

ELM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING

21 JUNE 2016 – 7.00 pm.

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

Apologies: Councillors Hopkin, Mrs Hopkin, Patrick and Stokes.

In attendance: County Councillor Gillick and District Councillors Sutton and Tanfield (all left the meeting at 7.50 pm).

The minutes of the meeting of 24 May 2016 were confirmed and signed.

17/16 Open Forum

(1) Whitemill Environment Fund

A parishioner informed the council that there is still funding available from the Whitemill Environment Fund, for which community groups and organisations are able to make applications to deliver community projects, and enquired as whether the council would be prepared to publicise the situation via the display of notices on the parish notice boards. In addition, the Whitemill Environment Fund Committee would be producing flyers for distribution across the parish.

Members decided that the situation be noted and that the Clerk would arrange the display of notices on the parish notice boards and publication on the council's website.

(2) Overgrown hedges

A parishioner mentioned overgrown hedges in certain locations across the parish, a situation which is causing difficulty for pedestrians in being able to walk along the footways without needing to step onto the carriageway.

Members decided that the comments of the parishioner be noted and that the Clerk would draw the issue to the attention of the Local Highway Authority, with a request that the situation be investigated and letters be sent to the owners of the land or properties who are causing obstruction of the highway by overgrown vegetation.

(3) Grass cutting across the parish

A parishioner mentioned the untidy appearance of the parish as a result of long grass in many public areas.

With the consent of the Chairman, the Clerk responded to the comments made by the parishioner. He mentioned that the responsibility for the majority of the grass cutting across the parish is either Fenland District Council (for public open spaces) or

Cambridgeshire County Council (for highway verges). He is. However, aware of public concerns regarding the grass cutting at some of the areas which are the responsibility of Elm Parish Council (such as Elm Cemetery and the three village playing fields).

The Clerk expressed his hope that the members of the District Council and the County Council who were present at the meeting would refer the parishioner's comments to the relevant officers of their respective councils.

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

(4) Speed Watch

A parishioner commented that the results of activity undertaken by the Elm parish Speed Watch group had shown that around 30% of motorists who travel along The Stitch at Fridaybridge drive at speeds in excess of the speed limit.

Members decided the comments of the parishioner be noted.

18/16 Members' Code of Conduct

The Clerk reminded members of the need for them to submit to the Monitoring Officer at Fenland District Council, via the Parish Clerk, any changes to the content of their Register of Member Interests forms.

Members decided the reminder from the Clerk be noted and acted upon.

19/16 Progress on actions from minutes of last meeting

(1) Play equipment provision in Elm and Fridaybridge (minute 7/16 (1))

Councillor Milham informed members that the group of parents of pupils of the Elm C of E Primary School which had offered to purchase and install, at no cost to the council, a bench at the new Elm play area had raised £800 for such works; this would be sufficient to meet the cost of purchasing and installing 2 benches at that location. He mentioned that the parents are ready to proceed as soon as they receive the "go ahead" from Elm Parish Council.

With regard to the provision of play equipment at Fridaybridge, the Clerk informed members that Elm Parish Council's application for funding from Fenland District Council's Rural Capital Grants Fund had been considered by the Cabinet of that council on 26 May 2016; he informed members of his understanding that money had, consequently, been allocated by Fenland District Council towards the cost of this project but he had not yet received formal notification of amount of the financial allocation and the terms and conditions applying to such.

With regard to the funding application to WREN, the Clerk informed members that he would be able to complete and submit the application following his receipt of written confirmation of the outcome of the application for funding from Fenland District Council's Rural Capital Grants Fund.

Members decided that

- (1) the information reported by the Clerk and Councillor Stokes be noted;
- (2) prior to the council giving the “go ahead” to installation of benches at the Elm play area, the Clerk would seek to ascertain (from the contractor which installed the play equipment) whether there are any regulations or guidance as to distances between pieces of play equipment and benches (or any other similar structure).

(2) Speeding across the parish (minute 7/16 (2))

Councillor Pinnock updated members on the operation of the Speed Watch scheme across the parish. He informed members that that Speed Watch activity continues and that for the period January 2016 to date 9,382 vehicles had been monitored with 700 of those vehicles (7.4%) being driven at speeds in excess of the speed limit.

Councillor Pinnock confirmed that the Elm Parish Speed Watch Co-ordinator had spoken with the Cambridgeshire Police Force Speed Watch Co-ordinator, Brian Robins, who had confirmed that the Elm Parish Speed Watch reporting procedure is good, with few rejections. Consequently, the drivers of most vehicles reported had been sent letters with the exception of “blocked vehicles” i.e. Government, military unmarked etc. In addition, he mentioned that Mr Robbins would be arranging for the Elm Parish Speed Watch Co-ordinator to deliver training to volunteers and to undertake risk assessment of locations.

