

WITCHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 10 January 2024 at 7.35pm in the Village Hall, Witcham.

Present: M Housden (Chairman), K Mackender (Vice-Chairman), L Holdaway, J Lucas,

In attendance Parish Clerk/RFO
District Councillor M Inskip

24/001 **Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received and accepted from S Wilkin (ill).
Apologies also received from County Councillor/District Councillor L Dupré (previous work commitment)

24/002 **To receive declarations of interest from Councillors in any items on the agenda**

- i) Pecuniary interests – none
- ii) Personal interests – L Holdaway Planning 24/012 22/00578/DISA
- iii) Prejudicial interests (and to inform the Chairman if they wish to speak on the matter during public participation) – none

7.37pm K Mackender arrived

24/003 **Dispensations:**

To note new Dispensations granted: Nil

24/004 **Reports from County and District Councillors**

Monthly reports for November and December, previously circulated, were noted.

Cambridgeshire County Council Consultation on 2024/5 Budget – links and information had been provided to Parish Councillors. Government's proposals for Cambridge 2040 (housing) and effect of increased costs in the budget for adult social care reported.

Consultations on proposals to close 3 fire stations in Cambridgeshire – Sutton, Manea and Kimbolton. Noted it was difficult recruiting firefighters for Sutton.

Closure at Sutton One Stop of full Post Office services. The Post Office was keen to keep a branch in the village but it was difficult to find an alternative retail business in the village to take it on.

Councillors expressed their grateful thanks for County Councillor Lorna Dupré in her recent work with County Council officers in trying to remedy the ditch flooding/blocked culvert near cemetery,

7.44pm District Councillor M Inskip left the meeting and was thanked for his attendance.

24/005 **Public Participation** There were no members of the public present

7.50pm M Inskip left the meeting

24/006 **Minutes**

Minutes of the Meeting of 8 November 2023 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 Chairman. The 2 other Councillors present at this meeting had not been at the November meeting.

| | | |
|--------|--|---|
| 24/007 | <p>Matters arising 23/165, 23/137c <i>Village Speedwatch</i> Clerk reported that the equipment had been purchased via an ECDC Community Grant Scheme by the District Councillor as Speedwatch Co-ordinator some years ago. It was confirmed this should now be added to the Parish Council's inventory. Clerk also reported that the landowner asking for roll-over of Management Plan for Drove at Bury Road had responded following Council's response at October meeting. Clerk had confirmed that the Council supported the roll-over and that landowners and volunteers should undertake the review of the roll-over with the Tree Officer and PROW officers. Members confirmed this was correct.</p> | 040/... Clerk |
| 24/008 | <p>Finance and General Administration</p> <p>a) Receipts and Payments January 2024 schedule, including payments made in December 2023 had been circulated. Documentation checked by L Holdaway. Resolved to approve the receipts and payments for January 2024 and confirm approval for December 2023 receipts and payments as per schedule. This included the BACS transfer to Thalia to unlock the grant of £39,800 and releasing cheque to cover Wicksteed invoice for Phase 1, £49,150.68 (including VAT) once the grant had been received from Cambridgeshire Community Foundation in respect of the Amey/Thalia grant scheme. Proposed J Lucas, seconded M Housden. Resolved to approve renewal of subscription to Cambridgeshire ACRE, £65. Proposed J Lucas, seconded L Holdaway.</p> <p>b) Update on charges for .gov.uk website Noted that this had increased from £12 to £13 per month, paid annually.</p> <p>c) Update on old website domain name Clerk confirmed she had cancelled the account as discussed but the Council still held the domain name. Credit notes for 2 months at £18.31 would be credited to the bank soon. Resolved to not take any further action regarding the domain name. Proposed K Mackender, seconded Chairman.</p> <p>d) 2024/5 Budget and Precept Updated Budget and Precept document had been circulated after last meeting. This was discussed again. Salary expenses had been increased due to the extra hours that the Clerk now needed to work to cover activities of the Council, which included the Play Projects, Neighbourhood Plan, leases, and increasing levels of information and enquiries to process. Resolved to vire £2500 from reserves to salaries budget. Proposed J Lucas, seconded K Mackender. Noted there could be some additional costs associated with the new lease with the RSPB for droves at Ouse Washes and Clerk instructed on further communications with the legal adviser. There were no further questions. Resolved to accept the 2024/25 Budget, Total expected expenditure £21,529, Total expected Income £2400. Balance of £19,129 to be covered by Precept £18,500 and £1000 transferred from reserves which would give contingency of £629. Proposed J Lucas, seconded K Mackender. Resolved to set the Precept for 2024/25 at £18,500. Proposed J Lucas, seconded K Mackender</p> <p>e) Exclusion of Press and Public</p> | Clerk Clerk Clerk Clerk Clerk Clerk Clerk |
| | <p>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 special and confidential nature of the business about to be transacted at Agenda Items 24/008f) to 24/008k) namely contractual and staff matters, 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.</p> | Clerk |

