

ELM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING

12 September 2017 – 7.00 pm.

Present: Councillor Pinnock Chairman; Councillors Mrs Dalliday, Mrs Cotterell, Stokes, Miss Ferguson (left the meeting at 20.10), Mrs Davis, Patrick (left the meeting at 20.15), Milham.

Apologies: Councillors Brand, Mrs Hopkin, and Hopkin. District Councillor Sutton

In attendance: District Councillors Mrs Tanfield.

The Chairman opened the meeting and confirmed that in accordance with the Agenda, the meeting was being audio recorded but recording would be suspended during the period of the public forum.

The Minutes of the meeting of 15 August 2017 were considered. Councillor Pinnock first wished to correct a statement made at the August meeting (which he was unable to attend) in answer to a resident's question which resulted in the resident being given incorrect information which was also shown inaccurately in the draft Minutes published on the Parish website He confirmed that the parish owned 158 streetlights and not the 97 stated. Of these, 91 were category 2.

Councillor Pinnock then referred to the draft Minute 44/17 which referred to a letter from District Councillor Simon King. He stated that the letter, dated 3 August, consisted of 11/2 A4 sheets but that the draft Minute consisted of four lines only and this, coupled with the fact that the letter from Councillor King had not been made available to residents, was insufficient to provide residents with sufficient detail.

Councillor Pinnock also advised Members that there was no Agenda item for the visit to the August meeting of the PCC Jason Ablewhite but there was a Minute referring to him. He further commented that fortunately the Council did not make any decisions because any decisions made on an item not on the Agenda is not valid.

It was agreed that the Clerk address the comments made and Councillor Pinnock confirmed he would sign the previous Minutes thereafter.

56/17 Members' Code of Conduct

The Chairman 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 be noted and acted upon.

Public Forum

A parishioner asked the question as to why all the concrete street lighting columns were removed. Councillor Pinnock said that from memory the Parish Council had no say in the matter as it does not own them. The parishioner made particular reference to a street light at Coldham that is made of concrete and has not been exchanged.

Councillors Pinnock and Ms Tanfield said that they thought that the parameters for removal were not to do with whether they were made of concrete but those that were deemed requiring removing or replacing. The parishioners said that it seemed acceptable to him but if it was to be replaced, this needed to be done soon with winter coming. Councillor Pinnock asked that he keep an eye on it and report back if he had any further concerns.

A parishioner reported an issue with the road marking/highway signs at Redmoor Lane and the fact that a recent accident had further highlighted the issue. Councillor Pinnock asked that the Clerk report it through the County Council website.

Enquiry was made of the progress of the Elm Church bells restoration. The resident was advised that the delay had been occasioned by illness but that works were once again proceeding and that completion was expected without further delay.

A parishioner raised the point that the Agenda was put on the website within 24 hours of the meeting and that the July Minutes were still annotated "Draft". The Clerk apologised and said that she would get the July minutes altered. She said that the Agenda usually goes out on time and she would endeavour to ensure it does in future. Councillor Patrick raised the point that the fact that they went on the Noticeboard meant that the Council was legally compliant. Councillor Pinnock said that according to the Parish Council publication scheme they should be on the website as well. He said that he would be passing this on the Chairman proper so that it does not happen again. He further stated that he felt more people go onto the website to view the documents rather than read Noticeboards.

57/17 Progress on actions from minutes of last meeting

(1) Play equipment provision in Fridaybridge (Minute 43/17 (1) refers

The Clerk reported that Councillor Tanfield had been in contact with staff from FDC and was waiting to arrange a meeting when that officer returns from leave.

(2) Speeding across the Parish (Minute 43/17(2) refers

Councillor Pinnock reported that Speedwatch had not been very active due to school holidays and the recent roadworks in the village which had slowed traffic. Activities will resume shortly and Mike Brooks the officer in charge of Speedwatch for the County, would be bringing the new County Casualty Reduction Officer to visit the Speedwatch scheme. This would be organised by the Speedwatch Co-Ordinator.

(3)& (4) Local Highway Improvements schemes – Elm & Fridaybridge (Minute 43 /17 (3) & (4) refers)

Councillor Pinnock reported that the flasher units outside the two schools in Elm and Fridaybridge had been installed and programmed. However he reported that the Elm ones were not working as they had been programmed for hours in excess of the three hours per day limit. He advised that he had received the Palm Programmer and would re-programme the two units.

Councillor Mrs Davis advised that the Fridaybridge units were not working. Councillor Pinnock stated that they had been when he had inspected them but would check them again.

