

WITCHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 11 September 2024 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall, Witcham

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

In attendance Parish Clerk/RFO
County Councillor L Dupré
Chair, Witcham Village Hall

24/137 **Apologies for absence** - None

24/138 **To receive declarations of interest from Councillors on any items on the agenda**
Pecuniary interests - none
Personal interests - none
Prejudicial interests (and to inform the Chairman if they wish to speak on the matter during public participation) – none

24/139 **Dispensations:**
To note any new Dispensations granted: Nil.

24/140 **Reports from County and District Councillors** (Aug & Sept)
County Councillor L Dupré gave a summary of the reports. (circulated on 12 August and 4 September).
Updates – Witcham Parish matters:
Mepal Road verge for pedestrians – CCC could make a path where possible – verge recently cut.
Sanctuary vacant dwellings/repairs – still being discussed.
Path repairs The Slade – Chairman thanked Cllr Dupré for her assistance in ascertaining clarity on road closure and dates. Noted this work had now been completed on 9 September in under a day.
Ditch alongside cemetery – Cllr Dupré to pursue again for update.

Chairman closed the open session for Councillor's reports and thanked Cllr Dupré who then left the meeting.

24/141 **Public Participation**
Chairman proposed opening meeting to discuss Right of Way and Car Park Lease with the Village Hall Chair, and this was agreed.

Chair of Village Hall confirmed she would contact their solicitor regarding preparing the draft for the Parish Council's solicitors to review. She would come back to the Council next month. New Deed, based on the old Deed of Right of Way solely between Parish Council and Village Hall Committee (Trustees), and the Heads of Terms previously agreed.

Village Hall Committee Chair advised they would be discussing placing power points around the village green. This had been raised by Events Committee for Christmas lights etc. Village hall had previously been thinking of installing a power point at the front of the village hall for Christmas lights. They would liaise with the Parish Council in due course to discuss consent for any to be located on Parish Council owned land.

Chair of village hall left the meeting, and the Chairman closed the meeting to the public.

24/142 **Minutes**

Minutes of the Meeting of 10 July 2024 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.

24/143 **Matters arising from previous minutes**

J Lucas asked if the "What's On", village newsletter, was still being published. Deferred, to item 24/147 Finance item under Receipts and Payments.

24/144 **Chairman's Report**

Village Hall Roadway - Chairman reported that a trailer had been positioned for a few days to deter vehicles entering site.

Resolved Clerk to write to the local farmers thanking them for their assistance in this matter. Proposed J Lucas, seconded S Wilkin.

Clerk

Anti-social Driving – cars had been heard racing on the A142 or Elean Business Park in early August.

Path Works Along The Slade – Chairman had been contacted by villagers regarding concerns and communication issues about road being closed - denying access for school buses, Zipper service and tradesmen with work to do at properties in The Slade. The County Councillor had been very helpful in dealing with this and as reported above, the work had been completed earlier in the week in little over half a day. (TTRO24/280)

Village Sign – G Byrne offered to help Chairman take down and get delivered for paint repairs.

MH/
GB

Signs – Recreation Ground and Village Hall Direction Sign. The planned material would be plastic backed with aluminium, which would last many years and be recyclable. There are no other realistic suitable materials and his contact would do some draft mock ups with various backgrounds that are not as harsh as the first draft with the white background. These can include a wood effect background.

MH

Bonfires Hive Road – ECDC Environmental Health had been contacted and were working with the landowner. Any more bonfires to be reported to ECDC direct.

All

Fly-tipping Gravel Road – old tyres, reported to CCC highways on 23 August 2024. The had been removed 28 August.

Split Refuse Sacks – ECDC had been informed by local residents that on numerous occasions rubbish had been spilled on to roads and paths when binmen pick bags up. Noted ECDC had cleared up the last lot and aware of the problems.

Allotments – Clerk had received an enquiry for an allotment in Witcham. Since the Council has no allotments, she had advised the residents accordingly and suggested facilities might be available in neighbouring villages. J Lucas advised that Mepal had had a number of unlet allotments and suggested residents contact Mepal Parish Council.

Clerk

24/145 **Recreation Ground and Cemetery Matters**

- a) **Weekly inspections** of play equipment and recreation ground had been completed by the Chairman. He advised there were no issues to raise. The Annual Inspection was due to take place in January.

Clerk to contact ECDC to ask for new labels for dog bins so that people had a phone number to report when dog bins full. Apparently, these were to have been replaced two years ago but despite an undertaking from ECDC it never materialised. 20 more dog fouling signs for placing on lamp posts etc and recreation ground also required.

