

WITCHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 8 March 2023 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall, Witcham

Present: M Housden (Chairman), J Bibby, S Wilkin

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

23/036 **Apologies for absence**

Apologies had been received and were accepted from J Lucas (family commitment) and L Holdaway (sick)
Absent – K Mackender

23/037 **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

23/038 **Dispensations**

To note any new Dispensations granted: Nil

23/039 **Reports from District and County Councillors**

The reports for March had been previously circulated and were noted.

The County and District Councillor L Dupré was invited by the Chairman to give an update regarding the closure of Priors Field Surgery at Sutton which she did, including the outcome of her meetings with NHS England, Chief Executive of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Integrated Care System (ICS) and the Patient Participation Group.

7.35pm District Councillor M Inskip arrived and apologised for being late, which was due to snow hindering his journey home.

The Public meetings (face to face and on-line) had been very well attended and further sessions were organised for 9 March. Two local MPs and Leader of ECDC had attended meetings. Initially an announcement had been made that the surgery would close on 31 March 2023, the Fenland Group having ended the contract to provide services for Sutton. Since November they had been looking at options. The patients, nearly 6000, would be transferred to others within the group at Manea, Wimblington, Doddington and Ramsey and some to Haddenham and Ely. If people were unhappy with their designated surgery they were free to apply to other surgeries after 1 April 2023. Letters were being despatched to patients this week. However, other options to find GPs and take over the lease of the building were still being examined by NHS England and ICS. Alternative locations for a surgery in the village in the future were also being investigated. There was deep concern for many patients, not least because for those without cars there was no bus service to many of the proposed surgeries. Even the bus service to Haddenham and Ely were inadequate for patients in need of medical services. The petition had so far raised 2100 signatures and some paper copies which would be presented at the meeting the next day. Sutton Mepal and Witcham Parish Councils were

23/039 **Reports from District and County Councillors** (cont)

working together to give support and Sutton had invited those local surgeries affected by the influx of new patients to consider signing the petition. Sutton was also applying for registration of the building as a Community Value Asset. Efforts were being made to ensure primary health care would remain available in the village albeit the model for medical services were changing nationally.

8.05pm The County and District Councillors left the room and the meeting resumed. District Councillor M Inskip would return for item 22/043

23/040 **Public Participation**

There were no members of the public present.

23/041 **Minutes**

Minutes of the Meeting of 8 February 2023. The Minutes were deferred to the next meeting as there was not a quorate number of members present who had attended this February meeting.

23/042 **Matters Arising**

There were no Matters Arising other than items appearing as Agenda Items. The Clerk apologised that some tasks such as Annual Report, Policies, further year-end work and application to move MVAS camera at The Slade had not been completed due to other work taking her time.

23/043 **Priors Field Surgery – Serving Sutton and Surrounding Villages**

There was discussion about what steps the Council could take to support patients affected by closure of the surgery. Clerk outlined actions the Mepal and Sutton Parish Council's had undertaken and advised she had placed a notice on the Council's website and left petition forms at the bus shelter for people to complete and return to District Councillor L Dupré. The content for a letter to go to S Barclay MP and NHS England was discussed.

8.11pm Chairman welcomed District Councillor M Inskip back to the meeting and explained the Council would be writing to MPs and NHS England. There was further discussion and District Councillor M Inskip left the meeting shortly afterwards. The meeting resumed.

Resolved to despatch letter to S Barclay MP and NHS England as discussed and to report to Sutton and Mepal Parish Councils. Proposed M Housden, seconded J Bibby.

Clerk

23/044 **Neighbourhood Plan**

Minutes of the working party's meeting held 28 February 2023 were awaited but Chairman gave summary of some preliminary drafted notes he had received as he had been unable to attend the meeting.

The compilation and circulation of the survey was most important to get completed, together with setting up the online meeting and visit by the Locality Design Codes Support Team. Confirmation that the application for support for this stage of the project had been successful had been circulated.

Resolved to ask the Chairman of the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group to meet some Councillors in the next week or two to discuss how things were going. Proposed S Wilkin, seconded Chairman.

Clerk

23/045 **2023 Annual Parish Meeting**

Clerk presented draft agenda and confirmed First Responders would attend. Chairman of Neighbourhood Plan Working Group already had a commitment that evening but Clerk would endeavour to get a report/find another member. M Housden gave his apologies as it clashed with personal family commitment. Confirmed K Mackender, Vice-Chairman of Council be asked to Chair the meeting. Invitations had been sent to village organisations/clubs and preliminary notice given in the newsletter and website. Clerk to contact What's On editor.