The meeting was advised that the cost of each unit was £1,030 and came with a five year warranty. Batteries should be replaced after 5-7 years at a current cost of £110 + VAT each. Councillor Pinnock advised that the warranty could be extended to ten years at a cost of £695 per unit. This included periodic visits and one battery change per unit.

Members decided that the extended warranty not be taken up and that any maintenance change be funded wholly or in part from the receipts from the Christmas Light fund.

Costings are still awaited from CCC re the scheme to reduce the speed limit from 40mph to 30mph on the B1101 between Elm and Fridaybridge. Councillor Pinnock expects these to be in the region of £2-3K. He has also requested costs from the County Council for installing "Unsuitable for HGV's signs in or near Gosmoor Lane.

58/17 Police matters – PCSO Sue Clarke

No email was received from the Police prior to the meeting.

59/17 Planning Applications

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

(Councillor Patrick declared a non-pecuniary interest in applications F/YR17/0812/F and F/YR17/813/LB and would not take part in any discussion or vote on them.)

F/YR17/0707/F – Erection of 1no 2-storey 4-bed dwelling with integrated garage and 1no 2-story 4-bed dwelling at Land South of 183 Main Road Fridaybridge

Resolved: That the application be supported

F/YR17/0759/LB – External alterations to a listed building involving replacement and repair of existing windows at The Limes Begdale Road Elm Wisbech PE14 0BQ.

Resolved: That the application be supported

F/YR17/0761/O – Erection of a dwelling (Outline application with all matters reserved) – Land North of 39 March Road Rings End Guyhirn.

Resolved: That the application be supported

F/YR17/0737/F – Change of use of part of church hall to form a 2-storey 2-bed dwelling involving single-storey side extension to link old engine house store at Fire Engine House and Plot 1 All Saints Church Hall Main Road Elm

Resolved: That the application be supported. However Members wanted their concerns noted by the Planning Authority, as to the location of the development and the potential hazards to traffic and pedestrians.

F/YR17/0799/LB – Alterations to a listed building involving the erection of single-storey side extension to link Engine House to Church Hall (to enable a change of use of buildings to residential use) at Fire Engine House and Plot 1 All Saints Church Hall Main Road Elm

Resolved: That the application be supported. However Members wanted their concerns noted by the Planning Authority, as to the location of the development and the potential hazards to traffic and pedestrians.

F/YR17/0812/F – External works to existing public house including removal of timber porch and erection of a 1.2 metre high timber fence at The Sportsman Main Road Elm PE14 0AG

Resolved: That the application be supported

F/YR17/0813/LB – Internal and external works to a Listed Building including removal of timber porch at The Sportsman Main Road Elm PE14 0AG

Resolved: That the application be supported

F/YR17/0798/F – Erection of a single-storey rear extension to existing dwelling involving demolition of conservatory at 31 Oldfield Avenue Elm PE14 0AL

Resolved: That the application be supported

60/17 Reports from District and County Councillors

Councillor Tanfield reported that things had been relatively quiet at FDC due to the summer recess. She is putting together a paper with officers in respect of how the Council communicate with the public particularly in respect of consultation. This is to give people who have taken the time to consult on an issue, thanks and feedback by FDC. It is hoped this will encourage greater involvement from the public to consultation exercises by FDC.

The Comprehensive Spending Review is ongoing with 9 projects ongoing across the District. These are all currently on budget.

She had nothing to further report in respect of issues raised by Parishioners.

61/17 Open Spaces (including the cemetery) within the Parish

The inspection of the Parish Play equipment report was previously circulated to Members. The two issues highlighted were the fencing around the Fridaybridge playground and a bolt missing on one of the pieces of equipment.

The Clerk was asked to look into who was responsible for the fencing and report back at the next meeting.

62/17 Viability of August Meeting

Councillor Brand had requested that the viability of holding the August meetings be considered.

It was advised that this matter had been raised on other occasions in previous years and it was agreed that providing August was quorate, they were required in order to consider planning and financial matters.

63/17 Noticeboards

The Clerk requested guidance from Members as to what they felt was appropriate to go on the Parish Noticeboards. She had included some job advertisements from local organisations. Members discussed the issue and resolved that the Clerk be authorised to put Agendas, Minutes, Parish Council Notices and Accounts (for example Audit or Elections), on the Noticeboards and anything unrelated to Council business should be referred to the Council for approval.