Councillor Pinnock informed members that leaflets seeking volunteers had been published on the Parish Council website and on all notice boards. A further 500 copies would be distributed when printed. He mentioned that further to minute 7/16 (2), the Speed Watch warning notices had been installed at the locations agreed at that minute.

Councillor Pinnock mentioned that a new computer-based reporting system had been developed, which it is hoped would be operative very soon, this would reduce the amount of administration required of the Elm Parish Speed Watch Co-ordinator.

Members decided that the current situation be noted.

(3) Planning issues across the parish (minute 9/16)

The Clerk informed members that he had referred to the Planning Compliance Team at Fenland District Council the Parish Council's concern regarding the creation of an earth bund of approximately 8 feet in height at Halfpenny Lane, Elm and he had received a response, stating that the matter is being investigated.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

20/16 Police matters

No member of the Wisbech and District Neighbourhood Policing Team was present at the meeting and on this occasion no report had been received by the Clerk from PCSO Clarke; consequently, members received no information relating to recent incidents of crime and disorder which had been reported to the Constabulary, in relation to the geographical area covered by Elm Parish Council, since the last meeting of the council.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

21/16 Planning applications

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

- (1) Erection of a two-storey side extension, involving demolition of existing two-storey side extension, at Long Beach farm, Thurlands Drove, Upwell – F/YR16/0365/F (applicant: Mr and Mrs Hartley).

That the application be supported.

- (2) Certificate of Lawful Use (Existing): Erection of a kennel block comprising of 14 kennels for business use and erection of a single-storey outbuilding ancillary to existing dwelling at 8 Belt Drove, Elm – F/YR16/0455/CERTLU (applicant: Ms Betty Warden).

That the Parish Council is unable to confirm whether or not the applicant's claims in relation to the use of this site are correct.

Further to minute 46/15, the Clerk reported the submission of an appeal against Fenland District Council's refusal to grant planning permission for the erection of 30 x two-storey dwellings on land north of Henry Warby Avenue, Elm (application reference F/YR15/0614/F) and informed members of the opportunity to submit a representation to the Planning Inspectorate (in addition to the comments submitted by the Parish Council to the Local Planning Authority previously) in relation to this matter.

Councillor Pinnock expressed the opinion that Elm Parish Council should submit to the Planning Inspectorate additional comments to those that it had submitted to the Local Planning Authority in respect of this planning application and he offered to produce a draft representation, which he would circulate to members for comment prior to submission by the Clerk to the Planning Inspectorate.

Members decided that the information reported by the Clerk be noted and that the Clerk, in liaison with Councillor Pinnock, be delegated the authority to submit to the Planning Inspectorate, by the deadline of 8 July 2016, a representation on behalf of Elm Parish Council in respect of the appeal against Fenland District Council's refusal to grant planning (application reference F/YR15/0614/F).

22/16 Reports from District and County Councillors for the parish

Councillor Tanfield, one of the District Councillors who represents the parish of Elm, informed members that

- she had referred to the Clerk a complaint from a parishioner in relation to grass cutting at Elm Cemetery, as she outlined to members, and that the Clerk had subsequently informed her of the outcome of the complaint
- further to minute 11/16, there is now a Cambridgeshire and Peterborough devolution proposal. Under the proposal, which would be discussed by Fenland District Council on 1 July 2016, there would be a Mayor for the area (with effect from May 2017), who would be

supported by a Cabinet comprising the Leaders of the principal authorities within the area and the LEPs. There would also be an Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which would hold the decision-makers to account. The initial responsibility of the new authority would be issues related to transport and major community infrastructure.

District Councillor Tanfield expressed the opinion that this arrangement would result in more decision-making taking place at a local level (instead by the Government); this would be better for the rural areas and better for District Councils if they work together. She added that, as part of the deal, the area would receive from Government the sum £20m per year for a period of 30 years. District Councillor Tanfield expressed the opinion that this proposal would, in the future, see the devolution of some services/activities from principal authorities to Town and Parish Councils.

Councillor Sutton, the other District Councillor who represents the parish of Elm, informed members that

- he views the devolution proposal for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough as an opportunity for this area; it would provide funding that otherwise would not come to this part of the UK
- he had received complaints from parishioners regarding the speeds at which motorists drive along The Stitch at Fridaybridge.

