

WITCHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 10 November 2021 at 7.34 pm in the Village Hall, Witcham

Present: M Housden (Chairman), J Bibby, L Holdaway, J Lucas, K Mackender, S Wilkin

In attendance Mrs S J Bell (Clerk)
2 members of public present

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed the members of the public. All those present were invited to wear mask/shield, if they wished, and the Village Hall Risk Assessment for use of the hall was to be complied with. Hand sanitiser was available and the room would be kept ventilated to protect the public, and members of the Council and staff.

Action

21/188 **Apologies for absence:** Cllr L Duprè (CCC & ECDC), Cllr M Inskip (ECDC)

21/189 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillors to declare any pecuniary interests in any items on the agenda - none

Councillors to declare any personal interests in any items on the agenda
M Housden - agenda items 21/198 Planning Applications - 8 and 10A The Slade (consultee), and he said he would hand over the Chair to K Mackender and leave the meeting for these items.

L Holdaway and K Mackender- agenda item 21/198 Planning Applications – Pond Farm, 21 High Street (consultee/neighbour).

Councillors to declare any prejudicial interests in any items on the agenda and to inform the Chairman if they wish to speak on the matter during public participation - none

21/190 **Dispensations:**

To note any new Dispensations granted: Nil

21/191 **Public Participation**

The Chairman opened the meeting to the two members of the public.

Ref item 21/198 Planning Applications - 21/01546/FUL Pond Farm, 21 High Street – demolition of locally listed barn.

The member of the public said they had had a long term interest in historic buildings. They shared information about other barns in the village that had been restored as a dwelling and expressed concerns of people in the village that the historic value of this corner of the village would be lost by demolition of this 19th century barn, together with the recent demolition of the 18th century wall, and part of the hedgerow on the boundary with High Street and Headleys Lane.

L Holdaway and K Mackender advised these three points had been key issues at the ECDC Planning Committee meeting when consent for the development of this land had been granted in 2017 and planning conditions had been set.

Complaints from the village (both from individuals across the village and the Parish Council) had been made about the developer's apparent breach of conditions and in the past the District Council had failed to enforce compliance with some of these planning conditions, including retainment of the 18th century wall and preserving enough of the hedgerow.

Reports published as part of the newly proposed demolition of the barn and replacement with new building, revealed that since the original application

21/191 **Public Participation (cont)**

to convert the barn to a dwelling there was significant deterioration in the structure of the building – more tiles missing with resulting deterioration of the timbers. The new structural survey showed that in the engineer's opinion it was not safe to be converted.

Members of the Council advised that all residents with concerns should write in to East Cambs District Council as part of the consultation process. The Council's response would be discussed under Agenda Item 21/198.

The second member of the public had previously written to express concern about proposals being considered for refurbishment of the play and fitness facilities on the recreation ground. In particular, the enclosed young children's play equipment and the review of the horsechestnuts which were suffering with canker) and grew adjacent the boundary fence in the play area. The member of the public circulated an email from a tree surgeon advising that the trees were not infected with serious bleeding cankers but with Slime Flux, a bacterial infection that the resident understood could be managed. The member of the public was concerned that felling of the trees would visually spoil the area, leaving it open to the buildings behind and loss of shade for users. Referring to the play survey they said there had been only 17 replies and suggested the request for a herb garden was being ignored. He asked why the old equipment was being changed/upgraded and asked if members were aware that the area was used not just by children in the age group for which the equipment was designed for but by older youngsters as a meeting place. The Clerk advised that the professional annual inspection report showed that the safety tiles should be reviewed for refurbishment and thus with the play pieces being around 20 years old it was time to consider the economic value and level of refurbishment of the area.

The Chairman advised that the project was still at consultation stages with arrangements being made for an open session once costings had been received so that the community could attend to view schemes in the coming weeks.

Cllrs

The member of the public asked that their concerns be considered by the Council and suggested that everyone living around the recreation ground should be contacted by letter. The member of the public was advised that the survey had been delivered to each home in the village. Information was also being published in the newsletters delivered door to door, and on the website.

Both members of the public were thanked for their attendance and they left the meeting at approx. 8.05pm

21/192 **Minutes**

Minutes of the meeting of 13 October 2021, previously circulated, were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman, and the agenda of the same date signed by the Chairman as confirmation of the business transacted at that meeting. Proposed L Holdaway, seconded J Bibby.

