

ELSWORTH PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday September 20th 2023 at 7.30pm
in
Elsworth Sports Pavilion, Broad End, Elsworth CB23 4JD

PRESENT

Chair Peter Deer (PD)
Councillors Tim Hegan (TH), James Howell (JH), Lawrence Seifert (LS), Margaret Stevenson (MSt), James Witherow (JW)
In attendance Mrs E Sim Parish Clerk (ES)
D.Cllr Mark Howell (MH)
D Cllr Peter Sandford (PS)
C.Cllr Mandy Smith (MS)
Peter Ward Community Flood Group

2023/09-1 Absent. Richard Hyde (RH)

Public Participation No items

2023/09 -2 To receive declarations of interest & requests for dispensations.

- 2.1 To receive declarations of interest from councillors on items on the agenda. James Witherow declared an interest in Item 6.5. as a landowner.
- 2.2 For declarations of interest received, Councillors to inform the Chairman if they wish to speak on the matter at the agenda item prior to discussion. None.
- 2.3 To receive written requests for dispensations for disclosable pecuniary interests. None.
- 2.4 To grant any requests for dispensation as appropriate. None.

2023/09-3 To approve & sign the Minutes of the Council meetings dated 19th July 2023

It was proposed ^(JW, seconded TH) and unanimously **approved** that the Chairman sign the Minutes.

MSt requested an update on

2023/07/4.3. Trees. *“PH advised that remedial work on trees on the sports field that had previously been carried out was inadequate and that this ash tree was unbalanced. The field is owned by the Davison Trust which had agreed responsibility and action. However, to date no action had been taken. JH would speak to the Chairman of the Sports Club about the sports club taking responsibility for Health and Safety matters and respond to the Clerk.”*

JH responded that he had spoken to Rob Hector (Sports Club Chairman) who stated he would look into this but that to date no progress had been made.

2023/07/6.2. Village Maintenance: *Cutting sides of the brook.* JW responded that the cut needed specialist equipment. He noted that several other maintenance requirements were needed to deal with overgrown vegetation in various sites in the village and that these could be all undertaken by a suitable contractor. Quotations would be sought.

2023/07/6.3. Play area. *“The rubber surface matting was lifting and needing attention. The Clerk was mandated to contact the company that supplied this and request an inspection.”* The Clerk responded that the suppliers had requested photos of the problem. LS agreed to take clear photos once the grass was cut.

2023/09-4 Reports

4.1 Cambridgeshire County Councillor

Cllr Smith reported:

Elsworth Parish Council Chairman - Mr Peter Deer

Clerk to the Council: Mrs Elizabeth Sim. Mercia Cottage, Brockley Road Elsworth CB23 4JS
Tel 01954 267664 Email clerk@elsworthvillage.com.

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- Parishes were being asked to write to CCC concerning the cessation of weed control by the county. Members commented that the increase in the weeds and the subsequent health and safety issues resulting from cracked pavements and road surfaces was becoming apparent in many areas of the village. C.Cllr Smith was asked to confirm where liability lay, should an accident occur on the footpaths as a result of trip hazards. Weeds growing in roads were also potential contributors to surface deterioration and blocked drainage leading to flooding. Cllrs **agreed unanimously** to write to the County Council requesting the reinstatement of the weed control programme.
- Requests for 20mph speed restrictions were still being considered but it appeared likely that Elsworth had not been successful in its bid.
- LHI Bid. Cllr Smith's advice that positive consideration was given to evidence of consultation with parishioners undertaken by the PC was noted.
Cllr Smith responded to questions from members re:
 - Drain Clearance. A date for this would be communicated to the Clerk.
 - Where the cost savings from cutting the weed killing programme were going. MS would ask the County Officers this question.
 - Tar spraying damage on The Drift and in Fardell's Lane. All Insurance claims would be looked at. No resident should be out of pocket.