- 24/008 **Finance and General Administration** (cont) 041/...
- Proposed Chairman and agreed.
There were no members of the public present
- f) **Quotes Tree Works around Recreation Ground**
Clerk had contacted 4 tree surgeons for quotes. Quotes from the two respondents had been circulated to Councillors.
Resolved to accept the quote from Oakes and Watson at £690 plus VAT which would include the application to ECDC for tree works. Proposed Chairman, seconded J Lucas. Clerk
- g) **Clerk's Report**
Update on work since last meeting, including Parish Councillor vacancy and a FOI request. 2 weeks annual leave (16 hours) had been reduced to 1 week (8 hours) due to managing matters associated with the play projects and other necessary work.
Resolved to note the Clerk's Report. Proposed K Mackender, seconded L Holdaway. Clerk
- h) **Clerks Hours**
Councillors discussed workload and the extra hours worked by Clerk during November and December to cover activities necessary, including dealing with the Play Projects phases 1 and 2, Neighbourhood Plan and Freedom of Information etc.
Resolved to pay the additional 38 hours worked November and December. Proposed K Mackender, seconded L Holdaway.
- i) **RSPB Lease Ouse Washes.**
Nothing further to report following discussion under agenda item 24/008d)
- j) **Right of Way Roadway and Car Park – Village Hall**
Clerk to organise meeting with Village Hall representative and 2 councillors to discuss and clarify what is required for presentation at February Council meeting. Clerk
In view of pressure on February agenda, Clerk to ask ECDC if Planning representative would defer attendance until April APM. Clerk
- k) **Training for Councillors and Clerk**
Resolved Clerk to book training for CAPALC courses for Councillor and Clerk as discussed. Proposed Chairman, seconded K Mackender Clerk

Chairman re-opened meeting – there were no members of the public present.

- 24/009 **Neighbourhood Plan**
- a) Minutes of the Group's meeting held 28 November had been circulated to all Parish Councillors by the Group. Recent emails regarding 2023/24 Locality Grant and update from Consultant, together with summary of survey results and comments on the Design Code had also been circulated prior to the meeting. Noted 2nd version of Design Code now submitted back to AECOM.
- b) K Mackender confirmed he would attend the meeting of the Group on 16 January. A list of points to be taken to the meeting were discussed and it was **Resolved** that Clerk
- Clerk to inform the Working Group's Lead member that the Parish Council would submit the grant application that the Group and the Consultant should prepare, and which must be only for work they will complete by 31 March 2024. £5166 as per Consultant quote. Further application to complete the Neighbourhood Plan would be required for 2024/5
 - The Grant application must be forwarded to the Clerk by **22nd January so that she can submit to Locality by deadline of 26 January 2024.**
 - The Working Group is responsible for communicating with the Consultant direct on a regular basis to ensure the project is kept moving and to meet deadlines.

24/009 **Neighbourhood Plan (cont)**

- The Group's Minutes need to clearly show the Recommendations the members are putting to the Parish Council as per Reporting and Communications, and Meeting procedures set out in their Terms of Reference. Minutes also to record commitment and work done/doing with costs, including costs covered in Consultant's quotes.

Proposed L Holdaway, seconded K Mackender

- c) A public event to feedback to residents the recent survey results was planned for 27 January. As many councillors as possible should attend. S Wilkin had given apologies.
- d) Councillors were concerned about communication between Consultant and the Group, and his concerns and time issues so that they can plan to achieve set goals by 31 March 2024.

