

WITCHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 11 October 2023 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall, Witcham

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

In attendance Parish Clerk/RFO
County and District Councillor L Dupré

23/142 **Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from District Councillor M Inskip

23/143 **To receive any 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 - none

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

23/144 **Dispensations**

To note any new Dispensations granted: Nil

23/145 **Reports from District and County Councillors**

County Councillor report for October had been circulated and was noted. Councillor Dupré gave an update on District Council report.

7.37pm Councillor Dupré left the meeting

23/146 **Public Participation**

There were no members of the public present.

23/147 **Minutes**

Minutes of the Meeting of 27 September 2023 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman, and the agenda of the same date was also signed as confirmation of the business transacted at that meeting. Proposed L Holdaway, seconded S Wilkin

23/148 **Matters Arising**

23/138c) External Auditor's Report: Clerk advised that PKF had drawn their clients' attention to changes in the 2023 Practitioners Guide for 2023/4 financial year. Para 1.26, relating to Assertion 3 states that every authority must now have an email account that belongs to the Council and to which the Council has access. These email accounts must be used for any Council business emails. It was noted that Witcham Parish Council had already set up emails for Clerk and all Councillors for the conduct of all Parish Council business.

23/136c) Community Book Sharing: S Wilkin advised that the person who had offered to take over dealing with books left at the bus shelter for the community had been to tidy it. They would continue to visit to tidy. Councillors to monitor that the property was not overloaded with books etc.

23/136d) Cemetery Memorial Inspection Report. Clerk advised no families had contacted her. Invoice from supplier of service awaited.

23/148 **Matters Arising** (cont)

23/137c *Village Co-ordinator for Village Speedwatch Scheme.* Clerk reported that the area co-ordinator had suggested he could help with training and supporting the volunteers until new village co-ordinator found. S Wilkin to speak to volunteers at the Equestrian Centre who had come forward to do sessions and let Clerk know so that arrangements could be made with the area co-ordinator. It was felt better to continue using the tripod system which could be moved to two or three locations in the same session whereas MVAS equipment would be static.

SW

Clerk

23/138g) *Village Car Park* – response awaited from solicitors

23/138h) *RSPB Lease* – The Council's comments had now been despatched and responses awaited from advisers with a view to getting the work completed and signed off by January.

23/149 **Finance & General Administration**

- a) **Approve donation to Royal British Legion for wreath** to be laid at 2023 Remembrance Sunday service.

Resolved to approve payment of £30 for wreath. Proposed J Lucas, seconded Chairman. Chairman confirmed he would attend the service to represent the Council.

- b) **Receipts and Payments** Chairman proposed moving to item c) and returning to this item, and this was agreed.

- c) **Quarterly Reconciliations to 30 September 2023 and Budget Review.** Reconciliation sheet, the receipts and payments sheet with budget monitoring report and Clerk's comments had been previously circulated. Receipts £24,081.60, which included both halves of the Precept, £16,500. Payments £12,519.29. Balance £71,736.30.

She sought assistance from Councillors, by asking for details of items they would like to see included in the budget to ensure works and projects could be completed in the 2024/5 financial year. She had provided document listing existing budget and draft proposals for regular revenue expenses and this was updated, including lifting insurance from £600 to £1000 to take into account insurance for the new play and fitness equipment, and expected standard lift in insurance premiums currently being experienced in the industry.

All
Cllrs

Clerk suggested provision be made for computer and printer, and it was agreed to include in draft. Any further items to be sent to Clerk for inclusion on draft budget and Precept which would be discussed fully at the next meeting.

Clerk

All Cllrs

Resolved to approve quarterly reconciliations and the budget review to 30 September 2023. Proposed J Lucas, seconded K Mackender
The meeting returned to item b)

- b) **Receipts and Payments** Clerk asked if the domain for the old website could now be cancelled.

Resolved that the Clerk should make all necessary arrangements to cancel the old website with IONOS, including the direct debit. Proposed J Lucas, seconded K Mackender.