Clerk

23/046 **Recreation Ground and Cemetery Matters**

- a) **Weekly inspections** of recreation ground and play equipment had been completed by the Chairman and he had advised there were no issues to raise.
- b) **Play and Fitness**
Clerk had submitted the application to Amey for £39,800, having split the project into two phases as requested; details previously circulated, and new quotes from Wicksteed for split installation had been received and circulated.
Other sources of grants had been explored and there was a closing date for application to the Mick George Community Fund of August 2023 with decision for October. To be discussed further when more councillors present.
- c) **Grasscutting Contract**
No further updates at present.
- d) **Use of recreation ground by cricket teams for 2023 season**
Chairman said City of Ely Cricket Club had held their Annual General Meeting and further details about use of Witcham recreation ground was awaited. The dates for the 3rd team had been confirmed. Details regarding midweek matches for Witcham Cricket Club (Kirkland) was expected later this month.
- e) **Applications for use of recreation ground**
Email from resident regarding hire of village hall for wedding and access to public facilities on recreation ground received.
Resolved that Clerk despatch drafted response. Proposed J Bibby, seconded Chairman
- f) **Keep Britain Tidy – 2023 Spring Litterpick campaign**
Village co-ordinator had advised that she had contacted ECDC for equipment and litterpick planned for 23 March 2023
- g) **Cemetery Matters**
Clerk advised there was nothing further to report

Working party

Clerk

23/047 **Finance & Admin Matters**

- a) **Receipts and Payments** schedule March 2023 had been circulated. Documentation had been checked by J Bibby. Clerk had listed other payments expected to be made to 31 March 2023 and sought agreement that they be made so as to be included in this year's accounts. She also presented the invoice from Places4People – Consultants Neighbourhood Plan, which had arrived earlier in the afternoon.
Resolved to approve the receipts and payments for March 2023 and release cheques. (Listed at foot of Minutes) Proposed S Wilkin, seconded J Bibby
Resolved that Clerk arrange for payment of expected invoices to complete year-end accounts and report at April meeting in accordance with Finance Regulations. Payment of the Places4People invoice was approved. Proposed J Bibby, seconded M Housden.

Clerk

Clerk

- 23/047 **Finance and Admin Matters (cont)**
- b) **RSPB Lease**
 Clerk advised that new contact had been established and new Lease document had gone to their legal team. However they were suggesting starting the new agreement from 1 April 2023 rather than April 2022 which would shift date of rent reviews too.
Resolved that the agreement should commence 1 April 2022 and terms regarding rent reviews and starting rent to be as previously set out. Proposed Chairman, seconded S Wilkin. *Clerk*
- c) **Savings Accounts**
 Clerk advised that after a number of phone calls and somewhat protracted process, applications for the two accounts had been submitted for the new savings products. Lloyds had been overwhelmed with investment applications and final confirmation could not be expected for about 8 weeks. Investment date would commence from date of submission of the applications. *Clerk*
- d) **2022/23 Annual Report.**
 Clerk had yet to finish document but had some quotes which were discussed.
Resolved that the Clerk proceed with finalising document before next meeting to issue as a draft to Councillors for proof-reading and to get further quote for printing on A3 to make an A4 booklet. The Council approved Clerk arrange for printing up to maximum £200. Proposed J Bibby, seconded S Wilkin. *Clerk*
- 23/048 **Consultations (all items previously circulated)**
 The following had been circulated for comment and submissions:
- a) CCC Validation List - proposed draft revised guidance document which provides the full validation requirements and guidance.
Resolved that the Council had no comment to make. Proposed J Bibby, seconded S Wilkin *Clerk*
- b) Examination of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan – Single Issue Review - Notice of Hearings - 28 March 2023 – any further submissions due by 17 March 2023.
Resolved that the Council had no comment to make. Proposed S Wilkin, seconded J Bibby *Clerk*
- c) Mepal Neighbourhood Plan – Draft – Statutory Consultation
Resolved to thank Mepal Parish Council for keeping Witcham informed and that there were no comments for submission.
 Proposed Chairman, seconded S Wilkin *Clerk*
- 23/049 **Best Kept Garden Competition**
 J Bibby would contact judge to set up dates for the visits during June. Clerk to put up posters once dates known. She confirmed a notice had gone in the last newsletter. Clerk to get costs for trophies and ask for details to be included in “What’s On”. *JB*
Clerk
- 23/050 **Highways and Street Lighting Matters**
- a) Items to bring to attention of the Highways Authority. J Bibby advised that there were bad potholes and breaking up of road surface at Hive Road. Clerk to log on CCC ‘Report It’ website.
 Clerk reported on byways that had had vegetation cut back on Bury Road, along catchwater to Hive Road via model aircraft field. Horseriders had confirmed the maintenance works had improved passing along overgrown sections on some of the droves for them. Some collapse of brickwork on bridges over the catchwater into fields etc which Clerk would flag with CCC. *Clerk*
 The Management Plan for Bury Road had been circulated to Councillors before the meeting in readiness for review before the new *All*

23/050 **Highways and Street Lighting Matters** (cont)

plan needed to be established later in the year. There were no questions. Correspondence from owner in TPO area of Bury Road was received. Council would await further details once the review for the new plan was instigated by owners and third parties.