21/193 **Matters Arising from previous minutes – none noted**21/194 **Reports from District and County Councillors**

The reports had been previously circulated. Councillors had been invited to contact the District and County Council direct with any questions they had. None reported.

Cllrs

21/195 **Finance**a) **Receipts and Payments November**

The November 2021 schedule had been circulated. Cheques and supporting documents had been checked by J Bibby and L Holdaway, and were confirmed correct.

Resolved to approve the receipts and payments for November and release cheques. Proposed J Bibby, seconded L Holdaway.

Clerk

Regarding notification from E-on for an increase in the cost of street light energy to 33.8p per kWh, for the 5 parish owned street lights, it was **Resolved** that in the current climate of turbulent energy costs across the whole sector, the increase be accepted and kept under review for the future. Proposed J Lucas seconded S Wilkin.

*All*b) **Quarterly Accounts and Budget Review**

Copies of receipts and payments with bank reconciliation and review of budget headings had been prepared and circulated by the Clerk for Councillors to review and approve. The bank statements were presented at the meeting.

Resolved to approve the quarterly accounts to 30 September 2021 and budget. Receipts £18,185.14 including Precept £15,300. Payments £7198.42. Balance at 1 October 2021 £57,814.56 including all earmarked and general reserves. Proposed M Housden, seconded L Holdaway

*Clerk*c) **CIL Monies – Development Pond Farm, 21 High Street**

Correspondence previously circulated. Noted the Parish's first instalment (meaningful proportion), £1338.85, had been received and there was one more payment to come for this site. Clerk to thank ECDC for offering to come out to parish councils to explain the CIL system again but at the moment the Parish Council would prefer to leave for the time being owing to workload. Update from Haddenham regarding CIL wish-list for work at the Toll, desire to downgrade the road etc was noted.

*Clerk*d) **2022/23 Budget and Precept**

Preliminary draft had been prepared and circulated by the Clerk. Discussion on items for inclusion and adjustments. Clerk reported on costs for switching the 5 streetlights over to LED lamps.

Quote for cutting recreation ground of £450 for 2022 season received.

LGA'72 s.137 budget and grants for village organisations policy discussed.

Salary budget lifted to take into account review of Clerk's hours which was increased to 32 hours a month in view of additional work currently undertaken, and projected to continue over the next year. This would be kept under review.

Resolved to proceed with instructing the streetlight maintenance contractor to switch over to LED lamps (£220 each) using the £975 in streetlight reserves budget and noted that energy would reduce from 350watts to 150 watts and maintenance would reduce to under £40 plus VAT. Proposed J Lucas, seconded K Mackender.

Clerk

Resolved to accept the draft Budget and Precept of £16,000 and for final review and approval at the next meeting. Proposed J Lucas, seconded K Mackender

Clerk

21/196 **Policies**

Clerk advised she had been unable to review any more of the Council's policies and procedures in time for the meeting. Feedback from neighbouring parish council on partnership working for some areas of procedure received, and Clerk to make arrangements for future engagement as required.

Clerk

Clerk raised points on implementation measures for Safeguarding policy; Chairman had drafted the risk assessment. No Designated Person was appointed at this stage.

Chairman

Final document to be presented for final approval and signing off at the next meeting.

Clerk

L Holdaway had reviewed templates for Equality, Accessibility and Conflict of Interest Policies, which were passed round to Councillors for comments and feedback. These would be forwarded to Clerk for finalising in the next couple of weeks and presenting for approval at the next meeting.

*Cllrs**Clerk*21/197 **Cemetery**

Report of cemetery inspection of 16 October presented.

Chairman undertook to make a noticeboard on a stake to display cemetery rules. Cemetery rules to be reviewed at the next meeting.

*Chairman**Clerk*

Truelink to be reminded to cut hedges and remove ivy on far side hedge where it was also encroaching over grave plots. Some earthworks of levelling and filling gaps were required at several locations and the remains of a tree stump needed removing, all of which Clerk to ask Truelink to undertake.

Clerk

No headstones had been identified as loose and needing to be laid down so no medium or high risk issues to be dealt with.

