

Elm Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting of Elm Parish Council held at the Portacabin, Begdale, Elm on Wednesday 11th October 2023 commencing at 6.30pm

[Meetings of the Parish Council may be recorded by the Clerk to aid with minute taking. Any such recording is destroyed once the minutes are agreed].

Present: Cllrs – Butcher, Cage, Darker, Ferguson (Chair), Goodley, Johnson, Milham, Probets & Welbourne. District Cllrs Roy & Summers.

Mrs S England – Parish Clerk. 10 Members of the public.

- 94.23 **Apologies** – Reported for Cllrs Hopkin & Stevenson; Council resolved to accept their reasons for absence.
- 95.23 **Members Code of Conduct** – The Chair reminded members of the need to submit; via the Clerk; any changes to their Register of Interests information.
- 96.23 **Disclosable interests and requests for dispensation;**
Cllr Cage declared an interest in agenda item 12(3) due to his connection to the planning application (see min. ref. 105.23[3])
Cllr Probets declared an interest in agenda item 14 due to his connection associated with managing the football club (see min. ref. 107.23)
Cllr Johnson declared an interest in agenda item 14 due to his connection associated with managing the football club (see min. ref. 107.23).
- 97.23 **Open Forum**
6.33pm - Standing Orders were suspended; three members of the public requested to speak.
The following subjects were reported;
- Concerns relating to fig tree and boundary hedge which were growing into the highway along Wales Bank. *Clerk to write to developer of the site.*
 - Report of tree overhanging the highway along The Stitch. *Clerk to contact the householder.*
 - Details presented of objections raised in respect of planning application F/YR23/0759/O. *The Chair confirmed that all comments would be taken into consideration when the application was under discussion later on the agenda.*
- 6.49pm – Standing Orders were re-instated.
- 98.23 **Review and approval of Minutes** – Council resolved to approve the minutes of meeting held on 13th September 2023 as a true record of proceedings.
- 99.23 **Police matters** –
The Clerk advised incidents of anti-social behaviour and irresponsible parking at Elm School had been reported to the local police team.
- 100.23 **District Councillor's Report** – Cllr Roy reported;
An alleged incident involving a parishioner and members of the Tilia Homes grounds maintenance team had been reported; awaiting response. A dangerous section of wall on the boundary of Redmoor House had been reported to FDC. A meeting had taken place with the Deputy Police & Crime Commissioner which included discussions on anti-social behaviour incidents linked to use of Nitrous Oxide gas and how the issue was being tackled; confirmed that problem needed to be stressed with retailers. Action was being taken to ensure power maintenance for properties in rural areas (during outages) to protect Voice Over Internet Protocol.
The County Council had confirmed that the Elm Centre was leased to Elm Primary School; it was suggested that the Parish Council may wish to re-locate meetings to the venue; subject to be included on the next agenda.
Highways Officer, Amanda Hill had confirmed that all drains between the A1101 junction and the junction of High Road and Low Road would be jetted. An investigation was also underway to assess which drains required upgrading.
Cllr Summers reported;
The last full District Council meeting had focussed on highways' issues including the County Council's proposal to end cyclic weed spraying on highways and pavements. All complaints received from parishioners had been

forwarded to County Cllr Steve Count. It was confirmed that both FDC and the Parish Council had supported the petition urging for the policy on weed spraying to be reversed.

The Chair requested Cllr Roy to investigate the following issues; flytipping along Needham Bank; gullies required jetting along Birch Grove.

Cllr Roy added, he was monitoring the development along Gosmoor Lane and urging for additional drains to be installed prior to construction. There had been no further news concerning Strathmore House.