County Councillor Gillick informed members that

- he had attended two sessions at Shire Hall recently in respect of the devolution proposal and there is, in his opinion, a lack of clarity in what is proposed; he expressed the opinion that this proposal constitutes the first step towards the establishment of regional government.
County Councillor Gillick stated that the funding promised by the Government as part of the devolution deal is not new money; it would replace the usual revenue support grant. He expressed the opinion that Town and Parish Councils would continue to exist whatever other forms of local government were in place
- the County Council intends to issue to all of its members a laptop or other mobile device
- he had attended a recent members' seminar at which County Councillors had been informed of a number of facts relating to education, including the level of home-schooling within Fenland and that around 40% of secondary school-age children who live in Wisbech attend schools in other towns
- the County Council's Community Infrastructure Committee had recently considered the award of contracts but the identity of the contractors had been withheld from members of the committee.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

23/16 Open spaces (including the cemetery) under the Parish Council's control

The Chairman mentioned that he continues to receive complaints from parishioners regarding the apparent absence of grass cutting activities across the parish and suggested that it would be appropriate for the Clerk and he to meet with a representative of the council's grounds maintenance to undertake a "walkabout" of the locations which are covered by the

contract and to reach agreement with the contractor as to action required to address the current service/performance issues.

Councillor Mrs Davis informed members that she had been asked by a resident of Fridaybridge as to the ownership of planters in the central part of the village and whether it would be in order for him to “re-fresh” the planters and to plant flowers therein.

One member responded, stating that the planters had been installed by a resident of the village - they are not in the ownership of Elm Parish Council – but they are no longer being maintained/planted by the resident who had installed the containers. Members stated that they are happy for the enquirer to assume the responsibility for these planters and for the council meet the reasonable cost of plants etc.

In response to comments made by a number of members in relation to the amount of litter on the grass and the car parking area at the Begdale playing field, the Chairman undertook to make contact with a representative of Elm Football Club, making the suggestion that, as the primary users of the site, club members may wish to carry out a clean-up of the area.

The Clerk read to members an e-mail from a resident of Coldham, seeking Elm Parish Council’s assistance in addressing damage caused by vehicles to the layby at Coldham, which is making very muddy the area in front of the post box; he enquired as to whether Elm Parish Council would be able to install bollards at that location to prevent cars causing damage to the grassed area. The Clerk informed members that, as the land in question is in the ownership of the Local Highway Authority (LHA), he had forwarded the resident’s enquiry to the LHA; he had informed the resident of the action that he had taken.

Members decided that the situation in general be noted and that

- (1) the performance of the grounds maintenance contract continue to be monitored and that the Clerk would make arrangements for the Chairman and he to have a “walkabout” in the parish with a representative of the grounds maintenance contractor, with the aim of ensuring that any issues are identified and addressed to the satisfaction of the council;
- (2) they are happy for the resident of Fridaybridge who had made contact with Councillor Mrs Davis to assume the responsibility for the planters in the centre of that village and for Elm Parish Council to meet the reasonable cost of plants etc;
- (3) they would await a response from the Local Highway Authority in relation to the request from the resident of Coldham for the installation of additional bollards at Coldham layby before considering the matter any further.

24/16 Begdale Road, Elm

Further to minute 150/15, Councillor Pinnock informed members that he had made contact with the Local Highway Authority (LHA), which had confirmed the works to Begdale Road are, with a few exceptions, completed. He commented that he is very concerned at the conclusion of the LHA, as, in his opinion, the road is in parts in a dangerous condition due to the volume of traffic and the speed of vehicles on this unrestricted road. In particular, there is a stretch of road leading from Redmoor Lane to the newly re-surfaced part of Begdale Road

which requires urgent attention to remedy subsidence of the roadside. Councillor Pinnock proposed that the Clerk makes contact with the Local Highway Authority, with a request that necessary repair works be undertaken.

Members decided that the Clerk would make contact with the Local Highway Authority, with a request that necessary repair works to Begdale Road be undertaken.

25/16 Local Highway Improvements scheme 2016/17

Further to minute 149/15, the Clerk informed members that additional funding had recently been allocated to Cambridgeshire County Council's Local Highway Improvement schemes budget for 2016/17 and, consequently, the application submitted by Elm Parish Council had now secured funding for delivery this year.

The Local Highway Authority (LHA) states that an officer from the Local Projects team would contact the council to develop its proposal in more detail and establish final costs and a timetable for completion. The LHA makes the point that formal acceptance of applicants' financial contribution, along with any ongoing operational or ownership responsibilities, will be required by 30 September 2016, otherwise funding may be re-allocated to the next prioritised application.