Clerk

Clerk

- b) **Play Accessibility Audit - ECDC**

Resolved that as the play and fitness facilities had only just been installed under Wicksteed's guidance, including consideration and provision of Accessibility requirements, this service was not required at this time. Proposed K Mackender, seconded Chairman.

- c) **Application for Memorial Works at Cemetery.**

Resolved to approve the application from RS Memorials for removal of memorial and additional inscription. Proposed Chairman, seconded L Holdaway.

Clerk

24/146 **Planning Matters**

24/00826/FUL 14 Martins Lane Internal and external alterations including proposed bay window. Garage conversion (retrospective).

Resolved that the Council had no concerns. Proposed Chairman, seconded L Holdaway.

Clerk

The following were noted:

24/00725/TRE Yew Tree House, Silver Street T1 Yew Trees x2 at the front of property - Reduce to provide 1.5 m clearance from property and reduce overhang by 1.5m. This is required for both the installation of effective guttering and maintenance of the Tudor brickwork T2 2x Pear trees - Remove as in poor condition and for both safety reasons and to create space for other fruit trees within the area to flourish - ECDC Approved.

24/00137/FUL Land South West Of Ely Model Aircraft Club Hive Road Retention of open fronted storage building and retrospective change of use to mixed agricultural and straw thatching yard - Withdrawn.

24/147 **Finance and Administration Matters**a) **2024 Financial Regulations**

NALC template, updated by the Clerk for Witcham Parish Council, had been previously circulated. Values and non-statutory clauses reviewed and agreed.

Resolved to approve and adopt the newly revised Financial Regulations, with immediate effect. Proposed J Lucas, seconded K Mackender.

Final copy to be circulated before next meeting.

b) **CCC Archives Subscription (CCAN)**

CCC had contacted the Clerk to advise that for two years they had not received the subscription to keep the site going. Clerk had contacted the volunteers. They had confirmed this was correct and that they were no longer updating the site.

Clerk

Resolved to make the payment of £200. Proposed J Lucas, seconded G Byrne.

Clerk instructed to get clarification on how to get the administrative rights transferred and manage in the future. A note to go in the next "What's On" in order to get new volunteer to manage and update the site with articles in the future.

Clerk

c) **Poppy Wreath for Remembrance Day Service 2024**

Resolved to approve purchase of Poppy Wreath for the 2024 Remembrance Day Service, and to make a donation for the wreath of £40. Proposed G Byrne, seconded S Wilkin.

Clerk

d) **Quarterly Reconciliations and Budget Review to 30 June 2024**

Copies of receipts and payments and the bank reconciliations had been circulated prior to the meeting. Receipts £37,391.93. Payments £30,284.97. Balance at 30.6.24 was £58,697.14, including all earmarked reserves. Clerk advised that the 366 day fixed term savings matured October 2024. Bank statements presented at meeting and checks completed by J Lucas.

Clerk advised that the national salary review for Clerks for 1 April 2024 was still being negotiated and it was hoped there would be further progress in October/November.

Preparation of the 2025/6 Budget and Precept would commence next month and she requested that Councillors forward her details and costs of any projects they would like to put to Council for consideration.

Chairman suggested that the footpath across the village green, together with footway lighting, was an item the Council might like to consider in due course. He hoped this could be met by sourcing grant aid.

Cllrs

Resolved to approve reconciliation and budget review to 30 June 2024. Proposed S Wilkin, seconded L Holdaway.

24/147 **Finance and Administration Matters** (cont)

- e) **Approve Receipts and Payments for September, and August 2024** (previously circulated). Documentation had been checked by J Lucas. *Clerk*
Resolved to approve the receipts and payments schedule for September, and August, including BACS payments, and to release cheques. Proposed L Holdaway, seconded Chairman.
 Regarding outstanding invoices for reimbursement to the voluntary editor of the monthly "What's On" newsletter. As raised under matters arising there had been no issues released in recent months. Clerk advised she had heard no more about the VAT charges on the outstanding April invoice but had sent reminders on several occasions. *Chairman*
Resolved Chairman to speak with editor. Proposed J Lucas, seconded L Holdaway. *man*
- f) **2024 External Audit** *Clerk*
 Clerk reported that the External Audit had been completed and the Notice of Completion would be posted up by 30 September. Noted there were no actions for Councillors' attention.
- g) **Bank Mandate Signatories** *Clerk*
 Forms completed, to include additional councillor as previously discussed. *Clerk*
Resolved to approve change to mandate and for Clerk and Councillor to finalise with bank. Proposed J Lucas, seconded S Wilkin.
- h) **Arrangements for Annual Village Inspection.** *GB*
 G Byrne, J Lucas and Chairman undertook to carry out the village *JL*
 inspection and return forms to Clerk for review and discussion at the next *Chairman*
 meeting. Proposed G Byrne, seconded K Mackender. *man*

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 24/147i) to 24/147l)) listed below, 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. There were no members of the public present.

