

ELM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING

21 OCTOBER 2014 – 7.00 pm.

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

Apologies: Councillors Mrs Dalliday, Hopkin and Mrs Hopkin.

In attendance: District Councillors Sutton and Tanfield and County Councillor Gillick.

The minutes of the meeting of 18 September 2014 were confirmed and signed.

73/14 Open Forum

(1) Halfpenny Lane, Elm

Further to minute 58/14 (1), the resident of Elm who had expressed his concern regarding overgrown vegetation along certain areas of Halfpenny Lane, commented that, although some grass cutting had been undertaken, the situation is relatively unchanged from the situation he had described at minute 46/14 (1).

The Clerk explained the action that he had taken to address this situation (minute 75/14 (1) below refers).

Members decided that the comments of the local resident and the Clerk be noted.

(2) Fridaybridge Clocktower

Further to minute 58/14 (2), the wife of the parishioner who had informed the council that he had witnessed a lack of internal illumination of the clock faces on the clocktower at Fridaybridge commented that the situation remains the same as had been described at minutes 46/14 (2) and 58/14 (2).

The Clerk explained the action that he had taken to address this situation (minute 75/14 (2) below refers).

Members decided that the comments of the local resident and the Clerk be noted.

(3) Highway issue at Coldham

A resident of Coldham mentioned that there had been two road accidents recently on the outskirts of the village and that, as a result, there is need for the chevrons signage to be replaced.

Members decided that the comments of the parishioner be noted and that the Clerk would draw those comments to the attention of the Local Highway Authority.

(4) Possible Wisbech to March rail line

A resident of Coldham referred to information published on the website of Stephen Barclay MP in relation to the possible new Wisbech to March rail line and the potential for the provision of a King's Lynn to

Peterborough direct service. She expressed the view that if this scheme were to proceed, it would have a detrimental impact upon the village Coldham; for example, the railway track would prevent unrestricted access from the centre of the village to the playing field, as well as making the area more dangerous for children.

The resident requested that members of the Parish Council read the information published on the MP's website and then discuss the matter at the next meeting of the council.

Members decided that the comments of the parishioner be noted and that they would read the information published on the MP's website and then discuss the matter at the next meeting of the council.

74/14 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.

75/14 Progress on actions from minutes of last meeting

(1) Halfpenny Lane, Elm (minute 58/14 (1))

The Clerk reported that he had referred this issue to the relevant County Council Local Highway Officer (LHO) who had responded by informing the Clerk that she had asked the County Council's Highways Enforcement Officer to seek to achieve a solution to the issue. The LHO comments that she had sent letters to the "offender" on a number of occasions in the past, requesting that trimming works be undertaken to the vegetation, but no positive action had resulted.

Members decided that the information be noted and expressed their hope that intervention in this matter by the County Council's Highways Enforcement Officer would achieve a positive outcome to the situation.

(2) Fridaybridge clocktower (minute 58/14 (2))

The Clerk reported that he had made arrangements for the company which undertakes the maintenance of the clock to investigate, as part of the next servicing of the clock, the possible fault relating to illumination of the clock faces; this work is scheduled for December 2014.

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

(3) Facilities for young people in the parish (minute 60/14 (1))

The Clerk informed members that the situation is unchanged from that reported at minute 60/14 (1).

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

(4) Grove Gardens, Elm (minute 60/14 (3))

The Clerk reported that he had informed the Parks and Open Spaces Manager at Fenland District Council that Elm Parish Council is under pressure from Elm residents to provide play equipment at Elm and would appreciate his opinion as to the likelihood of adoption of the community land at Grove Gardens by Fenland District Council in the near future.

In response, the Parks and Open Spaces Manager at Fenland District Council (FDC) states that, having regard for the difficulties that have been faced by FDC to date in seeking to secure adoption of the open space and community land at Grove Gardens, his prediction is that it is extremely unlikely that adoption would take place any earlier than March or April 2015.