- d) **Review Savings Accounts** Clerk's report setting out current savings accounts and details of Fixed Term Deposit Accounts, together with details regarding payments to be made for Phase 1 of play project had been circulated. Further details regarding cashflow for the year was included in the budget monitoring report and supporting documents for reconciliations for the first half of the year, (item c). Phase 1 Wicksteed project payments of £49,424 plus CTP £4378 would be made shortly and the £39,800 Cambridgeshire Community Fund, Thalia grant, would be received on receipt of invoices. Phase 2 of the project would depend on whether the application for £14,000 was granted by Grantscape during the current financial year.

23/149 **Finance & General Administration (cont)**

Resolved to move £25,000 from instant savings account to a 12 month Fixed Term Deposit Account, currently 3.6%. Clerk to arrange necessary letter and signatures to open the account with the bank. Proposed J Lucas, seconded K Mackender.
More monies to be allocated to the cemetery reserves for land acquisition to extend cemetery.

Clerk

23/150 **Co-Option of Councillor**

There were no applications for consideration.

Clerk

23/151 **Recreation Ground/Bus Shelter and Cemetery Matters**

- a) **Weekly inspections** of recreation ground and play equipment had been completed by the Chairman and he advised there were no issues to raise. This excluded the young children's play area as the Wicksteed contractors were on site installing new equipment and was all sectioned off with heras fencing.

Chairman had mulched new trees with wood chippings as suggested by Tree Officer and the grass contractors had undertaken a further cut. He reported that the hedge at the cemetery on the Mepal side had been cut and height reduced.

- b) **Tree Works** – Chairman and Clerk had met the Tree Officer at the recreation ground to discuss tree works. His recommendations had been circulated to Councillors and would be the basis for the application for consent for tree works.

Resolved recommendations acceptable and Clerk to organise getting 3 quotes. Proposed L Holdaway, seconded S Wilkin.

Clerk

- c) **Use of Recreation Ground – Ely City Cricket** Enquiry received asking if the team could use the recreation ground again for the 2024 season.

Resolved that in principle happy for the Cricket Club to use Witcham Recreation Ground again for some of the matches in 2024. Proposed Chairman, seconded S Wilkin.

Clerk

Clerk also advised that enquiries were being received from people holding events at the village hall, seeking permission to extend their event to include use of the recreation ground. J Lucas proposed that a standard letter be issued as the recreation ground and play equipment cannot be closed off to the public for private functions taking place at the village hall. Seconded Chairman and agreed by all.

Clerk

- d) **Play Phase 1** Update received from Play Working Party and noted that the colour of the large pieces of equipment were not as discussed by them with Wicksteed, nor the purchase order. This meant there was a wider array of colours than planned. After much discussion on possible options, L Holdaway offered to speak to Wicksteed.

Resolved that that L Holdaway, on behalf of the working party, should contact Wicksteed to negotiate an acceptable resolution along the lines discussed at this meeting, and report back to Councillors. Proposed Chairman, seconded K Mackender and agreed unanimously.

LH

Chairman reported that he had been approached by several residents with positive feedback, commenting on how much better the facilities were and how nice the play area looked.

- i) **Release dates of funds.** Wicksteed invoice was expected shortly as installation nearly complete. Grant to be claimed and payment of CTP to be made. Clerk to prepare letter arranging for BACS payment to Thalia

Resolved that approval given for Clerk to arrange BACS payment to cover CTP £4378, as discussed with bank.

Clerk

Proposed Chairman, seconded L Holdaway

23/151 **Recreation Ground/Bus Shelter and Cemetery Matters** (cont)

- ii) **Opening of Phase 1 of project**
Resolved to hold an official opening, probably during November, on a Saturday, but dependent when all works completed. Proposed L Holdaway, seconded Chairman. Clerk to check dates village hall would be available. Donation of refreshments offered by Councillors. Resident to carry out opening ceremony to be contacted by Chairman. *Cllrs*
Clerk
- iii) **Signage**
 Signage about using equipment and supporters of the project required.
Resolved to get quotes for 2 A3 signs and fixings. Proposed Chairman and agreed unanimously. *Clerk*
 Chairman to update existing sign as discussed ready for converting to sign. Text for name of play area and date opened and funders agreed. *Chairman*
- iv) **Refurbishment of existing fencing** - Clerk had contacted local firm for quote. Deferred until after L Holdaway spoken to Wicksteed, as above. *LH*
Clerk
- v) **Other arrangements** – nothing more at present time
- e) **Phase 2 – older children and fitness equipment** Clerk advised that further information was required for next stage of application to Grantscape.