4.2. South Cambridgeshire District Councillors

D Cllr PS reported

- The four day working week for bin collections was starting on September 18th. Local government minister Lee Rowley had requested that SCDC cease the four day working week trial for all employees and advised that government would consider financial options to stop it.
- GCP Congestion charges had been dropped. Debate was still ongoing on this.
- Two busway projects (Sawston and Foxton) had been paused owing to lack of funds. MSt Advised that the bus service from Cambourne had become unsatisfactory and unreliable. Schoolchildren were in some cases unable to arrive in time for classes to commence. Cllr PS responded that there was a shortage of drivers.

D Cllr MH reported

- Proposed Congestion Charge. The Labour Party was not supporting the proposed congestion charge as it stands.
- Concrete in schools. None of the buildings that the CC is responsible for have been affected by the recently highlighted issues but a full reassessment was being carried out.
- Cambourne town was to become a blanket 20mph zone. The dual carriageway approach to Cambourne was to become a 40mph zone. D.Cllr MH advised that he had advocated 30mph for the dual carriageway.
- Fly tipping was becoming an increasing problem in the area. Sixteen bags of rubbish had been removed from the area of the Caxton Gibbet recently. Concealed cameras are to be installed at sites.
- Avenue business park planning application. Cllr Howell advised that he had made representations to the DC Planning Committee on behalf of those who had objected.

The Chairman agreed to take item 7.2. at this point.

7.2. To consider a proposal that Elsworth Parish Council writes to South Cambridgeshire District Council re the four-day working week and its perceived impact on services.

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Members discussed the implications and the effects on parishioners of the trial four day working week. They highlighted the inability of parishioners to access the DC Council building for advice, the failure of the call answering service, the lack of response to emails and telephone messages, the considerable waste of time and resources that this four day week working system presented for Parish Clerks and the Parish Council's ability to satisfactorily undertake its duties to its parishioners. Questions were raised about the contractual arrangements under which the trial was being undertaken. Members were also concerned about whether staff working at home were monitored. Members agreed that the lack of consultation with residents/ratepayers to ascertain their opinions on the trial was deplorable.

Cllr Howell advised that the four day week proposals had never been presented to full council meeting for a vote. Cllr PS advised that residents should write individually to the CEO of SCDC to express their opinions and cite their own experiences.

Parish Council members **agreed** that, as elected representatives of the parishioners, it was their mandate to represent parishioners' interests. Councillors **agreed unanimously** to write to the CEO of the SCDC to express the Parish Council's dissatisfaction with the concept and the reality of the effect on ratepayers of the four day working week. A draft of the letter would be circulated to all members.

Cllr Howell left the meeting at 20:00

The Chairman agreed to take Item 4.4 at this point.

4.4. Community Flood Group

PW reported that

- The shed on the sports field had been filled with equipment provided by the environment agency. Keys to this shed were available to anyone and were kept at the Community shop, with PW and with Philip Sleighthome. JW was storing the more valuable equipment.
- The Community Flood Plan had been adopted by the County Council and is expected to be published shortly on the Parish Council's website.
- Sensors which transmit information on water levels to monitors at the County Council had been installed at the sluice and at the top end of the brook. It had been agreed that a third one would be installed by Fardell's Lane bridge. The CC was in the process of updating the programme that monitors the sensors' readings.
- Information on how people would be alerted to a risk of flooding is to be clarified.
- A CCTV survey to look at the culvert in Broad End was to be carried out. It was proposed to survey all the culverts in the village.
- CCC Flood Risk Team had attended the Elsworth Show, the staff deserved thanks for attending on a Sunday afternoon. The Flood Risk team would be asked to look into issues raised by parishioners.

Councillors agreed that

- PW would send a list of equipment to the Clerk for inclusion on the PC's insurance policy.
- A schedule of maintenance would be drawn up regarding the clearance of vegetation from the sides of the brook, areas of Smith Street and Fardell's Lane.
- Cllr Smith would provide email contact details for County Council officers dealing with drains.
- County Highways would be asked to clarify responsibility for the maintenance of the sides of the Brook in various locations in the village.

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4.3. Clerk's Update

New CC Highways Officer

A new highways officer had been appointed for this area. A meeting had taken place with the Clerk at which he was brought up to date on all the issues that are affecting the village, many of which were reported on the CC's website months ago. He was aware that there are many issues which have had no action taken whatsoever and promised to deal with these as quickly as possible. Following the recent disaster with the dragon machine spraying tar all over the place in Fardell's Lane and The Drift, he and the County Councillor both came and did on-site visits and spoke to residents who were affected.

External Auditors

This year the External Auditors PKF Littlejohn included Elsworth Parish Council in their intermittent audit. This is done by random selection. Unfortunately, it coincided with the PC having a massive increase both in its income and expenditure owing to the very generous grant received from a parishioner and the PC using its section 106 monies and the donation from Mr Wakelin to fund the new play equipment. As a result, the PC was not able to self-certify for the past financial year 2022-2023 (the Clerk advised that this is possible if the income and expenditure for the year are both below £25K and means that the accounts only have to go to internal audit). The external Auditors have required much information to be sent to them to justify the additional receipts and expenditure. They have not completed the audit yet.

Maintenance

Two possible handyman organisations have been identified to undertake the jobs needed for the maintenance spruce up of the village. Estimates for daily rates have been obtained. Detailed specifications for the maintenance requirements need to be drawn up and sent before site visits can take place. TH and LH would prioritise work required and draw up the specifications within the next two weeks. The Clerk would then seek quotations from the organisations for the work to be carried out.

Policies.

Many of the policies that are available to Parish Councils and Town Councils are suitable for Town Councils but would be an unnecessary burden to small parishes. NALC is in the process of updating its model Financial Regulations which they hope to have available by the end of this year. The Clerk advised of the need to consider the update of the PC's policies and regulations as an ongoing project in order to ensure they are applicable for its needs and not an annual update burden.

PC email and domain

Noted that government has advised Parish Councils to use *GOV.UK* domains for Parish Council's and councillors' email addresses. With the rise in security requirements, personal emails for councillors are becoming an increasing risk.

2023/09-5 Finance

5.1. To approve payment of accounts.

The following payments were approved unanimously ^(Prop JW Sec JH).

29.08.2023	£30.00	Web site hosting	Richard Milns (Guava Design)
17.08.2023	£15.49	Computer equipment	HP Inc UK Ltd
10.08.2023	£93.71	Stationery	Viking
10.08.2023	£75.00	Elsworth Times	Pendrill Publications
07.08.2023	£30.00	Elsworth Times	Andrew Pope (Andrew Pope)
05.08.2023	£676.35	Clerk's remuneration	Parish Council
05.08.2023	£148.32	Computer equipment	Microsoft/Mrs E Sim reimbursement
03.08.2023	£410.00	Verge Cut	Neil Kenny

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27.07.2023	£240.00	General Village Maintenance	MG Tree Surgery Ltd
		Grant for grass cutting	
21.07.2023	£500.00	Sports field	Parish Council

5.2. Receipts. Noted

10.08.2023	£93.71	Stationery	Viking
31.08.2023	£19.08	Interest PC savings a/c Nat west	Nat west
02.08.2023	£16.72	Interest Santander Account	Santander Bank
31.07.2023	£21.04	Interest PC savings a/c Nat west	Nat west

The Clerk advised that the payment to Viking for stationery was still outstanding. The company had changed bank accounts and the payment had been made to the former account and reimbursed. New details of the company's bank account have now been received.

5.3. To agree the proposed donation to Elsworth Pre-school (July PC meeting) for funds to support replacement of equipment.
Councillors **agreed** to a grant of £272.00 subject to receipt of copy of the preschool accounts.