Members decided that

- (1) the information reported by the Clerk be noted;
- (2) in the light of the opinion of the Parks and Open Spaces Manager at Fenland District Council with regard to the possible timescale for the adoption of open space and community land at Grove Gardens, the Parish Council would consider using the pocket park adjacent to Chapel Lane as the site for the provision of play equipment at Elm;
- (3) to assist the council in assessing the feasibility of installing play equipment at the pocket park, the Chairman would calculate the size of the area of land occupied by play equipment at the playing field in Coldham to be able to estimate whether there would be sufficient land available at the pocket park to replicate the Coldham scheme at Elm.

(5) Play equipment provision in Elm and Fridaybridge (minute 60/14 (4))

The Clerk reminded members again of the decisions which had been made by the Parish Council at minute 36/14 and the need for actions to be taken to deliver the proposals; hence, he suggested that this matter should feature as a "standing" item on agendas for meetings of Elm Parish Council until such time as the schemes had been delivered.

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

(6) Memorial to the late Mac Cotterell (minute 60/14 (5))

The Clerk reported that the memorial bench had been delivered recently to Elm Cemetery and that he would now make arrangements for installation of the bench at the location within Elm Cemetery agreed at minute 48/14 (5).

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

76/14 Police matters

No member of the Wisbech and District Neighbourhood Policing Team was present at the meeting and, 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 and that the Clerk would seek to obtain from the Constabulary, for circulation to members, a report detailing recent incidents of crime and disorder within the geographical area covered by Elm Parish Council.

77/14 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 dwelling on land north of Rosedale, Needham Bank, Fridaybridge – F/YR14/0734/O (applicant: Ms J Drew).

That the application be supported.

- (2) Works to an Oak tree within a Conservation Area at Elm House, Main Road, Elm – F/YR14/0771/TRCA (applicant: Mrs D Bullard).

That the application be supported.

- (3) Erection of a 1.9 metre high (maximum height) replacement gates to front boundary of existing property at Waldersey House, 172 March Road, Fridaybridge – F/YR14/0775/F (applicant: Mr D Turner).

That the application be supported.

- (4) Erection of 4 x 22.0 metres high (hub height) wind turbines with associated works, to replace existing 6 turbines on site, at Chestnut Farm, Nettle Bank, Elm – F/YR14/0801/F (applicant: Mr P Lankfer).

That the application be supported.

(Councillor Mrs Lankfer declared her non-pecuniary interest in this application, by virtue of being a relative of the applicant)

- (5) Erection of a part two-storey, part single-storey side extension to existing dwelling at Treetops, 49 The Stitch, Fridaybridge – F/YR14/0806/F (applicants: Mr and Mrs Leake).

That the application be supported.

In addition, the Clerk reported that planning application F/YR14/0620/F (which proposed the change of use of residential cartilage and erection of a shed/store on land east of 166 Fridaybridge Road, Elm), which had been considered (and supported) by the Parish Council at minute 50/14, had been withdrawn by the applicant.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

78/14 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, given the extreme budgetary pressures being faced by the authority (both in terms of year-on-year significant financial reductions and the increasing population), the County Council had discussed recently the possibility of a unitary authorities system of local governance in Cambridgeshire and a number of potential options in that regard. He commented that, under any changes to the local governance structure in Cambridgeshire, the opportunity could exist for the devolution of certain services/functions from the County Council and the District Councils to Town and Parish Councils.

Councillor Gillick informed members that one of the ways in which the County Council is seeking to reduce its budgetary pressures is to dispose of a number of the buildings it owns. He mentioned that the County Council is also considering, as a means of reducing expenditure, lessening the amount of road gritting activity that it undertakes.

Councillor Sutton, one of the District Councillors who represents the parish of Elm,

- informed members that it is now proposed that Concurrent Functions Grants for 2015/16 and beyond would not be reduced below the 2014/15 level;
- mentioned that Fenland District Council (FDC) is still awaiting receipt from Balfour Beatty of the final results of the survey of street lamps; the way in which Balfour Beatty is undertaking the process, which seems to be taking place on a piecemeal basis (not focussing on whole parish or towns), means that it is not possible yet, from the information provided to FDC so far, to assess the implications for an individual parish or town areas
- commented that he had inspected the damaged street light at Oldfield Avenue (minute 80/14 refers) and concluded that it appears to have suffered accident damage
- mentioned that street lamp FPC3 on Birch Grove had been reported to Balfour Beatty as being faulty (the lamp being on permanently) and, in response, that company had removed the majority of the lamp column; Councillor Sutton suggested that the Parish Council may wish to pursue the re-instatement works
- stated that he is assisting a number of residents within the parish to address drainage-related issues.

