

# Elm Parish Council

## Minutes of the Meeting of Elm Parish Council held at the Portacabin, Begdale, Elm on Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> October 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 – Cage, Darker, Ferguson (Chair), Goodley, Milham & Welbourne. District Cllr Roy.  
Mrs S England – Parish Clerk. 2 Members of the public.

105.24 **Apologies** – Reported for Cllrs Dring, Hopkin & Stevenson; Council resolved to accept their reasons for absence.

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

107.24 **Disclosable interests (pecuniary & non-pecuniary) and requests for dispensation;**  
None disclosed.

### 108.24 **Open Forum**

6.31pm – It was resolved to suspend Standing Orders.

The following comments were raised;

- The County Council's approval of the 20mph zone for Elm Parish was positive news.
- Traffic calming was required for Needham Bank/Well End. *To be considered for 2025/26 LHI application.*
- Could The Leam pond be left to evolve rather than committing funds to ongoing maintenance. *It was confirmed that there was presently no requirement for additional maintenance work.*
- When would the grass cutting season finish. *It was confirmed that; due to an extended growing season; cuts would be extended into October.*

6.40 pm – It was resolved to reinstate Standing Orders.

109.24 **Review and approval of Minutes** – Council resolved to approve the minutes of meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2024 as a true record of proceedings.

110.24 **Police matters** – N/A

### 111.24 **District & County Councillors' Reports**

1. District Cllr Roy advised as follows;

It was good to have members of the public at the meeting who wished to congratulate the Parish Council on its successes. Speedwatch volunteers continued to monitor traffic weekly, it was interesting to note that vehicles who appeared to be speeding were actually not doing so. Julie Clarke (Local Constabulary) had attended one session and was attempting to source another unit for the team (none available at present).

A Golden age Fair would be held at Tower Hall, Friday Bridge on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2025; event to be promoted nearer the time. The subject of the March to Wisbech rail line was back on the agenda as costings covered the link finishing at Begdale and it was considered essential that the line ran right into Wisbech.

Strathmore House – S215 applied for and locks to be purchased. A S215 had also been applied for on another unkempt property located along Fridaybridge Road, owner had until 18<sup>th</sup> October to comply with improving the site.

Changes to the District Council's Code of Procurement should encourage smaller businesses to apply for contracts. Equally, its revised approach to Planning should speed up the application process.

Biomarsh – A portacabin was due to be installed pending completion of work on office buildings. Vegetation was to be cut back in order to improve visibility for vehicles leaving the site however it was proving impossible for HGV's to turn right (to A47) due to damage caused on land belonging to private residents. Construction of a new access lane (parallel to Newbridge Lane) had been discounted due to excessive costs involved. Work at the site had increased, the company was looking to employ a further 10+ people. It was queried if vehicles

using the Biomarsh site were 3.5 tonnes or under; if not, an operators licence was required; Cllr Roy to investigate.

Meetings were being held to progress the Community Space Project at Elm Church.

2. County Cllr Count advised as follows;

LHI applications were always dealt with on a 'case by case' basis, the fact that Elm PC had achieved success for complex projects in its 2023/24 and 2024/25 applications would not influence the panel's decision for future submissions. The new Highways Officer, Karen Southwell was settling into her role. The current highways faults reporting portal was not particularly good; a better system would be up and running by April 2025.

Smart Traffic Lights were to be installed at the Hobbs Lot Bridge junction.

A new App had been set up to promote active travel across the County. There were proposals to create a new cycle path linking March and Guyhirn through the nature reserve; if successful a spur could be added heading towards Elm.

It was disappointing that the 'Heatpump Incentive Project' resulted in homeowners actually having to pay more to run their homes; better deals may be available from local contractors.

The County Council was facing a £7.3m overspend (to date in 2024-25) on children's services due to special needs requirements. This was a country wide issue but Cambs was particularly affected.

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

1. An on-site meeting had been held with residents of Collett's Bridge Lane to discuss various concerns relating to poor road surface (including footpath 1, running parallel to C's B Lane), access for commercial vehicles, lack of turning bay etc. A report had subsequently been sent to the Highways & Rights of Way Officers seeking their advice on the issues raised. Thanks to Cllrs Darker & Hopkin for their support at the meeting.

