

Elm Parish Council

Minutes of the Meeting of Elm Parish Council held at the Portacabin, Begdale, Elm on Wednesday 11th September 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, Darker, Dring, Milham, Stevenson (Acting Chair) & Welbourne. District Cllr Roy.
Mrs S England – Parish Clerk. 6 Members of the public. Mr Brian Heffernan (Cambs County Council Principal Flood Risk Officer).

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

84.24 **Apologies** – Reported for Cllrs Cage, Ferguson, Goodley & Hopkin; Council resolved to accept their reasons for absence. County Councillor Steve Count had also submitted his apologies.

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

86.24 **Disclosable interests (pecuniary & non-pecuniary) and requests for dispensation;**
Cllr Stevenson advised his interest in agenda item (see min. ref 98.24) due to his ownership of Exclusive Rights of Burial at Elm Cemetery.

87.24 6.34 pm – It was resolved to suspend Standing Orders.
Presentation deferred pending Mr Heffernan's arrival.

Open Forum -

Concern was raised in relation to availability status of the defibrillator at Coldham as emergency services were directing users to the unit at Friday Bridge. The Clerk confirmed that she was aware of the issue; Circuit Network had been advised that their system was not updating correctly. It was suggested that a resident living adjacent to the Coldham defib. should hold spare pads in order to be able to re-stock the cabinet after use.

6.36 pm – It was resolved to reinstate Standing Orders.

88.24 **Review and approval of Minutes** – Council resolved to approve the minutes of meetings held on 10th July & 28th August (extraordinary) 2024 as a true record of proceedings.

89.24 **Police matters** – The Clerk reported that the local police team were aware of recent cases involving missing/injured cats, investigations were underway but it was not thought that the current incidents were connected to events that occurred in 2023.

90.24 **District Councillor's Report**

Cllr Roy advised as follows;

He was in communication with FDC Head of Planning concerning issues at properties located along Fridaybridge Road; Strathmore House was facing enforcement action. Simon Temporal (Tilia Homes) had appointed contractors to install water safety equipment/signage at Grove Gardens ponds but they had failed to attend. A meeting had taken place to inspect failing of safety surface at Friday Bridge play area, a report was being compiled to present to FDC. An on-site meeting would be taking place with representatives from Biomarsh on Friday 13th September, topics for discussion would include traffic management; representatives from the Parish Council welcome to attend. Members were thanked for their feedback concerning District Cllr Summers' Draft Highways Strategy Report. Residents living along Back Road were increasingly concerned about lack of visibility when trying to pull out onto Fridaybridge Road, Highways had rejected a proposal for a mirror to be installed; alternative measures were being investigated to make the junction safer. Speedwatch volunteers were operating 1 to 2 times weekly, there was evidence that traffic speeds were reducing, it was confirmed that Begdale Road had been checked. Councillors discussed the possibility of re-locating the National Speed limit sign further along Begdale Road (now that further housing development had taken place). It was suggested that there was a strong case for a pavement to be installed to support pedestrian access to the school located in Redmoor Lane and furthermore, would Biomarsh support/part-fund the project?

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

1. Positive feedback had been received concerning standard of grounds maintenance since the new contractor had been appointed.
2. District Cllr Summers' draft Highways Strategy – Cllrs' feedback had been forwarded to Cllr Summers, the content of the document would be discussed in greater depth at a future PC meeting; date to be confirmed, subject to Cllr Summers' availability.
3. A new Local Highways Officer had been appointed, Karen Southwell. All outstanding highways issues had been chased; no response to date.
4. A new waste bin had been installed at the entrance to the Solar Farm in Begdale; cost to be reimbursed by the Solar Farm.
5. Concerns relating to the condition of a property (and garden) located in Fridaybridge Road had been reported to FDC Planning and District Cllr Roy.
6. Concerns had been raised in relation to the condition of a track lying adjacent to land owned by Elm (and Emneth) PC at the Colletts Bridge end of the towpath. Clerk to meet with resident to discuss situation, take photographs of the surface and forward to relevant authority/person (possibly - County Highways Right of Way Officer).
7. Expressions of interest were being sought in respect of the 25/26 application round. *Members confirmed their intention for an application to be submitted.*
8. Notice of Cambs and Peterborough Combined Authority bus franchising consultation taking place during period; 14th August to 20th November 2024. Elm PC invited to respond as a statutory consultee.
9. Stagecoach chased again reference installation of new signage/timetables.
10. FDC chased again reference removal of barrel planters from Friday Bridge.
11. Information presented relating to National Planning Policy Framework – Consultation on proposed changes and details of amendments particularly affecting Cambridgeshire. *Clerk to forward details to Members to seek feedback on response to consultation.*
12. Request for projects/expenditure to be included in 2025/26 budget.
13. NALC had informed new versions of 20 model policies; Clerk and Admin. Assistant to work through the details during coming months.

