

# Elm Parish Council

## Minutes of the Meeting of Elm Parish Council held at the Portacabin, Begdale, Elm on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> June 2024 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, Dring, Goodley, Hopkin, Johnson, Milham, Probets, Stevenson & Welbourne.  
District Cllr Roy.

Mrs S England – Parish Clerk. 6 Members of the public.

26.24 **Apologies** – Reported for Cllr Ferguson; Council resolved to accept her reason for absence.

27.24 **Members Code of Conduct** – The Chair reminded members of the need to submit, via the Clerk; any changes to their Register of Interests information.

28.24 **Disclosable interests and requests for dispensation;**  
No interests declared.

### 29.24 **Open Forum**

6.32 pm – It was resolved to suspend Standing Orders.

Five members of the public requested to speak; the following subjects were raised;

- Proposal for 'Santa Sleigh Run' to be organised in December, running from Coldham through to Elm, all funds raised to be distributed for the benefit of children in the parish. Subject to be included on July agenda.
- Support voiced for Elmbridge Football Club and plans to expand facilities at Begdale playing field.
- Standard of grass maintenance at Coldham playing field had improved slightly, it was stressed that the field needed to be in good order for the Coldham Carnival, due to be held on 30<sup>th</sup> June.
- A blocked drain located in Station Road had been reported but subsequently written off by the County Council as 'No action'. Clerk to investigate the matter.
- It was confirmed that plans to install the WW1 plaque at Coldham layby would be progressed before the July meeting.

6.40 pm – It was resolved to reinstate Standing Orders.

30.24 **Review and approval of Minutes** – Council resolved to approve the minutes of meeting held on 8th May 2024 as a true record of proceedings. It was noted that Cllr Probets had submitted apologies for the May meeting however the email had arrived after the Clerk had left the office to attend the meeting.

### 31.24 **AGM Tasks** (deferred from May meeting).

- To review Council Standing Orders and Financial Regulations (updated to the new Model). Council resolved to adopt the documents; details as circulated prior to the meeting.
- To review Council's banking arrangements and signing mandate. It was resolved to continue to operate Council's business 'current' and 'savings' accounts with Barclays and also, maintain £98,000.00 in Income Bonds with NSI. It was resolved to confirm the existing signing mandate which included; Cllrs Ferguson, Probets and Welbourne as signatories and, the Clerk as a signatory with restricted powers.
- To review and approve Council's Asset Register. Item deferred pending completion of streetlight upgrades, phase 1.

32.24 **Police matters** – Nothing reported.

### 33.24 **District Councillor's Report**

Cllr Roy advised as follows;

There was a lack of recreational facilities for children/teenagers, could installation of outdoor gym equipment and/or creation of a safe cycling route be considered? Cllr Roy confirmed that he would be happy to be part of a working party and investigate funding for the project/s.

A meeting had taken place with Middle Level Commissioners; links to a series of videos had been circulated explaining how water levels were managed across the Fens. A date still needed to be arranged for Hilary Tandy

(& members of the Flood Management Team) to meet with various parties; including the Parish Council; in order to discuss flooding issues in the parish (including a Q&A session). FDC had confirmed that planning concerns relating to Newbridge Lane Travellers' site were being addressed. An agent had been appointed to assist the applicant with re-submitting their proposals in the correct manner.

Further to a spate of van 'break-ins', the local police team had increased patrols and surveillance.

Road works were due to take place on 23<sup>rd</sup> June which would create major delays in the area around The Horsefair. The Wisbech Rose Fair was being held on 29<sup>th</sup> June, a number of road closures would take place during the day. Coldham Carnival was due to be held on 30<sup>th</sup> June at Coldham playing field.