- i) **Bus Shelter Quotes** *Clerk*
 Clerk had obtained two more quotes which were presented. A written update for quote received 2023 had not been received and one had quoted for OSB for inside the bus shelter. *Clerk*
Resolved that Clerk contact contractor to amend quote from OSB to hard plywood. Place on October agenda. Proposed K Mackender, seconded G Byrne.
- j) **Signage Roadway to Village Hall (2)** *Chairman*
 Chairman had given update on outcome of enquiries with quotee regarding materials as per his report (Minute 24/144). Clerk had made tentative enquiries with two other companies but they had still not responded. Item deferred to a future meeting. *man*
- k) **RSPB Lease** *Clerk*
 Solicitors had sent in revised Lease with the amendment to Clause 8 earlier that evening. Hardcopy presented for examination and discussion. *Clerk*
Resolved to approve the draft subject to addition of additional text put forward this evening. Proposed Chairman, seconded S Wilkin.
- l) **Deed of Public Right of Way and Parking** *Clerk*
 Discussion regarding whose solicitor would draw up the draft for the new Deed had been raised under Minute 24/141. *Clerk*
Resolved to await response from Village Hall Committee Chair. Proposed K Mackender, seconded Chairman.

24/148 **NALC Biodiversity and Climate Actions**

Guidance documents previously circulated for review, together with paper from Clerk. The Witcham Neighbourhood Plan Working Group had been establishing a voluntary conservation group for some time and biodiversity and climate actions would be of great interest to them.

As it was now late in the evening and still much of agenda to complete, it was agreed this should be put forward for the October meeting as an early item on the agenda. In the meantime Chairman to provide draft text for response to local enquirer about the council's activities in these matters.

Chairman

24/149 **Neighbourhood Plan**

- a) Noted that the Sutton Replacement Neighbourhood Plan and the Mepal Neighbourhood Plan had both been made part of the development plan for East Cambridgeshire on 25 July 2024. A 'regulation 19 decision statement' to confirm such a decision for each plan, to sit alongside a copy of the final plan, will be available: [Mepal Neighbourhood Plan | East Cambridgeshire District Council \(eastcambs.gov.uk\)](https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/mepal-neighbourhood-plan) and [Sutton Neighbourhood Plan | East Cambridgeshire District Council \(eastcambs.gov.uk\)](https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/sutton-neighbourhood-plan)
- b) Witcham Neighbourhood Plan Working Group Minutes of meeting of 23 July 2024, previously circulated – noted.
- c) Witcham Neighbourhood Plan Working Group - report of meeting with Consultant on 29 August 2024, previously circulated – noted.
- d) Neighbourhood Plan – section on brief history of Witcham (circulated 14.8.24, re-circulated 2.9.24). Noted a lot of the information related to one of the village appraisals carried out years ago and that only the first page now seemed relevant.
- e) Working Group's timetable/activities, previously circulated, was examined and Councillors were pleased to see dates/timescales had been set out.

WNPWG

Noted:

The draft Neighbourhood Plan was to be completed by the end of September.

Proof-reading by Group and Councillors to take place ready for meeting with Consultant on 17 October.

Cllrs

2nd draft to be proof-read ready for a meeting to discuss with Consultant on 7 November so that final draft could be agreed by the Working Group for submission to the Parish Council to approve at its meeting on 13 November.

Cllrs

Publicity material to be ready for Consultation process to commence mid-December.

An application for a grant to complete the final stages would be made January 2025.

The Neighbourhood Plan would be formally submitted to East Cambs District Council for pre-examination publicity March 2025.

- f) Letter from Working Group regarding Grant Funding (circulated 2.9.24). Noted that Working Group was still awaiting a response from the Consultant in respect of questions raised by them about splitting the grant funding application in two for the current financial year.
- g) Dates for Working Group's proposed meetings with Consultant:

Thursday 17 October – K Mackender and M Housden
(no other Councillors available)

KM/MH

Thursday 7 November 2024 – to be confirmed at next Council meeting.

