

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 28 April 2021 at 7.31pm

This was a remote* meeting using the Zoom video conferencing platform system

*The Coronavirus Act 2020 s.78 and The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020, and Zoom Policy Notice.

The Clerk read out the Zoom notice seeking confirmation that participants were in a quiet place and that any other persons present were required to give details so they could be recorded in the Minutes as per normal face to face meetings. Noted that Zoom does collect some data of users – Zoom Policy/Notice. All present confirmed they were happy to proceed.

Present: M Housden – Chairman
S J Bell – Clerk

L Dupré – County Councillor and District Councillor
J Bibby, L Holdaway, J Lucas, K Mackender – Parish Councillors
Village Hall Chairman
Programme Development Manager, Cambs ACRE – Fens Biosphere Project

Apologies for absence were received from

Witcham Cricket Club (report previously submitted and circulated)
M Inskip, District Councillor (due to previous commitment)
S Wilkin, Parish Councillor (due to IT problems, which was accepted and approved)

Fens Biosphere Project

Chair welcomed the Programme Development Manager, Cambridgeshire ACRE, for the project who gave a presentation setting out the aims of the project, the geographical area covered, the support of UNESCO, and the vision for sustainable land use that works for people, nature and the economy in the long term. The project was gaining local support and he was pleased to report he had recently given a presentation to Fenland District Council and he thanked the District Councillors for their support in getting on the agenda at East Cambs District Council. He had previously worked on the Ouse Washes Project. The Ouse Washes are SSSI and RAMSAR listed and internationally renowned, and this was the core area for the Fens Biosphere Project with the surrounding agricultural land being in the buffer zone. There had been consultations to gauge what the areas meant to people and why they were special. Food production accounted for £3.1 billion in the local economy with 80,000 employment so clearly very important. The biosphere project was intended to futureproof and build resistance for the area in terms of natural resources, nature and the food industry, all working together, embracing technology and new techniques to ensure a sustainable future for all.

This was a very exciting project and Councillors found the presentation very interesting and informative. It would be further discussed at a Council meeting.
<https://www.fensbiosphere.org.uk>

The Programme Development Manager was thanked for attending the meeting to give the presentation and he left the meeting at 8.05pm

8.06pm – Zoom break

8.10pm the meeting resumed with all present except the Programme Development Manager, K Mackender and Village Hall Chairman.

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of 30 September 2020, previously circulated, were confirmed as a true record, and would be signed by the Chairman after the meeting. Proposed L Holdaway, seconded Chairman and unanimously resolved.

8.12pm K Mackender rejoined the meeting

Matters Arising: *Management of Drovers* Clerk advised that S Wilkin was progressing with enquiries and was reporting back to Council.

REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR

The report had been published with the agenda.

REPORT FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

The report had been published with the agenda pack. Councillor L Dupré spoke about the proposals for the Mepal Crematorium at the old Mepal Outdoor Centre and it was noted a crematorium was also being built at Huntingdon.

8.15pm Village Hall Chairman returned to the meeting.

J Lucas thanked the County Councillor and both District Councillors for all their work over the past months and it was particularly noted that earlier in the year they had provided much assistance in dealing with local concerns following the floods around the area over Christmas and the New Year.

The County Councillor and District Councillor, L Dupré, was thanked by the Chairman and she left the meeting at 8.20pm

Chairman proposed that the meeting move to item Village clubs/charities/organisations reports so that the Chairman of the Village Hall Committee could speak early as she had advised she could not stay for the whole meeting. Seconded K Mackender, and agreed by unanimously

VILLAGE CLUBS/CHARITIES/ORGANISATIONS REPORTS

Witcham Village Hall

The Annual Report had been circulated with the agenda pack. The Village Hall Chairman advised that Cambridgeshire ACRE had been a great support in providing guidance on re-opening after lockdowns under the Covid-19 restrictions. The grants had helped a great deal. Bookings were coming in again and they had bought a fogging machine to clean and sanitise between users. They were developing a website which was expected to be launched in the Autumn to help promote the Village Hall and the Pea Shoot. It was confirmed the Parish Council would include a link on their new website so that there would be easy access for people wanting information. It was confirmed the licence for the parking at the Village Hall was being dealt with.

8.33pm Village Hall Chairman left the meeting.

ANNUAL REPORT OF PARISH COUNCIL CHAIRMAN, INCLUDING 2020/21 ANNUAL ACCOUNTS AND 2021/22 PRECEPT

The Council's Annual Report and Accounts had been circulated with the agenda pack and previously approved by the Council. There were no members of the public present for further discussion and questions. It was noted that receipts for the year to 31 March 2021 amounted to £19,572, payments £18,314 giving a balance to carry forward of £46,828. This included a high level of reserves for specific projects such as new play equipment, cemetery etc. The Precept for 2021/22 had been held at £15,300 which included further monies for projects.

MOBILE VEHICLE ACTIVATED SIGNS

Chair said that the signs were in place and were being rotated along The Slade and Martins Lane. Data was being collected (discussed at Council meetings) and higher risk area appeared to be vehicles coming into the village, The Slade.

REPLACEMENT TREES FOR RECREATION GROUND

There were no members of the public present to discuss this project of starting tree planting in early Autumn 2021.

Resolved that a note should go on the Council’s website explaining how the Council had taken advice because several of the trees planted over recent years had died. Soil samples had been taken and nurseries would be contacted for guidance on tree species for the specific locations. Orders were required by end of July for planting during October to allow them to establish before winter conditions arrived. Proposed L Holdaway, seconded Chairman, and agreed unanimously.

PLAY AREA EQUIPMENT PROJECT

L Holdaway reported that the survey had been completed and results published. She intended to see some play equipment providers for further advice and sort out funding from grant schemes once Covid-19 restrictions permitted. As there were no members of the public present no further discussion could take place at this time.

8.49pm Zoom break

8.52pm the meeting resumed with all present except the Programme Development Manager, County Councillor L Dupré and Village Hall Chairman, all of whom had left earlier in the meeting.

VILLAGE CLUBS/CHARITIES/ORGANISATIONS REPORTS

Witcham Cricket Club

The Annual Report had been circulated with the agenda pack and was noted.

No other reports from any of the other village clubs/charities/organisations had been received.

Clerk to contact Witcham Community Archive Group to see how it was going and enquire if there was anything the Council could do to help.

ANY OTHER PARISH BUSINESS

Road Safety – junction High Street/Headleys Lane. Near miss reported and suggestion made that visibility mirror might be helpful or halt signs and roadmarkings. Clerk said she would try to find out about Highway Regulations so it could be discussed further at next Council meeting.

There being no further business the Chairman thanked those in attendance and closed the meeting at 9.07pm

Signed Dated