101.23 **Clerk's Report** – The Clerk reported as follows;

1. Council's streetlight project was still ongoing, there had been no further updates concerning likely completion date. FDC had requested payment of UKPN connectivity charges; to be considered under Finance.
2. Two poppy wreaths had been ordered; one for each of the services in Elm & Friday Bridge.
3. Barclays Bank had finally received the account details which were posted to them in mid-September. An issue had arisen connected to the fact that; since 1984; Barclays had been operating parish accounts under the wrong category. Assurance received that account could operate as normal pending further update in two to three weeks.
4. Clarion Housing had confirmed that their contractor would be completing pruning work on 38 trees on the green area adjacent to Birch Grove. Matter of vehicles parking on the grass had also been raised; their neighbourhood officer for Elm had confirmed that action was being taken.
5. Details of online training courses to be held by NALC had been circulated to Councillors; contact Clerk for booking details.
6. Highways had been chased again concerning installation of 'soft verge' warning signs on the approach to Coldham. It was confirmed that the broken bus stop pole on Main Road, Elm had been replaced.
7. Further to advice received from Highways Safety Audit Team & the Policy & Regulation Manager a Privately Funded Highway Improvement (PFHI) application had been submitted for improved signage at the junction of Wales Bank & Fridaybridge Rd; Costing information required for possible inclusion in the 2024/25 budget.
8. Another volunteer had expressed interest in assisting with the opening and closing of Begdale car park; Councillors confirmed they were happy for the Clerk to seek further information from the individual concerned.
9. Maintenance work on the village planters had been completed by Mr King; expenses totalling £87.11 to be included as an additional item on the monthly payment schedule.

Cllr Milham advised that FEET desperately needed more working party volunteers.

102.23 **Presentation** – Nikki Decker (Peterborough Environment City Trust); 'HEAT PUMP PROJECT FRIDAY BRIDGE'

7.05PM – It was resolved to suspend Standing Orders.

Ms Decker advised as follows;

- The project was funded by the Government's net zero innovation initiative. Four projects had been set up across England but uptake in Friday Bridge had been low.
- The aim of the project was to save householders' money and reduce emissions.
- Residents were entitled to a free 'no obligation' home assessment after which recommendations would be made.
- If installation of a heat pump was part of the recommendations, assistance would be provided for the householder to apply for funding.
- A £7,500 grant was available, this would not cover the whole installation cost (in region of £8,000 for a small property) however finance schemes were available for any shortfall.
- The grant scheme was not means tested.
- Properties in Friday Bridge had been identified as generally well insulated and grid supply was reliable in the area; two reasons for Friday Bridge being chosen for the project.
- Whilst the unit would be sited outside, significant disruption may still be caused to the interior of a dwelling during installation.
- A promotion event would be taking place at Dottie's Tea Room in Friday Bridge; date to be confirmed.

7.15pm – It was resolved to reinstate Standing Orders.
The Chair thanked Ms Decker for attending the meeting.

103.23 Financial Matters

- i. The Clerk advised the following sums had been received since the last meeting;
Precept (50%) £30,000.00; Allotment rent £3012.13; Cemetery Cottage rent £750.00; Cemetery fees £837.50; Interest £289.17.
- ii. To resolve to approve payments for October as detailed below;

PAYEE	DETAIL	NET	VAT	TOTAL
FDC	Streetlight upgrade - UKPN connectivity charges	£37,165.41	£7,433.08	£44,598.49
Idverde	Grounds Maint. Sep. 2023	£1,359.94	£271.99	£1,631.93
Idverde	Tree works - FB p. field	£737.34	£147.47	£884.81
Scribe	Cemetery software subscr.	£561.60	£112.32	£673.92
Fenland Fire appliance	Service fee - portacabin	£45.50	£9.10	£54.60
Plusnet	Broadband	£22.96	£4.59	£27.55
Mrs S England	Clerk's Salary	£1,176.25		£1,176.25
Mrs S England	Clerk's Expenses	£155.14	£1.21	£156.35
HMRC	PAYE M6	£115.81		£115.81
Nest	Pension Contr's	£91.40		£91.40
Timpsons	Padlock keys cut x2	£11.25	£2.25	£13.50
D King	Expenses - planters	£87.11		£87.11
		£41,529.71	£7,982.01	£49,511.72

It was confirmed that the payment to FDC for streetlight upgrade costs was authorised by the 'Parish Councils Act 1957 s3' which provided a Parish Council with the power to 'light roads and other public spaces'. It was resolved to authorise payment of invoices detailed in the October schedule.