64/17 Local Highway Improvements (LHI 2018/19)

Councillor Pinnock stated that he was disappointed that this matter has not been raised at the previous meeting as the deadline is 15 October 2017 which is before the Council's October meeting. He suggested that as time was now short, he make enquiry of CCC to establish whether or not, in principle, a full width speed cushion could be installed in Gosmoor Lane as this was one of the objectives dropped in the current scheme due to costs. It was agreed that the enquiry be made, Members circulated with the response and Councillor Pinnock make the application thereafter on behalf of the Council.

65/17 Cemetery Cottage

The painting of the Cottage had taken place and the invoice for payment received. Quotes were still awaited in respect of the tenant's request for thermostats to be added to a number of the Cottage radiators. The Clerk had given the tenant details of two contractors to contact to hasten the quotes being obtained.

66/17 Chapel of Rest

Members were informed that the painting of the Chapel had been completed. Prior to the commencement of those works by the Contractor, the Chapel Bell had fallen out of its casing. Some parts of the metal cannons of the Bell had corroded. The Clerk reported that the Contractor had provided the Clerk with details of a welder who could repair the Bell. She had taken it to the welding company prior to the meeting and had been given a quote to repair it of £25-£35 approximately. Members resolved that the repair of the bell be authorised and the approximate cost be noted. In addition that the bell housing be inspected before re-installation.

67/17 Website

Councillor Pinnock raised the issue with the Clerk that the cumulative monthly accounts were not showing on the website since May 2017. She acknowledged that this was an oversight on her part and she would get them done as soon as possible.

Members discussed the possibility of the Clerk maintaining the website rather than using a Web company. Councillor Pinnock suggested that the Clerk had quite a few duties and training to carry out already but that this maybe something to be considered in the future. He further stated that he had no spare time to do it and asked if anyone else was willing to do it. The Clerk reported that the Web company had put a lot of work into the updating the Website with Councillor Pinnock and due to this outlay it may be prudent to leave the situation as it is and reconsider again in the future.

Members resolved that the situation be noted and reviewed at a future date.

68/17 Recording of Meetings

The Clerk reported that she had done a lot of research in respect of this issue as she had received a request for a copy of the recording, she had taken of the meeting to aid her production of the minutes, from a Parishioner. As she had been advised by the Legal Adviser to the Councils and Clerks Direct, Paul Clayden, that this was not information covered by the Freedom of Information Act, she had refused to release the recording. The parishioner had appealed this decision. The Clerk was therefore bringing the matter to the Council again as a Review needed to take place in respect of the Clerk's decision.

The Clerk had again approached Paul Clayden for advice together with advice from the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) again and spoke to one of the legal advisers to the SLCC.

The information received was differing but they were all in agreement that the Clerk would not be criticised or be acting unlawfully if she deleted the recording. In addition the advice from the ICO was that the information required to go into the public domain was the approved Minutes and that this could be a "defence" under the legislation for not releasing the recording.

Members discussed the issue and resolved that the Clerk did not have to release the recording and that she could delete the recording when she had prepared the Minutes and they were subsequently approved by Members.

Councillor Pinnock stated that he understood the ICO was now only dealing with matters up to May 2017 and that the resident's complaint had yet to be determined. The Council would be bound by the ICO decision. He requested that his dissent to the decision to not provide a copy of the recording be noted as he believed that the default position should be to put such things into the public domain

69/17 Financial Matters

(1) Income and Expenditure since last meeting

ELM PARISH COUNCIL		
Income & Expenditure		
12 September 2017		
Income		
Payer	Description	Amount £
Peter Heron	Cemetery Cottage Rent	595.00
National Savings	Interest Received	62.43
Turner & Son	Interment Fee - Burial	990.00
Total		1,647.43
Expenditure		
Payee	Description	Amount £
SLCC	Admin Costs	82.80
R Kierman	Notice Boards cleaning	45.00
Mr J Davison	Works to Cottage	1,500.00
DA Pest Control	Control of moles	60.00
CL Butcher	Salary & Expenses	676.53
HMRC	Clerks' Tax & NI	444.57
RJ Warren Ltd	Grounds Maintenance	1,799.27
Solagen Limited	Speed Indicator Device	12.00
PKF Littlejohn	Audit Fee	360.00
Total		4,980.17

In addition, the Clerk reported on the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 31 August 2017 (in the total sum of £179,871.93), together with the figure of £140,805.19 as at 31 August 2016.

