

Elm Parish Council

Minutes of the Meeting of Elm Parish Council held at the Portacabin, Begdale, Elm on Wednesday 10th July 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 – Darker, Dring, Goodley, Hopkin, Johnson, Milham, Probets, Stevenson (Acting Chair) & Welbourne.
District Cllr Roy, County Cllr Count.

Mrs S England – Parish Clerk. 3 Members of the public.

It was confirmed that Cllr Stevenson (Vice-Chair) would be acting a Chair for the meeting in Cllr Ferguson's absence.

52.24 **Apologies** – Reported for Cllrs Butcher & Ferguson; Council resolved to accept their reasons for absence.

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

54.24 **Disclosable interests (pecuniary & non-pecuniary) and requests for dispensation;**
No interests declared.

55.24 **Open Forum**

6.32 pm – It was resolved to suspend Standing Orders.

County Cllr Count and one member of the public requested to speak; the following subjects were raised; Cllr Count advised his continued support for the Parish Council and confirmed that he was happy to be contacted via email concerning any matter in which he may be able to provide assistance; for example, maintenance issues relating to highways and drains. Further to CCC's reversal of its policy on weed spraying, Elm parish would be included in the next round of spraying operations. Recent political changes may impact on budgets/finances, it was hoped that the South Cambs Authority would not go down the route of 'four days' work for five days' pay', this would be a concern for the tax payer. The Chair and Clerk thanked Cllr Count for attending the meeting.

Mr Keeble (CRAG) thanked Council for providing grant funding in support of the Coldham Carnival. The Committee was happy with the standard of grass cutting undertaken prior to the event.

6.35 pm – It was resolved to reinstate Standing Orders.

56.24 **Review and approval of Minutes** – Council resolved to approve the minutes of meetings held on 12th June & 17th June 2024 as a true record of proceedings.

57.24 **Police matters** – Nothing reported.

58.24 **District Councillor's Report**

Cllr Roy advised as follows;

An appeal hearing for planning proposals at The Stitch would be held at The Boathouse in Wisbech on 31st July 2024. A new Planning Policy Manager had been appointed at Fenland District Council. Planning Enforcement had attended a property located along Redmoor Lane to check on activities taking place, officer had been assured that no business was being operated from the site; situation to be monitored. A team of volunteers was being brought together to facilitate the Elm Centre being fully used by the local community. An enforcement notice had been issued to the owners of an unkempt property located along Fridaybridge Road. Arrangements for a meeting to be held between various parties in order to discuss flooding issues across the parish were still being considered. A Speedwatch event would be taking place on Monday 15th July. A small event would be taking place at 1pm on 22nd July in order to officially mark installation of the bench (in memory of the late Mac Cotterell) on the green area adjacent to Birch Grove. A 24 hour road closure would be implemented along Churchill Road between 19th & 24th August, diversion route to be put in place but delays were highly likely.

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

1. Arrangements were in place for Mrs Marjorie Cotterell (ex-Cllr) to attend the ceremony to mark installation of the memorial bench at Birch Grove green area, a representative from Clarion Housing had also been invited.
2. Concerns relating to the play area safety surface at Friday Bridge (FDC project) were being investigated; thanks to District Cllr Roy for his support in the matter.
3. RoSPA safety inspections were due to take place at the Elm and Friday Bridge play areas on 17th July.
4. Stagecoach had been chased up concerning Council's request for installation of new bust stop signs and timetables in Elm and Friday Bridge.
5. Hilary Tandy (CCC Flood Risk Manager) had proposed further dates for the convening of a meeting to discuss flooding concerns. *Council resolved to respond suggesting that the meeting should take place as part of Council's September (11th) meeting; Clerk to liaise further with H. Tandy.*
6. Reference proposed installation of new litter bin at the entrance to Wisbech Solar Farm (WSF), it had been queried if WSF might be able to make a financial contribution to the project; awaiting response.
7. FDC had been chased up concerning removal of broken barrel planters in Friday Bridge.
8. Results of the 24/25 20mph zone funding applications would be released in September.
9. Concerns relating to longevity of road/pothole repairs had been raised with Cambs Highways; thanks to Cllr Steve Count for his support in the matter.
10. Funding was available for community tree planting projects across the UK, it had been confirmed that Coldham residents would be interested in planting a community orchard; Clerk to register interest on their behalf.
11. Local Highways Officer (LHO) Amanda Hill had left the role, a new LHO had yet to be appointed, officers from other areas to cover the post in the meantime.
12. Further complaints had been received concerning the overgrown conifer hedge at Asholt Corner in Coldham. County Highways continued to advise that the case was closed as responsibility fell to the landowner. It had been stressed that the landowner was not taking action and the situation had now become extremely hazardous for road users. Further report to be submitted; County Cllr Count to provide his support.
13. CCC Rights of Way Officer had confirmed that a new 'public footpath' post would be installed at the entrance to the large Pocket Park and also, contractors would be appointed to cut Elm byway 9. In both instances the work would take some time to complete.
14. An incident had occurred involving large Giant Hogweed plants being removed from an Emneth resident's garden and dumped onto the Towpath. The landowner had been contacted immediately resulting in removal of the debris. It was understood that licensed contractors were being sought to arrange removal of the Hogweed in accordance with legislation.
15. A number of tasks were scheduled for August (when no meeting takes place); further clearance/sorting of documents in the Cemetery Chapel (confidential shredding where appropriate); a working party organised to remove dead floral tributes and other unauthorised items from graves; an 'Open Day' at the Cemetery Chapel to provide parishioners with an opportunity to visit the building and view plans for renovation; reviewing information/correspondence held by Council and; where appropriate; destroying in line with 'Document Retention Policy'.
16. Overgrown vegetation along dykes adjacent to entrance to Begdale car park were causing hazard; arrangements were in place for cutting back.
17. A request had been submitted to FDC for vegetation on the boundary of Strathmore House to be cut back; thanks to Cllr Roy for his support in the matter.

