

ELM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING

24 MAY 2016 – 7.15 pm.

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

In attendance: County Councillor Gillick and District Councillors Sutton and Tanfield (until 8.00 pm).

Apologies: None (all members were present).

The minutes of the meeting of 19 April 2016 were confirmed and signed.

1/16 Open Forum

(1) Bar Drove, Elm

A parishioner informed the council that he wished to make it aware that a residential caravan (enclosed by fencing, which he suspects does not benefit from planning permission, had been sited at Bar Drove, Elm and enquired as to any action that could be taken by Elm Parish Council to address the situation.

With the consent of the Chairman, District Councillor Sutton responded to the parishioner; he commented that he had already raised this issue with both an officer of the Planning Compliance Team at Fenland District Council and that council's Equality and Diversity Manager.

Members decided that the comments of the parishioner and the response of District Councillor Sutton be noted.

(2) Coldham playing field

A resident of Coldham expressed to the council his opinion that the grass at Coldham playing field is in need of cutting, particularly given the fact that the annual Fun Weekend would take place within the next few days.

Both the Chairman and the Clerk mentioned that this matter had already been brought to the attention of the council's grounds maintenance contractor.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

(3) Elm play area

A parishioner informed the council that he had ascertained that the Whitemill Local Environment Fund Committee would consider favourably an application for the provision of a bench within the new play area if the application were submitted by Elm Primary School.

Members decided that the information provided by the parishioner be noted.

2/16 Election of Chairman

Councillor Brand was elected as Chairman of the Parish Council for the municipal year 2016/17 and made his Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

3/16 Election of Vice-Chairman

Councillor Pinnock was elected as Vice-Chairman of the Parish Council for the municipal year 2016/17.

4/16 Chairman's Allowance for 2016/17

Members considered the setting of a Chairman's Allowance for the municipal year 2016/17.

Members decided that the sum of £300.00 be allocated to meet the expenses of the Chairman of the Council during the municipal year 2016/17.

5/16 appointment of membership of the Finance Committee for the municipal year 2016/17

Members decided that membership of the Finance Committee for the municipal year 2016/17 be Councillors Brand, Mrs Cotterell, Milham, Pinnock and Webb.

6/16 Members' Code of Conduct

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.

7/16 Progress on actions from minutes of last meeting

(1) Play equipment provision in Elm and Fridaybridge (minute 155/15 (1))

Further to minute 116/15 (1), Councillor Pinnock reported that the Clerk and he had inspected the spare bench (currently stored within the Cemetery Chapel building) to assess its suitability for installation at the new play area at Elm; they had concluded that, subject to it being cleaned and re-painted,, it would be suitable and that they had identified an appropriate location for its siting. Councillor Pinnock presented a quotation that he had obtained from a local contractor for the improvement and installation of the bench.

Councillor Stokes informed members that a group of parents of pupils of the Elm C of E Primary School had offered to purchase and install, at no cost to the council, a bench at the new Elm play area.

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 would be considered by the Cabinet of that council on 26 May 2016; he had forwarded to members, in advance of the meeting, a copy of the report to be submitted by officers of Fenland District Council to that council's Cabinet meeting.

With regard to the funding application to WREN, the Clerk reminded members that he had been advised by the relevant officer of Fenland District Council to await the outcome of the application to that council's Rural Capital Grants Fund before submitting an application to WREN.

Members decided that

- (1) the information reported by the Clerk and Councillors Pinnock and Stokes be noted;
- (2) the offer group of parents of pupils of the Elm C of E Primary School had offered to purchase and install a bench at the new Elm play area, subject to the council agreeing the exact location of the bench.

(2) Speeding across the parish (minute 155/15 (2))

Councillor Pinnock updated members on the operation of the Speed Watch scheme across the parish. He mentioned that a meeting of the volunteers and the local co-ordinator had taken place last week to discuss operation and development of the scheme. He informed members that there is a need to recruit additional volunteers, to be able to spread the workload among more people, and he offered to produce a "recruitment" leaflet, which could be published on the Elm Parish Council website and displayed on the parish notice boards.

Councillor Pinnock read to members the statistics in relation to the Speed Watch activity during the last month; namely (with statistics for the previous month shown in brackets):

- 12 (10) sessions
- 2.622 (2,288) vehicles "clicked"
- 309 (126) motorists exceeding the speed limit; 11.78% (5.5%) of the vehicles "clicked".

Councillor Pinnock informed members that positive comments are being made by parishioners, who are appreciative of the work being undertaken by the Speed Watch volunteers. He mentioned that as a result of the Clerk contacting the Local Highway Authority, in accordance with minute 143/15, the speed limit signs on Gosmoor Lane had been replaced.

Councillor Pinnock commented that there had been almost no feedback from Cambridgeshire Constabulary in relation to the information which had been provided to the Constabulary by the Speed Watch volunteers. Consequently, he sought the backing of the council for him to make contact with the relevant officer at Cambridgeshire Constabulary to discuss the situation.

Further to minute 142/15 (2), Councillor Pinnock reminded members that he had circulated details, in advance of the meeting, in relation to the design of the Speed Watch warning notices and the locations at which he recommends they be installed. On the basis of the installation locations recommended, it is apparent that 7 (instead of 6, as estimated previously) notices (at a cost of £88 each) would be required.

Members decided that

- (1) the current situation be noted;
- (2) Councillor Pinnock would produce a "recruitment" leaflet, which could be published on the Elm Parish Council website and displayed on the parish notice boards;
- (3) Councillor Pinnock would discuss with the relevant officer at Cambridgeshire Constabulary the lack of feedback from Cambridgeshire Constabulary in relation to the information which had been provided to the Constabulary by the Speed Watch volunteers;

(4) arrangements be made for the purchase and installation (at the locations recommended by Councillor Pinnock) of 7 Speed Watch warning notices.

(3) Planning and Fenland Local Plan Policy LP12 (minute 155/15 (3))

The Clerk informed members that he had contacted the Head of Planning Services at Fenland District Council to ascertain whether there is an independent body to which Elm Parish Council could apply to challenge this decision of the Local Planning Authority (LPA) and had received a response to that enquiry.

In his e-mail response to the Clerk, the Head of Planning Service states that the LPA did not obtain a legal opinion on the issue as it is quite a straightforward point in terms of planning law. The decision to exclude The Dale from the LP12 figures was the result of a discussion between the Development Control Manager and a member of the Fenland District Council Policy Team. Planning permission was granted for 21 houses at The Dale in 2013; the development replaced sheltered housing, comprising 21 units, on the site. The fact that the new dwellings are different in nature to the ones that they replaced, the actual number of units on the site remains the same.

The Head of Planning Service states also that there is no appeal body which could settle the matter but the Parish Council may wish to contact the Royal Town Planning Institute to see if that body could provide the council with some advice and guidance.

The Head of Planning Service offered to attend this meeting of Elm Parish Council, to discuss this matter; the Clerk had informed members, in advance of the meeting of this invitation, and they had accepted the offer. Consequently, this officer, Mr N Harding, had been in attendance at the meeting.

Councillor Pinnock mentioned to Mr King that Circle Roddons Housing considers the 21 dwellings at The Dale to constitute new dwellings; a different stance to the one being taken from a planning perspective. He asked for an explanation from Mr King as to how the LP12 threshold figures for Elm had been calculated; the Parish Council had been provided with different figures on different occasions. In response, Mr King commented that the earlier figures provided to Elm Parish Council had been incorrect, due to a lack of proper checking/recording by officers of the Local Planning Authority; he is of the belief that the figures produced and circulated most recently by the LPA to Town and Parish Councils in Fenland are accurate.

Councillor Pinnock enquired of Mr King as to why local councils receive such a short period of notice of an application being referred to the District Council's Planning Committee for determination (and the opportunity for a member of the local council to attend that meeting to present that council's comments on the particular development proposal), which affords the local council little time to arrange for one of its members to attend the Planning Committee meeting. In response, Mr King stated his understanding that notice is given to local councils at the same time as the Planning Committee agenda is finalised/published.

Mr King responded in the affirmative to a question from Councillor Stokes as to whether it is possible for an applicant to submit more than one application for a site.

Councillor Pinnock mentioned Elm Parish Council's objections (particularly the proposed development of land allocated currently as community land) to planning application F/YR15/0907/F (for the erection of 11 two-storey 4-bed dwellings with garages on land west of Cedar Way, accessed from Grove Gardens, Elm), which would be considered at tomorrow afternoon's meeting of the District Council's Planning Committee. Mr King commented that the objections which had been raised by Elm Parish Council are included within the officers' committee report on the application.

