

WITCHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 14 February 2024 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall, Witcham

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

In attendance Parish Clerk/RFO
County and District Councillor L Dupré
District Councillor M Inskip
Member of the public – Councillor vacancy

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

24/019 **Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received and accepted from J Lucas.

24/020 **To receive declarations of interest from Councillors on any items on the agenda**

Pecuniary interests - none

Personal interests – 24/030 Planning - 24/00129/FUL

Prejudicial interests (and to inform the Chairman if they wish to speak on the matter during public participation) - none

24/021 **Dispensations**

To note any new Dispensations granted: Nil

24/022 **Reports from District and County Councillors**

Meeting opened for updates from the County and District Councillors.

Monthly report for February had been previously circulated and was noted.

County Councillor advised that the County Council budget was agreed on 13 February. Of note, the Highways & Transport Committee had changed its policy on highways weed spraying; reverting to regular twice-yearly weed killing in the places where it used to do this before last year's policy change. Communities which do not want chemical weed spraying in their area will be able to opt out in favour of manual weed removal by volunteers.

Combined Authority Mayor proposed to increase his Precept from £12 to £36 (average Band D property) to put towards improved bus services.

Cyclical gully cleaning back – expected to start in Witcham end Feb/March.

Chairman reported that the roadsweeper had been in the village on 14 February. This was a District Council function. District Councillor advised that roadside sweeping had recommenced and would be more regular since staffing levels had increased so that the drivers were not having to be diverted to refuse collection services.

Proposals for Mepal Cemetery financing (£9m CIL monies) going to full council from Finance and Assets Committee.

People still have time to complain about the closure of Barclay's facilities in Ely.

Good progress being made with ensuring future of future GP services in Sutton.

Meeting at The Glebe, Sutton on 5 March at 7.30pm regarding closing Sutton Fire Station; Witcham Parish Councillors welcome to attend.

No further updates on closure of post office facilities at One Stop in Sutton.

Witchford Neighbourhood Plan – review – climate change – better buildings.

Government is stepping in regarding better standard for buildings nationally rather than just local variances, further information awaited.

8.45pm Chairman thanked the County and District Councillors for attending and they left the meeting. M Inskip gave apologies for the March meeting.

24/023 **Public Participation**

Co-option to fill Parish Councillor vacancy: The applicant was invited to speak and to explain his interest in joining the Council. After questions put to the applicant by Councillors and confirmation by the applicant that he met the criteria for qualification to be a Councillor (with no disqualifications) he was thanked for attending and advised that his application would be discussed further under agenda item 24/031. He confirmed he would like to be considered for the vacancy.

The applicant stayed on to observe the meeting until Agenda Item 24/026e)

8.02 The Chairman closed the meeting to the public

24/024 **Minutes**

Minutes of the following Meetings were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman, and the agendas of the same date were signed by the Chairman as confirmation of the business transacted at that meeting:

8 November 2023 – proposed S Wilkin, seconded K Mackender and agreed (L Holdaway abstained as she had been absent)

10 January 2024 – proposed K Mackender, seconded L Holdaway and agreed (S Wilkin abstained as she had been absent)

24/025 **Matters Arising**

24/007, 23/165, 23/137c *Village Speedwatch* Clerk advised the equipment had cost £2500 – this would be the value to put on insurance policy

24/008f) *Tree works* – Contractor had submitted application to ECDC for the tree works (see agenda item 24/030) and planned to do the work in May.