Members decided

- (1) that the income of £1,647.43 be noted and that the expenditure of £4,980.17 be authorised;
- (2) that the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 31 August 2017 and the position as at 31 August 2016 be noted;
- (3) to note that, after allowing for the Parish Council's ear-marked reserves (totalling £121,425.00) at 31 August 2017), the actual balance available to the Parish Council at 31 August 2017 was £176,425.00 making further allowance for a general contingency of £55,000 reduces the actual balance available to the Parish Council at 31 August 2017 to approximately £3,446.93;
- (4) Councillor Pinnock asked about the progress of the Internet Banking for himself and Councillor Brand as he had taken his ID documents into the bank on 23rd August 2017. The Clerk confirmed that the paperwork required had been signed by Councillors Brand and Mrs Cotterell and taken into the Wisbech Branch and she was awaiting further correspondence from the bank but expected this to be a little while yet due to the time taken for the last time the bank mandate had been updated.
- (5) Councillor Pinnock asked that as the Clerk had internet banking could the financial report include figures for the bank account as at the date as near to the date of the meeting as possible, rather than the end of the previous month. The Clerk agreed to prepare the monthly accounts up to the date of the monthly meeting henceforth.
- (6) Councillor Pinnock advised that the Financial Statement as at 31 August 2017 was not strictly accurate as the earmarked reserves were understated by agreed expenditure not yet made. Items for The Leam (£1,804.00), cemetery dyke (£2,304.00) and chapel/cottage painting (£1,500) had been omitted. The Clerk argued that these were not "earmarked reserves" but 'agreed'. Councillor Pinnock explained that the object, from a management accounts viewpoint, was to advise members of the amount of cash available to spend and the Clerk's figure of £3,446.93 misrepresented the fact that this should, in reality, be a negative figure. Councillor Pinnock further explained to the Clerk that she had reduced to zero the previous earmarked reserve of £400 in respect of web design work when the work was paid for. The same logic applied. The Clerk's view was that as money was coming into the bank account during the month and some of the work was being carried out over the coming months, and then subsequently being invoiced for, the financial report was a snapshot of the situation when the report was prepared. In addition as the website reserve had been spent it was correct that it was removed from the reserves as it was no longer required.
- (7) Councillor Pinnock raised an issue that was not on the Agenda. He explained that the Council needed to make a decision regarding the appointment for the Internal Auditor for the year 2017/18. He stated that whilst the 2016/17 auditor (canalbs ltd) charged about £100 more than previous auditors, he believed that the Council and Clerk would benefit from the expertise of canalbs ltd. Moreover, canalbs ltd had stated at the last audit, that they would carry out an interim audit in November 2017 if reappointed. The Council resolved to reappoint canalbs ltd for the 2018/18 financial year and to ask them to carry out a mid-year audit in late November 2017. As this was not on the Agenda (the Clerk had held this over to the October meeting due to the number of items on the Agenda and the timescales involved) the decision will need to be ratified at the October meeting.

70/17 Correspondence

A resident had raised the issue of the fact that a grit bin in Fridaybridge had been overturned and could this be removed until the winter. Members discussed the fact that another grit bin in the Parish had been secured to a fence post to prevent this and agreed that the grit bin in Fridaybridge be similarly secured and asked that the Clerk get a cost for this from the previous Contractor. The resident also asked that Dog Waste Bins be provided in the same area.

Member discussed that they were also required in other areas in the Parish and asked the Clerk to get some costings together for the next meeting.

A resident advised that he was pleased to note that two of the Willow trees at the Leam had been pollarded but felt that the third tree there also required works. He had also asked that the Leam be thinned out. The Clerk informed Members that she had rung the resident to report that the works on the watercourse were to be carried out in late autumn.

She further reported that she had agreed to speak to Councillor Brand about the third Willow tree as he had knowledge of the works required and had spoken to the Contractor previously.

The Clerk reported that the External Audit had been completed by PKF Littlejohn and the letter received on the day of the meeting.

They had requested some further clarification from the Clerk, some weeks ago, on one issue in the figures and she had dealt with this. The Audit was returned with no further actions required. Their payment for the service was included in this month's financial report. The Clerk reported that the paperwork from the Auditor needs to go on the Noticeboards and Website by the 30 September 2017.

Members decided that the details be noted.

Date of Next Meeting

Members were reminded that the next meeting of the Parish Council is scheduled for 17 October 2017, to commence at 7.00pm, at the Parish Council office Begdale Road, Elm.

Meeting finished at 8.45 pm.

Signature :(Council Chairman).

Date: