

WITCHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 9 November 2022 at 7.34pm in the Village Hall, Witcham

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

In attendance Mrs S J Bell (Clerk)
M Inskip District Councillor
1 member of the public

22/193 **Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received and accepted from L Holdaway (work commitment)
J Lucas (ill).

Apologies also received from County and District Councillor L Dupré who had other work commitments.

22/194 **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 – M Housden Planning Item 22/200: Kings Development, The Slade

22/195 **Dispensations**

To note any new Dispensations granted: Nil

22/196 **Public Participation**

7.38 The Chairman opened the meeting to the public.

The member of the public was attending to get clarification and find out more about proposed works by the County Council in respect of cutting back vegetation/hedges/trees on the droves, He was concerned about the droves being cut back too hard.

Clerk reported:

Byway 10 (off Hive Road), which had become quite badly overgrown, would be cut by hand mostly from ditch to ditch during winter months.

Byway 11 – the section on Back Lane would be cleared to the ditch on south side and up to 2m of bramble/blackthorn cleared back on the north side early November; section on Bury Road, between Brickyards and the TRO gate would be cleared to the ditch on the north side and up to 2m of bramble/ blackthorn cleared back on the south side early November. A third section, at the eastern end, which falls within TPO area, works to be carried out by hand cutting back only the surface regrowth from clearance 3 years ago, 1m either side of existing accessible width, which was predominately blackthorn and bramble, overhanging branches cut back to a height of 4m. Works planned for later during winter. Noted this third section had been submitted as an application to ECDC Tree Officer for consent. Application 22/01222/TPO refers.

These works were necessary in order to ensure safe passage for pedestrians, horseriders and vehicles in accordance with the statutory status of the drove. Public Byway Open to All Traffic.

Clerk confirmed complaints about droves had been logged on County Council Report It website after concerns for horseriders and tractors/farm machinery struggling to get through in early Autumn. As part of the problem area

22/196 **Public Participation** (cont)

included areas close to protected trees at the bottom end and a Management Plan was in operation until 2023, she had flagged with landowner concerned and had not yet received any response. She had also advised the Public Rights of Way Officer regarding problems in the past relating to drove maintenance by the County Council in this area.

The member of the public thanked the Council for the information and he was thanked for his interest and coming along to the meeting.

7.43 Vice-Chairman, K Mackender took the Chair.

M Housden reported that he had been approached by some residents in The Slade regarding a number of issues causing concern about works on the King's development site.

1. Drainage – concerns about future flooding in The Slade (already subject to occasional flooding) because developer had laid a road using concrete and the levels looked high, suggesting run-off from the estate would run down into the road whereas it was designed to be contained within the site and drain into tanking system underground.
2. The house that was to have been brick finish and another to be rendered had been swapped so breached planning consent.

Residents had advised they would contact ECDC direct and in the meantime as he was also a neighbour with concerns, he had written to ECDC on a personal basis. He had been advised by the planning department that once the new footway on The Slade was constructed the levels for drainage would work and the materials, including topped with pavers, was porous to feed into the tanking system and drain away through proper watercourses and not pool on the highway/nearby properties. Planning Officer had also spoken to developer regarding external house finishes and it was left for developer to decide what to do to correct. Therefore necessary to reassess in time. Clerk had been sent copy correspondence between M Housden and Planning Officer.

7.47pm M Housden returned to the Chair and the meeting closed to the public.

22/197 **Minutes**

J Bibby proposed, M Housden seconded, that Minutes of the Meeting of 12 October 2022 be confirmed as a true record and be signed by the Chairman, and the agenda of the same date be signed by the Chairman as confirmation of the business transacted at that meeting. S Wilkin and K Mackender were not at this meeting. Inquorate.

For Jan agenda

22/198 **Matters Arising**

The Clerk had provided an update as follows in the Clerk's Report:

22/179, 22/163, 22/130 & 22/115c) Recreation Ground - information still awaited from Witcham Cricket Club. Chairman had chased with Treasurer who would remind Secretary (6.11.22).

22/179, 22/171 Streetlights and Highways: PROW officer had contacted owners regarding boundary encroachment and laurel bush in front of dog bin, and he was to be informed if remedial action was not taken in due course.

22/182 Annual Village Inspection: Damaged bins around recreation ground. ECDC had advised they would replace the one by the bus stop and undertake maintenance for the ones near village hall and path on to High Street. Faded dog bin signs would be replaced with new.

Noted that the ditch on the Mepal side of the cemetery had now been cleared out on the farmers side, including extensive hedgeworks. Confirmed that Clerk should thank landowner.