24/010 **Recreation Ground and Cemetery Matters**

- a) **Ditch Flooding adjacent Cemetery** Clerk had informed members of the Burial Board on 11 December about overfull ditch causing flooding following email from a family dated 10 December. Water table extremely high due to extensive rainfall and ditches everywhere were full. The situation was monitored. On 18 December Clerk engaged with County Councillor for assistance from County Council departments to help. Landowner attempted to dig a channel across their land to reduce level in ditch. 4 tankers worth of water was removed on 24 December. Flood team investigating and a meeting with County Council and riparian owners planned soon. The ditch was very full again and still causing flooding because the culvert is blocked which stops water getting into the highway drains and ditches further along Mepal Road. The water table across the whole of the county and indeed country remains very high and flood teams were having to focus on putting in resources to mitigate effects on homes and businesses.
- b) **Weekly Inspections** of recreation ground and play equipment had been completed by the Chairman and he advised there were no issues to raise. This now included the new equipment in the young children's play area, which had opened on 22 December 2023. New forms now being used. All Councillors reported that they had received lots of positive comments on the equipment from residents and visitors. New 'No Dogs' signs were required and Clerk would arrange an order. Clerk

c) **Play Project**

- i) **Phase 1** Clerk summarised correspondence and activities regarding new fence and gates etc and delays in opening the equipment under phase 1 of the project. Apology letter from Wicksteed and notices had been published on village noticeboard, the Council's website, and outside the play area. In response to reported comments on the village facebook page a link to the Council's website had been sent to the administrator.

A credit note for comfort facilities had now been received which corrected the original Wicksteed invoice so arrangements for drawing down the grant of £39,800 could now proceed and settlement could be made. VAT to be reclaimed later. (As per Receipts and Payments Schedule for January).

Chairman reported that the newly formed village social group, the Witcham Events Committee, planned to hold an event on 24 March 2024 and it was suggested combining the official opening of the new play facilities with that. Councillors were in general agreement and Chairman (and any other Councillors who could attend) to discuss further at the Committee's next meeting on 29 January. Clerk to check date with the person who was carrying out the opening for the Council. MH
Clerk

24/008 **Recreation Ground and Cemetery Matters**c) **Play Project** (cont)

- ii) **Phase 2** Confirmation of quote for Phase 2 had been received and forwarded to Grantscape together with other items requested. £12758.92 (valid to 31.1.24). Response awaited.

The results of the Neighbourhood Plan survey regarding leisure facilities were discussed.

Clerk

Resolved that Clerk to contact Wicksteed to get information about another piece of fitness equipment – pull-down bars (2 levels).

Clerk

Proposed J Lucas, seconded M Housden.

Clerk to contact Wicksteed to get confirmation that the eco-tumble and any other safety surfacing for this phase would be green and yellow (no blue). Noted that safety surfacing for the three fitness pieces was Wicksteed Safety Grass - a honeycomb matting that is installed on to grass to provide grass retention and improve impact-absorbing protection. The grass would grow through its cells and be suitable for wheelchairs and pushchairs. Arrangements to be made for mowing/maintenance.

Clerk

24/011 **Reports of Meetings attended by Councillors**

- a) Parish Forum meeting 29 November 2023 – Report and presentation pack previously circulated, together with Council representatives report. Received and noted.
- b) CAPALC Annual General Meeting 14 December 2023. Chairman gave verbal report and would circulate notes. Noted.

24/012 **Planning Applications**

23/01277/VAR The Old School High Street To Vary Condition 4 (restriction on use of annex) to allow use holiday accommodation of previously approved 91/00531/FUL for alterations to existing buildings (including part demolition) to form detached dwelling and ancillary accommodation plus erection of garage

Resolved that the Parish Council had concerns:

Consent for this application should be with Conditions:

Clerk

1. Parking for users of the AirB&B facility – users must park within the curtilage of the Old School House site and NOT on the street.
Reasons: this section of High Street already gets congested with on-street parking and there is space for parking within the curtilage of the property. It is a business and parking facilities on site should be provided and used to avoid further congestion and obstruction for others. This must be enforced.
2. The Council supports the erection of high close board fence to protect privacy of neighbours (east)

Proposed J Lucas, seconded L Holdaway.

The following EDCD decisions were noted:

23/01227/TRE Old Crown House, High Street T1 Hornbeam - Crown lift lowest branches by approximately 1 metre. Also reducing Hornbeam hedge below tree by approximately 60cm. T2 Large shrub - Cut back to approximately 1.5x1.5metres. T3 Cherry - Crown reduce by approximately 1-2 metres. T4 Laurel hedge - Reduce height by 60 cm and cut back to boundary the overhang on neighbours side – Approved

22/00578/DISA Witcham House, Headleys Lane To discharge Condition 6 (tree protection scheme) of decision dated 25 May 2023 for 22/00578/FUL Construction of detached garage, conversion of existing garages with room above and an orangery. Approved.

24/013 **Local GP Surgeries – Stretham**

A request for a letter of support for new surgery at Stretham (Haddenham Surgery) for Mereside Medical had been previously circulated. Pressures on existing GP surgeries for Witcham residents was of concern. Draft response considered.

