

WITCHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 14 July 2021 at 7.30 pm in the Village Hall, Witcham

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

In attendance Mrs S J Bell (Clerk)
 Cllr L Duprè (CCC & ECDC)
 2 members of public present

Chairman's Announcement: Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and reminded everyone of the necessity to comply with covid-19 restriction measures of social distancing, masks, hand sanitising, ventilation, non-sharing of papers, pens etc., and compliance with the Village Hall hire conditions following their Covid-19 Risk Assessment, which included maximum of 15 people in the large hall in total.

Members of the public were welcome to attend any of the Council meetings but must contact the Clerk before the meeting so that arrangements can be made to accommodate up to 15 people.

Action

21/125 **Apologies for absence:** received and accepted from J Lucas – on duty with the Covid vaccination programme.
 Apologies also received from a member of the public who had intended to speak under 21/128 regarding 21/134; the Village Hall Chairman (who was away) 21/128 regarding 21/133 and District Councillor M Inskip.

21/126 **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 21/142 Residents' complaint and he said he would leave the meeting for this item and hand over the Chair to K Mackender
 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

21/127 **Dispensations:**
 To note any new Dispensations granted: Nil

21/128 **Public Participation**
 Ref item 21/134, Public Rights of Way No 1. Member of the public reported that the fellow resident who was going to attend regarding access was now unfortunately unable to be present and proceeded with questions to the Council about use and status of the site.
 Members noted that people in the village wanted to be able to continue to use two of the fields which was crossed by Public Rights of Way No 1 for dog-walking around the circumference. Clerk gave advice obtained from County Council regarding statement issued by previous owner under Highways Act s.31, which had been previously circulated to Councillors.

Ref item 21/133 Ownership and management of the defibrillator at the Village Hall. The second member of the public said following concerns from some people, he was attending as the donator of the defibrillator and to represent the Village Hall Chairman. He and the Chair of the

21/128 **Public Participation** (cont)

Village Hall Committee wanted to reassure the Parish Council and people of the village about ownership and management of the equipment. It was an approved unit and was checked regularly as required. It was registered on the NHS system. For anyone needing to use the equipment, contact details to obtain code from ambulance service was on the cabinet and guidance would be given. Another training course was planned for 15 September at 7.30pm in the Village Hall for those unable to attend when it was launched in 2018.

Someone had asked why it was not on the Defib App and he explained that there had been problems in some places with vandalism and theft; the Village Hall, and himself, had therefore taken the decision that as Witcham is a small village and the unit was at a focal point in the village those who might need it in the village would know where to find it.

Two purpose designed location signs had been donated by a resident and he would arrange for installation at the bus shelter subject to consent from the Parish Council, who owned the bus shelter and noticeboard inside. Consideration had been given to putting signage on utility poles but the fees were too expensive and deemed unnecessary in a small village. It was suggested one of the signs could be offered to the camp site at The Slade and the member of public said he would contact the owner.

He confirmed the Village Hall would make all the arrangements for the September training session and would share a notice for Parish Council website. They were happy to continue to manage the equipment and should the Parish Council wish to nominate a representative to be involved they would be welcome. He confirmed the equipment was regularly checked by an appointed resident and maintained, and spares were held. He asked that all enquiries and concerns be addressed to the Village Hall Committee Chairman.

M Housden explained that the Village Hall had contacted the Parish Council when the equipment had been donated and it had been resolved in Council that it was best for the Village Hall to be responsible since it was on their building for insurance purposes and checks. The Council had supported and made a contribution to some of the installation costs.

The second member of the public also advised that he would make a donation to cover the cost of two trees for the recreation ground at the corner by the bus shelter as part of the replacement programme which would be in memory of his parents. He was thanked for this kind gesture and J Bibby would contact him with further details.

JB

7.55pm The two members of the public left the meeting and were thanked for attending by the Chairman.

21/129 **Minutes**

Minutes of the meeting of 23 June 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 K Mackender, seconded S Wilkin.