Clerk had obtained estimates and details of people who could carry out inspection of headstones at cemetery, previously circulated. (Costs for including in 2023/4 budget for 3-yearly inspection)

All

Clerk

22/198 **Matters Arising** (cont)

22/183 Finance and Admin: Clerk had provided details of interest rates on savings at the bank in the Clerk's Report for discussion under 22/203 Clerk had asked ECDC for review of CIL monies still outstanding and response was still awaited.

RSPB lease – the contact at RSPB had left and the new representative had suggested extending term under a Memorandum of Agreement and members confirmed a new lease should be prepared in accordance with the Heads of Terms of Reference as previously agreed.

Vice-Chairman would represent Council at the local Remembrance Service on Sunday and lay the wreath.

Response on draft Village Hall Car Park Licence awaited.

22/185 Play and Outdoor Fitness Refurbishment Project – Clerk's findings regarding advice from CAPALC and SLCC members in respect of Amey Community Fund administered by Cambridgeshire Community Fund was noted. See also Agenda Item 22/205.

22/190 Streetlights and Highways: Lamp opposite 14 Westway Place still not replaced. Light on bottom car park working but old bracket/leaning pole still not removed despite having received notification from Sanctuary Hereward that orders had been placed. Clerk had chased contact at Sanctuary Hereward who had chased contractor again.

22/191 Correspondence: Homelessness Survey – Councillors to report to Clerk if any rough sleepers seen in village for night of 17/18 November so she can make the return that week.

22/199 **Reports from District and County Councillors**

The reports for November had been previously circulated. As the District Council report had not been available to members until earlier in the day, a summary of the issues was offered by the District Councillor.

This covered updates on status of County Council bus issues and noted existing services now financially supported until 31 March 2023, including Zipper service and 39 service for journeys between Ely/Cambridge and Chatteris/March revisions.

He spoke about the provisions being considered by the Greater Cambridge Partnership to provide cheap travel within Cambridge and fringe villages. The Combined Authority was working on what could be arranged short and long term thereafter.

He explained about Civil Parking Enforcement Powers and the options the District Council had looked into with the Police, who now were so stretched that parking enforcement was low priority. Similarly provisions for options for moving traffic, eg lorries going through villages and a focus on dropping some 30mph speed limits down to 20mph.

A proposal had been pursued for zero rate to be applied to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, which was for people in financial hardship, currently 8.5% of Council Tax due on the property.

Planning – business case awaited now that crematorium at Mepal had been approved, and application for data centre at Elean Business Park (originally 2007/8) had come forward again.

8.15pm Chairman thanked M Inskip for the reports.

22/200 **Planning Applications and Tree Works:**

22/00976/TRE Recreation Ground Play Area, Martins Lane T1 Red Horse Chestnut – remove deadwood, raise crown to 2.5m from ground level reduce top by up to 1.5m and sides up to 2m; *T2 Horse Chestnut* – remove tree and stump due to poor health and structural condition; *T3 Horse Chestnut* – raise crown to 3m from ground level and reduce extended limb growing towards play equipment by 1m.

22/200 Planning Applications and Tree Works: (cont)

This was an application by the Parish Council in order to prepare the area for new play project and deal with longer term management of the trees and the safety of users.

22/01222/TPO The Bury Meadows, Bury Road Witcham A1 various – clear back the emerging surface vegetation 1m either side of the current clear usable surface (2m currently). This vegetation is primarily bramble and young blackthorn suckers. In order to enable safe use of the route by horse-riders any encroaching vegetation/branches within this clearance width will be cut back to a height of 4m

Clerk

Resolved that so long as the provisions of the TPO and consents are adhered to, the Council had no comment to make. Proposed K Mackender, seconded Chairman.

The following ECDC decision was noted:

22/0866/FUL 9 The Orchards Replacement double garage - Approved

8.24pm Vice-Chairman took the Chair for discussion on the issues raised under Public Participation regarding the King's development at The Slade. The Chair withdrew from discussion.

All

The issues raised were noted. Noted the issues had been assessed by the Planning Authority and assurance given that the road was alright. The Planning Authority was waiting to hear back from the developer on how he proposed to rectify the incorrect finishes on the said two houses. The Parish Council would monitor.

8.25pm M Housden returned to the Chair

22/201 Clerk's Report

Report, previously circulated, accepted. Items on updates covered in Matters Arising. Information for items on agenda to be taken under respective agenda item, principally 22/203 Finance – budgets, financial planning including CIL, 22/205 play project, 22/208 MVAS volunteers.

22/202 First Responders

Update regarding support for equipment for local First Responder team from Mepal Parish Council and Sutton Parish Council had been previously circulated.