2. An update had been received from Garry Edwards (FDC Engineering Manager) concerning the appointment of a new contractor for streetlight maintenance. The new contract would have a 'soft start' commencing 4<sup>th</sup> November; attending emergencies and routine work not requiring specific stock items only. FDC continued to chase UKPN in respect of outstanding connectivity works. Structural and electrical testing on the streetlight assets was currently ongoing, it was hoped that the updated inventory would be circulated within the following six weeks.

3. A new litter bin had been installed on the verge adjacent to Solar Farm entrance along Begdale; it was already being well used. The Solar Farm Communities Team had confirmed it would fund the cost of supply and installation.

4. Cambs & Peterborough Combined Authority bus franchising consultation – Cllr Roy would be attending a stakeholder event; awaiting his feedback concerning the proposals.

5. UKPN had been chased concerning additional wayleave payments, a further £287.29 was due to be banked.

6. Commencing October 2024 all UK Government services would be monitored for Website Accessibility Compliance (WCAG 2.2). Also, in order to comply with Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) it was recommended that Parish Councils and Cllrs should use gov.uk email addresses. Clerk to investigate further.

7. A local contractor had viewed the WW1 plaque and would be submitting a quotation for the creation of a mounting plinth at Coldham layby; item to be carried forward.

8. Maintenance on the clock at Friday Bridge Clock Tower had been completed. The annual safety check had been completed on fire appliances located at the portacabin and chapel.

9. The interest rate on Council's Barclays Business Investment Account would reduce from 1.95% to 1.9% with effect from 19<sup>th</sup> December 2024.

10. Further to complaints received regarding mud on roadway and overgrown brambles (affecting properties in Fen Way and All Saints Close), the Clerk had contacted the farmer managing the land in question requesting remedial work to be undertaken.

11. As requested, barrel planters (x 3) had been removed from verge adjacent to the Friday Bridge notice board.

12. Concerning the ongoing matter of missing bus stop signs and timetables, Stagecoach had recently reported that they were not actually responsible for replacing the items, further advising that it was the County Council's responsibility. Request to be diverted to the County Council.

13. Allotment rent invoices had been issued.
14. Councillors' feedback had been forwarded to Cllr Matt Summers in respect of the draft Highways Strategy. Cllr Summers would be invited to the November meeting in order to facilitate a full discussion on the proposals.
15. Cllrs requested to submit (to the Clerk) ideas for projects for inclusion in the 2025/26 budget.

#### 113.24 Financial Matters

- i. The Clerk advised the following sums had been received since the last meeting; Precept (50%) £39,210.00; Cottage rent £800.00; Interest £316.55; Cemetery fees £3320.00; Wayleave £287.29.
- ii. To resolve to approve expenditure for October 2024 as detailed in the payment schedule below;

PAYEE	DETAIL	NET	VAT	TOTAL
Idverde	Gr's Maint. completed Apr-July	£3,970.82	£794.16	£4,764.98
Tawny Owl	Gr's Maint. September	£1,957.00		£1,957.00
L Welbourne	Cemetery records & admin.	£559.18		£559.18
D Pritchard	Cem Chapel QS Report	£300.00	£60.00	£360.00
FDC	Bin (solar farm) to be reclaimed	£308.74	£61.75	£370.49
Hundred of Wisbech	Drainage Rates	£129.44		£129.44
BT	Broadband	£27.11	£5.42	£32.53
Wave	Cem. Water rates	£80.38		£80.38
Mrs S England	Clerk's salary	£1,357.64		£1,357.64
HMRC	PAYE M7	£64.57		£64.57
Mrs S England	Clerk's expenses	£142.10		£142.10
Nest	Pension Contr's	£102.20		£102.20
Fen Property Svs.	Plumbing repairs p'cabin	£174.98	£35.00	£209.98
SLCC	Annual Sub.	£188.00		£188.00
Smith of Derby	Clock maint. fee	£224.00	£44.80	£268.80
		£9,586.16	£1,001.13	£10,587.29

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

Chairperson .....

- iii. To resolve to approve Finance Report/ Bank Reconciliation; quarter end 30.9.24. Resolved to accept.
- iv. To resolve to approve Budget Update Report for quarter end 30.9.24. Resolved to accept.
- v. To resolve on quotation received for clearance/maintenance of towpath (50% of cost to Ementh PC). Council resolved to accept sections of quotation relating to pollarding of willow trees and cutting back vegetation to sides of path. Total £960.00 to be split 50/50 with Emneth PC.
- vi. To resolve to confirm approval of 'Community Space' S106 funding to be used by All Saints Parochial Church Council in support of their Community Facility Project. Council resolved to confirm its approval for S106 funds (designated for the benefit of a community building) totalling £42,569 to be transferred to the Elm PCC Community Facility Project.
- vii. To resolve on beneficiary of funds raised from Santa Run due to take place in December. It was resolved for Cllr Welbourne to enquire if Elm Primary School had a project that the funds would benefit.