21/130 **Matters Arising from previous minutes**

An update had been previously circulated by the Clerk. Of note *21/110 Planning Application – Pond Farm* Enforcement Officer had advised there were no planning conditions restricting bonfires on site and no planning conditions preventing materials from elsewhere being

21/130 **Matters Arising from previous minutes (cont)**

brought to the site – to report concerns people need to contact environmentalhealth@eastcambs.gov.uk

Protection of hedge measures were now in place and the developer had been spoken to regarding parking and to ensure contractors made aware of the traffic management plan. It had also been confirmed that the Tree Officer was satisfied no hedging other than that approved had been removed, and the developer had been asked to plant a native mixed species hedge when the soft landscaping scheme was completed (current vegetation described as wild rose and brambles).

21/112 *Village Inspection* – Village Hall Chairman had advised the sign at the bottom of the Village Hall roadway did not belong to them. Clerk had added to asset list with nominal value of £100 and would inform insurance company - £1500 as a replacement value.

Clerk

21/118 *Village Hall AGM* scheduled for 29 June 2021 had been cancelled and new date awaited.

21/131 **Reports from District and County Councillors**

The reports had been previously circulated. County Councillor updates included that a meeting with ECDC officer, and the new Police Inspector and local Sergeant had taken place at the Elean Business Park regarding the grounds being used for drifting and racing by motorists. Further details awaited.

School meals - County Council would top up funds to provide meals over school holidays via supermarket vouchers.

Overnight closures of A142 for signage and white-lining - pedestrians, cyclists and horseriders would be let through during these overnight works.

Local Highways Initiative Scheme – receipt of applications date had been extended to 15 September. She would be attending a meeting with the new Mayor for the Combined Authority regarding road safety issues.

There was nothing further to report on the District Council report which had just been released and there were no further questions from Councillors

8.12pm the County Councillor was thanked and she let the meeting.

21/132 **Public Meeting 7 July 2021**

Notes had been circulated to Councillors.

Recreation Ground – New Play Equipment and Facilities.

L Holdaway and K Mackender had met Wicksteed on 7 July 2021 for advice and requested proposals and costs. Of note, problem disposing of old safety tiles and various options would need to be considered in due course. If any of the equipment to be replaced was still serviceable, Wicksteed had suggested donating to charity or a less resourced site outside the parish. Information from Wicksteed was expected in 3 weeks so would be presented at September meeting after which further quotes could be obtained and proposals put back out to the public as part of the ongoing consultation process.

LH/KM

Recreation Ground – Tree Replacement Programme

J Bibby reported she had received responses for donations to cover three trees (Liquidamber, Prunus and Corylus) and Chairman advised a resident had pledged £50 which could help with costs of a 4th (a Hawthorn) or accessories needed for tree planting. Second stage

- 21/132 **Recreation Ground – Tree Replacement Programme (cont)**
 would be reviewed after play area done. The trees here were old and in poor condition so most would need to be removed and size of space for equipment and planting up would need to be re-assessed. J Bibby advised that Barchams had confirmed the pictures of the trees given as samples could be uploaded to the Council's website as part of the consultation process.
 Clerk undertook to contact tree officer to confirm tree species to replace those removed/died earlier. *Clerk*
- Resolved** that
- 4 trees be ordered for recreation ground (corner High Street/Martins Lane to replace previously felled/failed trees.
 - a review be carried out on removal and replanting of trees in play area space as part of play refurbishment project *All*
 - J Bibby to speak to contractors about grinding out stumps of felled trees on Martins Lane *JB*
 - J Bibby to confirm price of trees (up to approx. £600) so Clerk could issue the purchase order for Barchams. *JB*
- Proposed Chairman, seconded J Bibby and agreed unanimously.
- New website**
 Response awaited from supplier *Clerk*
- Witcham Archive Group**
 Confirmed that Clerk would contact the group to get items to go in Council's newsletter and website from time to time to promote the website and support activities. *Clerk*
- Mobile Vehicle Activated Speed Signs**
 Following complaints in recent meetings about speeding vehicles at High Street, Chairman reported that the streetlight columns were mainly on the south side of the street so it was unclear if a bracket could be fixed so as to serve the unit to work in both directions by turning of the bracket. With regards to Silver Street the only option looked to be on the streetlight near number 16. He would pass street light numbers to Clerk. Clerk advised she expected the brackets to cost about £50 each and that the Council would need to make application for consent from County Council Highways Department and Balfour Beatty Streetlighting Department as previously. *Chairman*
- Resolved** that Clerk should proceed in making arrangements to obtain consents for installation of brackets on streetlight columns, one each for High Street and Silver Street as discussed. Proposed Chairman, seconded K Mackender. *Clerk*
- 21/133 **Village Hall Defibrillator**
 The information from the donator and Village Hall under item 21/128 was noted.
- Resolved** to approve that the donator could put a location notice in the Council's noticeboard at the bus shelter as discussed under item 21/128. Clerk to write to resident to advise that the Village Hall Committee was responsible for the defibrillator and that they were organising a further training session. Also to advise that the unit was linked to the NHS system but not an App as explained by donator under item 21/128. Proposed Chairman and agreed unanimously. *Clerk*
- Clerk*

