

WITCHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 13 April 2022 at 7.30 pm in the Village Hall, Witcham

Present: M Housden (Chairman), K Mackender (Vice-Chairman), J Bibby, S Wilkin

In attendance Mrs S J Bell (Clerk)
Chair - Village Hall Committee

22/057 Apologies for absence

Apologies had been received from L Holdaway (holiday), J Lucas (sick).
The District and County Councillors were not in attendance in order to keep numbers low in the hall due to high local Covid infection rates.

22/058 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

22/059 Dispensations

To note any new Dispensations granted: Nil

22/060 Public Participation

Chairman opened meeting and welcomed the Chair of the Village Hall Committee who was attending to share proposals for 3 new benches to replace existing along the roadway to the village hall and one on the other side adj Martins Lane. She sought input from the Parish Council regarding design before ordering. The benches were recycled plastic, looked like wood and light in colour. They would be installed and secured on the existing pads although one would need extending at installation. Plaques were also discussed. The model, Ellwood by Glasdon, was favoured by all those present and the Chair of the Village Hall Committee was thanked.

Other points raised:

- a) Clerk to forward copy of Land Registry documents for land covering car park to the Chair Village Hall Committee.
- b) Chair Village Hall Committee asked if the Council had given any thought to installing rechargeable points for electric cars. The Council did not own site accessible to electricity so this had not been pursued. Chair of Village Hall Committee said she would undertake to investigate further with possibility of installing some at the Village Hall. This would be of benefit to people using the village hall facilities. A charge (£) system would be required. She suggested installing near the metal container.
- c) Village Hall Committee had revised terms and conditions of hire and included clause regarding responsibilities of users being responsible for the wellbeing of children on site including presence during cricket matches and using play equipment/facilities on the recreation ground.
- d) Chair of Village Hall Committee asked if the Council had made plans for any events to mark Queen's Jubilee. Chairman advised the Council didn't usually organise events as historically this had always been done by village organisations such as the Village Hall Committee and Church. It was understood other groups including independent residents/streets might be organising something but no details were known.
- e) Chair of Village Hall was asked if the Village Hall had considered installation of solar panels on the roof of the village hall. She said it had been

22/060 Public Participation (cont)

thought about when the major works were carried out on the village hall a few years back but there was no south facing roof and in any case they did not have the funding at that time.

- f) Chair of Village Hall Committee advised that the bookings Clerk would be contacting the Council to enquire if the Council felt ready to hold meetings in the small room from September so that the large hall could be let to others on the same night. Clerk confirmed she had made bookings for Council meetings up to March next year in the large hall. Council to review.

Chairman thanked the Chair of the Village Hall Committee for attending and she left at 7.55pm

22/061 Minutes

Minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2022, 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 Chairman, seconded J Bibby.

22/062 Matters Arising

22/047b) Emails Clerk confirmed arrangements for card had been made and Microsoft would be updated.

22/048c) Recreation Ground – Play Inspection - Clerk confirmed annual play inspection had been booked (approx. June) and costs had increased.

22/047d) Donation for local First Responders – noted an item had been included in the Council's latest newsletter promoting the service and seeking volunteers to cover Witcham, Sutton and Mepal. Further details regarding support from all villages was awaited together with grant application form.

Clerk

February Minutes

Clerk reported that it had recently come to light that the numbering was incorrect in the February meeting minutes. Replace 22/011 with 22/030 (Finance) and 22/012 with 22/031 (Zipper bus service).

22/063 "What's On"

Letter from volunteer editor advising that she wished to retire from producing the monthly "What's On" was read to the meeting.

She had been producing the newsletter for well over 20 years and Clerk was asked to write to thank her for all her work on this; it had been a most valuable contribution to the village, a useful tool to keep people informed of village events and news, and it would be a shame if it were to disappear.

Resolved to write letter of thanks to the retiring editor and include on agenda for Annual Parish Meeting in two weeks time. Proposed J Bibby, seconded Chairman

APM
Clerk**22/064 Reports from District and County Councillors**

The reports had been previously circulated and Councillors invited to contact County and District Councillors regarding any points they sought further information on.

22/065 Finance and General Administration**a) Renewal of SLCC membership**

Resolved to approve renewal of SLCC membership at £112.
Proposed Chairman, seconded S Wilkin.