Regarding complaint by family in respect of loose kerbing and posts on the right hand side of the path had been investigated. There was evidence that some of the sections had come loose but these and all the others showed evidence of having been reassembled and glued with thick mastic since the original installation. There was no evidence of having been struck and it was concluded that weather had deteriorated the mastic and released the joints.

Resolved that the family be informed that the repairs necessary were due to weather and land movement rather than impact and that they were responsible for repairs. Proposed J Lucas, seconded K Mackender.

*Clerk/**Chairman*21/198 **Planning Applications**

21/01546/FUL Pond Farm 21 High Street Witcham Ely Cambridgeshire Demolition of existing agricultural barn structure, construction of new dwelling, single storey extension, carport and amenity land. After much discussion about the loss of real historic structures during the course of this development, ie the 18th century brick wall, the removal of more of the old hedgerow than had been expected from the original planning application and consent, and now the demolition of the 19 century barn and replacement with barn-style, wood clad dwelling, Councillors shared the concerns voiced by some residents.

Resolved that the Council had concerns.

- i) The Parish Council would prefer that the barn stayed.
- ii) Councillors understand that the barn is locally listed with ECDC.
- iii) If it is not at all possible to save the old barn, then very strict conditions must be applied to any consent; and the District Council must ensure enforcement.
- iv) Councillors recalled that at the time of the 2016/17 application going to Planning Committee there was heavy debate and conditions, including protection measures at the site for the ancient walls, old established hedgerow and barn, were

21/198 **Planning Applications** (cont)

- imposed. In the event residents and the Parish Council had experienced lack of action in respect of enforcement by the District Council when the wall and hedgerow were removed.
- v) Loss of the ancient boundary wall (High Street) and barn is lost history, lost tangible structures, in this corner of the village; the whole street being in the conservation area.

Clerk

9.20pm. M Housden handed the Chair to K Mackender and left the meeting.

21/01571/FUL 8 The Slade Construction of single storey front porch and single storey rear extension.

Resolved that the Council had no concerns. Proposed K Mackender, seconded J Lucas

Clerk

21/00754/FUL 10a The Slade Change of use of existing timber cabin from garden room to drinking establishment (bar) Amendment - involves responses to comments from the Access Group and updated application form.

Clerk

The applicant's response to the points raised by the Access Group were received and discussed. The agent had advised there was an error regarding the area of the existing unit – form should state 22.89m².

9.25pm M Housden returned to room

Resolved that the Council request sight of the response of the Access Group following the applicant's response in order to consider further. Comments submitted May/June 2021 remain. Proposed K Mackender, seconded L Holdaway.

9.27pm M Housden returned to the table and K Mackender returned the Chair to M Housden

21/199 **Website and Emails**

Clerk had uploaded further items to the website. Everyone was having problems with emails on the website providers system and Outlook would not function properly. Costs for switching to exchange had been provided. **Resolved** that quote for transfer of emails to exchange, with cost of £3.80 plus VAT per user be accepted and Clerk to progress. Proposed K Mackender, seconded J Lucas.

*Clerk*21/200 **Recreation Ground**

- a) Monthly report on weekly inspections. No problems reported. Chairman and J Bibby had made site visit on 3 November to mark up sites for the 4 new trees. They reported that ivy had fallen back over the wall behind shrubs etc on the boundary with The Hall. A dead conifer needed removal and shrubs cutting back. Clerk to contact Tree Officer and seek further clarification on horsechestnut trees at enclosed play area.
- b) Community feedback regarding play and outdoor fitness refurbishment project and tree planting following publication of latest newsletter. There was none other than points raised by the member of public earlier in the meeting which had been noted for consideration during the consultation process and upcoming open meeting.
- c) Verbal report on play and outdoor fitness refurbishment project. A third quote was awaited following site meeting 2 weeks ago which

*Clerk**All**LH*

21/200 **Recreation Ground (cont)**

would be forwarded to Councillors on receipt for further discussion at next meeting.

Agreed an application for the December grant round could not be met and would have to be deferred to March.

Arrangements for open meeting as part of consultation process with the community also had to be deferred.

- d) Four new large trees had been planted in the south west corner of the recreation ground on 6 November and Chairman had been topping up the water bags. J Bibby and Chairman had reviewed recreation ground for further tree planting and suggested 3 more for Martins Lane and 1 in High Street to replace the one leaning over.
- e) Again this would require liaison with the ECDC Tree Officer. Chairman said he had reinstalled the dog sign that had been removed when the contractors ground out and removed the two tree stumps on Martins Lane. L Holdaway advised that the District Council was offering free trees.

