

ELM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING

21 APRIL 2015 – 7.00 pm.

Present: Councillor Brand, Chairman; Councillors Mrs Cotterell, Mrs Dalliday, Hopkin, Mrs Hopkin, Milham, Pinnock, Softley, Stokes, Miss Webb and Webb.

Apologies: Councillor Mrs Lankfer and County Councillor Gillick.

In attendance: District Councillors Sutton and Tanfield.

The minutes of the meeting of 17 March 2015 were confirmed and signed.

161/14 Open Forum

(1) Overgrown vegetation on Fridaybridge Road, Elm

A parishioner expressed his gratitude for the County Council's removal, at public expense, of the overgrown vegetation at various locations along Fridaybridge Road, Elm and suggested that, as there are now three plots of land for sale in one of those areas, the County Council may now wish to make contact with the land owner, via the selling agent, in an effort to recover some of the costs that it had incurred in undertaking the vegetation removal works.

Members decided that the comments of the parishioner be noted and that the Clerk would forward to the Local Highway Authority the parishioner's suggestion in relation to seeking to recover some of the costs that it had incurred in undertaking the vegetation removal works.

(2) Traffic in Elm

A resident of Gosmoor Lane, Elm informed the council of her concerns regarding both the amount of traffic and the speed at which it travels through Elm and enquired as to whether Elm Parish Council would be able to assist in achieving the provision of traffic calming in the village as a means of addressing the situation.

The resident commented that she had witnessed large lorries meeting each other on narrow roads and, consequently, mounting pavements to be able to pass; this not only causes a dangerous situation to pedestrians but also damages the pavements. Also, the weight of the lorries is causing damage to the roads within the village. She stated that she had raised her concerns with an officer of the Local Highway Authority but had found him not to be supportive in suggesting a remedy to the situation.

The resident also expressed her concern regarding the inconsiderate parking of vehicles around certain junctions onto Gosmoor Lane (particular at the opening and closing times of the village primary school), which is, in her opinion, causing significant highway safety problems.

Members decided that the comments of the local resident be noted and that the Clerk would invite the Local Highway Authority to suggest possible remedies to the issues raised by the local resident.

162/14 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.

163/14 Progress on actions from minutes of last meeting

(1) Highway defects at Coldham (minute 151/14 (1))

The Clerk informed members that he had drawn to the attention of the Local Highway Authority (LHA) the highway defects mentioned at the last meeting of the council by a resident of Coldham and that, in response, the relevant officer of the LHA had arranged repair of the pot hole at the Station Road/March Road junction in Coldham and had submitted a bid for funding for a scheme for repair of the length of the B1101 between the layby at Coldham and Coldham Estate farm.

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

(2) Fridaybridge Clocktower (minute 151/14 (2))

Councillor Softley informed members that he had discovered, when attending the Fridaybridge Clocktower recently with a representative of the company which undertakes the maintenance of the clock mechanism that the lock on the door to the clocktower had been the subject of vandalism and that, as a result, it had not proved possible for the maintenance engineer to gain access to the inside of the building to undertake the necessary servicing and maintenance works.

Members decided that the information reported by Councillor Softley be noted and the Clerk would engage the services of a local locksmith to remedy the problem of accessing the clocktower and then arrange for the contractor to undertake the annual maintenance of the clock mechanism and replace the failed illumination to one of the clock faces.

(3) Play equipment provision in Elm and Fridaybridge (minute 153/14 (1))

With regard to the possible provision of play equipment at Elm, the Clerk reminded members that he had been informed informally, and is awaiting receipt of formal confirmation, from the Local Highway Authority (LHA) that – as the scheme for the creation of a play area on the grassed verge area at Abington Grove, Elm would not involve any change to the public highway, such as pedestrian crossing points or parking bays – there would be no requirement for the LHA to undertake a safety audit.

With regard to the order which had been placed by the Clerk for the manufacture and installation of the play equipment, as agreed at minute 124/14 (1), the contractor had informed the Clerk that he would undertake no work in relation to this order until such time as the Clerk had received formal confirmation from the Local Highway Authority that no safety audit is required.

Councillor Pinnock informed members that he had spoken with District Councillor Sutton regarding the District Council's progress in adopting the community land to the rear of Grove Gardens and he had been informed by District Councillor Sutton that Fenland District Council would not adopt this land until such time as the question of the parrot weed in the pond had been resolved.

Councillor Pinnock stated that he still believes that the siting of play equipment on the greens at the entrance to Abington Grove is most unwise due to the land sinking and that water lays on it during the winter months.

