

WITCHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 8 November 2023 at 7.40pm in the Village Hall, Witcham

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

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

23/159 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received and accepted from L Holdaway (work commitments), and J Lucas (School Governors meeting).

Apologies also received from District Councillor M Inskip

23/160 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

23/161 Dispensations

To note any new Dispensations granted: Nil

23/162 Reports from District and County Councillors

County Councillor and District Councillor reports for November had been circulated and were noted.

Councillor L Dupré gave an update on complaints about TV reception and noise issues believed to be coming from the Elean Business Park, and advised she was conducting a survey and would feedback further in due course.

Complaints picked up on Facebook included allegations of smell nuisance too.

There was some discussion about East Cambs Street Scene work and letter from Mr Hill regarding waste services, previously circulated to Councillors.

Councillor L Dupré also reported on the Quality of Life survey and said this had provided interesting information, in particular the age groups impacted by loneliness.

7.50pm Councillor Dupré was thanked and she left the meeting

23/163 Public Participation

There were no members of the public present.

23/164 Minutes

Minutes of the Meeting of 11 October 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 Chairman, seconded S Wilkin

23/165 Matters Arising

23/148/23/138c External Auditor's Report – Assertion 3 AGAR 2023/4 – Noted it follows that all written communication relating to Council business should be conducted via the Council's email system rather than any personal communication systems.

ALL

23/137c Village Speedwatch – Clerk asked S Wilkin if the volunteers from the Equestrian Centre were happy to proceed with carrying out speed checks and

SW

23/165 **Matters Arising** (cont)

undertake training via area co-ordinator rather than waiting for appointment of village co-ordinator. She would chase up. It was noted that now the peak times for speeding were during hours of darkness it was difficult to carry out speedchecks. Chairman advised that he had collected the apparatus and put it on charge, and all appeared to be well. Clerk was trying to establish ownership of the apparatus – whether shared with other villages.

23/166 **Finance & General Administration**a) **Approval Councillor Training**

Resolved to approve refresher training on weekly play inspections for Chairman, April 2024 at a cost of £20. Proposed K Mackender, seconded S Wilkin.

Clerk

b) **Receipts and Payments**

November 2023 schedule had been circulated and additional items subsequently received, ie Reimburse What's On Editor, Cartridgesave and Truelink, all added. Documentation checked by Chairman

Resolved to approve the receipts and payments for November 2023, including emergency expenditure made by Clerk in consultation with Chairman £444 excl VAT, and release cheques. Proposed K Mackender, seconded S Wilkin.

Clerk

Resolved to approve that urgent payments due before January 2024 meeting, including Truelink, salary expenses and play project should be made and reported at January meeting in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations. Proposed Chairman, seconded S Wilkin

Clerk

c) **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 23/166d) to 23/166f) 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 Chairman and agreed.

There were no members of the public present

d) **RSPB Lease Ouse Washes.**

Update from legal adviser noted.

e) **Roadway to Village Hall across Recreation Ground.**

Council to include item in 2024/5 budget to consider getting advice/new document.

f) **Clerk's hours**

Report of hours worked since April 2023 had been circulated. The temporary period of increased hours had ended and the Clerk confirmed she would prefer to keep her hours down to the original contracted 32 hours per month. From the summary it was estimated normal months were averaging about 45 hours per month. Some of the projects were nearing completion so it was hoped hours could be reduced. K Mackender suggested including item on the January agenda so that Councillors could assess on a risk basis, the Clerk's tasks to see if there were any areas of work that were not linked directly with matters pertaining to Witcham Parish Council business and the village specifically, which could be eliminated, and this was agreed.

23/166 **Finance & General Administration (cont)**g) **2024/5 Budget and Precept**

The Clerk had prepared draft and included all items submitted by members, together with notes and list of earmarked reserves. She had also prepared and previously circulated mid-quarter reconciliations and predicted cashflow, play project projections and Neighbourhood Plan budget monitoring report. Predicted salary budget revealed overspend of approximately £2500 which she suggested members should consider making a virement from general reserves to cover during current year.