92.24 **Presentation** –

7.02 pm It was resolved to suspend Standing Orders.

The Chairman welcomed Mr Brian Heffernan (CCC Principal Flood Risk Officer) to the meeting.

Mr Heffernan apologised for the fact that a representative from the Highways Department had not been available to attend but confirmed that he had been briefed on current issues affecting the parish. The following information was conveyed;

- Flood Risk Teams were set up as a result of legislation included in the Flood and Water Management Act 2010. Their statutory obligations include; investigating flood defences, monitoring locations where significant (defined by set criteria) flooding events have occurred, publishing reports in relation to flooding events.
- It was not the Team's responsibility to apportion blame, rather, report that an incident had occurred and advise the risk management authorities, for example; The Environment Agency, Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFA), Internal Drainage Boards.
- Officers also investigated responsibilities connected to riparian ownership in accordance with The Land Drainage Act 1991. It was stressed that, property deeds did not always include details of riparian responsibilities however obligations detailed under the Act may still apply.
- In relation to planning matters a sub-unit of the Team was consulted on developments of 10 developments or more. Recommendations (designed to limit risk) were submitted to the relevant Planning Authority in respect of surface water management, it was then incumbent on the developer to come up with appropriate water management measures. The Team's recommendations were limited to commenting on a particular site, developments in the wider area were not taken into account. Soakaways did not work in areas of clay soil.
- Advice was also provided in response to general enquiries, for example; roof leaks, whole property flooding.

- In recent months, an unprecedented quantity of surface water (created as a result of 12 ‘alphabetical’ storms) had placed the drainage system at ‘break point saturation’ in several areas, i.e. if all systems were full to capacity, it was inevitable that further rainfall would cause flooding to occur.
- Every gully, drain and water course had a body/organisation that was responsible for it, it was the Flood Risk Team’s responsibility to contact other flood management authorities (CCC, AWA for example) requesting remedial action/repair to be undertaken. However, if the cause of flooding was groundwater, it was extremely difficult to manage/resolve.
- It was stressed that flooding issues should always be reported via the Cambs Highways portal thereby ensuring that funding could be diverted according to flood event statistics.

In response to questions raised by members of the public, it was confirmed;

- Despite Middle Level Commissioners expressing concerns about their capacity to support further development in the region (largely due to existing strain on infrastructure), they were merely acting in their role as a consultee, there was no statutory provision to stop a development, it was the Planning Authority that ultimately determined an application.
- Maps of flood risk areas had some use but were currently being reviewed/updated. Requests for flood risk status to be reviewed could be made but it was a long and complicated process. If a development was likely to cause increased flood risk, the area would not automatically be re-coded; everyone present agreed that this was extremely frustrating.
- Birch Grove – Highways contractors visited the location on 19th July 2024, gullies were emptied/jetted and inspected via CCTV. 15 gullies were identified as operational, 2 were found to be slow draining (adjacent to properties 11 and 21). Further investigations needed to be undertaken to identify cause of blockages. Members of the public affected by flooding events expressed their concern and frustration regarding the current situation. Mr Heffernan asked the residents to email him directly concerning the subject and assured that he would ensure further investigations were undertaken; however, he was unable to guarantee a timeframe for the work.
- Flooding at location near old Post Office – A resident advised that his property had been flooded 15 times and; despite reporting the issue on numerous occasions during the past 40 years; the issue had not resolved. Drains located between the old PO and Elm Church were regularly backing up during periods of heavy rainfall and the ACO drain installed to the front of the resident’s property was unable to cope with high volumes of surface water, ‘the water flows over the drain heading towards the property’. Numerous on-site meetings had been held (with reps from Drainage Boards/Highways etc.) but the situation was still unresolved. Mr Heffernan advised he would speak to relevant parties in order to highlight ongoing concerns.
- It was stressed that all incidents must be reported via the online portal.
- It was confirmed that although there was an emergency helpline, resources were limited and assistance to the parish (during flood events) could therefore not be guaranteed.

District Cllr Roy thanked Mr Heffernan for attending the meeting adding; although the Local Planning Authority made the ultimate decision on development applications, there was a desperate need for more ‘joined up thinking’ between all relevant parties.