Noted villagers at Mepal and the Witcham Equestrian Centre had undertaken fund-raising activities also.

After discussion K Mackender proposed that the £50 pledged earlier in the year should now be released. The team had attended the Annual Parish Meeting earlier in the year and there had been support for the Parish Council to make a contribution for this worthy work undertaken by volunteers, which benefitted the village community.

Resolved that the Council in accordance with its powers under Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972, should incur the following expenditure which, in the opinion of the Council is in the interests of the area or its inhabitants and will benefit them in a manner commensurate with the expenditure. To contribute £50 towards costs of additional equipment to assist the First Responders Team covering Witcham as per discussions at the beginning of the year and at the 2022 Annual Parish Meeting. Proposed by K Mackender, seconded by S Wilkin. No abstentions or votes against proposal.

Clerk

22/203 **Finance & Admin**

- a) The November 2022 schedule had been circulated. Clerk reported that as advised by email, two more invoices had been received since the schedule had been prepared and circulated with agenda papers: Truelink October £74.88 and K&M Lighting 21.80. Documentation had been checked by J Bibby.
Resolved to approve the receipts and payments for November 2022, and release cheques. (Listed at foot of Minutes).
 Proposed J Bibby, seconded S Wilkin. *Clerk*
- Resolved** that in the event of no planned meeting for December urgent payments and salary items would be paid and reported at the January meeting in accordance with the Council's Finance Regulations. Proposed Chairman, seconded J Bibby. *Clerk*
- b) Witcham Cricket Club grasscutting invoice. Noted that the Club had been unable to undertake grasscutting at recreation ground this season and had asked Mr Bibby to cut on their behalf. They therefore now requested that payment of £450 be made to him direct.
Resolved to pay Mr Bibby £450 for grasscutting for 2022 season, subject to receipt of invoice. Proposed Chairman, seconded S Wilkin.
- c) 2022 NJC National Salary Award. Details previously circulated.
Resolved to approve increase in Clerk's salary in line with the National Agreement including back-dated to 1 April 2022. Proposed K Mackender, seconded J Bibby.
- d) Grasscutting Contract. Details for new contract to start 1 March 2023 previously circulated was discussed and amended, including for arrangements for cutting recreation ground cricket outfield on a fortnightly basis. Contractors to submit tenders for consideration and decisions at meeting on 11 January 2023.
- e) Receipts and payments together with reconciliations for period July to September 2022 (circulated 12.10.22) considered. Original bank statements presented as confirmation of balances at the bank. Receipts to 30 September 2022 was £21353.40 (including the full year precept of £16,000, the CIL payment of £4016.54, and £1160.76 VAT reclaimed for previous year). Payments £8867.93. Total balance to carry forward £63,623.54, including all earmarked reserves.
Resolved to approve the receipts and payments and reconciliations to 30 September 2022. Proposed Chairman, seconded K Mackender.

9.07pm District Councillor M Inskip left the meeting.

- f) Draft workings for 2023/24 Budget and Precept had been prepared by the Clerk and previously circulated. Documents discussed including concerns about expiry on 31 March 2023 of Locality Grant for Neighbourhood Plan work; a review of CIL money; and other additional costs expected in 2023/24. Amendments made.
Resolved that the Council agreed the amended draft subject to receiving further information and discussion, and with a view to minimising any rise in the Precept when the Budget and Precept is finalised at the January meeting. Proposed Chairman, seconded K Mackender.
Resolved to use the remainder of the £2450 raised on the 2022/23 Precept for projects, ie £950, for the play project. Proposed K Mackender, seconded Chairman. (£1500 had already been vired to Neighbourhood Plan at previous meeting)

22/203 **Finance & Admin (cont)**

Resolved to vire £200 of the savings made on streetlighting budgets (brought about by the switch to LED system) to reserves for financing new replacement brackets/poles as and when required. Proposed J Bibby, seconded K Mackender. (Previous reserves had been used as part of the switch to LED).

Resolved to include the £955 for tree works in preparation for the new play equipment from the play budget. Proposed K Mackender, seconded Chairman.

9.30pm the member of the public left the meeting.