Councillors reviewed the proposals for the 2024/5 Budget and Precept and made amendments to reduce spending and review some of the reserves: Training reduce to £45, Poll administration (next schedule election 2027) reduce to £250, reduce estimate/budget for bus shelter repairs and decoration from £1000 to £800 by getting painting done by volunteer. Utilise some of the MVAS reserves for new equipment (£898) (previously held to cover new batteries and maintenance costs for existing apparatus). Amend Neighbourhood Plan predicted overspend of £2771 by splitting over two financial years, being £1200 (including £150 for additional printing and refreshments for consultation processes) for 2024/5 and balance to go in 2025/6. This would bring the Precept in at approximately £18500, an increase of £2000 on the previous year. (12%). Noted, last year's budget and the Precept underestimated as it had been set some 6 months before April 2023 and subsequent inflation and increased work for Clerk during this time. Precept was always prudently set and in other years this had been held at around £500 per year (a difference of £2-3 per annum on Band D) **Resolved** that the estimated Precept for 2024/5 would be £18500 and Clerk to adjust draft budget as discussed in this meeting. Proposed K Mackender, seconded S Wilkin.
To be reviewed and final figures agreed at January meeting.

23/167 **Recreation Ground 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 this was still in the hands of Wicksteed. Noted that the old trim trail pieces on the High Street side had already been removed by Wicksteed contractors when carrying out phase 1 works. Notices had been posted up explaining delay in making new equipment available for use.

b) **Play Project, Phases 1 and 2**

Emails from Wicksteed had been circulated to Councillors following negotiations by lead of the working party.

Resolved that L Holdaway be instructed to accept the proposals offered by Wicksteed to replace fencing with blue powder coated fencing matching RAL colour with the blue on the new equipment and the installation of 'mat' for train. Also to insist on details of timescales in order the Parish Council can arrange the official opening and get signs done, and receipt of post-installation safety inspection after fencing items installed. Wicksteed to be informed all these works to be completed by 30 November 2023. Proposed Chairman, seconded K Mackender.

The new equipment would remain locked until after final safety checks and the official opening.

LH

23/167 **Recreation Ground and Cemetery Matters (cont)**

Report by Clerk regarding conditions for Thalia grant in respect of acknowledgement etc, previously circulated was considered. There was discussion about arrangements for official opening, potentially 16 December, and wording for the signs for phase 1 and publicity text acknowledging the grant and work from Thalia via the Cambridgeshire Community Foundation. Estimate for cost of signs received. Clerk to proceed with arrangements for the opening, publicity, etc in liaison with the working party members.

ALL

Clerk

Resolved to approve the content for the signs and publicity text as amended. Proposed Chairman, seconded S Wilkin.

Clerk

Resolved to approve that the Clerk place the order for the signs for the fence, phase 1 as per estimate. Proposed Chairman, seconded S Wilkin.

Clerk

Agreed that Clerk to contact Cambridgeshire Community Foundation to progress claiming of grant and revised figures, and to make the payment to Wicksteed on receipt of the grant as discussed.

Clerk

Clerk presented details for insuring new equipment, including value of old equipment. Adjustment required, including retention of some old equipment until phase 2 completed. To be finalised for when phase 1 completed and taken over by the Council

Working
Party

Phase 2 – Clerk had circulated confirmation by Grantscape of the offer of the grant for refurbishment of older children's play equipment, installation of fitness equipment and replacement goals.

Clerk

23/168 **Planning Applications and Tree Works**

The following ECDC decisions were noted:

23/00868/VAR Land South West Of Ely Model Aircraft Club Hive Road To Vary Condition 4 (use of building) of previously approved 22/00163/FUL for Proposed agricultural barn open fronted to store straw size 27 mtr x 8.7 mtr – Approved.

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) – Approved.

23/169 **Neighbourhood Plan**

- a) Reports and recommendations to Council from Neighbourhood Plan Working Group (NPWG). Chairman had attended the last meeting of the NPWG and the Minutes had been circulated to everyone. The Group were busy reviewing the Design Code and now had some information from the survey to work on.
- b) Recommendation from Neighbourhood Plan Working Group Lead and Consultant in respect of application for further Locality funding for next stages of Neighbourhood Plan: The Lead requested budget of £150 from Parish Council to cover costs of printing and refreshments for drop in event in coming months. An email forwarded by the Lead on 7 November advised that the Consultant suggested the Group could probably get the Plan ready for consultation by the end of this financial year. There was general information but not specific and set within monthly timeframes with completion dates.

Resolved that a response should be sent advising that there had not been time to consider the matter fully and in any case the Working Group needed to decide, and recommend to Council, what its members

Clerk

23/169 **Neighbourhood Plan (cont)**

will complete before 31 March 2024, and work out costs with Consultant before the Council could sign and submit an application on behalf of the Group for further grant monies. Proposed K Mackender, seconded S Wilkin.

