

# Elm Parish Council

## Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Elm Parish Council held at the Portacabin, Begdale, Elm on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2026 commencing at 6.40pm

[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 – Milham, Ferguson, Goodley, Lee, Pigden, Pilbeam, Butcher, Hopkin, South & Fisher.

District Cllr Roy, S England (Clerk, minute taker), L Welbourne (Deputy Clerk), 1 member of the public.

- 1.26 **To elect a Chair** – Cllr Ferguson was elected unanimously as Chair to the Council. P-Cllr Butcher, S-Cllr Lee.
- 2.26 **Chair to sign Declaration of Acceptance of Office** – Cllr Ferguson signed the Declaration.
- 3.26 **To elect Vice-Chairman** – Cllr Milham was elected unanimously as Vice-Chair. P-Cllr Pilbeam, S-Cllr Hopkin.
- 4.26 **Apologies for absence** – Received from; Cllrs Cage & Welbourne. Council resolved to accept their reasons for absence.
- 5.26 **Members Code of Conduct** – The Chair reminded members of the need to submit; via the Clerk; any changes to the information included in their Declaration of Interests.
- 6.26 **To receive declarations of interests (pecuniary, non-pecuniary & other) and any requests for dispensation.**  
Cllr Ferguson declared an interest in agenda item 14(ii) [Minute ref. 14.26(ii)] due to her personal connection with a payee included in the payment schedule.
- 7.26 **Open Forum** – No comments received.
- 8.26 **AGM Tasks;**
  - i. To review adopt latest model Standing Orders (circ. 16.4.26) – Resolved to adopt. P-Cllr Fisher, S-Cllr Pilbeam.
  - ii. To adopt new model IT Policy (adapted for Elm PC (circ. 16.4.26) – Resolved to adopt. P-Cllr Fisher, S-Cllr South.
  - iii. To review Financial Regulations – Resolved to approve current model. P-Cllr Lee, S-Cllr Milham.
  - iv. To approve content of all other Council Policies and Procedures – Clerk advised review was ongoing, c/f to June.
  - v. To review effectiveness of Council's internal control systems – Resolved to approve Statement of Internal Control. P-Cllr South, S-Cllr Hopkin.
  - vi. To confirm the continued appointment of Mr Terry Jordan as Council's Internal Auditor. Resolved to confirm. P-Cllr Lee, S-Cllr Hopkin.
  - vii. To review Council's Asset Register and insurance arrangements for the coming year. Noted that Asset Register was a live document and further work was necessary to improve accuracy. Resolved to approve the current details. P-Cllr Ferguson, S-Cllr Pilbeam. Insurance arrangements to be considered under Finance.
  - viii. To confirm meeting dates for the municipal year as – second Wednesday monthly with exception of August when no meeting is held. Resolved to confirm meeting dates as detailed.
  - ix. To review Council's banking arrangements and signing mandate. Resolved to confirm continuation of bank accounts held with Barclays and NSI investments. Resolved to confirm signatories as Cllrs Ferguson, Pigden & Welbourne. Resolved to confirm continuation of signing mandate requiring two signatories to authorise payments. P-Cllr Fisher, S-Cllr Butcher.
  - x. To resolve to continue with the regular direct debit payments for the current financial year to suppliers; Wave Water, BT, KLIDB, ICO data protection and NEST. Resolved to approve. P-Cllr Lee, S-Cllr South.
  - xi. To confirm to members their responsibilities in relation to data protection – The Clerk reminded Members of their duties in respect of data protection and requested that they regularly reviewed their Council email account, deleting items as appropriate, particularly messages which contain personal information.
- 9.26 **To review membership of Committees, Working Parties (WP) & outside bodies.**
  - i. Personnel Committee (currently Cllrs Ferguson, Hopkin, South & Milham).
  - ii. Finance Working party (all Councillors)
  - iii. Christmas Decorations Working Party (currently Cllrs South, Milham, Welbourne & Lee).
  - iv. Emergency Plan WP (currently Cllrs Pilbeam, Cage, Goodley, Pigden & Milham).
  - v. Street Pride (currently Cllr Pilbeam).
  - vi. Whitemill Fund (currently Cllr Pilbeam).

It was resolved to re-appoint current members of Committees and WP's and, representatives of outside bodies 'en bloc'. P-Cllr Pilbeam, S-Cllr Lee.