He suggested that Elm Parish Council should write to Fenland District Council and the owners of the land, suggesting that the ponds be filled-in; this would eradicate the weed problem and allow the transfer of the community land to take place so that play equipment could be sited thereon.

Members stated that the decision to place the play equipment on the Abington Grove green had been made in Councillor Pinnock's absence and that it should stand. Councillor Pinnock wished that his regret and dissention to this course of action be recorded.

With regard to the provision of play equipment at Fridaybridge, the Clerk informed members that he had heard nothing from any officer at Fenland District Council (FDC) since forwarding to FDC a completed application form for funding from WREN towards the provision of play equipment at the playing field at Maltmas Drove, Fridaybridge.

At the invitation of the Chairman, District Councillor Tanfield informed members that, although the Clerk had not been informed by Fenland District Council (FDC) of the situation, the application from Elm Parish Council for funding from WREN had been submitted by officers of FDC to WREN. She mentioned also that a number of local residents would be commencing work on 14 May 2015 on creating the community garden element of the scheme.

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

(4) Fishing at The Leam, Fridaybridge (minute 140/14 (2))

The Clerk informed members that he had received a response from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in relation to the draft byelaw he had submitted for provisional approval.

The DCLG had confirmed that the draft byelaw accords with its guidance on the making of byelaws and asks for information as to Elm Parish Council's need for the byelaw; furthermore, the DCLG comments that, as Government is now in the elections Purdah period, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) is not able to provide any provisional/confirmation to applications until a new Government is formed.

Councillor Pinnock questioned the need for this byelaw, particularly because of the expectation that it would provide to the public the expectation that it would result in cessation of fishing activities at The Leam, whereas, in reality, the byelaw would have no such effect because of the absence of Police and Parish Council resources to enforce the byelaw. Councillor Pinnock asked the Clerk whether his conclusion regarding the enforcement of such byelaw is correct. In response, the Clerk expressed the opinion that to all intents and purposes the byelaw would not be enforced

Cllr Pinnock expressed the opinion that it would be illogical to introduce an unenforceable byelaw and, consequently, he suggested that this not be proceeded with.

Members stated that the decision to make the byelaw had been made in Councillor Pinnock's absence and that it should stand. Councilor Pinnock wished that his regret and dissention to this course of action be recorded.

Members decided that the information reported by the Clerk be noted and that he would provide answers to the questions asked by the DCLG in relation to Elm Parish Council's need for the byelaw

(5) Abington Grove, Elm - parking on the grassed verge area (minute 154/14 (3))

The Clerk reported that he had forwarded to the Local Highway Authority (LHA) the information he had received from the contactor required by the LHA for the purpose of the undertaking a safety audit in respect

of the Parish Council's proposal to install timber bollards around the green area to the left of the Abington Grove entrance.

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

164/14 Police matters

PCSO Sue Clarke, of the Wisbech and District Neighbourhood Policing Team, attended the meeting to inform the council of recent incidents of crime and disorder within the geographical area covered by Elm Parish Council, as well as updating the council on other relevant matters.

PCSO Clarke commented that the crime rate in the parish is very low; since the last meeting of Elm Parish Council there had been only one crime recorded; that being the theft of a ride-on lawnmower.

PCSO Clarke informed members that one of her particular areas of focus at this time continues to be the inconsiderate and illegal parking of vehicles on the roads in the vicinity of Elm C of E Primary School; she made the point that the problems linked to parking in the vicinity of schools is not an issue which is unique to Elm and is not one which is likely to cease without Police intervention. She stated her keenness to work with the school in terms of pupils producing "safe parking" posters, which would be used as part of a campaign to educate the parents not to park inappropriately or inconsiderately in the vicinity of the school.

The next area of focus for PCSO Clarke would be to tackle motorists' speeding through villages; she made the point that addressing the speeding of vehicles through Elm is now a priority for the local policing team. As part of this exercise, speed monitoring equipment would be installed for a period in the village. As had been mentioned, at minute 161/14 (2) by the parishioner, one of the areas within the parish which seems to be suffering from speeding and poor driving is Gosmoor Lane, Elm; the speeding along Gosmoor Lane is an issue in relation to both domestic vehicles and lorries.

PCSO Clarke informed members that she had examined the adequacy of the existing speed limit signs along Gosmoor Lane, to see whether they provide a sufficient "message" in terms of the speed limit. Her conclusion is that the provision of additional speed limit signs along Gosmoor lane may be beneficial; she indicated that she would be happy to lend her support to any Local Highway Improvement bid that Elm Parish Council may wish to submit in that regard.