- b) The Chairman had circulated the latest speed data for February and noted there had been some decrease in top speeds over the period. Application to move MVAS equipment to a pole further down The Slade as previously discussed was still outstanding.

Clerk

Clerk had received an expression of interest from a resident and

SW
Clerk

S Wilkin said she had details of 3 interested people and she would get them to contact the Clerk so details could be passed on to the co-ordinator. Clerk to also ask co-ordinator if they would like to do a piece at the Annual Parish Meeting.

At this point it was realised there was further information to report under Agenda Item 23/046a) – Recreation Ground regarding new seat. The Chairman asked if members would return to this item and this was agreed by all.

Recreation Ground and Cemetery Matters

J Bibby confirmed that the Village Hall was offering a new seat to place on the recreation ground on the newly raised area at the entrance. The Village Hall Chairman had suggested this earlier and would now order if the Council was agreeable. The Council was being asked to pay for erection of concrete pad to fix the seat to, estimated cost £450 (excl VAT). (as per arrangement for two seats that had been installed in 2022) It was suggested it be accepted as a commemoration to the Coronation of King Charles III, 6 May 2023.

Resolved to accept the seat for placing on recreation ground at roadway entrance. Proposed S Wilkin, seconded Chairman.

- 23/046 **Resolved** that the Council would meet the cost of concrete pad/installation in time for the Coronation (delegated to Clerk to maximum £500) and to enquire if a Coronation plaque could be added to the seat, which if necessary the Council could meet the cost. To be taken from the 2023/24 budget for Grounds equipment and repairs of £1000. Proposed Chairman, seconded S Wilkin.

Clerk

The Chair moved back to the order of the Agenda, Agenda Item 23/051

23/051 **Correspondence**

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

Changes to procurement thresholds and VAT on sports fees effective immediately

Cambridgeshire ACRE - Rural Affordable Housing Partnership Offer of Service

ECDC Arrangements for Coronation King Charles III Saturday 6 May 2023

ECDC Council Tax 10th year - freeze

East Cambs Trading Company update

ECDC Cost of Living Help and mobile bus refurbishment

Cambridgeshire Home Energy Support Service (CHESS) (PECT events)

Great British Spring Clean 2023

CAPALC Councillor Training – 15 July Sutton, 30 September Somersham

Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Parks Partnership Healthier Parks, Healthier

Planet, Healthier People: an introduction. 14 March 2023

NALC and CAPALC Newsletters, Events and Bulletins

CCC 20mph scheme

TMC Incident Report

23/051 **Correspondence** (cont)

Cambridgeshire Community Fund applications programme
 Youth Activities – The Hive Ely, weekly sports: www.livingsport.co.uk
 Community Safety Partnership Chief Inspector Paul Rogerson 13 March 2023
 Buckingham Palace Garden Parties
 Arthur Rank Hospice Charity – Arthurs Shed - Events
 HMRC Bulletin
 ECDC Electric Vehicle charge points in district council car parks Barton Road, Newnham Street Ely, and Clay Street Soham
 ECDC Accessible Changing Places toilets – Government Grant. The Lighthouse Centre, Ely, the public toilets in Fountain Lane, Soham and Littleport Youth and Community Centre – special hoist and a changing bench for people with profound and multiple physical and learning disabilities, spinal injuries and people living with stroke.

The following had also recently been circulated
 East Cambs Community Meetings 2023
 CCC Neighbourhood Policing Community Meeting 4 April 2023
 ECDC Newsletter from Leader of the Council
 CCC Road Surface Treatment Programme
 East Cambs Youth Webpages (to be posted up)
 TMC Incident Report
 Employers' Pensions Newsletter
 ECDC Press Release – Older People Encouraged to Plan for New Elections
 ECDC Soham toilets closure and election updates
 Environment Agency – Ouse Washes update

23/052 **Date of next meeting:** 12 April 2023

Review Actions – omitted. Meeting closed at 1010pm

Schedule of Receipts and Payments

		£	£	£
Receipts:	Nil			
Payments	002044 Village Hall hire (Council)	320.00		320.00
	002045 Clerks salary (Mar)	379.06		379.06
	002046 LGPS	135.39		135.39
	002047 HMRC	284.40		284.40
	002048 Reimburse What's On printing for Jan and Feb	73.58		73.58
	002049 Truelink (Feb)	62.40	12.48	74.88
	002051 Clerk Reimbursement exp Oct-Mar	179.76		179.76
	d/d ICO	40.00		40.00
	d/d IONOS (Feb)	22.03	4.41	26.44
	c/p MS online services – 7 licences emails (Feb)	31.50	6.30	37.80

Neighbourhood Plan Expenditure

002050	Village Hall hire Neighbourhood Plan Working Group (11 meetings June-March)	220.00		220.00
002052	Places4People Phase 1	3195.00	639.00	3834.00

Noted that MS online services Total £37.80 would be taken from the account on 19 March 2023.

Signed..... Dated