- 10.26 **Signing of Minutes** – Council unanimously resolved to approve the minutes of meeting held 8<sup>th</sup> April 2026 as a true record of proceedings. P-Cllr Hopkin, S-Cllr Milham.
- 11.26 **District Councillor's Report** - District Cllr Roy reported as follows;
1. Fenland Inspire funding programme for improvements to play areas – consultation currently ongoing, please engage.
  2. Gully Cleaning Friday Bridge to Elm - moved to August 2026 during school holidays to allow temporary road closures and road works to be completed. Well End and Needham Bank had also been added to the programme of works.
  3. Limes Ave – resurfacing completed to a good standard, however Highways had been requested to address a few outstanding issues, including a property in Limes Avenue which had been ‘missed’. Highways confirmed that work would be completed within next 12 weeks.
  4. Bio Marsh site now empty, deadline is 20th May 2026. Site to be monitored for future use.
  5. Meeting to be held with Stagecoach to discuss the option of re-routing the bus to Coldham during road closures.
  6. Begdale Road corner (opp. BioMarsh) presenting hazard due to overgrown bushes. Property owner has not undertaken maintenance, Highways advised as situation contravenes section 154 of the Highways Act 1980.
  7. New signage and line markings along Redmoor Lane - broken verges not repaired adequately prior to line marking. Signage also appears to be more akin to that installed on motorways. Further update pending.
  8. Elm Community Hub Project - Investigations concluded approx. £1/2m of repairs required to church fabric prior to Hub being built; Church of England authorities have provided permission for work to be undertaken. National Lottery Heritage Fund grant of £1/4m approved to progress most urgent repairs, awaiting permission to start. Grant also covers NLHF criteria in respect of; community engagement, evaluation, digital presence and, allowances for inflation and contingency. PCC also awarded smaller grant and interest-free loan from the Cambridgeshire Historic Churches Trust. Grant funding will not completely cover cost of repairs and secondary funding options are being explored. Moving forward, Committee undertaking further work on hub design and usage in preparation for a final grant submission to fund construction.
  9. Grove Gardens – Delays in grass cutting allegedly due to issues with payments to the contractor. New contract now in place, cutting every two weeks.
  10. 20mph scheme – decision due, 5th June 2026. Further queries can be forwarded to Cllr Roy. County Cllr Galbraith would be attending the meeting.
- 12.26 **To receive report from County Councillor** – County Cllr Fisher reported as follows;
1. CCC Quality of Life Survey – everyone encouraged to engage.
  2. Local Government Reorganisation – further update expected during June to September. Expectation that LGR will go ahead despite press articles suggesting the contrary.
  3. 20mph Scheme meeting – Confirmation that County Cllr Galbraith would be in attendance.
  4. Damaged sign, Gosmoor Lane – matter escalated.
  5. Change in legislation resulted in County Cllr address details no longer being included on Council website.
- 13.26 **Clerk's Report**  
The Clerk reported as follows;
1. Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) – The Clerk confirmed she had attended LGR training and also studied information supplied by CAPALC which identified areas of risk (tailored to Elm) and mitigating measures which could be taken to address potential risks posed by LGR. In summary, investigations/measures needed to be taken in connection to;
    - Documentation of existing S106 funds, concurrent grant funding, maintenance contracts – all at risk during transition.
    - Asset transfers – particularly cost implications, for example, would parish need to take over areas of grass cutting currently falling under County responsibility.
    - Investigation of land titles - ensure that land owned by PC is not mistakenly transferred to the new Unitary Authority.
    - Examine leasehold agreements – relevant to Friday Bridge playing field.
    - Budget for professional advice which may be required.
    - Consider creation of Neighbourhood Plan – acknowledged that Council had; in the past; resolved not to pursue the creation of a NP however CAPALC were recommending that it would be beneficial. Advice sought to date had raised concerns relating to; creating a steering group that could offer appropriate expertise and, the cost involved. The Clerk asked District Cllr Roy to offer his views on the subject, he advised that Council should definitely consider the creation of a NP. Subject deferred to June meeting, Members requested to study Wimblington & Stonea draft NP in meantime along with NALC guide already circulated by the Clerk.