24/026 **Finance & Admin Matters**

- a) **Receipts and Payments** schedule February 2024 had been circulated. Documentation had been checked by L Holdaway. Arrears for rent review UKPN lease had been received. Clerk also reported that the fee for annual renewal of the Microsoft 365 Licence would go out 18 March 2024.
Resolved to approve signing off UKPN Rent Review Memorandum in relation to the terms of the Lease for substation on recreation ground. Proposed L Holdaway, seconded S Wilkin
Resolved to approve the receipts and payments for February 2024 and release cheques. (Listed at foot of Minutes). Proposed L Holdaway, seconded S Wilkin
- b) **Receipt of Cambridgeshire Community Foundation/Thalia grant and release of payment to Wicksteed for Phase 1** was noted.
- c) **Quarterly reconciliations**, (3rd quarter) and budget report previously circulated to Councillors. Bank statements presented at meeting. Receipts (including full Precept) £26,436.47, Payments £17078.75. Balance £69531.71 including all earmarked reserves.
2024/25 Budget summary circulated and copy would be posted on website.
Resolved to approve the Quarterly reconciliations and budget report. Proposed K Mackender, seconded Chairman.
- d) **LGA 1972 S.137** limit for 2024/25 was £10.81 (x No people on electoral register)

Clerk

Clerk

24/026 **Finance & Admin Matters (cont)**e) **Exclusion of Press and Public**

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 24/026f) to 24/026h) 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. Proposed by Chairman and agreed.

The member of the public was thanked for attending, and he left the meeting.

Clerk

f) 2023/24 National Joint Council (NJC) Salary Award and additional day annual leave.

Resolved to accept the recommendation of NALC/SLCC to adopt the new rates of pay as agreed by the National Joint Council for Local Government Services. The recommended uplift for the Clerk's salary, effective from 1 April 2023, would be based on the current spine point. An additional day for annual leave, pro-rate to hours worked, noted. Back-pay to be included in March payroll. Proposed L Holdaway, seconded S Wilkin

Clerk

g) **RSPB Lease**

Report from Clerk received and discussed.

Resolved Clerk to take title evidence to show solicitors to arrange Title Absolute for Land Registry. Clerk also to obtain confirmation that RSPB legal team accepted points submitted on new Lease. Proposed L Holdaway, seconded S Wilkin.

h) **Village Hall Deed of Right of Way and car parking etc.** Clerk's report of meeting of 5 February and proposed Heads of Terms, together with content for draft instruction to get solicitors' quotes had been previously circulated. L Holdaway explained further. **Resolved** to proceed with obtaining new Deed as the old one does not cover all that is required now, and the original signed copy is missing. Clerk to send off for fixed fee quote of legal costs, as per drafted letter. Village Hall Management Committee to pay Council's legal expenses and their solicitor to draft the Deed based on Heads of Terms discussed. Proposed S Wilkin, seconded Chairman and unanimously agreed.

Clerk

8.27pm Meeting re-opened to public

24/027 **Neighbourhood Plan**

Report from Neighbourhood Plan Working Group Chairman and Minutes of its meeting with Consultant on 5 February 2024 had been previously circulated. Noted from the report that there was to have been another Working Group meeting on 27 February (Minutes to follow) where arrangements would be made for drop-in event for 24 March. All comments and information from the Group would be submitted to the Consultant by 14 March so that he can organise publicity items, including Survey and final Design Guide information as agreed on 5 February.

Chairman

Clerk reported that the Locality Grant for the next stages of work by the Consultant had been approved - £1633. An application for a grant for the final stages would need to be submitted after the 1 April 2024, as soon as 2024/5 scheme was announced by Locality and the Government and applications were being accepted.

24/028 **Recreation Ground and Cemetery Matters (cont)**

- a) **Overflowing Ditch at Cemetery** Clerk advised that the meeting with County Council representatives was provisionally fixed for noon on 26 February 2024. Clerk instructed to see if the adjoining landowner would like to attend. Also to keep the County Councillor updated.
- b) **Weekly inspections** of recreation ground and play equipment had been completed by the Chairman and he had advised there were no issues to raise. Wicksteed representative had been shown the pooling that was occurring after rainfall on the steps of the large multiplay unit on 9.2.24 and they would report back from installation team to see if any remedial action could be taken to ease the problem. Chairman confirmed he now had the keys for the new equipment.
- c) **Application for use of Recreation Ground – 24 March 2024**
Chairman presented application and supporting risk assessment and public liability insurance from the Chair of the Witcham Events Committee (circulated to councillors earlier in the day).
Resolved that the Council gave consent to use of the recreation ground on 24 March 2024. Proposed K Mackender, seconded L Holdaway.