In an effort to tackle the situation relating to speeding, speed checks had been undertaken in the parish; this activity had resulted in a number of tickets being issued to motorists.

The PCSO asked that the community and the members of the Parish Council report to her the registration numbers of lorries seen being driven dangerously or at speed through the parish.

Members decided that the information reported by PCSO Sue Clarke be noted.

165/14 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 part two-storey, part first-floor side extension and single-storey rear extension to existing dwelling, involving demolition of existing conservatory, at 137 March Road, Fridaybridge – F/YR15/0190/F (applicants: Mr and Mrs C Brown).

That the application be supported.

- (2) Erection of 4 dwellings on land south of Needham Road Cottages, Needham Bank, Fridaybridge – F/YR15/0194/O (applicant: Mr P R Lattimore).

Object, on the basis that the site's visibility splays are inadequate to allow vehicles to leave from the site in a safe manner.

- (3) Erection of 21 x two-storey dwellings comprising of 14 x 2-bed and 7 x 3-bed; 2.1 metre high fencing/walls and landscaping, involving demolition of existing sheltered accommodation and garage and alterations to the gardens of 6 bungalows (part retrospective) at The Dale, Begdale Road, Elm – F/YR15/0195/F (applicant: Roddons Housing Association).

Object to the application for the following reasons:

- *approval of the proposal would result in overdevelopment of the site*
- *the current community infrastructure (including lack capacity at Elm Primary School, insufficient medical facilities and inadequate local road network) is insufficient to support this development*
- *the design and nature of the proposed properties is out of keeping with the surrounding built environment*
- *the recent variations to the original plans propose a development which would be out of keeping with the character of the surrounding area. The Parish Council is strongly of the opinion that: the hanging tiles should be of a traditional material; the developer should be required to plant trees to replace those which have been removed; the use of black UPVC for windows is inappropriate, given the proximity of this site to the Elm Conservation Area; the provision of a close-boarded fence with trellis instead of brick boundary walls would have a further detrimental impact upon the surrounding area.*

The Parish Council also comments that it had strongly opposed this scheme from the beginning, when presented with an indicative scheme by Roddons (prior to the submission of a planning application) and its fears at how this development would look are becoming a reality.

- (4) Erection of a dwelling, involving the demolition of two existing dwellings, at 1 – 2 Whitehouse Farm, Coldham Bank, Coldham – F/YR15/0201/O (applicant: Mrs J Scarboro).

That the application be supported.

- (5) Erection of 2 x two-storey 2-bed dwellings involving demolition of outbuildings; formation of a new access and parking to serve proposed dwellings and existing dwelling and change of use of land by infilling of dyke to extend cartilage of 76 March Road at One Woodhouse Cottages, 76 March Road, Fridaybridge – F/YR15/0206/F (applicant: Mr M Gower).

That the application be supported.

- (6) Erection of single-storey side and rear extensions to existing dwelling, involving the demolition of existing conservatory, at Longbeach, Back Road, Fridaybridge – F/YR15/0216/F (applicants: J Holloway and K Gledhill).

That the application be supported.

- (7) Change of use of land for the siting of two mobile homes and two touring caravans with post and rail fencing to front boundary (retrospective) on land west of Bar Drove, Fridaybridge – F/YR15/0227/F (applicant: Mr S Smith).

Object, on the basis that

- *the proposal, by reason of its intended use, would have an unacceptably adverse impact upon the amenities of the properties immediately adjacent to the site and the surrounding area by reason of overlooking, loss of privacy and a visually overbearing impact*
- *the proposal, by reason of its siting, would have an adverse impact upon the scale and character of the existing and surrounding dwellings*
- *the proposal would have the effect of a mini gypsy site – capable of extension onto adjacent land – which would not be consistent with the domestic nature of the existing development and would have an adverse affect upon the visual amenity of the area as a whole*
- *the site is located in a predominantly residential area, where occupiers would reasonably expect a level of amenity concurrent with the existing properties*
- *the use of this site as additional caravan accommodation introduces a diverse element that, by reason of its use, is likely to result in nuisance to the detriment of neighbours' residential amenity*
- *the proposal, by reason of its siting, would lead to a fragmented form of development on prime agricultural land, which would be harmful to the open, rural and undeveloped character of the area*

In addition, there is a lack of clarity as to exactly what is being applied for; the permission sought appears to be for the use of two caravans, whilst paragraph 17 of the application makes reference to a 4-bed (of unknown nature).