2. Fenland Inspire funding for improvements to play areas/equipment – FDC Officer had confirmed that Elm play area was included in the sites under consideration, £30k had provisionally been allocated. Online consultation currently open on FDC website, all encouraged to respond.
3. The Leam Pond boundary fence – further subsidence reported to CCC Highways. Pavement also appeared to be cracking, gap between fence and pavement created significant hazard to pedestrians. Highways officer had confirmed that meeting would be taking place to consider options.
4. Friday Bridge playing field boundary fence – subject to vandalism, contractor requested to report findings reference repair costs.
5. Bulb planting along Towpath – ground too compacted to permit use of traditional bulb planting tools. Ground would require rotavating and raking back to permit bulbs to be laid on cleared area. Once completed, earth raked back and ground re-seeded. Estimate of cost involved to be sought, 50% of which could be charged to Emneth PC subject to their approval.
6. Crisis Support Scheme – designed to support low-income households for purchase of heating oil and essential household items. Details circulated via social media and to local community groups.
7. Thanks received from Elm WI for use of portacabin.
8. Documents for power supply at portacabin re-submitted because supplier had mislaid originals. It was still unclear if the supplier required a new meter to be fitted as communication was erratic despite attempts to move the matter forward.
9. Complaint had been received reference branches of tree (located in Elm Cemetery) overhanging a resident's garden. Clerk had advised; resident was entitled to arrange for a suitably qualified contractor to cut back branches to the boundary line. A copy of Council's Tree Policy had also been forwarded.
10. Cemetery Clearance Working Party – 'topple testing' of memorials was due to take place, clearance of dead floral tributes and unauthorised items (e.g. glass/ceramic vases) would also be undertaken. Date suggested; 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2026 at 5.30pm (subject to weather conditions), a number of Cllrs confirmed their attendance to assist.
11. Strathmore House – Further incidents of youths breaking into and gathering at the site; Police and FDC informed. It was queried if FDC would pursue a compulsory purchase order of the site.

#### 14.26 Financial Matters

- i. The Clerk advised the following sums had been received since the last meeting; VAT refund £19,160.95; Cemetery fees £2800.00; Interest £242.45; De Silva Coaching £200.00.
- ii. To resolve to approve expenditure for May 2026 as detailed below – Cllr Ferguson confirmed her interest in a payment to be approved and withdrew from voting on the agenda item.  
Council resolved to approve expenditure detailed in the payment schedule for May 2026. P-Cllr Pilbeam, S-Cllr South.

PAYEE	DETAIL	NET	VAT	TOTAL
Tawny Owl Services	Grounds Maintenance	£1,748.55	£349.71	£2,098.26
Tawny Owl Services	Hogweed treatment (50%)	£42.50	£8.50	£51.00
Tawny Owl Services	Repairs	£626.50	£125.30	£751.80
BT	Broadband	£36.95	£7.39	£44.34
Scottish power	Cemetery Cottage power	£64.16	£2.84	£67.00
David Clark Builder	Cemetery Cottage/portacabin repairs	£10,074.00	£0.00	£10,074.00
Fenland Heating Solutions	Cemetery Cottage Boiler	£2,445.54	£0.00	£2,445.54
CAPALC	LGR, Tfr of Assets training	£35.00	£0.00	£35.00
Citizens Advice	Grant - S137	£50.00	£0.00	£50.00
Wave	Portacabin water	£21.63	£0.00	£21.63
KLIDB	AGR. Drainage rates	£93.11	£0.00	£93.22
Salaries	Clerk's & Deputy Clerk salary	£2,791.17	£0.00	£2,791.17
Expenses	Clerk's & Deputy Clerk exps	£320.13	£16.81	£336.94
HMRC	PAYE M1	£466.63	£0.00	£466.63
Nest	Pension contributions	£262.13	£0.00	£262.13
D C Cotterell Prop Maint.	Cem Cottage redecoration	£2,500.00	0.00	£2,500.00
Cambs County Council	FB playing field - Annual rent	£375.00	0.00	£375.00
Upwell PC	Contr. To gritting at Health Centre	£56.95	0.00	£56.95
ICO	Data Protection fee	£47.00	0.00	£47.00
		£22,056.95	£510.55	£22,567.61