Clerk
Chairman
JL

Clerk

d) **Play and Fitness Projects**

Report from Play Working Party.

- i) Phase 1 – Official Opening 2pm on 24 March 2024
Noted that the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group members were holding a drop-in session on 24 March 2024 at the Village Hall, (see Minute 24/027), and that the Witcham Events Committee were holding an Easter Egg Hunt, (see Minute 24/048c)).
Resolved that the Official Opening should take place at 2pm on Sunday 24 March 2024. Clerk to make arrangements regarding invitations, ordering the sign as previously agreed, releasing pre-agreed press release item and Chairman would contact a photographer in the village to see if they might be willing to take photos. Proposed S Wilkin, seconded Chairman
- ii) Phase 2 – Grantscape had approved the application for a grant of £14000, details including conditions had been circulated to Councillors.
- iii) Wicksteed site meeting – Phase 2. Chairman gave report of meeting on 9 February. Plan and costings for pull-up bar and chest press and pull down exerciser, together with grass mats for the pieces had been circulated upon receipt from Wicksteed earlier in the day. Project budget report had been previously circulated to Councillors for review.
Resolved to place purchase order with Wicksteed for the above two items with mats. Equipment colour green with beige as per images. £4304.13 plus VAT. Purchase order for replacement swing seats and safety surfacing, and Skier, Surfer and Cycle Bike, as per quote and images, £12,758.92 plus VAT, also now to be placed. Proposed S Wilkin, seconded K Mackender and unanimously agreed.

Clerk

Chairman

Clerk

24/029 **Annual Parish Meeting 2024**

Originally scheduled for 24 April, this date was now not suited for everyone.
Resolved that the date be re-set to Wednesday 15 May 2024, 7.30pm in the Village Hall. Clerk to organise agenda, notices and invites as discussed.
Proposed L Holdaway, seconded Chairman.

Clerk

24/030 **Planning Applications and Tree Works:**

<https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/planning/current-planning-applications>

M Housden had declared an interest as a neighbour although he had not been included for consultation by the District Council Planning Department.

24/00129/FUL 8 The Slade Construction of timber workshop

Resolved that the Council had no concerns. Proposed K Mackender, seconded L Holdaway. M Housden abstained.

The following was noted:

24/00072/TRE Recreation Ground, Maintenance Tree Works:

T1 Prunus - Crown lift to 2 meters; T2 Ash- Reduce Northern lower crown spread by 2.5 meters, reduce Southern lower crown spread by 2 meters, clear BT lines by 0.5 meters; T3 Rowan - Formatively prune and crown lift to 2 meters; T4 Hornbeam - Crown lift to 3.5 meters over grass; T5 Norway Maple - Crown lift over recreation ground to 3 meters, reduce back from roadway by 1.5 meters; T9 Cherry - Crown lift to 4 meters and remove dead wood; T10 Maple - Crown lift to 3.5 meters; T11 Maple - Remove lowest lateral limb over recreation ground, remove dead wood; T12 Cherry - Crown lift to 4 meters and remove dead wood; T14 Prunus - Crown lift to 3.5 meters; T15 Rowan- Formatively prune; T16 Maple - Crown lift to 5.5 meters over road way and 4 meters over grass

24/031 **Parish Councillor Vacancy – Co-option**

Application had been previously circulated and the candidate had attended and spoken under Public Participation above. Secret ballot was carried out.

Clerk counted the votes and reported that it was a unanimous vote to co-opt Mr G Byrne to the Parish Council to fill the vacancy following 2023 elections.

Clerk to write to Mr Byrne and make the necessary arrangements for him to attend the next meeting.

Clerk

24/032 **Witchford Neighbourhood Plan**

Single Issue Review (Climate Change) Regulation 14. Noted and no comment to make.

24/033 **2024 Witcham Best Kept Gardens**

Deferred to next meeting as councillor who normally helped organise visits with judges was not present.