22/204 **Recreation Ground**

- a) Chairman had completed usual weekly inspections of recreation ground and play equipment, and said there was nothing to report.
- b) Chairman and J Bibby reported that some of the soil to create the banking adjacent roadway to village hall was in place but excessive wet weather had temporarily halted further progress. An interested resident had been out and made suggestions to help with developing the area. The Ginkgo Maidenhair tree selected at the previous meeting had now been found to be unsuitable since the females produced flowers and fruit at maturity of about 20 years which could be toxic for dogs. The supplier had advised that there was no way of knowing if a tree was male or female until it reached maturity to flower. There was further discussion about alternative species as recommended by Tree Officer. **Resolved** that J Bibby should contact the supplier to discuss ordering a Mountain Ash or similar; in the event of a Mountain Ash not being available she should select something similar within budget set at previous meeting and keep Councillors and Clerk informed so that delivery and planting could be expedited. Proposed K Mackender, seconded S Wilkin.

22/205 **Play and Outdoor Fitness Refurbishment Project**

Clerk reported on findings following contact with Cambridgeshire Community Fund (CCF) who administered the Amey Community Fund, and other parishes who had secured Amey grants. Councillors reviewed calculations for covering cost of the project. Supplier tender approx. £49785 plus VAT and inflation. Parish Council would provide some funding - £6047 and the CIL payment £4016 received this year, plus the 11% to release the Amey grant if successful.

Resolved to submit the Expression of Interest form for Amey grant of £40,000 plus £5,000 contingency with explanations as had been suggested by CCF. Proposed K Mackender, seconded J Bibby.

Clerk

Resolved that the Clerk should make arrangements to obtain letters of support as discussed. Proposed K Mackender, seconded J Bibby.

Clerk

22/206 **Neighbourhood Plan Working Party**

Report of October meeting, previously circulated, was noted. Additional meeting had been arranged for 16 November 2022 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall when a Consultant would give a presentation. All Councillors were invited to attend this meeting. K Mackender gave apologies due to work commitment.

All

22/207 **Consultations**

Noted comments were invited on the following:

- a) Anglian Water – new reservoirs in the East of England
www.anglianwater.co.uk/new-reservoirs
- b) Greater Cambridge Partnership Making Connections 2022 (Oct-Dec) <http://www.greatercambridge.org.uk/mc-2022>

All

22/208 MVAS – Speed Camera

The Chairman had circulated the latest speed data for October. The village speedwatch co-ordinator had advised that he had insufficient volunteers to carry out a speedwatch session. Interested persons needed to contact him and he would arrange training.

Correspondence from a resident enquiring about the speed data was noted. The resident had also been advised that volunteers were being sought to help the village co-ordinator carry out Speedwatch sessions.

Resolved that arrangements should be made for a note to go in the next “What’s On” seeking volunteers.

*Clerk/
What’s On*

22/209 Street Lights and Highways

No items were reported for bringing to the attention of the Highways Authority and it was noted that some vegetation had been cut back on both sides of Silver Street toward junction with The Slade and Martins Lane but there was a slight obstruction on Silver Street that would be dealt with by householder. Conifers in The Slade near the junction had been cut back hard as part of the process of installing the new footway serving the new houses on the King’s development site.

22/210 Correspondence

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

Employers Pension Forum Girton College 21 November 2022 and newsletter

ECDC Covid-related support provisions and contacts

ECDC Warm Hubs – new centres opening

ECDC Examination of Local Plan, Single Issue Review, submission updates

ECDC newsletter

Cambridgeshire ACRE newsletter, including Rural England Prosperity Fund in Cambridgeshire, Greater Cambridge Transport, Warm Hubs

CCC Cost of Living Events at Ely Library 27 October 2022

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority newsletters including

Ely Zipper bus service secured until March 2023

NALC newsletters, including 2023 Parish Council Elections

Circulated during past week was ECDC Facilities Improvement Grant information, NALC Chief Executive Bulletins and NALC Events, White Ribbon Day 25 November 2022, Cambs County Council Transport Management Team incident report and map, and training options, plus details for purchasing latest edition of the Charles Arnold Baker reference book

22/211 Date of next meeting: Subject to there being no planning applications or urgent business, the next scheduled meeting would be Wednesday 11 January 2023.

Review Actions – omitted

Meeting closed at 10.05pm

Schedule of Receipts and Payments

		£	£	£
Receipts:	Chatteris Co-operative Funeral Services (Landin)	170.00		170.00
Payments	002020 Truelink (Aug works – late invoice)	62.40	12.48	74.88
	002021 Clerks salary (Nov)	355.02		355.02
	002022 LGPS	126.75		126.75

Schedule of Receipts and Payments (cont)

002023	RBL Remembrance Sunday Wreath			
	Chairmans allowance	30.00		30.00
c/p	MS online services	31.50	6.30	37.80
D/D	Ionos	22.03	4.41	26.44
002024	Truelink Ltd (Oct)	62.40	12.48	74.88
002025	K&M Lighting (Nov-Apr)	18.17	3.63	21.80

Signed..... Dated