#### 34.24 **Clerk's Report** – The Clerk reported as follows;

1. The Asset Manager for Wisbech Solar Farm had responded concerning proposals to install a litter bin at the site entrance. Clerk to investigate the possibility of funding; Cllr Roy providing support.
2. Pre-election restrictions on Council activities (Purdah) would be in force until Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> July.
3. The emergency lighting inspection and testing had been completed at the portacabin.
4. A section of fencing and stile had been removed at the Pocket Park entrance to the towpath to facilitate access for mobility scooters.
5. It had been established that planning proposals approved for Redmoor House expired on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2024.
6. Stagecoach to be chased again concerning installation of timetables at bus stops in Elm.
7. Works on the drainage system in Birch Grove were due to take place on 13<sup>th</sup> June. Highways Drainage and Resilience Team were being consulted reference flooding issues along Elm High Road.
8. Garry Edwards (FDC Engineering Manager) had provided an update on the current streetlight maintenance contract (with Cable Test Ltd) which was due to expire in August 2024. New Government Procurement Regulations meant that the tendering process would be more labour intensive but it was hoped that a new 3 year contract (with an option to extend for a further 2 years) would be in place commencing 1<sup>st</sup> September. Several contractors had expressed their interest in tendering and it was therefore hoped that a competitive rate could be agreed. All existing works orders with CTL would be fulfilled and they would continue to work with UKPN concerning outstanding connectivity works. Bulk electrical and structural testing would be undertaken on all assets during August/September and the results would be shared later in the year once data had been compiled and entered into the asset inventory.
9. The underwriters for Council's insurance policy were happy with additional information submitted in respect of the Cemetery Chapel (classed as an unoccupied building); the policy renewed on 1<sup>st</sup> June.
10. Cllr Count had provided an update concerning flooding on Atkinsons Lane, advising that the owners of adjacent land had been approached concerning their riparian responsibility to maintain a pond located on their site; matter ongoing.

#### 35.24 **Financial Matters**

- i. The Clerk advised the following sums had been received since the last meeting; VAT £15,645.52; Cemetery fees £2,375.00; Cottage rent £1600.00; Interest £599.16.
- ii. To resolve to approve payments for June as detailed below;

PAYEE	DETAIL	NET	VAT	TOTAL
Gallagher insurance	Annual premium	£6,017.12		£6,017.12
Idverde	Grounds Maint. May 2024	£1,263.80	£252.76	£1,516.56
L Welbourne	Admin/Cem/play areas/exp	£562.79		£562.79
Tawny Owl maint. servs.	Safety surface repairs FB	£1,086.34		£1,086.34
Tawny Owl maint. servs.	Play equip maint. FB & Elm	£300.85		£300.85
Tawny Owl maint. servs.	Re-set posts at Memorial	£160.00		£160.00
Tawny Owl maint. servs.	Removal of fence & stile	£140.00		£140.00
L Green Electrical	Replace lights x3, elec test	£600.00	£120.00	£720.00
LCSS - T Jordan	Internal Audit fee	£210.00		£210.00
CAPALC	Cllr training	£75.00		£75.00

Walton Loo Hire	CRAG (Grant for carnival)	£200.00	£40.00	£240.00
BT	Broadband	£27.11	£5.42	£32.53
S England	Clerk's salary	£1,314.87		£1,314.87
S England	Clerk's Expenses	£212.51	£0.99	£213.50
HMRC	PAYE M2	£259.95		£259.95
Nest	Pension Contr's	£125.63		£125.63
Tamar IT	Bus. Hosting & domain	£87.00	£17.40	£104.40
		£12,642.97	£436.57	£13,079.54

It was noted that a payment to Tamar IT totalling £87.00 + VAT had been included as an addendum to the schedule. It was resolved to approve payment of June invoices as detailed, with the following exception; payment to Idverde to be held back pending ongoing monitoring of working standards.

Chairperson .....

- iii. To resolve on quotations received for repairs to surface of Begdale car park. Item deferred pending clarification of quotation detail.
- iv. To receive details of and; resolve to approve; content of Internal Auditor's Report 2023-24. It was resolved to accept the content of the Report.
- v. To resolve to approve Section 1 of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) 2023-24. It was resolved to approve AGAR Section 1.
- vi. To resolve to approve Section 2 of the AGAR (Accounting Statements) 2023-24. It was resolved to approve Section 2.
- vii. To resolve to approve payment to continue via direct debit for; broadband, water/drainage rates and NEST pension contributions. It was resolved to approve continued direct debits for specified utilities & NEST.
- viii. To resolve on arrangements for authorisation of supplier payments due in August (when no meeting is held). It was resolved to authorise Cllrs Ferguson, Proberts, Stevenson & Welbourne to approve August payments; payment schedule to be circulated to all remaining Members for their attention.

#### 36.24 Correspondence

- i. Email, parishioner – complaint reference standard of grounds maintenance at Coldham playing field.  
*Subject discussed in Public Forum; Council to consider contract later in the meeting.*

**For information purposes;**

All information circulated to Council Members and posted to the website and Facebook platform where appropriate. For further details contact the Parish Clerk.

#### 37.24 Planning

1. **F/YR24/0387/F** – Construction of front and side extensions, involving demolition of garage and porch and, replacement of existing hedge with fencing at, Ye Old Bakery, 45 High Road, Elm. Council resolved to support the proposals.
2. It was noted that demolition had commenced at the site of the former dairy in Begdale Road. Permission granted under F/YR24/0278/DE2.

