

# Elm Parish Council

## Minutes of the meeting of Elm Parish Council held at the Portacabin, Begdale, Elm on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> November 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 – Darker, Ferguson (Chair), Goodley, Johnson, Milham, Stevenson & Welbourne. District Cllr Roy, Mrs S England – Parish Clerk. 1 Member of the public.

- 118.23 **Apologies** – Reported for Cllrs Hopkin & Probets; Council resolved to accept their reasons for absence.
- 119.23 **Members Code of Conduct** – The Chair reminded members of the need to submit; via the Clerk; any changes to their Register of Interests information.
- 120.23 **Disclosable interests and requests for dispensation;**  
Cllr Johnson declared an interest in agenda item 9(ii) due to his connection to Boom Construction (see min. ref. 126.23(ii)) and also, item 13 due to his connection associated with managing the football club (see min. ref. 130.23).
- 121.23 **Open Forum**  
Nothing reported.
- 122.23 **Review and approval of Minutes** – Council resolved to approve the minutes of meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2023 as a true record of proceedings.
- 123.23 **Police matters** –  
The Clerk advised that a recent case involving a lost cat was not believed to be connected to incidents that had occurred earlier in the year.
- 124.23 **District Councillor's Report** – Cllr Roy reported;  
Cobra Engineering had been awarded a significant grant as part of the Levelling Up Fund. A new charter had been set up (involving Police HQ in Huntingdon) which would provide new incentives for the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme. Simon Temporal (Tilia Homes) was being chased concerning safety issues at the Grove Gardens' ponds. A new battery was required for Speedwatch equipment; cost being investigated. There was an ongoing issue of fly-tipping along Needham Bank; a long term plan was required. Cambs County Council had confirmed that Elm School personnel should be managing bookings at the Elm Centre; meeting to be arranged with the headteacher to discuss. A quantity of promotional information was available reference anti dog fouling and littering; the Parish Council was welcome to make use of it.
- 125.23 **Clerk's Report** – The Clerk reported as follows;
1. Council's streetlight upgrade project - update on phase 1 requested from Garry Edwards, no response to date. Enquiry also raised reference estimated costings for second phase which would include assets identified as having a 5 year remaining lifespan.
  2. Peat Soil affected roads - Cllr Steve Count had confirmed that he would be asking for Gosmoor Lane and sections of March Rd, Coldham to be included on the list. Begdale Road had already been added; Bramble Lane was excluded due to low traffic numbers.
  3. Highways outstanding issues chased – no response.
  4. Dog fouling incident at Begdale field – report submitted to FDC along with vehicle registration details; Samantha Krauss had confirmed that a fine of £150 would be issued.
  5. Alleged incident at Grove Gardens involving a parishioner and member of Idverde maintenance team - it was understood that team members from Idverde's Warboys depot were involved; details forwarded to District Cllr Roy.
  6. Grove Gardens' ponds - Simon Temporal (Tilia Homes Aftercare Manager) had advised that they were waiting for a ROSPA water safety test to be carried out on the ponds before any action was taken in relation to signage & buoyancy aids. Due to the fact that the subject had been raised with him in early 2022 it had been queried how long it would take to arrange the tests; chased twice, no response.

7. Clarion Housing tree works - advised in September that all works on the green area adjacent to Birch Grove would be completed by end of October; no further update received.
8. Clarion, parking on the green area adjacent too Birch Grove – further update requested concerning action to be taken.
9. Barclays bank account – further information had been sent to Barclays in support of their re-categorising of Council’s account.
10. Strathmore House – A meeting had taken place with the owner concerning proposed plans for the site, once an architect had been appointed work would commence on submission of a pre-application to FDC Planning.
11. FDC had advised an updated tax base figure of 1282 for 2024-25 which would assist with budget calculations. Concurrent Functions Grant confirmed as £7837.
12. Promotional event for ‘Heat Pumps for Friday Bridge’ scheme to be held on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> November at Dotties Tea Room, 3-6pm.
13. UKPN had been in touch requesting permission to prune trees growing into power lines at Chapel Lane; permission granted.
14. Flytipping, Station Rd, Coldham – reported to FDC.
15. Works on gullies - cleaning, jetting & tracing had been confirmed between Low Rd & 42 High Rd and, from 42 High Road to the A1101; work should be completed within 12 weeks.
16. Elm Footpath 8 – it was understood that the matter had not been resolved; Clerk to chase.
17. Alleged discharge of septic tank waste into highway drain at Coldham - Chris Convine (Middle Level Drainage Board) had visited the homeowner and advised that the practice should cease immediately.
18. Further to a meeting of the Finance Working Party, additional costings were being sourced for inclusion in the 24/25 budget. Council’s precept request needed to be submitted by early February.
19. A meeting had been arranged with a representative from ‘Richard King Memorials & Grave diggers’ (Cllrs Milham & Stevenson also in attendance), useful insight was gained into issues affecting the cemetery especially on subjects of levelling and topple testing. Signs reminding people of the Lawn Cemetery Regulations had also been installed; thanks to Cllrs Milham & Stevenson for their assistance.
20. Thanks conveyed to Cllr Darker for pruning back vegetation obscuring road signs between Friday Bridge & Coldham.
21. Contact had been made with the owners of Bates Farm and another household in Main Rd, Elm requesting cutting back of boundary hedges.
22. Plusnet Business broadband – letter received advising they would be discontinuing their broadband service; Clerk sourcing new provider.
23. A quotation had been sourced for pollarding and cutting back trees on the boundary of the large pocket park, the tree surgeon had also confirmed that an ash tree growing along the towpath was suffering from die back. Recommendation was to remove all foliage and side branches but leave the skeleton of the tree for wildlife e.g. attaching bird boxes. Awaiting additional quote from another contractor. Council resolved to approve recommendations for the ash tree subject to confirmation from Emneth Parish Council.