Members decided that the situation be noted and expressed their thanks to Mr King for his attendance at the meeting, which they had found to be very useful.

8/16 Police matters

Although no member of the Wisbech and District Neighbourhood Policing Team was present at the meeting, PCSO Sue Clarke had provided to the Clerk a very brief report on recent incidents of crime and disorder which had been reported to the Constabulary since the last meeting of the Parish Council. PCSO Clarke's report mentioned that there had been no incidents of crime and disorder reported to the Constabulary since the last meeting of the council; there had, however, been an increase in the number of thefts from vehicles of catalytic converters in other local areas and that vehicle owners need to take reasonable measures to ensure that they do not become a victim of such criminal activity.

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

9/16 Planning issues in the parish

Councillor Pinnock made reference to certain planning issues/concerns affecting the parish, details of which he had circulated to members in advance of the meeting, as follows:

- (1) Bar Drove, Elm – concerns regarding the stationing of a residential caravan and the erection of fencing.
- (2) Halfpenny Lane, Elm – the creation of an earth bund of approximately 8 feet in height; the positioning of the earth bund does not appear to accord with the approved plans.
- (3) Planning application F/YR15/0907/F (for the erection of 11 two-storey 4-bed dwellings with garages on land west of Cedar Way, accessed from Grove Gardens, Elm). He had proposed to attend tomorrow afternoon's meeting of Fenland District Council's Planning Committee – to inform the committee of Elm Parish Council's objections to the application - but is now longer able to do so. He had prepared some notes as the basis of a presentation. Councillor Stokes had, subsequently offered to attend to present the council's views on application.

With regard to (1), Councillor Pinnock stated that, given the information reported by District Councillor Sutton at minute 1/16 (1), he no longer seeks a discussion on this issue.

Members decided that

- (1) the issue of the location of the earth bund at Halfpenny Lane, Elm be referred, by the Clerk, to the Planning Compliance Team at Fenland District Council for investigation;
- (2) Councillor Stokes' offer to attend tomorrow afternoon's meeting of Fenland District Council's Planning Committee to make a presentation at that meeting – of objection to planning application F/YR15/0907/F – be accepted.

10/16 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 three-storey 5/6-bed dwelling with detached triple garage at plot 4, land west of Appletree House, Begdale Road, Elm - F/YR16/0250/F (applicant: Mr L Willis).

That the application be supported.

- (2) Erection of a two-storey 4-bed dwelling on land south of 6 March Road, Rings End - F/YR16/0251/F (applicant: Mrs Luu).

That the application be supported in principle but the council is concerned about the reduction in the existing on-site car parking facilities that would be a consequence of approval of the application.

- (3) Erection of a single-storey storage building on land east of plot 2, land south of 188 Fridaybridge Road, Elm - F/YR16/0276/F (applicants: Mr and Mrs J Clarke).

That the application be supported.

- (4) Change of use of agricultural buildings to 2 x 4-bed dwellings (Class Q (a) and (b)) at Whitehouse Farm, Coldham Bank, Coldham – F/YR16/0329/PNC04 (applicants: Mr J Butt and Mrs J Scarbro).

That the application be supported.

- (5) Erection of 5 x 2-bed and 15 x 4-bed two-storey dwellings with garages on land west of Cedar Way, accessed from Grove Gardens, Elm – F/YR16/0335/F (applicant: Kier Living Ltd).

Object to the application for the following reasons:

- *approval of the proposal would contribute, through cumulative impact of current and planned residential development, to overdevelopment of the village of Elm*
 - *the current community infrastructure (including lack of capacity at Elm Primary School, insufficient medical facilities and inadequate local road network) is insufficient to support the continued development within the village*
 - *the application site provides insufficient facilities for the off-road parking of vehicles likely to be generated by occupiers of the proposed dwellings*
 - *a part of the application site is subject to a Section 106 Planning Obligation requiring its use, once adopted by Fenland District Council, as community land*
 - *approval of the proposal could be in conflict with Policy LP12 of the Fenland Local Plan (adopted in May 2014).*
- (6) Conversion of care home to two-storey 4-bed dwelling, involving demolition of northern section of existing building, at Friday House Residential Home, 141 March Road, Fridaybridge – F/YR16/0350/F (applicant: Mr C Clandillon).

That the application be supported.