Chairperson

- iii. To resolve to accept content of AGAR Report, Section 3 (signed off by External Auditor with no action required. Council resolved.
- iv. To resolve to accept content of Bank Reconciliation Report, quarter ended 30.9.23. Resolved.
- v. To resolve to accept content of Budget Update Report, quarter ended 30.9.23. Resolved; noting that most categories were in line with expected expenditure.
- vi. To resolve to purchase window blind for the parish office. Resolved.
- vii. To resolve on quotation received totalling £125.10 + VAT for installation of fire safety equipment and signage at the small unit in Begdale car park. Resolved to accept.

104.23 Correspondence

- i. Email, Cllr Steve Count – Study into Peat Soil Affected Roads; request for omissions. Councillors requested Gosmoor Lane, Bramble Lane and a section of March Road, Coldham to also be investigated.
- ii. Email, parishioners – Complaint concerning alleged behaviour of Tilia Homes' groundsmen. The Clerk confirmed that (in addition to Cllr Roy) she had reported the matter to Simon Temporal at Tilia Homes; awaiting further response. Council requested the Clerk to also chase the matter of health & safety concerns at the Grove Gardens ponds.

For information purposes;

- i. FDC Member Services – Council secures injunction against Wisbech beggar.
- ii. FDC Member Services – Improving access to mental health services for rough sleepers.
- iii. Cambs CC – Roadworks Bulletin.
- iv. Cambs CC – Cambs Matters Newsletter.
- v. Cambs ACRE – Newsletter September 2023.

- vi. FDC Member Services – Council speaks out against ‘War on Motorists’.
- vii. FDC Member Services – Council agrees motion against County Council weed spraying decision.
- viii. FDC Member Services – Call for revised Local Transport Plan.
- ix. Public Sector Executive – New Update.

105.23 **Planning**

1. **F/YR23/0700/F** – Construction of building for use as a sitting area/store and change of use of land to dog park with secure fencing up to 1.8m high (max) at, land north of Six Acres, Bar Drove, Friday Bridge. Council resolved to support the application.
2. **F/YR23/0757/F** – Change of use of existing residential care home and school to further educational use only and the formation of a car park at, Begdale House School, Begdale Road, Elm. Council resolved to approve the application requesting that; if FDC were minded to grant the proposals; a condition should be attached to improve the surface of the road running in front of the site between the two junctions. Council also asked the Clerk to make a request for white lines to be re-painted at the two junctions.
3. **F/YR23/0759/O** – Construction of up to 8 x dwellings involving demolition of an existing dwelling (7 The Stitch) and an outbuilding (outline application with all matters reserved) at, land East of 208 Fridaybridge Road, Elm.

Cllr Cage confirmed his interest in the agenda item and left the meeting room.

Council resolved to object to the proposals on the following grounds;

The proposed location fell outside the residential development area defined in Fenland District Council’s Emerging Local Plan. The proposals were not in-keeping with the existing form of residential development (typically linear frontage in style and character) and therefore contrary to Policy LP12 (d) of Fenland Local Plan 2014 and, Policy LP 7 Parts (a) & (d) of the Fenland Emerging Plan.

The proposed site was currently a paddock and therefore contrary to Policy LP12 Part A(a*) of the Fenland Local Plan 2014 which stated that developments should not be permitted in ‘*gardens, paddocks, and other undeveloped land within the curtilage of buildings on the edge of the settlement where the land relates more to the surrounding countryside than to the built-up area of the settlement....*’

The indicative plan appeared to show development extending beyond a drainage ditch and therefore contrary to Fenland Local Plan 2014 Policy LP12 Part A(F) which states that the site, ‘*retains and respects natural boundaries such as trees, hedgerows, embankments, and drainage ditches*’.

The Fenland Emerging Local Plan included a further 230 properties in the site allocations for Friday Bridge, these were in addition to the development which had already taken place or was currently ongoing in the village. As there had been considerable local opposition to the application, the proposals were contrary to Fenland Local Plan 2014 Policy LP3.

The proposals appeared to indicate a shortfall of parking spaces for each dwelling.

Cllr Cage re-joined the meeting.

7.31pm – Standing Orders were suspended in order to permit a member of the public to speak.