#### 38.24 Highways & Footways

- i. LHI update 2024-25 - No update other than, decision should be expected by end of September 2024.

#### 39.24 To review arrangements for grounds maintenance across the Parish, resolve appropriately.

It was resolved to defer the item to closed session in order to facilitate discussion on full details of the contract.

**40.24 To receive update concerning subsidence of the bank and fencing at The Leam pond; resolve on action.**

Members were advised that advice had been sought from two specialist contractors concerning what exactly needed to be done to stabilise the bank and fencing; in the first instance it was imperative that ownership of the fence was established. During subsequent investigations a letter had been discovered (dated, 28<sup>th</sup> June 2004), confirming that the fence fell under the responsibility of the County Council. Contractors had provided advice on how replacement fence posts could be installed using steel pins and concrete. It was resolved for the Clerk to write to the County Council advising them of the situation and forwarding details of the recommendations made for remedial works.

**41.24 To receive update concerning Elm Cemetery Chapel; resolve appropriately.**

It was confirmed that Structural Engineer, Dave Wilby (ARD Consulting Engineers) would be attending the Chapel to undertake the structural investigation on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> June at 11:00. All Councillors welcome to attend.

**42.24 To receive other comments and/or requests from Members; to be included on the next agenda.**

As advised prior to the meeting, an urgent matter had arisen concerning arrangements for Elmbridge Football Club to expand their activities at Begdale playing field. Unfortunately, Cllrs Proberts and Johnson had become aware of the proposals after the June agenda had been published and; as a decision was required by 1<sup>st</sup> July; information pertaining to the subject was presented under this agenda item with a view to scheduling a further extraordinary meeting to discuss the matter in full and, facilitate a resolution according to Council Standing Orders.

Cllr Proberts presented a report outlining proposals for Elmbridge FC to provide training/playing opportunities for children (5 – U13's) in collaboration with Wisbech Town Football Club. For full details of the outline proposals see Appendix 1 to the Minutes.

Councillors were given the opportunity to raise questions, the following points were raised;

- The plans for expansion would be self-funding.
- The proposals could not be facilitated at Wisbech Town FC as there are no smaller pitches at their site.
- A 4m perimeter would remain around the field for other recreational use, dog walking for example.
- Matches and training sessions would be split/staggered in order to manage parking. A local farmer had agreed to provide overspill parking facilities in his yard.
- Training sessions would relocate to Thomas Clarkson (or other facility) during late Autumn/Winter.
- Metal shielding would be provided to protect trees growing on the playing field.
- It would provide Council with an opportunity to invest in the community and encourage children to become more physically active. Low level anti-social behaviour may be reduced.
- Funds would be raised via players' subs/membership fees, sponsorship (including Wisbech Town FC) and social events.
- Parents of the children were very supportive of the proposals.

Matters requiring further investigation/confirmation;

- What was the minimum distance trees could be planted adjacent to a dyke/drain? Clerk to contact Drainage Board for advice.
- Arrangements would need to be put in place for the men's toilets to be cleaned at the portacabin.
- If the proposals were agreed, monitoring of noise and car parking arrangements would be necessary.
- Would children from the parish feel 'pushed out'? Members were reassured that players of all abilities would be given the opportunity to play.
- Clear arrangements would need to be put in place for managing the opening and closing of the car park gates.
- Management of grass maintenance at Begdale playing field would be taken into account when discussions were held concerning the current grounds maintenance contract.

It was resolved to convene an extraordinary meeting of the Parish Council at 6.30pm on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> June in order to discuss the subject in greater detail and, resolve on a decision in accordance with Standing Orders. The agenda would include an Open Forum to allow members of the public to share their views.

The Clerk confirmed that she would issue the agenda immediately and upload details to Facebook and Council's website. Notices would also be hand delivered to residents living along Begdale Road in order to make them aware of the meeting, should they wish to attend.

**43.24 Date of next Parish Council meeting**

It was resolved to confirm that the next Parish Council meeting would be held at 6.30pm on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> July.

**44.24 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 s.1(2)**

7.50pm - It was resolved to enter closed session.

**45.24 To review grounds maintenance contract; resolve appropriately** (Agenda item 14 deferred; see min. ref. 39.24).

The standard of work undertaken by the current contractor was discussed along with terms and prices included for each area of the parish. The possibility of making alternative arrangements was also considered. It was resolved to monitor the situation over the next month and carry the subject forward to the July meeting.

**46.24 Close of meeting** – The meeting closed at 8.07pm.

Signed .....  
Elm Parish Council Chairman

Date .....