23/170 **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. However, the lamp that had been removed in order to carry out this work had not yet been returned. Clerk to follow-up. Noted that the Chairman had reported blocked drains in The Slade. Also noted that a report of moss on the footway in High Street, which posed a slip risk for pedestrians, had been cleaned away earlier in the day by Highways contractors.
- b) **Speed data for October** - Chairman had circulated the monthly information – noted.
Update on Speedwatch sessions and collection of equipment, noted under Matters Arising above.

Clerk

23/171 **Consultations**

Definitive Map Modification Order to upgrade public footpaths in Mepal and Witcham to bridleways on the Definitive Map and Statement for Cambridgeshire:

M080 LH – an application to upgrade Public Footpath No. 10, Mepal to a bridleway (points 1-2-3) on the route marked in blue on the plan reference M080).

M081 LH – an application to upgrade Public Footpath No. 9, Mepal and Public Footpath No. 9, Witcham to a bridleway (points 4-9 on the route marked in red on the plan reference M081).

Resolved that the Council supported these applications to upgrade the footpaths to bridleways. Proposed S Wilkin, seconded K Mackender

Clerk

23/172 **Correspondence**

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

ECDC Planning Briefing event for Parish Councils, 29 November 2023, 2pm to 4pm on 29th November in the ECDC Council Chamber – J Lucas attending, other Councillors working and therefore not available.

JL

ECDC Rough Sleeper estimate 23/24 November 2023 – Councillors to inform Clerk if any seen.

ALL

East Cambs District Council Local Plan 2015– amendment adopted October 2023 – Policy GROWTH1 <https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/local-development-framework/east-cambridgeshire-local-plan-2015-amended-2023>.

ALL

CAPALC Bulletins and training courses for Councillors

ALL

East Cambs Parish Council Conference 27 October 2023

East Cambs Road Safety Volunteer Scheme – new safety officer

East Cambs Street Scene (ECSS) changes staff and working practices for waste

ECDC Press Releases – climate change (29th of 164 District Councils – for combatting climate change); hedgehogs, and newsletters

ECDC Hate Crime – 3rd party reporting centres

ECDC Warm Hub Funding scheme

NPCC October Campaign 16-29 October National Speed Operation

CCC New Fall Prevention tool

CCC 2023/4 Highway Improvement Scheme

Cambs ACRE – staying in touch

NALC Legal updates, Bulletins and Events

Arthurs Sheds – events

23/172 **Correspondence** (cont)

Other pieces circulated in last week:

East Cambs Parish and Community Forum 15 November, 2pm on-line.

East Cambs Climate Action Network – 16 November 2023 6.30-8pm, Prosper Café Ely

CAPALC Newsletter and information for Annual General Meeting 14

MH

December 2023 at 7-9pm online

LHI Q&A session 9 November 2023 2.30-4pm and 5 January 2024 10.30 – 12noon

ECDC Pride of Place and Parish Nature Recovery Plan

Environment Agency Ouse bank works update

TMC Incident Reports

Neighbourhood Watch – Countywide Dispersal – car meets

ECDC Operational Services and Finance Committee meetings

Notice from landuser – PROW - access gates locked Wydens (off Hive Road) (they will take up with CCC)

Clerk also reported on Mepal Neighbourhood Plan and the invite for the Council to comment during the current consultation phase. This had missed the deadline for inclusion on November agenda. Clerk to advise that notice too short and need longer to consider and comment on.

23/173 **Date of next meeting:** Subject to there being no urgent business such as planning applications, the next meeting will take place on 10 January 2024.

Agenda to include provision for Head of Planning to attend

Review Actions – omitted.

Meeting closed at 10.10pm

Schedule of Receipts and Payments

		£	£	£
Receipts:	Ely City Cricket Donation/Recreation Ground	400.00		400.00
	ECDC Cil (2 properties)	2072.04		2072.04
Payments:	002099 K&M Lighting	22.05	4.41	26.46
	002100/1 Salary expenses	851.61		851.61
	002102 Cottenham Computers	444.00	88.80	532.80
	002103 What's On Editor, reimburse printing	38.09	1.20	39.29
	002104 Cartridgesave	47.60	9.52	57.12
	002105 Truelink	272.40	54.48)	
	" Truelink	195.00	39.00)	560.88
	d/d IONOS	29.06	5.81	34.87
	c/p MS online services – 7 licences emails	31.50	6.30	37.80

Signed..... Dated