

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 30 September 2020 at 7.34pm

This was a remote* meeting using the Zoom video conferencing platform system
(Held in September as original date in April was cancelled due to Coronavirus – Covid-19 restrictions.)

*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.

Present: M Housden – Chairman
S J Bell – Clerk

L Dupré – County Councillor
M Inskip – District Councillor
J Bibby, L Holdaway, K Mackender, Sally Wilkin – Parish Councillors
Nil members of the electorate

Apologies for absence were received from J Lucas (Parish Councillor) due to a previous engagement, and J Walker (Village Hall Committee) who hoped to join later due to a previous engagement, A Finn (Droves)

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of 24 April 2019, previously circulated, were confirmed as a true record, and would be signed by the Chairman after the meeting. Proposed J Bibby, seconded S Wilkin and unanimously resolved.

Matters Arising: *Adopted Red Telephone Kiosk High Street* – confirmed work was underway. The project had been extended to include replacement of cloudy glazing. Contributions for the repairs and decoration had been pledged by some members of the village for which the Parish Council and community were most thankful.
Flashing Speed Signs – Consents from Highways and Street lighting were awaited after which the purchase order would be raised, so installation was expected to be towards the end of the year.
Dog bins - The new dog bins had been installed at Market Way/Headleys Lane and Back Lane/Martins Lane.

REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR

The report had been published with the agenda, and County Councillor L Dupré gave an update on some of the items including nothing further happening on creating more unitary councils but there was a Planning (development) White Paper out for consultation; Schools had re-opened after Covid and still concerns for universities and care homes. The BP roundabout on A142 outside Ely was due for completion of improvement works and the roundabout at Lancaster Way was due for changes from Christmas onwards. Proposals for dualling A10 in hand and for which there would be a consultation period.

REPORT FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

The report had been published with the agenda, and District Councillor M Inskip gave further updates including The Hive Leisure Centre in Ely had re-opened - with pre-booking only. District Council reception had re-opened but where possible, and in view of latest Government advice, staff were still working from home where possible. There was much to consider in the Government's White Paper on the proposed major changes to Planning. The proposals remove much power and scrutiny by the planning authority. The Local Plan (2015) was under review and would be discussed at next District Council meeting. A particular issue was the calculation of the number of homes the Plan needs. The District Council had been successful at Court after 2 developers had won planning appeals at Witchford. The Council was reviewing the impact on its finances in the light of

the Covid-19 pandemic. Mepal Outdoor Centre would not be re-opening and there was a proposal for a crematorium on this site. Additional measures at the Elean Business Park with a Dispersal Order to deter joy-riders and drifters for one weekend had been effective and noise measuring equipment had added to the measures the District Council could employ to deter this anti-social behaviour. The outcome of the bus questionnaire was to be discussed at the October Council meeting.

Chairman thanked the County and District Councillors for their reports.

2019/20 ANNUAL REPORT OF CHAIRMAN OF PARISH COUNCIL

A copy of the Council's Annual Report and Accounts for 2019/20 had been distributed to all householders and a copy placed on the website. The Chairman highlighted the main points and gave an update.

The Clerk presented the year-end accounts, a copy of which had been included in the Annual Report and Summary of Accounts 2019/20. Receipts for the year to 31 March 2020 amounted to £24,132.01. Payments £21,706.58 The balance at 1 April 2020 was £45,570.49 compared to £43,145.06 the previous April. Monies in reserves earmarked for specific projects were explained. The Precept for 2020/21 had been set at £15,300 which included a further £1000 each for cemetery and play equipment.

PLAY AREAS/EQUIPMENT

Unfortunately, with no members of the public present to discuss the play areas following distribution of play survey questionnaire to each household two weeks earlier, there was no opportunity to discuss proposals and receive ideas from the community regarding provision of new facilities. Five questionnaires had been returned to-date and the closing date was Monday 5 October. L Holdaway confirmed she would collate responses and provide a summary for next Council meeting. Funding streams were available and it was hoped a plan could be established so that bids for grants could be submitted by next Spring.

MANAGEMENT OF DROVES

Bury Road landowner was proposing that people in the village might like to set up a voluntary group - 'Friends of the Drovers' and had submitted details including opportunities for skills development for anyone interested in participating, which was read out to the meeting. She had already spoken with a resident about woodland and S Wilkin said that one of the horseriders was interested in helping with the byways. Indeed, in liaison with the Public Rights of Way Officer at Cambridgeshire County Council earlier in the year had carried out some clearance of the byways with a team of volunteers to open up and make safe for horseriding.

Resolved that it would be beneficial if the landowner, resident and horseriders could link up to move forward with setting up a voluntary group to carry out conservation/maintenance of the public rights of way within the parish. Recent information about Tree Wardens and working with the ECDC Tree Officer could also be beneficial. Clerk to advise landowner accordingly and to request she keep the Parish Council in the loop via updates at the Public Participation section of Council meetings as things progressed. Proposed M Housden, seconded S Wilkin.

REPORTS FROM VILLAGE ORGANISATIONS/CLUBS

Witcham Community Archive Group

Report received earlier in the day was attached to the pack on the zoom table and had been forwarded to known attendants for the evening. Still only two people left trying to keep this going. Due to Covid-19 no fundraising had been carried out to pay CCC £100 and CCAN £10. Despite items on the monthly What's On for a couple of months calling for interest, no one had presented.

Witcham Indoor Carpet Bowls

Report received earlier in the day was attached to the pack on the zoom table and had been forwarded to known attendants for the evening. It had been an active year until Covid-19 struck; from when the East Cambs League cancelled the 20/21 season and members deemed it not safe to meet in the numbers needed to hold Club Nights for the foreseeable future. Membership – 22.

Village Hall Committee

The Chairman’s report had been published with the agenda. Under Covid-19 from March 2020 the hall had closed in accordance with Government guidance. Following easing of the restrictions the hall had opened for some use, and a Covid risk assessment and rigorous cleaning system introduced to meet sanitisation requirements. Fundraising including the 50th World Pea Shooting Championship had been cancelled. Maintenance, including new blinds and heaters, improved security lighting and refurbishment of gents toilet had been completed. ECDC Covid-19 grant money was being used to offset lost income and ensure hall sanitised. The Trustees hoped use of the hall would soon return to pre-Covid-19 levels and were working hard to ensure the future of the hall. She thanked the Trustees for their willingness and commitment to the hall and the community it serves.

Unfortunately, no other clubs/village organisations had submitted a report this year.

ANY OTHER PARISH BUSINESS

Noted that dogs were being walked on the paths and roads in various areas of the village without a lead on. (This falls under the Road Traffic Act 1988 which says it is a criminal offence for a dog to be on a designated road (ie. a public road) without being held on a lead. There are exceptions for dogs proved to be kept for driving or tending sheep or cattle in the course of a trade or business)

Chair reported that he and the Clerk had met with the Tree Officer earlier in the day and sadly there were 3 trees on the village green that would have to come down - Ash in play area, Horsechestnut outside Village Hall and Prunus Pissardii Nigra on Martins Lane nearest bus shelter; all were affected by fungus etc. Report would follow and Clerk was organising quotes from tree surgeons. J Bibby said she believed the original trees were planted along edge of village green on Martins Lane in 1971.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.44pm

Signed Dated