Clerk

b) Receipts and payments for April 2022

The April 2022 schedule had been circulated. Cheques and supporting documents, checked by J Bibby and S Wilkin were confirmed correct. (Listed at foot of Minutes). Clerk confirmed end of year tasks for pay and pensions had been completed and the Declaration of Compliance

22/065 **Finance and General Administration** (cont)

completed and acknowledged regarding Pension re-enrolment procedures (Pensions Regulator)

Resolved to approve the receipts and payments for April 2022 and release cheques. Proposed S Wilkin, seconded K Mackender.

c) Year-end accounts, including budget review, draft AGAR and Exemption form and associated year-end documents

Copies of receipts and payments for the year with bank reconciliation to 31 March 2022, together with Summary and Clerk's report had been prepared and previously circulated by the Clerk for Councillors to review for approval. The original bank statements were presented and the documents checked by Chairman. Receipts, including £15300 Precept, totalled £21084.31, Payments £16774.08. Balance as at 31 March 2022 £51138.07 (including all earmarked reserves).

Budgets for 2021/2 were reviewed and surplus/deficits discussed.

Resolved that the accounts for the year ending 31 March 2022, together with reconciliations, bank statements and the Summary be approved.

Proposed K Mackender, seconded J Bibby.

Resolved to accept the Finance Report to Councillors for the year ending 31 March 2022 from the Clerk. Noted that under salaries, HMRC PAYE employers refund of £164.60 was awaited and that there was an overspend of approximately £360 due to extra hours worked by Clerk to cope with increased workload. An underspend of £570 on grounds works to be held in earmarked reserves towards works to be completed during 2022/23. £975 from earmarked reserves for streetlighting equipment had been used to upgrade the Council's 5 streetlights to LED system and there was a deficit on streetlighting budget of £95 to be vired from general reserves. Admin deficit of £144 and S.137 £60 vired from general reserves. £40 donation from resident for village works was to go to tree project. Underspend of £160 under S.142 (due to What's On not being printed) was vired to general reserves. £2450 included in the 2022/23 Precept Budget for projects at the recreation ground including developing land at entrance to roadway to village hall. ECDC CIL monies £1339 earmarked for cemetery extension (currently £8300 having reduced original £15k+ with purchase of replacement lychgate in 2020). Also to vire £7000 from general reserves to Cemetery project. Proposed K Mackender, seconded Chairman and agreed unanimously.

The latest Practitioners Guide had been circulated for Councillors to examine. The draft AGAR forms – Certificate of Exemption, Governance Statement and Statement of Accounts had been previously circulated together with internal auditor's comments. Variance and Reserves statements also discussed and confirmed.

Noted that under Transparency Code for Smaller Councils, a list of payments of £100 and over was required to be published on the website. Clerk advised that the Council published all payments and receipts regardless of value as a schedule at the foot of the Minutes for each meeting and had done so since 2016 (previously always listed under the Finance agenda item, within the body of the Minutes each month). Councillors felt that to create a separate document for website each month was an added admin burden with little gain and Clerk to clarify with Auditor. The draft Certificate of Exemption and AGAR forms were agreed and final copy to be completed and presented at the May meeting for approval and final signing off.

2021/22 Fixed asset list, as amended, had been previously circulated.

Resolved to approve the fixed asset list. Proposed J Bibby, seconded Chairman.

22/065 **Finance and General Administration (cont)****d) Internal Audit**

Scheduled for 22 April 2022.

- e) **2021/22 Annual Report** Draft, previously circulated. There were no further updates for the play project to be added. Remainder of content discussed; tree planting pictures to be added and document printed double-sided A4 rather than booklet to reduce admin time.

Resolved that the Annual Report be approved for circulation at Annual Parish Meeting and each householder Proposed K Mackender, seconded S Wilkin

f) Policies and procedures

Documents previously circulated, discussed and updated.

Resolved to approve and sign off the following:

Safeguarding Risk Assessment for use in the event of any Council organised functions in the future.

Risk Assessments – General Council, including Cemetery and Recreation Ground

Training Statement of Intent

Proposed Chairman, seconded J Bibby

Clerk

g) Renewal of Lease with RSPB for drove land at Ouse Washes

Estimate received from Council's solicitor, which had been passed back to RSPB for acceptance as part of the negotiating terms for renewal and Heads of Terms. Response from RSPB awaited.

Clerk

h) Renewal of Insurance

Resolved to opt for 3 year term. Further details awaited and Clerk to update regarding new play and fitness equipment and benches in due course.

i) Clerk's March Timesheet.

Hours reviewed. With additional meetings and year-end work and policies etc additional hours had been worked in March and April.

Resolved to pay additional 25 hours in May salaries. Proposed K Mackender, seconded Chairman.