It was reported that requests for an investigation into gullies/drains along The Stitch were being ignored.

Flooding of the highway and residents’ driveways continued and the parishioner was minded to undertake a camera inspection himself. The Clerk confirmed she would report the situation to Highways.

7.35pm – Standing Orders were re-instated.

106.23 **Highways & Footways**

Update on outstanding matters;

- i. LHI application 2022-23 – work on the two chicanes due to commence later in the month.

New matters N/A

107.23 **To receive update on matters relating to Friday Bridge Youth Football Team, resolve appropriately.**

Cllrs Probets & Johnson confirmed their interest in the agenda item.

It was resolved to approve a Fun Day to be held on Begdale field on Sunday 22nd October as a fundraising event for the Football Club. It was confirmed that a local farmer had approved parking on his land.

It was agreed that a licence needed to be drawn up between the Parish Council and Football Club for use of the field; nominal fee of £1. Cllrs Johnson & Probets advised that it was likely further teams would be set up (Under 11’s, Under 8’s, maybe Over 12’s) in addition to the Under 10’s. Three pitches might be required but matches would be staggered. Due to the darker evenings, training would be taking place at the Thomas

Clarkson School over the next few months.

The Clerk advised additional grass maintenance costs quoted by Idverde - £40 for collecting cuttings, £170 to undertake additional cuts outside of grounds maintenance contracted season (April to October).

It was resolved to approve the funding of an additional £40 per cut for collection of cuttings until the end of October.

It was resolved for the Clerk to seek further quotes for cutting of the pitch area as required between November and March. Subject to be carried forward onto the November agenda.

108.23 To receive update concerning WW1 plaque, resolve on appropriate action.

The Clerk confirmed she had contacted Cambs County Council to seek permission for installation of the plaque on the green area adjacent to Coldham layby; no response to date.

109.23 To receive comments/requests from Members; to be included on the next agenda.

Cllr Roy – possibility of moving Parish Council meetings to the Elm Centre.

Cllr Ferguson – FEET (how to support the group in locating additional volunteers).

110.23 Date of next meeting – It was resolved to confirm that the next Parish Council meeting would take place on Wednesday 8th November 2023 commencing at 6.30pm. It was further resolved to have a shorter December agenda in order to facilitate Council's 'Christmas Meal'; arrangements to be made by Cllr Welbourne.

111.23 To resolve to enter closed session in order to consider the following agenda item on the grounds of confidentiality by virtue of; The Public Bodies (Admission to meetings) Act 1960 s1(2).

7.55pm - It was resolved to enter closed session.

112.23 To consider issues relating to a grave in the new lawn cemetery area (confidential due to protection of an individual's personal data).

The Clerk updated Members on the subject. It was resolved to plant a hedge on the far side of the two concrete beams laid to the north side of the Lawn Cemetery.

113.23 To receive update concerning alleged incident at Elm Cemetery, resolve appropriately (confidential due to protection of an individual's personal data).

The Clerk updated Members on the subject; item to be carried forward.

The Clerk also advised Members of a non-statutory burial which would be taking place at the Cemetery; advice had been sought from ICCM on the correct procedure.

114.23 To receive update concerning allotment tenancy agreements, resolve appropriately (confidential due to protection of an individual's personal data & contractual matters).

The Clerk updated Members; item to be carried forward.

115.23 Consideration of personnel matters (confidential due to protection of an individual's personal data & contractual matters).

It was resolved to convene a meeting of the Personnel Panel (operating on a working party basis) on Thursday 19th October at 5.30pm; Clerk to notify Cllr Stevenson.

It was resolved for the Chair & Vice-Chair to undertake the Clerk's Annual Appraisal at 5pm on 19th October. Taking into account that proposed action would impact on the 2024/25 budget, it was resolved to convene a meeting of the Finance working party on Wednesday 1st November at 6.30pm.

116.23 Addendum – consideration of issues relating to grounds maintenance contract (confidential due to contractual matters).

It was resolved for a meeting to be arranged with representatives from Council's grounds maintenance contractor.

117.23 Close of meeting – The meeting closed at 8.30pm.

Signed

Elm Parish Council Chairman

Date