Councillor Pinnock informed members of meetings which had taken place – involving the Headteacher of Elm Primary School, a representative of the County Council's Local Projects team and he – with the aim of developing a co-ordinated scheme which would deliver the desired outcomes of both the LHI application submitted by the school and this council (both of these schemes were submitted on the basis of seeking to improve road safety in the vicinity of the school). He had circulated to members, in advance of the meeting, a report that he had produced which summarised these meetings and included suggestions which had been made to the LHA in terms of achieving a safer situation and he confirmed that he is awaiting a report from the Local Highway Authority outlining which of the suggested schemes of speed reduction contained in the report could be implemented and at what cost.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

26/16 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 and annual boiler service (£66.00))	£457.60
J G Cross Memorials	Memorial inscription	£99.00
Total Income		£556.60

Expenditure

Glazewing	Wheelie bin emptying – Elm Cemetery (includes VAT of £15.20)	£91.20
R J Warren Ltd	Grounds maintenance contract (includes VAT of £272.48)	£1,634.87
T Jordan	Salary (less income tax of £159.39 and NI of £10.72) and reimbursement of expenses	£756.55
Society of Local Council Clerks	Membership 2016/17	£83.50
Anglian Water	Water for cemetery	£82.88
HM Revenue and Customs	Clerk's Income Tax and NI (April, May and June 2016)	£554.08
Carter Accommodation Ltd	Hire of disabled toilet for Coldham Fun Weekend (includes VAT of £19.00)	£114.00
Chairman's Allowance Account	Chairman's Allowance 2016/17	£300.00
Total Expenditure		£3,617.08

In addition, the Clerk reported on the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 31 May 2016 (in the total sum of £143,704.63), together with the figure as at 31 May 2015.

Members decided

- (1) that the income of £556.60 be noted and that the expenditure of £3,617.08 be authorised;
- (2) that the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 31 May 2016 and the position as at 31 May 2015 be noted;
- (3) to note that, after allowing for the Parish Council's ear-marked reserves (totalling £93,595.00) at 31 May 2016), the actual balance available to the Parish Council at 31 May 2016 was £50,109.63; making further allowance for a general contingency of £55,000 reduces the actual balance available to the Parish Council at 31 May 2016 to approximately - £4,891.00.

27/16 Garden Waste Service

Members considered, as a consultee, Fenland District Council's proposal to commence charging (with effect from 1 April 2017) for the garden waste collection service.

The District Council's consultation exercise, which includes the delivery (between 20 and 30 June 2016) to household in Fenland of a consultation document, operates between 10 June and 31 July 2016. All of the feedback received by the District Council, included that received from Town and Parish Councils, will be included in a report to be presented to that council's Cabinet in the autumn of this year.

Members noted that the estimated cost of the service with effect from 1 April 2017 would be £40 per household per annum.

Although members feel that this proposal could be a retrograde step, which could lead to an increase in the amount of fly tipping in Fenland, they are mindful of the need for Fenland District Council to achieve financial savings.

Members decided that Fenland District Council be informed that Elm Parish Council can see the logic in the proposal to commence charging (with effect from 1 April 2017) for the garden waste collection service.

28/16 Wisbech St Mary and Guyhirn Parochial Church Council - request for financial assistance

Members considered a request from Wisbech St Mary and Guyhirn Parochial Church Council for a financial contribution towards the cost of maintaining the churchyard at the Guyhirn Chapel of Ease.

The Clerk informed members that the letter of request states that the Wisbech St Mary and Guyhirn Parochial Church Council is asking Elm Parish Council to consider making "its annual contribution" to this maintenance work. However, Elm Parish Council's records show that the only contribution made by the council towards the cost of such work in recent years was in the financial year 2012/13. Members requested the Clerk to draw this fact to the Wisbech St Mary and Guyhirn Parochial Church Council in his response to the letter.

Members decided, having considered Elm Parish Council's current level of financial resources and commitments upon those resources (which includes spending around £6,000 on the maintenance of its cemetery) for the financial year 2016/17, that this council is unable to make a financial contribution in the current financial year towards the cost of maintaining the churchyard at the Guyhirn Chapel of Ease.

29/16 Correspondence

Annual Coldham Fun Weekend

Further to minute 162/15 (2), the Clerk read to members an e-mail from the Secretary of the Coldham Residents Action Group (CRAG), expressing the group's appreciation of Elm Parish Council meeting the cost of providing a disabled toilet for the Coldham Fun Weekend 2016.

The e-mail also mentions that the event generated income slightly in excess of £2,000, which would be used by CRAG for upkeep of Coldham playing field and community building and to fund the cost of other village events, such as the annual Easter Egg Hunt.

Members decided that the content of the e-mail be noted.

30/16 Date of next meeting

Members were reminded that the next meeting of the Parish Council is scheduled for 19 July 2016, to commencing at 7.00 pm, at the Parish Council office, Begdale Road, Elm.

Meeting finished at 8.25 pm

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

Date:.....