Councillor Tanfield, the other District Councillor who represents the parish of Elm, reminded the Parish Council of the current review of subsidised bus services being undertaken by the County Council, under the Cambridgeshire Future Transport project, and suggested that the Parish Council should give publicity to the public consultation exercise taking place as part of this project.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

79/14 Financial assistance to Elm Parochial Church Council for works to the bells at All Saints Church

Further to minute 69/14, members considered a draft agreement between Elm Parish Council (EPC) and the Elm Parochial Church Council (PCC), which had been prepared, at the request of Councillor Pinnock, by Mr R Wilkes on behalf of the Elm PCC, in relation to the financial support to be provided by EPC to the PCC to fund repair works to the bells at All Saints Church.

A copy of the draft agreement had been circulated to all members of Elm Parish Council in advance of the meeting.

Mr Wilkes, who had been invited to address the council on this matter, summarised the draft agreement, making the particular points that any funding provided by the Parish Council would be net of VAT and that such funding could be applied by the PCC only to the cost of repair works to the bells (and for no other purpose).

Councillor Pinnock informed members that he had forwarded to Mr Wilkes some suggested amendments to the agreement, to which Mr Wilkes had indicated his agreement.

Members decided that

- (1) Councillor Pinnock would produce an updated version of the agreement, incorporating the agreed amendments, and circulate that version to the members of the council and Mr Wilkes;
- (2) the recipients of the updated agreement would forward to the Clerk, within seven days of their receipt of the document, any comments or suggested revisions;
- (3) a final version of the agreement be approved at the next meeting of the Parish Council.

80/14 Street lighting

The Clerk reported a request from Fenland District Council for the Parish Council's consent to replace a damaged street lamp (FPC2 at Oldfield Avenue, Elm).

The quotation for the cost of the work is £1,248.34 (plus VAT).

Councillor Pinnock informed members that he had looked at the condition of this lamp column and concluded that it is suffering very minor impact damage; it is still working and appears to be safe. This conclusion had also been reached by District Councillor Sutton (minute 78/14 refers).

Given the comments of those councillors, members are not minded to spend in excess of £1,200.00 on the replacement of this street lamp unless Balfour Beatty, the District Council's street lighting contractor, is able to demonstrate an over-riding safety need (such as the potential for electrocution of a member of the public) for works to be carried out.

Members decided that the Clerk would request Fenland District Council (FDC) to inform Balfour Beatty of the Parish Council's views in this matter and FDC to subsequently inform the Clerk of the response from Balfour Beatty in that regard.

81/14 Open spaces (including the cemetery) under the Parish Council's control

Members considered whether there are any issues relating to the open spaces issues which required discussion by the Parish Council.

The Clerk informed members that he had no such items requiring consideration by members at this time.

No member of the council had any items that they wished to raise.

Members decided that the current situation be noted.

82/14 Parish Council administration

Councillor Stokes mentioned a situation whereby he had been contacted, during the period of the Clerk's recent period of annual leave, by a local funeral director wishing to arrange the purchase of a burial plot and the interment of a deceased person therein. Given that Councillor Stokes had no access to the council's burial records, this caused him difficulty in being able to provide the service required by the funeral director; Councillor Stokes commented that he would not wish to experience a recurrence of this situation.

The Clerk informed members that he had been contacted, upon his return from annual leave, by the grave digger who had been engaged by the funeral director and the Clerk had, consequently, made the necessary arrangements for the burial to take place. He also made the point that this was the first time, since his becoming Clerk to Elm Parish Council (which commenced in July 2010), that such a situation had occurred.

Members decided that the situation be noted and that the Clerk would put in place, in liaison with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council, an arrangement to ensure that this situation does not occur in the future.