- 21/134 **Public Rights of Way No.1**
 Discussion ensued following feedback from public participation session and sale of 16 acres grazing land.
Resolved that Councillors
- required more information from residents
 - needed to consider available options
 - should defer to September
- Proposed K Mackender, seconded L Holdaway
 Chairman said he would speak to some of the people who had contacted him about this matter and bring information back to a meeting in September.
- 21/135 **Policies and Risk Assessments**
 Over the last few days the Clerk had looked at reviewing the Council's policies ready to go on the new website. Standing Orders and Financial Regulations had recently been reviewed during Covid-19 restrictions. She had circulated to Councillors some re-drafted documents and advice, together with website links. She said she was unable to complete the exercise on her own and needed help from Councillors to participate in reviewing and re-drafting some of the policies ready for adoption in the Autumn. The Council's policies had not been reviewed since 2018 and earlier, and thus now urgent. All Councillors to look at those documents already circulated to feedback after the August recess. *All Cllrs*
- Covid-19 Risk Assessments – confirmed Council would encourage use of masks/face shields, sanitiser and ventilation during meetings in enclosed spaces until further notice. Sitting 2m apart, it was a struggle to be heard with face masks on and Chairman suggested switching to face shields. *All*
- 21/136 **Review of Ouse Washes Lease – Drovers**
 Current agreement with RSPB expires 31 March 2022.
Resolved Clerk should proceed with opening up dialogue for new term with RSPB and report back at the October meeting. Proposed Chairman, seconded K Mackender *Clerk*
- 21/137 **Finance**
- a) **Receipts and Payments July**
 Receipts and payments schedule for July 2021 had been circulated. Cheques and supporting documents had been checked by signatories and confirmed correct.
Resolved to approve the receipts and payments for July and release cheques. Proposed J Bibby, seconded L Holdaway. *Clerk*
- Resolved** to approve Clerk making arrangements for payroll and urgent payments to be undertaken during August recess and report back at September meeting, following normal procedures for raising and signing cheques. Proposed K Mackender, seconded Chairman. *Clerk*
- 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.
 Expenditure was on target with the budget.
Resolved to approve the quarterly accounts to 30 June 2021 and budget. Receipts £9584.28 including Precept £7650. Payments £3514.76. Balance at 1 July 2021 £52,897.36 including all earmarked and general reserves. £786 underspend on salaries for 2020/21 to be carried over to 2021/2 to meet some additional hours worked by Clerk in

21/137 **Finance** (cont)

earlier months. Other underspends to be used to balance overspend on grounds budget, and balance to be vired against general reserves. Proposed L Holdaway, seconded S Wilkin.

Clerk

21/138 **Recreation Ground**

- a) Monthly report on weekly inspections. Chairman said there were no problems to report and confirmed the Covid sign was still in place.
- b) Annual Play Inspection Report. Previously circulated to all Councillors

Resolved to accept the Wicksteed Annual Play Inspection report and to note that the identified works in respect of safety surfacing would be resolved once play area refurbished.

Proposed Chairman, seconded K Mackender.

Chairman would deal with any works needed to safety surfacing during weekly inspections until refurbishment.

Chairman

21/139 **Planning Applications**

21/00754/FUL 10A The Slade. Change of use of existing timber cabin from garden room to drinking establishment (bar)

Clerk had circulated the advice from ECDC Licensing Officer regarding queries about terms of the licence, and confirmed it was a full open licence with opening permitted from 9am until 12am – open to public and campers as advised by the licence-holder at the last meeting. The Licensing Officer had advised that any concerns or complaints from the public should be made to East Cambs District Council direct.