In addition, the Clerk reported that planning application F/YR16/0143/CERTLU (for a Certificate of Lawful Use (Existing): Use of land as domestic garden at The Courtyard, 2A High Road, Elm), considered by the Parish Council at minute 145/15 refers, had been withdrawn by the applicant.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

11/16 Reports from District and County Councillors for the parish

County Councillor Gillick informed members of the County Council's Community Highways Volunteering scheme proposals. Under the scheme, volunteers within parishes would be recruited to undertake, on behalf of the Local

Highway Authority (LHA), certain routine maintenance activities which would be a low priority for the LHA and, consequently, it may be unable to fund; such works are:

- siding out of overgrown footways
- cutting back vegetation which is causing obstruction to footways
- cleaning road signs
- litter picking.

Officers of the Local Highway Authority are in the process of producing volunteer information packs.

County Councillor Gillick mentioned also that

- there is some uncertainty as to the collaborates to any devolution arrangement for East Anglia
- approximately £550 million is available under the (Cambridge) City Deal and the process is being managed by a committee which comprises members of Cambridgeshire County Council and representatives of the private-sector
- a new multi-authority contract for the delivery of certain highways activities (including maintenance of street lighting, the Guided Busway etc) had been awarded recently
- the County Council would soon be investigating options for achieving further reductions in highways budgets
- the reduction in the budgets of principal authorities provides parish councils with the opportunity to “step up” in terms of the delivery of public services.

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

- further to minute 158/15, it appears that the Government is “softening” its approach to requiring any devolution arrangement for East Anglia to embrace three counties (i.e. Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk); it is now looking likely that a devolution arrangement to cover Cambridgeshire and Peterborough may be possible
- he had received a call from a resident of Fridaybridge Road, Elm, enquiring as to the possibility of the current 40 mph speed limit on that road being reduced to 30 mph (so that the whole length of the B1101 between Fridaybridge and Elm would have a 30 mph speed limit). He requested the Parish Council to bear this in mind when considering the submission of a Local Highway Initiative scheme bid for 2017/18
- he is supporting of the proposal of Councillor Pinnock to produce publicity material with the aim of recruiting additional Speed Watch volunteers (minute 7/16 (2) refers) and made the point that both District Councillor Tanfield and he would be happy to assist with distribution.

Councillor Tanfield, the other District Councillor who represents the parish of Elm, informed members that she had nothing to add to the report of District Councillor Sutton.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

12/16 Nationwide Building Society’s volunteering scheme

With the consent of the Chairman, District Councillor Sutton informed members that he had been approached by the March branch of the Nationwide Building Society to see if he had any suggestions to make as to any community work which staff could undertake as part of the society’s volunteering scheme; he had suggested initially, subject to agreement of the respective Parish Councils, cleaning of the war memorial at Elm and a litter pick in both Elm and Christchurch.

The proposed date for the volunteering activity is 5 June 2016.

District Councillor Sutton stated that he would be prepared to obtain the necessary equipment (including Hi-Viz jackets) for use by the volunteers.

The Clerk reminded members that the war memorial at Elm is a Listed Building and, consequently, it had been necessary to engage specialist contractors when the memorial had been cleaned on previous occasions.

Members decided that

- (1) the information reported by District Councillor Sutton be noted and that the Nationwide Building Society's volunteers be invited to undertake a litter pick in Elm;
- (2) Parish Councillors would make contact with District Councillor Sutton with suggestions as to particular parts of Elm which would benefit from a litter pick;
- (3) the Clerk would seek to obtain quotations from specialist contractors for cleaning of the war memorial at Elm, for consideration at a future meeting.

13/16 Open spaces (including the cemetery) under the Parish Council's control

Further to minute 159/15, the Clerk informed members that he placed an order for the installation of bollards around the war memorial at Elm and had enquired of the contractor as to a likely timescale for the installation works. In response, the contractor had stated that delivery of the bollards from his supplier is anticipated by the end of this month and that he would subsequently inform the Clerk of a start date for the works.

The Chairman mentioned that he had received a number of complaints from parishioners regarding the apparent absence of grass cutting activities across the parish, Both the Clerk and he had discussed this situation with the council's grounds maintenance contractor and had been informed that the situation had resulted from a mower breakdown but the consequent backlog is being cleared.

In addition, the Clerk read an e-mail from a resident of Fridaybridge enquiring as to any plans of the council to undertake cleaning/clearance works to the pond at The Leam.