**126.23 Financial Matters**

- i. The Clerk advised the following sums had been received since the last meeting; Allotment rent £807.13; Cemetery fees £2875.00; Interest £298.81.
- ii. To resolve to approve payments for November as detailed below;

| PAYEE                 | DETAIL                           | NET       | VAT     | TOTAL     |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------|-----------|---------|-----------|
| Idverde               | Grounds Maint. Oct. 2023         | £1,359.94 | £271.99 | £1,631.93 |
| Inspire Architectural | Cem Chapel, building reg app.    | £1,000.00 |         | £1,000.00 |
| SLCC                  | Annual sub                       | £187.00   |         | £187.00   |
| Tamar IT              | M'soft Office 365 fee            | £65.83    | £13.17  | £79.00    |
| L Welbourne           | Cemetery admin.                  | £97.50    |         | £97.50    |
| Wave                  | Water rates - Begdale            | £21.08    |         | £21.08    |
| Boom Construction     | Jetting drains & gutters p'cabin | £150.00   | £30.00  | £180.00   |
| FDC                   | Bin emptying - Cemetery          | £217.98   |         | £217.98   |
| Plusnet               | Broadband                        | £22.96    | £4.59   | £27.55    |
| S England             | Clerk's Salary                   | £1,398.92 |         | £1,398.92 |

|           |                  |           |         |           |
|-----------|------------------|-----------|---------|-----------|
| S England | Clerk's Expenses | £220.81   | £10.94  | £231.75   |
| HMRC      | PAYE M7          | £147.08   |         | £147.08   |
| Nest      | Pension Contr's  | £133.10   |         | £133.10   |
|           |                  | £5,022.20 | £330.69 | £5,352.89 |

Cllr Johnson confirmed his interest in the payment to Boom Construction. Council resolved to approve payment of purchase invoices presented in the November schedule with the exception of payment to Idverde which would be withheld pending a meeting to be arranged with their Area Manager.

Chairperson .....

- iii. To resolve on subscribing to SCRIBE accounting software (for smaller Councils) with effect from new financial year. Resolved.

### 127.23 Correspondence

- i. Emails x 2, parishioners – raising issues concerning chicanes. Members noted the concerns raised and acknowledged that the comments would be taken into account. Clerk to respond.
- ii. Email FEET – seeking support from the Parish Council in recruitment of additional volunteers. Clerk to make notices for posting on notice boards and entrance gates to the towpath.

**For information purposes;**

- i. FDC – Mac's Golden Age 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary event, 3<sup>rd</sup> November.
- ii. FDC – Carol Service Invitation (for our Chair), 8<sup>th</sup> December.
- iii. NALC – Newsletter.
- iv. FDC Members Services – Advice on Councillor safety & security.
- v. CCC – Cambs Matters Newsletter.

### 128.23 Planning

**F/YR23/0821/F** – 2 storey front & side extension and render/cladding to existing dwelling, new detached garage & culvert drain for formation of new access at, Plum Cottage, Needham Bank, Friday Bridge. Council resolved to support the application.