- iii. To resolve to confirm situation arising concerning appointment of contractor to undertake refurbishment works at Cemetery Cottage (in line with advice received from Auditor) - Council resolved to confirm that; the immediate appointment of a contractor to undertake work at Cemetery Cottage had been a necessity due to unforeseen complications. Specifically, the initial inspection of collapsing bedroom ceilings had revealed lath and plaster construction which required prompt attention. Additional issues connected to loose plaster on the walls, improperly fitted windows, mould and uneven/moving floorboards were also discovered. As the contractor was already on-site (available to commence work immediately); and Council was of the opinion that his work represented good value for money; Members agreed in principle that the usual tender process would be set aside and work should commence prior to the May meeting. The Clerks provided updates to all Members at regular intervals.
- iv. To resolve on Grant Funding request from CRAG for a Portaloo at Coldham Carnival at a cost of £250.00 plus VAT - Resolved to approve. P-Cllr Pilbeam, S-Cllr Butcher.
- v. To resolve on quotation received from Fen Group for maintenance works on The Leam Pond for £506.75 plus VAT (if applicable) - Council resolved that the area did not currently require maintenance, subject deferred to September.
- vi. To resolve on quotations received for the refurbishment of Fridaybridge Village Sign; £160.80 (inc VAT) for removal and transportation; £262.50 for artwork and paints - Resolved to accept. P-Cllr Pilbeam, S-Cllr Milham.
- vii. To resolve to approve the end of year accounts for financial year 2025/26 – Resolved to approve. P-Cllr Fisher, S-Cllr Hopkin.
- viii. To resolve on quotations received for Council's Annual Insurance Policy – It was resolved to approve acceptance of renewal premium received from AJ Gallagher (underwritten by Hiscox) for sum of £6860.00. It was further resolved to confirm a three-year LTA with AJ Gallagher. P-Cllr Milham, S-Cllr Fisher.
- ix. To resolve on updates to Council's annual 2026/27 budget - The budget had been reviewed as a result of unexpected costs arising from refurbishment work at Cemetery Cottage. Members reviewed the proposed amendments and resolved as follows; 'Staff Costs' adjusted to £37,000; 'Training Costs' adjusted to £500; 'Professional Fees' adjusted to £1,500; 'Play Equipment' adjusted to £1,000; 'Street Furniture' adjusted to £500; 'Signs & Noticeboards' adjusted to £500; 'Cemetery Cottage Maintenance' adjusted to £22,000; 'Cem. Chapel Maintenance' adjusted to £500; 'Cem. Cottage Rental Income' adjusted to £8,550. Council resolved to approve adjustments proposed for the 2026-27 budget. P-Cllr Pilbeam, S-Cllr Fisher.
- x. To resolve on updated fees for Elm Cemetery – Proposals for an increase in Cemetery fees had been circulated to Members prior to the meeting. Council resolved to approve the updated Fee Schedule, details as included in the draft proposal with the exception of fees for kerbings which were increased to £1,000 per single plot. P-Cllr South, S-Cllr Hopkin. Full details of updated fees available via the Council website, <https://elm-pc.org.uk> or, from the Clerk, [clerk@elm-pc.org.uk](mailto:clerk@elm-pc.org.uk)

#### 15.26.1 Correspondence

- i. E-mail, parishioner - regarding road safety along Main Road, Elm at the corner approaching Elm Church; *guidance sought from Highways Safety Officers advised that it was difficult to manage as 'excess speed' was the likely cause of collisions. Furthermore; as accidents were collision damage rather than injury; the incidents were not included in accident statistics which would act in support of the installation of additional safety measures. Situation to be monitored to see if 20mph zone (if approved) would improve safety.*
- ii. E-mail, parishioner - regarding incident of ASB in Begdale Car Park – *CCTV had been reviewed and data forwarded to the local police team. Parishioner advised that the situation would continue to be monitored moving forward.*
- iii. E-mail, parishioner - complaint regarding condition of ponds at Grove Gardens. *Clerk actively engaging with Tilia and RMG Group reference maintenance.*
- iv. E-mail, FDC play area project officer – request for clarification of play areas to be considered for funding. *Quotation for improvements to Elm play area had been forwarded to FDC.*
- v. E-mail, parishioner – complaint of stain damage to memorial headstone. *Clerk seeking advice from stonemason, parishioner advised.*
- vi. E-mail, parishioner – reference proposed work on trees at property within the conservation area. *Clerk confirmed she had spoken with the parishioner recommending that; as the trees were located in the Conservation Area; an arborist's report would likely be required in support of a request for felling. District Cllr Roy confirmed he had visited the property and it was his understanding that the Planning Officer would also be attending. Final decision was in hands of Planning Department.*