Resolved to approve the draft letter for sending to Mereside Medical to support their application for new surgery at Stretham. Proposed J Lucas, seconded L Holdaway

Clerk

24/014 **ECDC Bus Services and Cycling and Walking Opportunities**

Update on improvements and summary of work undertaken 2022/23 received and comments were invited. No comments were put forward.

24/015 **Highways and Streetlighting**a) **Items brought to the attention of the Highways Authority:**

Streetlight L8EKG had been replaced following recent water works but was still not lit.

Chairman reported that Highway drain near Kings development had been blocked since October. Highways attended in October and had been back last Friday to jet and back again on Monday. Seemingly there was a blockage caused by partial collapse of the system and this was being attended to.

Byway 12 – surface repair plans. Email of 4 January from County Council advising that Rights of Way Department was proposing to lay planings on the first 130m from Back Lane across width of surface, the next 400m to width 5m on eastern side. The rest of Byway 12 – to be levelled of ruts with discs and possibly some making up in two or three low spots with planings.

Consensus amongst Councillors that this proposal sounded good and they had no objections.

b) **Speed data for December** – Chairman had circulated the monthly information – noted. (see also Matters Arising regarding equipment)c) **Speedwatch sessions** – further details about volunteers carrying out sessions was awaited from S Wilkin.d) **CCC Streetlighting** – upgrade to LED system noted

Clerk

24/016 **Sutton Neighbourhood Plan**

The details of the draft replacement Sutton Neighbourhood Plan (Submission Version) had been circulated to Councillors. There were no comments.

24/017 **Correspondence**

The following items of information/interest and invitations to events had been circulated and unless recorded below as otherwise, were noted.

East Cambs Community meeting dates (Police) 9 January, 3 April, 3 July, 2 October and 9 January 2025

'Be Winterwise' Toolkit

Temporary Traffic Road Regulation Order Mepal Road 5–7 February 2024(confirmed)

CCC Budget consultation meeting 11 January 2024

ECDC Community Safety Partnership – action plan and training offers

TMC Incident Report

Parish and Community Forum updates

NALC Newsletters, bulletins and events

CAPALC newsletters

Cambridgeshire Acre news updates

HMRC Employers information

ECDC Press releases: changes to Planning, Business Boost, Shop Watch Launch,

White Ribbon Day

ECDC Minutes of meetings for Planning, Operational Services and Finance and Assets Committees

24/108 **Correspondence** (cont)
 Consultation process regarding proposals for closure of local Fire Stations at Sutton and Manea commenced. (see District Councillors' reports)

24/018 **Date of next meeting:** 14 February 2024

To Review Actions – not done.

Chairman closed meeting 9.55pm

Schedule of Receipts and Payments

| January 2024 | | £ | £ | £ |
|---------------------|---|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Receipts: | Nil | | | |
| Payments | | | | |
| | 002111 Npower Street light energy Oct/Dec | 42.76 | 2.14 | 44.90 |
| | 002112/3 Salary expenses | 509.64 | | 509.64 |
| | 002114 Cambs ACRE Subscription | 65.00 | | 65.00 |
| | 002115 Reimbursement Clerks Expenses | 85.48 | 1.66 | 87.14 |
| c/p | MS online services – 7 licences emails | 31.50 | 6.30 | 37.80 |
| d/d | IONOS Nov | 15.26 | 3.05 | 18.31 |
| d/d | IONOS Dec | 15.26 | 3.05 | 18.31 |
| | BACS Thalia (CTP) | 4378.00 | | 4378.00 |
| | 002116 Wicksteed Phase 1 Play project | 41186.75 | 8237.35 | 49424.10 |
| | Less Credit note Wicksteed | 227.85 | 45.57 | 273.42 |
| | | 40958.90 | 8191.78 | 49150.68 |
| | <i>Cheque to be raised and despatched on receipt of Thalia grant of £39800 (documents checked and agreed at this meeting)</i> | | | |

December 2023

| | | £ | £ | £ |
|-----------|--|--------|-------|--------|
| Receipts: | UKPN (unit at recreation ground) | 63.89 | | 63.89 |
| Payments | | | | |
| | 002106 Truelink (Nov) | 199.90 | 39.98 | 239.88 |
| | 002107/9 Salary expenses | 951.08 | | 951.08 |
| | 002110 CAPALC Training | 20.00 | | 20.00 |
| c/p | MS online services – 7 licences emails | 31.50 | 6.30 | 37.80 |

Signed..... Dated