60.24 **Financial Matters**

- i. The Clerk advised the following sums had been received since the last meeting; FDC Concurrent functions Grant £7837.00; Cottage rent £800.00; Interest £316.55, Defib cabinet refund (Elgoods) £540.00.
- ii. To resolve to approve payments for July as detailed below;

PAYEE	DETAIL	NET	VAT	TOTAL
Idverde	Grounds Maint. Jun 2024	£1,263.80	£252.76	£1,516.56
L Welbourne	Admin/Cem/play areas/exps	£616.80		£616.80

FDC	Litter bin - Grove Gardens	£308.74	£61.75	£370.49
L Green Electrical	Defib cabinet install.	£100.00	£20.00	£120.00
Wave	Water rates Cem & Cottage	£86.80		£86.80
BT	Broadband	£27.11	£5.42	£32.53
S England	Clerk's salary	£1,191.82		£1,191.82
S England	Clerk's Expenses	£187.58	£2.66	£190.24
HMRC	PAYE M3	£321.73		£321.73
Nest	Pension Contr's	£103.92		£103.92
		£4,208.30	£342.59	£4,550.89

It was resolved to approve payment of July invoices as detailed, with the following exception; payment to Idverde to be held back pending ongoing monitoring of working standards.

iii. To resolve to approve Bank Reconciliation Report, quarter end 30.6.24. Resolved to accept.

iv. To resolve to approve Budget Update Report, quarter end 30.6.24 (including resolution on re-allocation of sums to cover over-spend in Insurance and Play Equipment budget categories). It was resolved to accept the report. It was resolved to top up the Insurance budget category by £1017.12 from the General Reserve. It was resolved to divert £1500.00 from the Grounds Maintenance budget to the Play Equipment budget in order to cover over-spend and fund future play area checks.

Chairperson

61.24 Correspondence

General - N/A.

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.

62.24 Planning

1. **F/YR24/0503/F** – Agricultural store shed (to house tractor & agr. Tools) to be constructed at; land south west of Willow Lodge, Maltmas Drove, Friday Bridge. Resolved to support.

63.24 Highways & Footways

Monitoring and reporting of highway/drains faults continued but response from Highways was lacking.

64.24 To adopt updated Code of Conduct (based on latest model) and Application for Dispensation form.

Council resolved to adopt the documents; drafts circulated prior to meeting.

65.24 To receive update from Elmbridge Football Club and resolve on;

i. Approval of designs for signage and installation locations – Cllr Probets had provided draft designs for two signs, both A1 in size. One to direct motorists to the overflow parking areas (to be attached to the outer car park railings) and a second to promote Elmbridge FC's affiliation with Wisbech Town FC (WTFC) and advise match/training times (to be attached to unused fixing posts on the edge of Begdale field). Members were advised that further minor amendments may be required to the design/s; Council to be kept updated. Council resolved to approve the design and proposed fixing locations for the two signs subject to update on final detail.

ii. Approval for removal of fixed goal posts to facilitate the development of additional pitches – Members were advised that in all probability only two pitches would be required for the coming season. It may therefore be possible to progress with the removal of one fixed goal post (preferably the one installed at the car park end of the field as the ground was flatter at the far end). The removed goal post would be stored within the small compound. Council resolved to approve the removal of the fixed goal post/s on condition that; should the FC stop using the field; the posts should be re-instated by the Club.

iii. Approval of design for storage unit and installation location – Members were advised that a unit was

required for storage of a ride-on lawn mower and other equipment; an example of the design had been circulated prior to the meeting. It was stressed that; once installed (within the small compound); it would be painted green and appropriately secured. Councillors were assured that delivery and installation should be straightforward as the compound security gates would accommodate the width of the unit. Council resolved to permit the installation of a storage container within the small compound subject to confirmation of the final design and dimensions (which should be less than 15m sq. due to planning considerations).

iv. Approval of creation of working party to assist with matters relating to the Football Club. Deferred at the request of Cllr Probeta.

v. To consider details for Licence Agreement to be drawn up in relation to Elmbridge FC's use of Begdale playing field - The Clerk advised she was still waiting for information requested from the Elmbridge Football Club Committee; details of licence agreement to be deferred pending receipt.