- vii E-mail, FEET - concerning presence of Hogweed along Towpath. *Clerks had liaised with contractor who confirmed that all areas of the Towpath were being sprayed; FEET advised. Clerks requested to seek quotes for additional signage to be installed warning of the presence of Giant Hogweed along the wider areas of the Towpath, Emneth PC to be contacted to request share of cost.*
  - viii E-mail, parishioner - reference alleged theft of floral arrangement from grave. *Clerk had advised parishioner to make police report (in accordance with Cemetery Regulations), grounds maintenance contractor asked to be vigilant. Members acknowledged that it was an extremely difficult situation to manage.*
- 16.26 **To receive update from Working Parties / Outside bodies where appropriate.**
- i. Finance Working party – NTR
  - ii. Christmas Decorations Working Party - A supplier had been identified who would deliver and plant a tree at a suitable time later in the year. The Clerk asked the Working Party to supply proposals for a plan of action including details relating to; cost, design, location, power supply, testing requirements, risk assessment and other appropriate documentation. To be received at the July meeting.
  - iii. Emergency Plan WP – Cllr Pilbeam confirmed that a meeting had been held and he had been appointed as the WP spokesperson. Three options had been identified, details to be circulated to Members for their consideration prior to the June meeting. Subject deferred.
  - iv. Street Pride – Cllr Pilbeam advised that 44 bags of rubbish had been collected during the past month, a large quantity had been collected on the double bends along Begdale where there had been road closures. Work equated to 39 human hours; 8 incidents of flytipping reported; 51 NOX canisters collected (mostly along Bar Drove). The Clerks advised health & safety risks associated with the collection of NOX canisters (classed as hazardous waste) particularly if they are moved in a personal vehicle.
  - v. White Mill Fund – Cllr Pilbeam advised closing date for funding applications was 30<sup>th</sup> May 2026 and the Committee would be considering the requests on 15<sup>th</sup> June. Applicants included; Rings End Nature Reserve and the Tower Hall Committee.
- 17.26 **Planning:**
- 1. **F/YR26/0309/F - Installation of mounted PV solar panels and 2 x external air conditioning units on flat roof (part retrospective) at The Sportsman Main Road Elm Wisbech Cambridgeshire PE14 0AG**  
Resolved to support.
  - 2. **F/YR26/0310/LB - Works to a listed building including the installation of mounted PV solar panels and 2 x external air conditioning units on flat roof at The Sportsman Main Road Elm Wisbech Cambridgeshire PE14 0AG**  
Resolved to support.
  - 3. **Applications to Traffic Commissioner for Vehicle Operators Licences at (i) Biomarsh site (ii) Elm Self store – resolve on appropriate action / responses.** District Cllr Roy advised (i) response was not required for Biomarsh, (ii) Application for Elm Self Store site did not appear to be problematic and should be allowed to progress. No further action resolved by Council.
  - 4. **Addendum – F/YR26/0330/TRTOP – Works to Walnut tree covered by TPO at Main Rd, Friday Bridge.** As the proposals were supported by a specialist's survey it was resolved to support the application.
- 18.26 **Highways & Footways;**
- i. LHI 2025-26 – The MVAS unit for Coldham had been collected and would be installed once fixing posts were in situ.
  - ii. LHI 2026-27 – Application for weight & width restrictions along Begdale Road and Redmoor Lane were currently undergoing feasibility assessments. Scoring panel sessions and finalisation of prioritised funding lists would take place between June and September.
- 19.26 **To resolve to (i) register with Parish Online (POL) mapping system and (ii) appoint District Cllr Roy as designated person to take ownership of the Nature Recovery Plan within the POL system** – Subject deferred to June meeting, Members requested to read up on subject in the meantime.
- 20.26 **To receive requests from members for items to be included on next agenda** – Nothing raised.
- 21.26 **To confirm date for next Parish Council meeting** – Resolved to confirm next meeting date, 10<sup>th</sup> June 2026.
- 22.26 **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).**  
20.25 – It was resolved to enter closed session.

23.26 **To receive update relating to tenancy agreement at Cemetery Cottage (confidential due to contractual matters and personal data)** – Members were provided with an update; it was hoped that recommendations for a suitable tenant could be resolved at the June meeting.

24.26 **To resolve to close the closed session.** 20.27 - It was resolved to close the closed session.

25.25 **Close of meeting.** 20.27 - It was resolved to close the meeting.

Signed .....  
Elm Parish Council Chair

Date .....