Cllrs

24/150 **Highways and Streetlighting**

- a) Items reported to Highways Authority: Fly tipping at Gravel Road (Minute 24/144)
K Mackender reported that when the contractors had been at The Slade to resurface the paths, the top end (Witcham Toll) had not been dealt with. This surface was bad and in need of repair. Chairman added that earlier in the year he had submitted a request on the CCC "Report It" site - manhole cover had collapsed and was a trip hazard for pedestrians as it was becoming hidden in the grass. A cone had been placed in the hole to warn people but this had still not been dealt with.
Resolved that the Clerk should report these two issues to County Council highways and County Councillor. Proposed K Mackender, seconded Chairman
- b) Notice of nPower proposals for modernising UMS connections. Migrate Non-Half Hourly (NHH) Unmetered Supplies Metering Systems, due between 23 September 2024 and 31 March 2025 (P434), received and noted.
- c) Flytipping reported to ECDC at Gravel Road, off Hive Road, end August (Minute 24/144 refers).
- d) CCC investigations Mepal Road/junction ditch adj cemetery. There had been no response back from the CCC team who were going to investigate verge sometime after May 2024. County Councillor was to pursue. (Minute 24/140 refers).
- e) Correspondence Ref: CCC/LDB maintenance works village droves/drain. County Councillor had contacted CCC team and the closure of the gates from Byway 11 was to prevent vehicles gaining access to Byway 8 while IDB clear counterwash drain and repair surface as they go. This was nothing to do with any planned works elsewhere. No further action required.

Clerk

24/151 **Consultations**

- a) **Active Travel Hierarchy**, circulated 12 August 2024. Establish hierarchies for importance and maintenance for a) walking and wheeling, b) cycling, and c) public rights of way. Some Councillors had looked at this and responded as individuals. It was suggested details be placed on village noticeboard and website to urge villagers' to take the opportunity to give their views for change and improvements. Closing date 30 September 2024.
- b) **Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority Bus Franchising Consultation**, circulated 20 August and 2 September 2024. Some Councillors had responded as individuals. Closing date 20 November 2024. Details to be posted on village noticeboard and website.

Clerk

Clerk

24/152 **Speedwatch and MVAS Monitoring**

- a) Speedwatch sessions. G Byrne reported that several successful sessions had now taken place. Lots more sessions planned over coming months. Looking for more volunteers. Automated ANPR Speedwatch and appointment of new co-ordinator for District (temporary cover), noted.
- b) MVAS speed data for July and August had been circulated by the Chairman, noted.

GB

24/153 **Correspondence**

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

Priors Field Surgery, Sutton – new contract arrangements

Mereside Surgeries – update on expansions

Sustrans route feasibility studies - Chairman to attend seminar -18.9.24 at 6pm

Police and Crime Plan survey

Automated ANPR Speedwatch

Speedwatch – temporary co-ordinator appointed

CCC Capital Maintenance Programme 2024/25

24/153 **Correspondence** (cont)

Presentation on Capital Scheme Prioritisation for Highway Maintenance Scheme

28.8.20 cancelled

Ouse Washes newsletter

East Cambs Parish and Community Forum meeting 18.9.24

TMC Incident Report

Greater Cambridge Partnership – Joint Assembly and Executive Board Meeting

2.10.24

ACRE Affordable Homes for local people – offer to attend Council meeting – not required at moment.

ACRE AGM 9.10.24 – no representative to attend

CAPALC Civility & Respect Taskforce vacancy

Community Energy Action Plan – no comment

ECDC Meeting agendas and minutes and Planning decisions, press releases Youth

Fusion Days, Grants, electric vehicles, Sunnica Statement, Licensing: Gambling –

Statement of Principles review, Corporate Action Plan, High Street Review Fund

NALC Bulletins, Newsletters, Events including mastering emergency planning and

launch of new website.

CAPALC Conference, Wyboston, 20.9.24, Awards, newsletters and updates

24/154 **Date of next meeting:** 9 October 2024.

9.45pm Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting

Schedule of Receipts and Payments

		£	£	£
Receipts:	Neighbourhood Plan Grant	6922.00		6922.00
Payments	002164 Truelink July	726.60	145.32	871.92
	Truelink August	392.40	78.48	470.88
	Truelink Total			£1342.80
	002165/6/BACS			
	Salary Expenses	839.06	-	839.06
	002167 PKF External Auditors	315.00	63.00	378.00
	c/p Microsoft 365 subscription	59.99		59.99
	c/p MS online services – 7 licences emails	34.30	6.86	41.16
	What's On invoices outstanding			
August payments confirmed:				
	002162/3 Salary expenses	536.66		536.66
	c/p MS online services – 7 licences emails	34.30	6.86	41.16

Signed..... Dated