#### 114.24 Correspondence

General;

- (i) Email, parishioner – overgrown vegetation at The Leam pond. *The Clerk confirmed that the pond had been inspected and; although there had been significant growth of reeds etc; the water was still accessible for wildlife. Parishioner advised accordingly.*

**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.

**115.24 Planning**

**F/YR24/0793/F** – Construction of 9 x dwellings, formation of 3 x accesses and extension of existing pavements at; land South East of Aberfield, Well End, Friday Bridge. Council resolved to support the application.

**116.24 Highways & Footways**

- (i) 20 mph zone application – Confirmation received the panel had approved the Parish Council's application; awaiting further information from the Project Delivery Officer.
- (ii) LHI application 2024/25 – Confirmation received the panel had approved the Parish Council's application; awaiting further information from the Project Delivery Officer.
- (iii) LHI application 2025/26 – A link providing details of options for both complex and non-complex projects (and relevant costings) had been circulated to Cllrs prior to the meeting. Subject to be carried forward pending confirmation of closing date for applications. Suggestions to date included; (i) Extension of 30mph zone to include additional development along Begdale Road, (ii) flashing speed limit reminder sign/s along Well End/Needham Bank, (iii) measures to reduce speed along B1101 in Coldham.

**117.24 To adopt Hire of Parish Playing Fields Policy.**

Resolved to adopt; draft as circulated.

**118.24 To consider issue of flooding in the parish; resolve on further action where appropriate.**

The gullies along Birch Grove had coped with drainage of surface water during recent heavy rainfall. Gosmoor Lane had suffered flooding along with the area adjacent to the junction of A1101 with Main Road, Elm ('China Rose' junction), it was suspected that the latter was an issue with the Norfolk drainage network. Situation to be monitored; all flooding events to be reported to the Clerk.

**119.24 To receive update concerning QS Report on Elm Cemetery Chapel; resolve appropriately.**

The updated QS Report (based on structural engineer's observations) had suggested a 'High Level Cost Plant' figure in excess of £220,000.00. Additional costs would include; water/sewer connections; further specialist reports (due to the 'non-standard' structure of the building); unknown requirements of Conservation Officer; lighting/furnishing; builder's profits & prelims. This could take the total project cost closer to £300,000.00 which would be financially prohibitive for the Parish Council. It was recognised that; even if the project did not proceed; there were remedial works required to make the building safe; re-fixing the keystone over the main door for example. It was thought that this and other tasks would cost in the region of £18,000.00. Further discussions relating to finance/contractual issues deferred to closed session, see Minute ref. 123.24.

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

- Thanks conveyed to Cllr Milham for agreeing to lay wreath at Elm War Memorial on Remembrance Sunday. It was confirmed that a wreath would also be delivered to The Chequers for the RBL representative to lay at the Clock Tower Memorial in Friday Bridge.
- Agenda item – improvements to the portacabin.
- Agenda item – arrangements for Christmas meal.

**121.24 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 13<sup>th</sup> November 2024.

**122.24 To resolve to enter closed session in order to consider the following agenda items on the grounds of confidentiality by virtue of; The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 s.1(2).**

7.45pm – it was resolved to enter closed session.

**123.24 To consider confidential matters relating to the proposed Cemetery Chapel project (contractual/financial Issues).**

Members considered financial implications of proceeding with the Chapel project; in conclusion, it was resolved not to proceed with the conversion. It was further resolved to set aside £20,000.00 from the existing reserve to

deal with structural work which needed to be undertaken in order to make the building safe. Moving forward, Members were asked to consider what the building might be used for; storage for example.

124.24 **To consider staffing/personnel matters; resolve appropriately** (confidential due to discussion of individuals' personal information).

8pm – Cllr Welbourne declared an interest in the agenda item due to his connection to a person involved in matters to be discussed; he proceeded to leave the meeting room.

Members considered information presented concerning staffing roles at the Parish Council; it was resolved to directly employ Mrs Lyn Welbourne to the role of Deputy Clerk with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025, salary band on payscale yet to be confirmed.

125.24 **Close of meeting** – The meeting closed at 8.17pm.

Signed .....  
Elm Parish Council Chair

Date .....