83/14 Concurrent Functions Grants and Parish Council street lighting (provisional liability of £75,000)

At minute 65/14 members decided that the following item be deferred again and be placed on the agenda for this meeting of Elm Parish Council:

“Councillor Pinnock to raise the following issues: (1) examination of the procedure and results of meetings held by Fenland District Council (FDC); (2) taking action to ensure that the Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) is kept fully informed of all administrative and financial matters affecting Elm Parish Council; (3) requesting formally from FDC confirmation of the purpose of the survey of street lamps and to request that, in future, all correspondence be addressed to the Clerk/RFO of Elm Parish Council; (4) ensuring that the Chairman informs the Clerk/RFO of all matters relating to the operational running of the council”.

Councillor Pinnock stated that he had been shocked to discover that the Parish Council could be faced with a financial liability of £75,000 over the next three years. He has calculated the likely total cost of replacing the category one lamps (£11,000 (on the basis of the Parish Council being required to meet 50% of the costs)) and the Category 2 lamps (£53,000) at around £64,000. He referred to the concerns that had been raised by one parishioner with regard to the level of financial reserves held by Elm Parish Council, which the council could have “defended” more easily if it had been aware of this potential calling upon those reserves.

Councillor Pinnock asked the question as to whether the Clerk or any member of Elm Parish Council had attended meetings with Fenland District Council regarding this situation.

The Clerk confirmed that he not attended any such meetings. The Chairman informed members that he had attended two meetings at Fenland District Council at which Concurrent Functions Grants and street lighting had been discussed but had not reported back to the Parish Council on his attendance at those meetings because nothing “concrete” had resulted from the meetings.

Councillor Pinnock stated that he could not understand the approach taken by Fenland District Council in not corresponding with the Clerk in this matter and for inviting Parish Council Chairmen but not inviting Parish Council Clerks to these meetings. He commented that it is the responsibility of a Parish Council Clerk to ensure that members receive all relevant information which affects the parish and to be able, if also the Responsible Financial Officer, to advise members of the financial implications of issues affecting the council.

Councillor Pinnock proposed that, to prevent the Clerk being “out of the loop” in future, all correspondence for Elm Parish Council should be sent to him, as the council’s Proper Officer, and to no individual members of the council; also, the Clerk should be invited to all meetings convened by Fenland District Council in relation to issues which affect the parish of Elm.

The Clerk reported that he had contacted Fenland District Council (which had commissioned the survey of street lights in Fenland) to ascertain whether the condition survey of street lights had been in response to a European Union Directive and, if so, the date of the directive and why had this information not been brought to the attention of Parish Councils.

In response to the Clerk’s enquiry, Fenland District Council’s Head of Assets and Projects explained the situation as follows:

- historically the lights owned by Parish Councils and the District Council were maintained by the County Council via its term contracts, initially with Ringway and then Atkins
- when the County Council agreed its 25 years PFI agreement for street lighting with Balfour Beatty, part of the negotiation was that the successful provider would continue to offer street lighting repairs and maintenance to Districts and Parishes, although this would be outside of the PFI
- Fenland District Council subsequently agreed a repairs and maintenance agreement with Balfour Beatty, which included activities such as bulb changes, globe cleaning and condition information.
- the condition survey of District and Parish street lamps was a matter of good housekeeping rather than a new express requirement.

Members decided that

- (1) Fenland District Council be informed that all correspondence for Elm Parish Council should be sent to the Clerk, and to no individual members of the council; also, the Clerk should be invited to all meetings convened by Fenland District Council in relation to issues which affect the parish of Elm;
- (2) the information reported by the Clerk as to the rationale for the current condition survey of street lamps be noted.

