire County Council (Various Streets, Elm) (Prohibition of Waiting) Order 2014

Further to minute 144/13 (1), the Clerk reported receipt from the Policy and Regulation Team at the County Council of a copy of the Cambridgeshire County Council (Various Streets, Elm) (Prohibition of Waiting) Order 2014, which came into effect on 22 April 2014.

The Clerk informed members that this Order provides the power for the Local Highway Authority to introduce the waiting prohibitions necessary to deliver the Local Highway Improvement scheme requested by Elm Parish Council under the bidding process for 2013/14.

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

## **(2) Magpas – financial assistance**

Further to minute 144/13 (2), the Clerk read to members a letter of thanks from Magpas in relation to the financial assistance provided by the parish Council towards the cost of providing emergency medical care at the scenes of accidents within Cambridgeshire.

Members decided that the content of the letter be noted.

## **(3) Elm Friendship Club - financial assistance**

Further to minute 90/13 (1), the circulated a letter of thanks from the Elm Friendship Club in relation to the financial assistance provided by the Parish Council to cover the annual cost of hiring accommodation for the club's fortnightly meetings, two outings (involving coach hire and fees for entrance to activities) and meeting the cost of speakers/presenters attending some club meetings.

Members decided that the content of the letter be noted.

## **(4) Dog Order Awareness campaign**

The Clerk reported read to members an e-mail from a resident of Elm, stating that he does share the view of the Parish Council at minute 147/13; he states that he had previously reported a problem with dog fouling in Elm and had contacted local councillors and that, having acknowledged there to be a problem, the District Council had affixed warning signs to posts at certain locations in the village. The resident, therefore, concludes that a problem of dog fouling in the parish does exist and he cannot understand why the Parish Council declined the District Council's offer to run a Dog Order Awareness campaign (minute 147/13 refers).

The resident had also mentioned certain issues that he had raised with local council in relation to a missing information board and a broken gate. With regard to these issues, District Councillor Sutton explained the action being taken by the District Council and the County Council to address them.

Members decided that the content of the e-mail and the comments of District Councillor Sutton be noted.

## **15/14 Application for financial assistance**

Further to minute 159/13, Councillor Pinnock invited members to re-consider the decision to award financial assistance to the Fenland Association for Community Transport (FACT). He expressed the opinion that, in the light of certain information now in his possession, it would be prudent not to provide the financial assistance (of £50.00) agreed at minute 159/13.

Members decided, having regard for the information reported by Councillor Pinnock, that the Parish Council would now not award to FACT the financial assistance agreed at minute 159/13.

*(Members resolved to exclude the public from this item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended))*

**16/14 Date of next meeting**

Members were reminded that the next meeting of the Parish Council had been scheduled for 24 June 2014, commencing at 7.00 pm, at the Parish Council office, Begdale Road, Elm.

**Meeting finished at 8.35 pm**

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

Date:.....