5.4. To consider and, if thought fit, agree quotations for signage for Fardell's Lane Reserve and Children's play area.
Councillors **agreed** to allocate £1,000.00 to signage for the play area and £200.00 for signage for Fardell's Lane Reserve.
The Clerk was mandated to contact County Highways with regard to the positioning of a sign on the road verge in Broad End cautioning about the children's play area.

5.5. To agree [the](#) quotation from MG Tree Surgery for stump removal of [the](#) Willow tree in Brook Street. Councillors **agreed** unanimously to accept the quote of £216.00 from MG Tree Surgery.

2023/09-6 Village matters

6.1. **LHI.** To consider putting in an application for LHI funding for 2024-2025.

MSt Presented a proposal for a zebra crossing in Smith Street to be constructed on the existing speed bump near the junction with Broad End. The LHI application would support such a proposal to ensure road safety in the area where residents cross the road, in particular the school children, as parents had been permitted to park in Avenue Business Park. Councillors were in favour of increasing road safety in this area and it was proposed that the County Highways officer who deals with LHI bids should be asked to do a site visit and advise.

6.2. **Village Maintenance.** To receive a progress report from the Maintenance Working party Dealt with previously in the meeting.

6.3. **Children's Play Equipment.** To receive an update on maintenance work required Dealt with previously in the meeting.

6.4. **The Elsworth Times.** To receive an update on proposals for future publications. No update had been received from RH. **Agreed** he be asked to circulate a brief report to members.

6.5. EWR. Update

The Chairman reported that a letter of objection to EWR's latest proposals had been delivered to the Rail Minister, Huw Merriman. A meeting took place in July in the pavilion

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between Anthony Browne MP and parish representatives. The meeting focused on the water shortage in this area which has a potential impact on housing development. Geoff Clarke and PD had put an article in the Cambourne Crier highlighting the issue and they were to meet Bridget Smith the leader to the District Council to discuss matters relating to EWR and housing development further.

6.6. 20mph Zone Request.

Dealt with under Agenda Item 4.1.

2023/09-7 PC matters

- 7.1. To consider supporting a petition received from Steve Count, Councillor for March North objecting to the County Council's withdrawal of road weed clearing. Councillors had agreed to write during discussions under agenda item 4.1.
- 7.2. To consider a proposal that Elsworth Parish Council writes to South Cambridgeshire District Council re the four-day working week and its perceived impact on services. Councillors had agreed to write to the CEO of SCDC during discussions when agenda item 7.2. was brought forward in the meeting.

2023/09-8 Planning

8.1. Planning Applications considered.

- 23/0961/TTCA 41 Brook Street Elsworth Cambridgeshire
Tree T1: Flowering Plum. Fell to ground level as the tree was originally planted over the main drain from the property and the roots are now interfering with the discharge of sewage.
Tree T2: Ash: Reduce the height by 3m and the width by 1.5m to limit growth. The tree is in proximity to the garage foundations and the crown now interferes with the overhead electric mains cable serving other houses in the street.
PC recommendation: Support.
- 23/0953/TTPO 6 The Drift Elsworth Cambridgeshire
2204 - Oak, Remove deadwood above 60mm in diameter and longer than 1.5m in length.
PC recommendation: Support with comment.

8.2 Applications determined/closed by SCDC

- 23/01760/HFUL 15 Cotterells Lane Elsworth Cambridgeshire CB23 4JR *Granted Permission on 26 July 2023.*
- 23/02025/FUL 5 Church Lane Elsworth Cambridgeshire CB23 4HU *Granted Permission on 28 July 2023*
- 23/02633/LBC 38 Boxworth Road Elsworth Cambridgeshire CB23 4JQ *Granted Permission on 6th September 2023*

Dates of Parish Council meetings in 2023.

November 15th Parish Council Meeting

There being no further business to conduct the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 21:28

Signed _____ (Chairman). Date _____