84/14 Financial matters

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

Income

Maxey Grounds	Cottage rent (less fees)	£523.60
Richard King Memorials	Memorial inscription	£66.00
A R Clingo	Interment of ashes fee	£138.00
A R Clingo	Interment fee	£275.00
Fenland District Council	Parish Precept 2014/15 (including Council Tax Support Grant)– second 50%	£15,000.00
UK Power Networks	Wayleave	£230.84
J P Smith	Allotment rent	£1,750.00
Richard King Memorials	Memorial inscription	£66.00
Total Income		£18,049.44

Expenditure

Glazewing	Wheelie bin emptying – Elm Cemetery (includes VAT of £14.10)	£84.62
R J Warren Ltd	Grounds maintenance contract (includes VAT of £241.88)	£1,451.29
T Jordan	Salary (less income tax of £219.30 and NI of £52.02), Broadband and other expenses	£939.45
K G Webb	Hedge trimming and tree cutting works at Gosmoor Lane, Elm	£2,275.00
Malcolm Lane and Son	Manufacture and supply of memorial bench (includes VAT of £187.00)	£1,122.00
C Brennan	Playing field security (quarterly payment to 30 September 2014)	£100.00
Total Expenditure		£5,972.36

In addition, the Clerk reported on the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 30 September 2014 (in the total sum of £126,344.19), together with the month-end figures for each of the preceding six months and as at 30 September 2013.

Further to minute 21/11, the Clerk reported on the management accounts that he had produced for the second 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.

Members decided

- (1) that the income of £18,049.44 be noted and that the expenditure of £5,972.36 be authorised;
- (2) that the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 30 September 2014, together with the month-end figures for each of the preceding six months and as at 30 September 2013, be noted;
- (3) to note that, after allowing for the Parish Council's ear-marked reserves (totalling £55,935.50) at 30 September 2014), the actual balance available to the Parish Council at 30 September 2014 was £70,408.69; 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 September 2014 to approximately £25,408.00;
- (4) that the financial information within the first quarter's management accounts be noted.

85/14 Finance Committee

Members considered the making of arrangements for a meeting of the council's Finance Committee.

Members decided that the Clerk would consult with members of the committee as to their availability (for certain dates/times) for a meeting of the committee and items which they wish to feature on the meeting agenda, following which a meeting would be arranged.

86/14 Application to divert and upgrade part of Footpath No. 5 at Elm

Members considered an application which had been made to Cambridgeshire County Council, under Section 119 of the Highways Act 1980, for diversion of part of Elm Footpath No. 5 and subsequent upgrading of the entire path to bridleway.

The Clerk had circulated to members, in advance of the meeting, a copy of the application and accompanying maps (which show the proposed diversion route).

The deadline for the submission of consultation responses to the County Council is 24 October 2014.

Members decided that County Council be informed that Elm Parish Council supports the application.

87/14 Correspondence

(1) Coldham Village Event

Further to minute 55/14 (3), the Clerk read to members an e-mail from the Secretary of Coldham Residents Action Group, expressing thanks to the Parish Council for meeting the cost of providing a disabled toilet for the sixth Annual Coldham Village Event 2014. The e-mail also informed the council that the event generated

approximately £800, which would be used to operate and maintain the village's playing field and community building.

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

(2) Parking on the grassed verge at Abington Grove, Elm

The Clerk read to members an e-mail (forwarded to him by District Councillor Sutton) from a resident of Elm, suggesting that, in an effort to deter motorists from parking their vehicles on the grassed verge areas at the junction of Abington Grove and Main Road, the installation of a No Parking sign may be worth considering.

Members are of the opinion that the installation of signage would have no effect upon the habits of those who park their vehicles on these grassed verge areas.

Members decided that the Parish Council would not pursue the suggestion of seeking to secure the installation (by the Local Highway Authority) of a No Parking sign on the grassed verge areas at the junction of Abington Grove and Main Road

(3) Ownership of an area of land at Elm

Members had been consulted in advance of the meeting on whether they could assist in identifying the ownership of a particular area of land at Elm. However, as a result of investigations by members in recent days, the issue no longer required consideration by the Parish Council and was, consequently, withdrawn from the agenda for this meeting.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

88/14 Date of next meeting

Members were reminded that the next meeting of the Parish Council had been scheduled for 18 November 2014, commencing at 7.00 pm, at the Parish Council office, Begdale Road, Elm.

Meeting finished at 8.25 pm

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

Date:.....