In response to a comment made by Councillor Pinnock that a number of parishioners had complained to him about the condition of Begdale Road, Councillor Miss Ferguson stated that the Local Highway Authority (LHA) had stated that the road had been inspected and it had been agreed that some workmanship issues with the carriageway surfacing would be addressed before a "Provisional Certificate of Completion" is issued. With respect to the in-filled verge/soft landscaping areas, Belectric/British Solar Renewables was required to rectify any damage caused during the construction of the Solar Farm by reinstating these areas back to the condition they were in before work commenced and the LHA is happy this has been carried out

Members decided that the situation in general be noted and that

- (1) the performance of the grounds maintenance contract be monitored;
- (2) the Clerk would obtain an estimate of the cost of undertaking cleaning/clearance works at the pond at The Leam, with a view to making financial provision for such works during the financial year 2017/18.

14/16 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)	£523.60
H M Revenue and Customs	VAT refund 2015/16	£11,312.59
Kent Memorials	Memorial tablet	£165.00
Kent Memorials	Cemetery memorial	£222.00
Fenland District Council	Precept - first 50%	£24,575.00
Fenland District Council	Council Tax Support Grant - first 50%	£1,719.50
Peter Barnes Funerals Ltd	Plot purchase and interment fee	£1,279.00
Peter Barnes Funerals Ltd	Interment fee	£412.00
A J Coggles	Plot purchase and interment fee	£2,475.00
Total Income		£42,683.69

Expenditure

Glazewing	Wheelie bin emptying – Elm Cemetery (includes VAT of £15.20)	£91.20
R J Warren Ltd	Grounds maintenance contract (includes VAT of £263.58)	£1,581.47
T Jordan	Salary (less income tax of £167.33 and NI of £19.76) and reimbursement of expenses	£802.22
Richard Kierman	Cleaning of notice boards etc	£45.00
S Cowell	Internal Audit of 2016/16 accounts	£65.00
Came and Company	Insurance 2016/17	£2,488.70
Anglia Locksmiths	Open and replace lock at Elm playing field and provide additional keys (includes VAT of £14.95)	£89.71
Cambridgeshire County Council	Purchase of 7 Community Speed Watch notices (includes VAT of £123.20)	£739.20
Total Expenditure		£5,902.50

In addition, the Clerk reported on the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 30 April 2016 (in the total sum of £144,816.84), together with the figure as at 30 April 2015.

The Clerk reported on the Annual Audit of Accounts 2015/16 Annual Return (which includes the Governance Statement and Accounting Statement), 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 2015/16.

Members decided

- (1) that the income of £42,683.69 be noted and that the expenditure of £5,902.50 be authorised;
- (2) that the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 30 April 2016 and the position as at 30 April 2015 be noted;
- (3) to note that, after allowing for the Parish Council's ear-marked reserves (totalling £62,595.00) at 30 April 2016, the actual balance available to the Parish Council at 30 April 2016 was £82,221.84; making further allowance for a general contingency of £55,000 reduces the actual balance available to the Parish Council at 30 April 2016 to approximately £27,222.00;
- (4) that the Annual Audit of Accounts Annual Return for 2015/16 be approved and submitted to the External Auditor.

15/16 Correspondence

(1) Elm Friendship Club – financial assistance

Further to minute 162/15 (3), the Clerk read to members a further letter from the Secretary of the Elm Friendship Club expressing the club's appreciation of the financial assistance provided by Elm Parish Council towards its annual operating costs and informing the council that some of that funding is being used to book an outing to Skegness next month.

Members decided that the content of the letter be noted.

(2) Cemetery Cottage, Elm

The Clerk read to members the report of the letting agent in relation to the most recent periodic inspection of Cemetery Cottage.

In his report, the letting agent comments that the property is being maintained in good order by the tenant, who is happy to remain in residence for the foreseeable future.

The tenant had, however, mentioned to the letting agent that repairs are required to the toilet cistern and to one of the radiators in the bathroom of the property. Consequently, the letting agent had requested the council, as landlord, to consider consenting to (and meeting the cost) of the repair works.

Members decided that the content of the periodic inspection report be noted and that the letting agent be authorised to arrange for the repair works, as identified, to be undertaken.

16/16 Date of next meeting

Members were reminded that the next meeting of the Parish Council had been scheduled for 21 June 2016, commencing at 7.00 pm, at the Parish Council office, Begdale Road, Elm.

Meeting finished at 9.00 pm

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

Date:.....