21/00533/VAR Pond Farm 21 High Street. Nothing further to report other than as reported under Matters Arising

21/140 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

It is hereby resolved that in accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, that as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted at agenda item 21/141 – 21/142 namely Clerk's review and Residents' Complaint, it is advisable in the public interest that the public and press be temporarily excluded from this meeting and they are herewith instructed to withdraw. Proposed Chairman and agreed.

There were no members of the public present.

21/141 **Clerk's Review**

Report previously circulated.

Resolved to approve payment of 29 additional hours worked in next pay run. Proposed L Holdaway, seconded K Mackender.

Clerk had advised that she would reduce hours for August including taking annual leave from end July/beginning August.

Clerk

9.38pm Chairman handed over the Chair to K Mackender and left the room

21/142 **Residents' Complaint**

Details previously circulated.

Reponses drafted for Clerk to send and there was discussion about channels for residents to express concerns on items that were not the responsibility of the Parish Council. K Mackender said residents

- 21/142 **Residents' Complaint** (cont)
 should feel free to contact Parish Councillors on any matters of concern so that the Councillors could understand local issues and to represent their views at a Parish Council meeting, and L Holdaway confirmed. Clerk advised that residents should provide contact details and be using the complaints facility on the new website in due course but there was strong feeling amongst councillors that this would deter residents. Clerk confirmed the Council was required to comply with data protection rules including GDPR and FOI requirements. *Clerk*
Resolved to respond to complainant as per documents drafted. Proposed K Mackender, seconded S Wilkin and unanimously agreed.
- 10.15pm M Housden was called back to re-join the meeting.
 K Mackender handed Chair to M Housden
- Chairman re-opened the meeting
- 21/143 **Street Lights and Highways**
 a) A142 Ely to Chatteris Road Safety Improvements Road Closures 26 July 2021 to 3 August 2021, 8pm to 6 am. Noted.
 b) Broken streetlight at Westway Place – Clerk had contacted Hereward again and it had been confirmed a request for an order had been placed but she could not get a committed date. *Clerk*
- 21/144 **Correspondence**
 The following had been previously circulated and were noted.
 Neighbourhood Plan – pre-consultation for parish of Isleham *Clerk*
 CCC Local Highways Improvement applications 2022/23 (closing date 2.8.21) (amended to 30.9.21)
 CCC Highway Events June
 CCC Micro Asphalt/Gripfibre Surface Treatment Program updates across the county
 IHMC Incident Reports June
 CCC Fostering Newsletter
 NALC Bulletins and Events – Future Communities 2021
 NALC Chief Executive Weekly Bulletins – New Planning Bill, and request for Neighbourhood Plans to remain a 'material consideration', Civility and Respect Project Working Group – changes for town and parish councils *All*
- 21/145 **Cemetery Management**
 Request for additional inscription on existing headstone received and considered. *Clerk*
Resolved to approve the application for additional inscription from Hanchets. Proposed Chairman, seconded L Holdaway.
- Also noted cheque for £240 for 2 plaques for Garden of Remembrance wall had been received earlier in the day, and a request for desk style tablet for recently interred ashes would be submitted shortly. *Clerk*
- 21/146 **Date of next meeting:** 8 September 2021, subject to compliance with any Covid-19 restrictions.
 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. L Holdaway - resident had told her the verges had been badly cut at Market Way
 Review any actions – not done

Chairman closed the meeting at 10.20pm

July Schedule of Receipts and Payments

		£	£	£
Receipts	VAT refund 20/21	1588.08		1588.08
Payments	001929 Cartridgesave toners	43.08	8.62	51.70
	001930 Truelink grounds maintenance (June)	307.20	61.44	368.64
	001931 Clerks salary July incl extra hours	554.44		554.44
	001932 LGPS	198.02		198.02
	001933 Wicksteed Annual Inspection	60.00	12.00	72.00
	001934 Eon Streetlighting energy	86.57	4.33	90.90
	001935 Reimbursement expenses to Clerk IONOS (July) (awaited)	107.04		107.04

Signed..... Dated