March Agenda

24/034 **Priors Field GP Surgery – NHS Cambs and Peterborough Integrated Care System**

Noted that the existing building was to be purchased and retrofit carried out.

24/035 **Highways and Street Lighting Matters**

- a) **Streetlight** that had previously been removed for Anglian Water works and reinstalled, was now reconnected and lighting up at night – noted.
- b) **2024-280 Proposed TTRO Temporary Prohibition of Through Traffic Order** The Slade 13/03/24 to 30/10/24. Footway slurry sealing and associated works.
Noted CCC had now made the Order and it would come into operation on 13 March 2024 and continue until works finished or on 12 September 2025 whichever is the earlier.

24/035 **Highways and Streetlighting Matters (cont)**

- c) **Drove Management** - Further correspondence received from landowner reiterating that the Parish Council should be making the submission in respect of rolling over the existing Byway Management Plan. Clerk had also received enquiry from a resident asking if the TPO (E/01/12) Bury Road was still in place since the Byway Management Plan expired in December 2023. Clerk advised she was awaiting advice from the Tree Officer to clarify the situation.
- d) **Byway 12 Wardy Hill Road** – CCC Surface repair Plans. Noted the Rights of Way Officer would contact adjacent landowners well before works commence in the summer.
- e) **Speed data for December** – Chairman had circulated the monthly information – noted.
- f) **Speedwatch sessions.** S Wilkin said the 3 volunteers from the Equestrian Centre were happy to work with the Area Co-ordinator for training and getting sessions established. Agreed to defer to next meeting.

*Clerk**March
Agenda*24/036 **Correspondence**

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

CAPALC Procurement guidance and newsletters
 CAPALC Training courses for Councillors and Clerks - bookings
 CCC Care Together volunteer recruitment - hearing
www.cambridgeshirehearinghelp.org.uk
 CCC Adventures Away from Home Fund - Grafham Water Centre – disadvantaged children Jan-Mar
 CCC Highway Events
 CCC 'Be Winterwise'
 CCC Budget Seminar for Town and Parish Councils 11th January - meeting recording
 TMC Incident Report January 2024
 Combined Authority Corporate Plan, Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan
<https://cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/yoursayyourfuture/>
 ECDC Lakeside Bereavement Centre Plan, Iretons Way, Mepal – crematorium, natural burial area and pet cemetery
 ECDC Press releases: Council helps fund multi-adapted gym in Littleport, illegal fires, Silver Investors in Environment accreditation, Save money during Energy Saving Week
 ECDC CPCA EV & EV Charging webinars - An Introduction for Councillors
 ECDC Minutes Finance and Assets and Planning meetings
 ECDC Hate Crime 3rd Party reporting Centres
 NALC Bulletins, newsletters, Chief Executive
 Cambs ACRE newsletter
 Cambs ACRE Social Enterprise Venture information

24/037 **Date of next meetings:**

13 March 2024
 10 April 2024
 8 May 2024
 Annual Parish Meeting – 15 May 2024

Review Actions – omitted.

Meeting closed at 9.35pm

Schedule of Receipts and Payments

	£	£	£
Receipts:			
UKPN Wayleave (Recreation Ground)	3.23		3.23
UKPN Arrears Lease	33.69		33.69
Cambridgeshire Community Foundation (Thalia)	39800.00		39800.00
Payments:			
002117 Truelink (Dec)	80.00	16.00	
Truelink (Jan)	80.00	16.00	192.00
002118 TEEC Host & .gov domain fee	216.00	43.20	259.20
002119/20 Salary expenses	1114.36		1114.36
002121 CAPALC Councillor/Clerk training	140.00		140.00
d/d IONOS Dec – 4 Jan	2.62	0.52	3.14
c/p MS online services – 7 licences emails	31.50	6.30	37.80
c/p RS Memorials Headstone Insp	80.00	16.00	96.00

Clerk confirmed release of the following payments, as agreed at January meeting.

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
Balance (confirmed on statement)	40958.90	8191.78	49150.68

Signed..... Dated