Drainage Board pumping systems were currently operating at maximum capacity and there were a number of high profile sites that continually flooded. The drainage system in Elm was totally inadequate, with some gullies permanently blocked. The flood mitigation measures for the new development off Gosmoor Lane were unworkable and ultimately, this would lead to more flooding events.

An enquiry had been raised with local drainage boards to find out the number of riparian ownership enforcement actions that had been undertaken during the past ten years; the response received – zero. It was stressed that awareness of riparian ownership responsibilities should be part of the property/land conveyancing process.

Mr Heffernan confirmed that there were signs emerging of more ‘joined up thinking’ between parties but it needed to happen at scale.

The Chair thanked Mr Heffernan and members of the public for taking part in the discussion and also, thanked District Cllr Roy for his support.

7.58 pm – It was resolved to reinstate Standing Orders.

93.24 **Financial Matters**

- i. The Clerk advised the following sums had been received since the last meeting; Cottage rent £1600.00; Interest £1094.61; Cemetery fees £1880.00; Elm WI (room hire) £70.00.
- ii. To resolve to **confirm** expenditure for August 2024 as detailed below;

PAYEE	DETAIL	NET	VAT	TOTAL
FDC	Streetlight Upgrades, maintenance & energy re-charge 23/24	£57,594.54	£11,518.91	£69,113.45
Tawny Owl	Grounds Maint.	£1,165.28		£1,165.28
Mrs L Welbourne	Cem & office admin. Support	£708.28		£708.28
RoSPA	Play area annual inspections	£490.00	£98.00	£588.00
FDC	Cemetery skip emptying	£224.28		£224.28
BT	Broadband	£27.11	£5.42	£32.53
Wave	Water rates - portacabin	£35.69		£36.69
S England	Clerk's salary	£1,277.98		£1,277.98
S England	Clerk's Expenses	£147.25		£147.25
HMRC	PAYE M4	£246.08		£246.08
Nest	Pension Contr's	£119.34		£119.34
		£62,035.83	£11,622.33	£73,658.16

It was resolved to confirm payment for invoices due in August as detailed above.

Reference the payment to FDC in respect of streetlight repairs, maintenance, upgrades and energy re-charge costs it was confirmed that this was permissible under the 'Power to light roads and public spaces' provided by The Parish Councils Act 1957 (s3) and, The Highways Act 1980 (s301).

- iii. To resolve to approve expenditure for September 2024 as detailed in the payment schedule below;

PAYEE	DETAIL	NET	VAT	TOTAL
Tawny Owl	Grounds Maint. Aug. 24	£1,456.72		£1,456.72
ARD Consulting Engineers	Report on Ce. Chapel	£850.00	£170.00	£1,020.00
PKF Littlejohn	External Audit fee	£420.00	£84.00	£504.00
Mrs L Welbourne	Cem & office admin. Support	£171.88		£171.88
M Goodley	Verge maintenance	£104.00		£104.00
BT	Broadband	£27.11	£5.42	£32.53
S England	Clerk's salary	£1,103.06		£1,103.06
S England	Clerk's Expenses	£171.55		£171.55
HMRC	PAYE M5	£301.11		£301.11
Nest	Pension Contr's	£88.49		£88.49
		£4,693.92	£259.42	£4,953.34

It was resolved to approve payment of September invoices included in the payment schedule.

Chairperson

94.24 **Correspondence**

General;

- (i) Email, parishioner – query ref. glass vase removed from Cemetery. Matter resolved; vase returned.
- (ii) Email, parishioner – ongoing issue of broken streetlight FPC2A (Fridaybridge Road) despite three attempts to repair. Issue raised with FDC Assets & Projects.
- (iii) Emails (x2), parishioners – concerns raised in connection to activities at Fenmarc, Gosmoor Lane. Details forwarded to FDC Planning & Cllrs Roy & Summers. Residents advised to report nuisance issues to FDC Environment Team.

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.

95.24 **Planning**

F/YR24/0573/TRCA – FOR INFORMATION PURPOSES ONLY, CLLRS ADVISED TO SUBMIT COMMENTS IN THEIR PERSONAL CAPACITY. Fell Yew tree x1 & Sycamore x1 also, works to Oak tree (within a conservation area) at, Grove House, Main Road, Elm.

F/YR24/0387/F - FOR INFORMATION PURPOSES ONLY, CLLRS ADVISED TO SUBMIT COMMENTS IN THEIR PERSONAL CAPACITY. Revised proposals for extension, demolition work and boundary treatments at, Ye Old Bakery, 45 High Rd, Elm.