Furthermore, the Parish Council requests that if planning permission for this proposal is granted, that permission be made personal to the applicant.

- (8) Erection of a single-storey rear extension to existing dwelling, involving demolition of existing conservatory, at Cherry Willows, Well End, Fridaybridge – F/YR15/0231/F (applicants: Mr and Mrs R Taylor).

That the application be supported.

- (9) Conversion of coach house to two-storey 4-bed dwelling with integral garage incorporating single-storey extension to link buildings, involving demolition of existing barn, at barn and coach house at Waldersea House, 172 March Road, Fridaybridge – F/YR15/0238/F (applicant: Mr L Walton).

That the application be supported.

- (10) Alterations to facilitate conversion of coach house to two-storey 4-bed dwelling, incorporating single-storey extension to link buildings and demolition of existing barn, at barn and coach house at Waldersea House, 172 March Road, Fridaybridge – F/YR15/0239/LB (applicant: Mr L Walton).

That the application be supported.

- (11) Erection of a part two-storey/single-storey side extension to existing dwelling at 5 Barnard Cottages, Well End, Fridaybridge – F/YR15/0247/F (Mrs D Watmore).

That the application be supported.

- (12) Erection of 3 dwellings on land south of 56 Elm High Road, fronting Elm Low Road, Wisbech – F/YR15/0265/O (applicant: Mrs Jane Wearing).

That the application be supported.

- (13) Conversion of barn to form additional living accommodation to existing dwelling, erection of a garage and change of use of land to form residential cartilage (retrospective) at Cherry Tree Barn, 133 March Road, Fridaybridge – F/YR15/0271/F (applicant: Mr M Sheldrake).

That the application be supported.

166/14 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. County Councillor Gillick had, however, provided details to the Clerk of his investigations in relation to a matter which had been raised, at minute 121/14, by a resident of Coldham regarding re-surfacing works, undertaken by the County Council, to part of the carriageway at Overstone Drive (a road which is in private ownership; not adopted highway).

The Clerk reported that County Councillor Gillick had been informed by the relevant officer within the County Council's Highways Service that this re-surfacing work had been undertaken in error (instead of at Overstone Road) by its maintenance contractor. Consequently, the contractor had offered to undertake compensatory works to the value of £2,800. County Councillor Gillick has, therefore, invited Elm Parish Council to suggest locations where highway maintenance works are required within the parish.

Councillors Sutton and Tanfield, the District Councillors who represents the parish of Elm, both informed members that they had nothing specific to report in relation Fenland District Council issues at this time. However, with regard to the issue which had been reported by the Clerk on behalf of County Councillor Gillick, Councillor Sutton suggested that works to repair pot holes along Begdale Road and re-surfacing works to the carriageway at the entrance to the Tower Hall at Maltmas Drove, Fridaybridge be undertaken by the County Council's highways maintenance contractor.

Members decided that the situation be noted and that the suggestion of District Councillor Sutton in relation to highways maintenance works be supported.

167/14 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.

Members raised the following concerns relating to the cemetery:

- the contractor which provides the wheeled bin service does not ensure that the bin, following emptying, is always returned by the company's operatives to its siting within the cemetery; it is often left just inside the gates

- it is apparent that some of the grave diggers engaged by local Funeral Directors are not removing from the cemetery the surplus soil consequent to an interment but are, instead, piling the soil along one of the site boundaries
- more than one resident whose property shares a border with the cemetery had deposited vegetation in the dyke which runs along the boundary.

Members decided that the situation be noted and that the Clerk would contact the contractor which provides the wheeled bin service, all of the local Funeral Directors and the occupiers of the properties from which the vegetation appears to have originated, with the aim of achieving remedies to all of these issues.

168/14 Financial provision for street lighting

Further to minute 112/14, Councillor Pinnock proposed that the council should include within its ear-marked reserves a sum at the level of around one-third of the estimated cost (of £74,000) of the street lighting works which would require funding by Elm Parish Council.

Members decided that an ear-marked reserve for street lighting of £25,000 be included within Elm Parish Council's accounts.