### 129.23 Highways & Footways

- i. LHI application 2022-23 – It was confirmed that installation of the chicanes had been completed but the scheme did not allow access for large agricultural vehicles. Meeting arranged with Highways Officers to discuss the situation; Cllrs Welbourne & Stevenson to attend on behalf of Council. Subject to be carried forward.
- ii. LHI application 2024-25 – Item deferred pending feedback from meeting with Highways Officers.
- iii. Update on funding for 20mph zone application – It was reported that the parish had not been successful in the current round of funding, however Elm was ranked at the top of the remaining unsuccessful applicants; application to be re-submitted for the 2024/25 scheme.
- iv. TTRO – Laddus Drove, Friday Bridge 8/1 – 26/1 2024 (Anglia Water Pipeline Project).
- v. Road closure (8am – 4pm), Needham Bank, 22<sup>nd</sup> November, patch repairs.
- vi. Emergency road closure, Friday Bridge (outside The Chequers Public House), Councillors expressed frustration that; yet again; the bus service had been cancelled. Clerk to contact Anglian Water to enquire when the road would be re-opening.

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

Cllr Johnson confirmed his interest in the agenda item. The Clerk presented details of quotations for 'one off cutting of the grass (including collection of cuttings) over the football pitch area at Begdale Field. It was resolved to accept a quote of £75.00 submitted by Paul Smith Landscapes for one cut. Growth to be monitored; further cuts to be presented for approval of Council.

Cllr Johnson advised that; further to an area of brambles being cleared at Friday Bridge playing field; re-seeding was required. Clerk to seek quotation.

- 131.23 **To resolve on style of fencing repair at Friday Bridge playing field and how play area inspections should be managed moving forward.**  
 The Clerk circulated photographs of a section of fencing that had (again) been broken down at Friday Bridge playing field. It was reported that quads and motorbikes were regularly accessing the field. It was resolved for the Clerk to investigate the installation of concrete 'Lego' blocks across the gap.  
 A number of other issues had been identified at the play area, Idverde had admitted that it was proving problematic for them to undertake inspections and report back to Council in a timely manner. It was resolved;
- to remove play area inspections from the annual maintenance contract,
  - for the Clerk, Mrs Welbourne, Cllrs Milham & Johnson to undertake online play area inspection training for the Elm and Friday Bridge play areas,
  - to advise C.R.A.G. that Council would no longer be taking responsibility for checking play equipment at Coldham.
- 132.23 **To resolve on (i) issues relating to the surface of Begdale car park, (ii) rules for opening gates for vehicle access.**  
 Members were advised that; during periods of heavy rainfall; the car park surface still held water, there was also a large dip in the entrance splay creating a large puddle to form. It was resolved for the Clerk to seek quotations for laying concrete at the entrance with the inclusion of a french gully. It was further resolved to investigate the potential cost of re-positioning security fencing around the small unit in order to create an additional area for car parking.  
 Reference access gates, it was resolved to keep them on pedestrian access only during the Winter months.
- 133.23 **To receive comments/requests from Members; to be included on the next agenda.**  
 No items requested.
- 134.23 **Date of next meeting** – It was resolved to confirm that the next Parish Council meeting would take place on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2023 commencing at the earlier time of 6.00pm in order to facilitate Council's Christmas meal.
- 135.23 **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).**  
 7.32pm - It was resolved to enter closed session.
- 136.23 **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 seek advice on a maximum load weight for memorials to be installed on the concrete beams.
- 137.23 **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 pending further update from Council's solicitor.  
 Advice received (from a specialist contractor) in relation to topple testing of memorials was presented. It was resolved for the contractor to undertake testing on two sections of the cemetery at a 'half-day' rate of £350.00 plus VAT. Funding for testing to be undertaken in additional areas to be included in the 2024/25 budget.
- 138.23 **To consider matters relating to tenancy agreement for Cemetery cottage, resolve appropriately** (confidential due to contractual matters and protection of an individual's personal data).  
 The presented information relevant to the matter; Council resolved appropriately.
- 139.23 **Consideration of personnel matters** (confidential due to protection of an individual's personal data & contractual matters).  
 8.30pm – The Clerk left the meeting room.  
 The Chair updated Members on the Clerk's Annual Appraisal. It was resolved;

- to authorise Mrs Welbourne to undertake additional administration tasks,
- to create an 'admin' email address for the role,
- to increase the Clerk's salary in line with the NALC/SLCC pay agreement for 2023; backdated to 1<sup>st</sup> April.
- To review level of remuneration for the administration role; to be carried forward to the December meeting.

140.23 **Close of meeting** – The meeting closed at 8.40pm.

Signed .....  
Elm Parish Council Chairman

Date .....