9.16pm J Lucas left the meeting

Details for application reviewed and information provided for Clerk to make the submission with support from L Holdaway

- f) **Cemetery Fees and Rules**
 Clerk had contacted nearby cemetery owners for comparison of current cemetery fees and had presented details with suggested revisions.
Resolved that the Council approved the uplifted fees as presented by Clerk. Proposed K Mackender, seconded Chairman. *Clerk*

23/152 **Planning Applications and Tree Works**

23/01000/TRE 2A The Slade T1 Row of Conifers - Trim back sides to leave approximately 1m overhang with green foliage over gravel access adjacent to property and reduce height down by approximately 5 metres. T2 Goat Willow - Cut back large low right hand limb growing towards 2a by approximately 4 metres. (Tree needs to be viewed from back garden). Noted.

23/153 **Neighbourhood Plan**

It was noted that K Mackender had given apologies as he would be unable to attend the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group's meeting scheduled for 24 October. S Wilkin and L Holdaway already had commitments and gave apologies. Clerk to check if J Lucas could attend with the Chairman on this occasion. *Clerk*

- a) Updates from Neighbourhood Plan Working Group. Clerk had prepared letter as discussed at 27 September 2023 Council meeting, and circulated to councillors for confirmation as requested. There had been some delay getting responses back from Councillors but it had finally been despatched by email to all members of the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group on Tuesday. Responses from the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group had been requested by 3 November in readiness for the Council's meeting on 8 November.
- b) Locality Funding – application details had been requested from Working Group in conjunction with Consultant, by 3 November for consideration at Council's meeting on 8 November 2023.

23/154 **Highways and Street Lighting Matters**

- a) **Items to bring to attention of the Highways Authority** – Chairman said he had reported water leak by streetlamp at The Slade and Anglian Water had attended.
- b) **Speed data for September** - Chairman had circulated the information – noted.
Update on Speedwatch sessions and co-ordinator role noted under Matters Arising above.
- c) **60MPH Speed Limit Witcham to Mepal Road.** Update from Mepal Parish Council noted. Response given to Clerk for response to resident on Mepal Road and Mepal Parish Council.

Clerk

23/155 **Bury Road Management Plan for Trees and Shrubs**

Update from landowner following correspondence with Wildlife Trust discussed. Noted suggestion of management plan being rolled forward and that landowners should manage it. Also that a volunteer group be formed, and that the Plan should be presented to and supported by all levels of council as previously.

9.35pm L Holdaway left the meeting

Resolved that Clerk respond advising that the Councillors were very busy with village projects but would be supportive of the group being formed. Proposed Chairman, seconded K Mackender.

Clerk

23/156 **Consultations**

- a) ECDC Licensing Committee: Amendments to current Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy – No comments
- b) CCC Local Highways stakeholders survey – roads and streetlighting – No comments
- c) ECDC Polling District Review – Noted

23/157 **Correspondence**

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

CAPALC training, Councillor, inspections, planning, CIL etc – No interest
 NHS Priors Field Surgery Sutton update – contract extended to March 2025
 Greater Cambridge Partnership – Making Connections – Congestion Charge
 ECDC Rough Sleeper estimate 23/24 November 2023 – to do
 NALC Bulletins, Newsletters and Events
 ECDC press releases
 CAPALC Bulletin
 TTRO 23-1298 Long Causeway, Coveney

Headleys Lane planning issue – response from A Bailey, circulated 6 October 2023. Planning Briefing event for Parish Councils 2pm-4pm 29 November 2023 ECDC Council Chamber – J Lucas had offered to attend.

23/158 **Date of next meeting:** 8 November 2023

Review Actions – omitted. Meeting closed at 9.38 pm

Schedule of Receipts and Payments

		£	£	£
Receipts:	Precept	8250.00		8250.00
Payments	002094 Npower	25.69	1.28	26.97
	002095/6Salary	875.73		875.73
	002097 Royal British Legion Remembrance Sunday Wreath	30.00		30.00
	002098 Clerk's expenses reimbursement	181.08		181.08
	d/d IONOS	29.06	5.81	34.87
	c/p MS online services – 7 licences emails	31.50	6.30	37.80
	c/p MS365 annual subscription	59.99		59.99

Signed..... Dated