169/14 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
W and W G West	Plot purchase and interment fee	£853.00
Richard king Memorials Ltd	Cemetery memorial	£148.00
Mr Smart	Purchase of cremated remains plot	£302.50
W Bailey and Son	Cremated remains plot and interment fee	£259.00
Total Income		£2,086.10

Expenditure

Glazewing	Wheelie bin emptying – Elm Cemetery (includes VAT of £14.10)	£84.62
R J Warren Ltd	Grounds maintenance contract (includes VAT of £249.12)	£1,494.72
T Jordan	Salary (less income tax of £183.76 and NI of £29.62), Broadband and other expenses	£801.18
D A Pest Control	Control of moles at Coldham	£60.00
C Brennan	Playing field security (quarterly payment to 31 March 2015)	£100.00
Cambridgeshire County Council	Lease of Fridaybridge playing field for 2015/16	£375.00
King's Lynn IDB	Agricultural drainage rates	£64.04

Richard Kierman	Cleaning of notice boards etc	£45.00
Total Expenditure		£3,024.56

In addition, the Clerk reported on the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 31 March 2015 (in the total sum of £128,034.28), together with the month-end figures for each of the preceding six months and as at 31 March 2014.

Further to minute 21/11, the Clerk reported on the management accounts that he had produced for the fourth quarter of the 2014/15 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.

Councillor Pinnock informed members that the Clerk and he had met recently to discuss the council's year-end accounts; they concluded that the year-end figures which had been produced independently by Councillor Pinnock and the Clerk were in accord.

Members decided

- (1) that the income of £2,086.10 be noted and that the expenditure of £3,024.56 be authorised;
- (2) that the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 31 March 2015, together with the month-end figures for each of the preceding six months and as at 31 March 2014, be noted;
- (3) to note that, after allowing for the Parish Council's ear-marked reserves (totalling £57,866.50 at 31 March 2015), the actual balance available to the Parish Council at 31 March 2015 was £70,167.78; 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 March 2015 to approximately £25,168.00;
- (4) that the financial information within the fourth quarter's management accounts be noted.

170/14 Grants to voluntary and charitable bodies

(1) Wisbech and District Stroke Club

Further to minute 159/14 (1), members considered an application for financial assistance from the Wisbech and District Stroke Club towards the club's annual operating costs.

The Clerk reminded members that the Parish Council had provided financial support of £300 in the financial year 2012/13.

Members decided that financial support in the sum of £350.00 be awarded to the Wisbech and District Stroke Club.

(2) Magpas

Members considered a request from Magpas for financial assistance, in the sum of £200.00, towards the cost of operating its services in the financial year 2015/16.

The information provided by Magpas in support of the application gave details of the number of accidents that it had attended over the previous twelve months period and examples of some of the costs it incurs in operating the service that it provides.

Members decided that financial support in the sum of £200.00 be awarded to the Magpas.

(3) 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 at the annual Coldham Fun Weekend, which take place on 23 and 24 May 2015.

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, 2013 and 2014.

Members decided that the Parish Council would meet the cost of providing a disabled toilet for the Coldham Fun Weekend 2015.

171/14 Correspondence

(1) Elm C of E Primary School – Thank You card.

The Clerk read to members a Thank You card from the pupils of the Elm C of E Primary School.

The wording within the card says “At Elm C of E Primary School, we have been responding to Bishop Stephen’s Lent challenge by thinking about saying “thank you” to the people in our school and community who help us. Thank you for helping us. From the children of Elm Primary School”.

Members decided that the content of the Thank You card be noted.

(2) Local council elections 2015.

The Clerk referred to correspondence he had received from Fenland District Council (FDC), in which FDC had explained the situation with regard to candidates for election to membership of Elm Parish Council.

The current situation is that there would be no poll for election to membership of Elm Parish Council on 7 May 2015 as there had been 5 candidates for the 8 seats in the Elm and Fridaybridge ward, 2 candidates for the 2 seats in the Coldham ward and no candidates for the 2 seats in the Rings End ward of Elm Parish Council. Consequently, it is necessary for the council to fill the 5 vacancies by co-option, as soon as possible after 7 May 2015.

The Clerk was asked by Councillor Pinnock to confirm his understanding that, because of the fact that less than two-thirds of the membership of the council would be filled by election, Elm Parish Council would not be eligible to adopt the General Power of Competence. The Clerk confirmed Councillor Pinnock’s understanding of the situation to be correct.

Members decided that the information reported by the Clerk be noted and that co-option to membership of Elm Parish Council, using the process used on previous occasions by the Parish Council in filling casual vacancies, be undertaken at 19 May 2015 meeting of Elm Parish Council; the Clerk would the advertise vacancies via publication of a notice on the Parish Council’s website and its notice boards.

172/14 Date of next meeting

Members were reminded that the next meeting of the Parish Council had been scheduled for 19 May 2015, to commence 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 8.25 pm

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

Date:.....