Chairman and J Bibby put forward a suggestion for planting up entrance to Village Hall roadway and this would be placed on the agenda for January for further discussion.

Clerk

- f) Request from Village Hall to confirm use of recreation ground as emergency assembly point and consent to erect a sign on play area fence was considered.

Resolved that consent be given for Village Hall Management Committee to place a sign on the play area railings, bottom end facing to Martins Lane, as an emergency assembly point for Village Hall users. Proposed K Mackender, seconded J Lucas.

Clerk

21/201 **Neighbourhood Plan**

Clerk reported that since the newsletter had gone out the previous week she had not yet received any responses from residents. Item deferred.

All

21/202 **Speedwatch**

Latest MVAS results had been circulated and were noted.

Resolved information should be passed to Police/Speedwatch. Proposed Chairman and agreed unanimously.

Chairman/
Clerk

Chairman reported that he had been approached by a resident interested in joining local speedwatch team.

21/203 **Street Lights and Highways**

Clerk had still been chasing Sanctuary Housing for repairs to street light at Westway Place and also removal of the old bracket and light on the next car park down. She had now passed details to the County/District Council who was awaiting a response from Sanctuary Housing.

LD
Clerk

The street light on the roadway to the village hall had been repaired.

21/185 **Correspondence**

The following correspondence, previously circulated, was received and noted unless otherwise annotated.

Littleport and Downham IDB – correspondence to Environment Agency regarding concerns on dredging on the One Hundred Foot River – no action
NALC new guide on website accessibility and publishing guidelines – no comment

CCC Emergency Active Travel Fund – Cycle Parking proposals for villages – J Lucas proposed, seconded by S Wilkin that Village Hall be asked if they are interested in say having say 4 cycle place ramp for car park.

Clerk

Combined Authority Mayor - have your say on Travel in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough – each councillor would complete and put on PC website

All

- 21/185 **Correspondence** (cont)
 CAPALC Autumn training programme for councillors – no requests *All*
 Cambridgeshire County Council - Climate Change Strategy Webinar 11
 November 2021 – no one available
 Road Victims Trust Remembrance Service, Sunday 21st November 2021
 East Cambridgeshire Parish Council Conference 2nd November 2021, at
 11am until 14:45pm Ely Maltings – cancelled due to Covid-19 risks
 CCC Flood online training for community groups Oct/Nov 21 – no interest
 Cambridgeshire Local Councils Conference – 14 January 2022 – Clerk to *Clerk*
 attend
 ECDC Parish and Community Forum updates
 Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Mayor's updates
 CCC - IHMC Incident Report
 Youth Advisory Board events
 CCC Events
 NALC Bulletins, newsletters
 Ouse Washes Project update/newsletter
 CAPALC Bulletin
 ECDC Create a Community Orchard
 Pension Regulator – Re-enrolment duties *Clerk*
 Letter regarding land west – Witcham House
- 21/205 **Community Police**
 No issues received for reporting to Police
- 21/206 **Date of next meeting:** In view of volume of work outstanding, a December *Clerk*
 meeting would be required this year. Clerk to book hall and advise
 councillors.

**All business, including receipts and payments, to be considered at
 this meeting must be delivered to the Clerk at least 7 days prior to the
 meeting.**

Chairman closed the meeting at 10.15pm

Schedules of Receipts and Payments

		£	£	£
Receipts	ECDC CIL (1) (Pond Farm)	1338.85		1338.85
Payments	001949 Cartridgesave	167.78	33.56	201.34
	001950 Clerks salary Nov incl additional hours	617.64		617.64
	001951 LGPS	198.02		198.02
	001952 Truelink grounds maintenance (Oct)	273.70	54.74)	
	tree stumps	100.00	20.00)	448.44
	001953 K&M Lighting	45.22	9.04	54.26
	001954 Clerks expenses	152.12		152.12
	001955 Barcham trees	532.32	106.46	638.78
	001956 Witcham Cricket Club grasscutting	450.00		450.00
	d/d IONOS (Oct)	22.03	4.41	26.44

Signed..... Dated