Clerk

22/066 **Annual Parish Meeting – Wednesday 27 April 2022 – 7.30pm**

Agenda previously circulated, discussed and agreed. Promotion notices discussed, and confirmed details had been published in newsletter, village noticeboard and website earlier in the month.

This was an important meeting as it was necessary to engage with the electorate regarding proposals to initiate development of a Neighbourhood Plan in order to ensure that the future of Witcham was in-keeping with the desires of the community.

Speakers for the meeting were discussed.

Clerk to contact Archive Group regarding CCC subscription for the Archive website.

Clerk

K Mackender gave his apologies as he was unable to attend due to work commitments.

Resolved to include presentation by First Responders representative in respect of efforts to recruit volunteers and promote the service for Witcham, Sutton and Mepal. Proposed K Mackender, seconded S Wilkin.

Clerk

Clerk to send draft promotion notice for the meeting to Councillors in the morning and to finalise for noticeboards and website for the same day. Chairman to sign agenda and put on village noticeboards.

Clerk

22/067 **Recreation Ground**

- a) Chairman had completed usual weekly inspections of recreation ground and play equipment and there was nothing to report.

Signs for recreation ground discussed and it was noted that animals were being taken on to the recreation ground via the little path crossing from High Street to the Village Hall and the roadway, which was not permitted. Dog notices are displayed around area and items regularly put in the quarterly newsletter. Chairman to draft new notice for additional signage for kites and drones. New improved signage would also form part of the proposed play and fitness project. New sign for entrance on to recreation ground to replace existing brown wooden board to be examined, possibly using same posts, and signage for location of the village hall would also be useful for visitors to the village.

Chairman

Clerk to write to Cricket Club regarding their practice nets

Clerk

- b) **Village Hall Committee** – Provision of new Bench seats alongside drive to Village Hall and adj Martins Lane
Following discussions under public participation section of meeting, it was **Resolved** that the Council would accept the proposed 3 new bench seats to replace existing, using same fixing pads and extended where necessary. Parish Council would take over maintenance and include on Fixed Asset list and insurance policy. Proposed K Mackender, seconded J Bibby

Clerk

c) **Cycle Parking – Recreation Ground – Installation of Cycle Racks**

Clerk reported that the County Council was asking the Parish Council to take over ownership of the proposed cycle racks.

Resolved that further to Minute 22/048b) the Parish Council would take over ownership of the proposed cycle racks and undertake maintenance, inspections and include on its insurance. Proposed J Bibby, seconded S Wilkin.

Clerk

Note to be included in the Annual Report.

d) **Play and Outdoor Fitness Refurbishment Project Working Party**

There was nothing further to report at present.

It was noted that **Land Registry** had confirmed voluntary registration of the land owned by the Parish Council at the Cemetery on Mepal Road and the Recreation Ground at Martins Lane. Plans circulated to Councillors and amendments by Land Registry noted. Clerk to seek clarification regarding part of northern boundary with pictures.

*Clerk*22/068 **Planning Applications**

22/00289/TRE 18 High Street T1 Prunus - Re-pollard to previous points removing 3m growth; T2 Lime - Fell due to excessive decay. Noted.

22/00200/FUL Land East of 2 Market Way Change of use to paddocks, erection of stables and associated works. Amendment – revision site address to clarify siting of proposed development. Noted, no comments. (This was an issue the Parish Council had reported on).

The following ECDC decisions were noted

21/01546/FUL – Pond Farm 21 High Street Demolition of existing agricultural barn structure, construction of new dwelling, single storey extension, carport and amenity land – approved

22/068 **Planning Applications** (cont)

It was also noted that concerns regarding bonfires, dumping rubbish from other sites, removal of more hedgerow and damage to verge were being investigated and further noted that the developers had still not installed hardcore for road surfacing on site to support the building process/delivery of materials etc.

22/00144/TRE 1 Silver Street T1 smaller of 2 Hornbeam – reduce by 2m and 2m off the sides. T2 larger of 2 Hornbeam – reduce in height by 2.5m and 2.5m off the sides. Both trees to raise canopy to 2.5m from ground level and also to remove any small crossing branches, deadwood, or stubs. Approved.

Kings of Witcham development site – The Slade. In response to enquiry from District Councillor, agreed the recent variations regarding materials and window changes were not of concern but as there had always been concerns about drainage systems – any amendments/variations should continue to go to Planning Committee before being accepted. Clerk to contact District Councillor.