Council was advised that an individual was allegedly running football training sessions on Begdale field. The Clerk confirmed that; whilst an application had been made; approval was subject to receipt of evidence of, Risk Assessment, PL insurance and DBS documentation. It was confirmed that the individual concerned would be instructed to cease training sessions until all evidence had been provided to Council.

An issue was raised concerning complaints that had allegedly been received from members of the public in relation to Councillors' alleged behaviour during the June extra-ordinary meeting. Additional comments were made concerning Councillors' alleged behaviour towards one another. The Clerk reminded all Members that there were clear guidelines to deal with such matters as detailed in; Council's Complaints Policy and the Councillors Code of Conduct. Any member of the public or Councillor wishing to raise a complaint should be directed to the Clerk who would advise/arrange the appropriate course of action.

- 66.24 **To receive an update concerning the boundary fence adjacent to The Leam pond; resolve appropriately.**
As previously reported, Cambs County Council had been identified as the body responsible for maintenance of the fence. The issue had been reported both via the portal and directly to Highways Officers; no response to date, situation to be monitored.
- 67.24 **To receive update on Structural Engineer's Report on Elm Cemetery Chapel; resolve appropriately.**
The Clerk advised that; despite chasing up the report on a number of occasions; it had not been received. It was resolved to authorise the Clerk to forward a copy of the report (on receipt) to the Quantity Surveyor (QS) requesting an updated costing for the project; on condition that the QS' charge for the update did not exceed the original sum quoted for his work (£1,000.00 total; £350.00 already invoiced for initial estimated cost report; balance remaining £650.00).
- 68.24 **To resolve on details relating to location and information panel to be incorporated into the WW1 memorial plaque plinth at Coldham layby.**
It was confirmed that the Clerk and Cllr Hopkin had visited Coldham layby to consider an appropriate location for the plaque to be installed. An area to the left of the oak bench had been identified and a photograph of the proposed site was shown to Cllrs. It was recognised that proposals for an information plate to be included on the plinth would merely duplicate details already included on the plaque itself, however a map of the airfield site would be a useful addition. Clerk confirmed she had been in contact with A1 signs to investigate how the map design might be transferred to an information panel. Council resolved to approve the proposed location for the plinth; subject to be carried forward.
- 69.24 **To resolve on 'Santa Sleigh Run' to be operated through parish villages in December (date tbc.) subject to receipt of appropriate H&S/ insurance documentation.**
7.30pm - It was resolved to suspend Standing Orders in order to permit member of the public to provide information on the subject.
Members were advised that the 'Santa Sleigh Run' was operated by a small charity, 'Fenland Farmers'. It was proposed to undertake the run on 20th December (to be confirmed) travelling through the parish with appropriate 'Meet & Greet' stops in each village.
7.32pm – Council resolved to reinstate Standing Orders.
Council resolved to approve the event in principle subject to receipt of appropriate insurance/risk

documentation and confirmation of route/stops. Ideas on how profits from the event might be distributed to be considered under a future agenda.

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

The following subjects were requested;

1. Election of new Chair (if appropriate).
2. Distribution of profit from Santa Run.

71.24 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 11th September.

72.24 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)

7.33pm - It was resolved to enter closed session.

73.24 To receive update concerning grounds maintenance contract and resolve on appropriate way forward.

The Clerk updated Council on standards of grounds maintenance under the existing contract. Details were provided of (i) a contractor who was available to take over the contract if considered appropriate, (ii) new tender document including costings for each task at every location, (iii) a calculation of the sum currently owed to Idverde for work completed, (iv) funds remaining under 'Grounds Maintenance' budget heading and how a new contract would impact on the budget category.

It was resolved to end the contract with the current provider with effect from 31st July 2024. It was further resolved to accept the tender received from Tawny Owl Services, contract to commence from 1st August 2024; payment to be made pro-rata for the current season dependent on work completed.

The subject of additional maintenance required on football pitches at Begdale field was raised, specifically extra/lower cutting and collection of grass. The Clerk confirmed that this would incur additional cost and she would raise an enquiry with the contractor.

It was resolved to approve an additional cut for the Football Club; requirements to be confirmed by Cllrs Probets & Johnson. *** Refer to footnote below.*

74.24 Close of meeting – The meeting closed at 7.50pm.

Signed
Elm Parish Council Chairman

Date

***On reflection, the subject of funding for additional maintenance work to football pitches should have been requested in advance and included under Agenda item 14 (see Minute ref. 65.24). In accordance with Standing Orders para. 9(b), the proposal should not have been resolved.*