F/YR24/0700/TRTPO – Felling of Lime Tree (covered by TPO 9/1968) at, Gemini House, 9 Gosmoor Lane, Elm. Council resolved to support the Tree Officer's recommendation in respect of the proposals.

96.24 **Highways & Footways**

- (i) 20 mph zone application – deferred pending further response from CCC Highways.
- (ii) LHI application 2024/25 – deferred pending further response from CCC Highways.
- (iii) To resolve on response to National Highways consultation concerning proposals for speed limit reductions along A47 between Peterborough and Kings Lynn. Council resolved that it had no particular view on the proposals.

97.24 **To approve content and adopt the following policies;**

- (i) Safeguarding (Children, Young People & Vulnerable Adults) Policy. Resolved to adopt.
- (ii) Hire of Parish Facilities Policy – deferred pending completion.
- (iii) Biodiversity Policy (based on NALC Model, a duty under Section 40 of NERC 2006). Resolved to adopt.

98.24 **To resolve on action concerning Gov.uk guidance on 'the protection of groundwater from human burials'** (Details of guidance circulated to Members prior to meeting).

Cllr Stevenson confirmed his interest in the agenda item (due to ownership of rights to a plot at Elm Cemetery) and did not take part in the following discussion/resolutions.

The Clerk advised that best practice measures for the operation of Cemeteries included, 'interments should take place at least 1 metre above expected groundwater levels'. This was relevant because groundwater at Elm Cemetery was occasionally present when double depth graves were being excavated. The Clerk confirmed that she had contacted the ICCM for advice (Institute of Cemetery Management), they had advised contacting the Environment Agency however it was viewed that this may create further complications (such as the requirement for permits etc). The immediate issue to address was exclusive rights that had been purchased in advance for double depth plots (affecting 3 or 4 graves). It was also acknowledged that, even without the legislation; if these plots were not used for 30 or 40 years; double depth excavation may be totally impossible to achieve should groundwater continue to rise.

It was resolved to update Cemetery Regulations advising that only single depth plots were available.

For those who had already purchased rights for a double depth plot, it was resolved to offer two adjacent plots at no additional cost.

99.24 **To resolve on requests submitted by FEET;** (i) PC's to assist with clearance of towpath access path once annually, (ii) plant 2500 crocus bulbs to raise awareness of Polio eradication, (iii) install information board to illustrate the 'Polio journey'.

The Clerk reported; Emneth Parish Council was supportive of providing assistance with cutting the towpath access path once annually. They were also in favour of the crocus planting project, suggesting that 'Polio journey' information notice/s could be put up on the two oak noticeboards installed at either end of the towpath.

Council resolved to support seeking a quotation from Tawny Owl Services (grounds contractor for both Elm & Emneth PC's) in respect of a 'one off' clearance of the towpath access path.

Council resolved to support the crocus planting project, suggesting that information should be included on the existing noticeboards.

In respect of a further request for the creation of a lavender garden; the Clerk confirmed she had requested further information from FEET concerning the design and ongoing maintenance requirements etc.

100.24 **To receive update concerning proposals for expanded football playing facilities at Begdale playing field; resolve appropriately.**

Further to the extraordinary PC meeting convened in August specifically to discuss the football 'youth hub' project, an email had been received from the Wisbech Town FC's (WTFC) representative advising that; Wisbech Town FC was looking at 'an alternative solution'.

The representative had been requested to seek WTFC's opinion on an acceptable hire fee for Begdale playing field; it appeared that this had not been acted on.

It was resolved for the Clerk to contact Cllr Johnson to seek/confirm his understanding of the situation.

101.24 **To receive update concerning Structural & QS Reports on Elm Cemetery Chapel; resolve appropriately.**

The Clerk advised that; as previously resolved; the Structural Engineer's Report had been forwarded to the Quantity Surveyor in order to seek an updated costing for the Chapel conversion project. Subject to be carried forward.

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

The following subjects were requested;

1. The general subject of flooding issues to be carried forward.
2. The Clerk advised that a number of Councils were installing small memorial stones to mark graves purchased (historically) by institutions (such as Maternity Homes/ Hospitals) for the interment of babies that had either; died when only a few days old or, been stillborn. It was thought that there were a few such graves located within Elm Cemetery, the situation would be properly investigated on completion of the cemetery mapping at which point the subject would be included as an agenda item.

103.24 **To confirm 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 9th October.

104.24 **Close of meeting** – The meeting closed at 8.20pm.

Signed
Elm Parish Council Chairman

Date