Clerk

22/069 **2022 Best Kept Garden Competition**

Typing correction to heading noted: should read Best Kept Garden not Village

After discussion it was **Resolved** to leave again this year but to review later also consider changes, eg classes and timing as discussed in earlier years before Covid. Proposed J Bibby, seconded K Mackender

Cllrs

22/070 **Neighbourhood Plan**

Chairman reported that 6 residents and 2 councillors had attended the meeting on 18 March 2022 when District Councillor Mark Inskip had given a very informative and thorough presentation on the Neighbourhood Plan process.

Those present at the presentation thought it would be worth starting the process of producing a Neighbourhood Plan to see if there was enough support and get clarity of what is required before going on to complete it. The questionnaire stage would certainly be a good tool to engage with the community to establish what was needed for the future of Witcham.

This subject was included on the agenda for the Annual Parish Meeting later in the month.

Cllrs

22/071 **Police**

- a) There were no issues to report.
- b) Monthly speed data had been circulated.

22/072 **Street Lights and Highways**

- a) Temporary Traffic Regulation Order Witcham Rd, closure of sections of Mepal to Witcham Road 16 to 20 May 2022 – Noted
- b) Clerk to raise with Highways Authority the poor condition of the road surface in High Street and enquire when it would be included on the resurfacing programme.

Clerk

Chairman had reported the drain outside 4 The Slade which had lot of gravel in it after burst water main.

- c) Sanctuary Housing had advised an order for works to replace street light opposite 14 Westway Place had been raised but on the visit further work had been identified so further orders were required by contractors. It was being kept under review and chased by Clerk and Sanctuary Housing – local Housing Officer, together with removal of the old pole and bracket on the bottom carpark bay.

Clerk

22/073 Correspondence

The following correspondence had been circulated:

Pension updates and training opportunities – no one nominated

NALC Legal Topic Note 87 – Procurement (Play/fitness project)

NALC Events – Safer Communities and climate change.

Neighbourhood Plans – Chair suggested the event on 29 June 2022, 12-1.15pm might be useful if someone could attend but this was a Wednesday so people at work

Cllrs

NALC Small Councils Committee – issues to address (respond by 30 April 2022) – no response to be made

E CDC Ukrainian Crises – questionnaire and arrangements for support – no response to be made

Cambs ACRE Food Farming and Countryside – Listening to Cambridgeshire.

J Lucas had indicated that she would like to attend and this was agreed.

JL

East Cambs Parish Council Conference 3 May 2022, 11-14.45hrs, Ely Maltings – no one nominated

NALC/CAPALC – Practitioners Guide – Year-end guidance (circulated with AGAR forms and finance report)

HMRC Spring Statement 2022

Environment Agency Hundred Foot River Works update and drop in event at Welney on 23 April 2022 10.30am and 2.30pm

Cambs ACRE Safeguarding lead and policies

Cambs ACRE Charity purposes and rules

Cambs ACRE Funding a project – help

Covid updates (various)

CCC The Library Presents – Spring 2022 Programme

CAPALC newsletters/bulletins, training schedule, Queens Jubilee celebrations – establishing portfolio

NALC Bulletins, CEO updates and Civility and Respect Project, Utility Aid – service audit

E CDC agendas and minutes (see website for links)

E CDC TV Licensing – dispensation for Queens Jubilee

E CDC Newsletter

CCC Cambridgeshire Flood Risk Management Strategy Consultation – final document and links to report floods, concerns about planning/development etc

E CDC Press Release – submission Relevant Representation response to Sunnica

Cambs ACRE Managing finances for Trustees

E CDC Bird Flu arrangements

IHMC (TMC) Incident Report and training opportunities

CCC Operational Services draft Minutes

Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group Cambs – Conservation Wildlife Pond Funding

22/074 Date of next meeting: 11 May 2022 – Annual General Meeting of the Council

27 April 2022 Annual Parish Meeting – meeting of the Electorate

Review Actions – omitted. Meeting closed at 10pm

Schedule of Receipts and Payments

		£	£	£
Receipts:	RSPB	1020.15		1020.15
Payments	001971 Cancelled (Cartridgesave)			
	001977 Cartridgesave	164.42	32.88	197.30
	001978 Clerks salary Apr incl extra hours and back pay for 2021 pay award to 1.4.21)	677.63		677.63
	001979 LGPS	241.96		241.96

Schedule of Receipts and Payments (cont)

001980	Truelink grass and grounds (Mar)	195.20	39.04	234.24
001981	CAPALC membership	308.18		308.18
001982	SLCC	112.00		112.00
d/d	IONOS (Mar) d/d	22.03	4.41	26.44

Correction to March 2022 schedule:

ICO £35 not £40 (discount for direct debit)

Signed..... Dated