

WITCHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 12 June 2024 at 7.34pm in the Village Hall, Witcham

Present: M Housden (Chairman), L Holdaway, K Mackender, S Wilkin

In attendance Parish Clerk/RFO
County Councillor L Dupré

24/100 **Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from J Lucas, G Byrne (personal commitments) and District Councillor M Inskip (work commitments)
Noted that K Mackender needed to leave at 8.30pm.

24/101 **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

24/102 **Dispensations**

To note any new Dispensations granted: Nil

24/103 **Reports from District and County Councillors**

Monthly reports for May had been previously circulated and were noted.
Chairman opened meeting for Councillor Dupré to give an update.
County Councillor Dupré advised that Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, Shaping Our New and Improved Bus Routes - Join the Conversation meetings, were currently taking place around the County.
Proposals included linking services from Sutton to Earith and Willingham.
Mepal Post Office was being refurbished and the one at Sutton would close this month. She had been talking to people about an outreach service but it was not looking very positive.

Ref: Headleys Lane – Verges and Flooding (Agenda Item 24/110b)

She referred to her site meeting at Headleys Lane with County Council Officers. The paved area, bollards and damaged verges had been discussed. All the verge belonged to the County Council (Highways) without doubt. However, Officers were minded to leave the bollards and paved area, subject to it being maintained by the homeowner. It would still be held in ownership by the County Council and failure by the homeowner to maintain the pavers would result in the County Council simply laying a strip of asphalt at the entrance. She had suggested wildflowers be sown on the grass verge either side on that side of the lane, with a view to the County Council keeping up regular maintenance during each season. She noted precedents to build and encroach over verge should be avoided; narrowing in the lane by structures and overgrown vegetation was dangerous and all Headleys Lane needed to be fit for large vehicles, eg farm vehicles and machinery to pass along. She noted the Parish Council's suggestion that homeowners should be advised by letter that building over lane/verges was not permitted. The Chairman pointed out that at various stages during the development of Pond Farm, issues regarding removal of ancient wall, hedging and encroachments had been raised with ECDC Planning for enforcement and also with CCC Highways department. Unfortunately, there had been no positive action to deter breaches. She would report back to the officers and advised that the new Highways Officer was keen to work with parishes. He had suggested setting up meeting of all local Parish Chairman and Clerks. This offer was welcomed.

24/103 **Reports from District and County Councillors (cont)****Ref: Annual Parish Meeting – lost footpath Mepal to Witcham (Agenda Item 24/109)**

County Councillor Dupré also confirmed that she had spoken to the Officers about doing something with the verge on the road between Mepal and Witcham to make it useable by pedestrians and they had undertaken to inspect after the meeting at Headleys Lane.

County Councillor Dupré advised that ECDC was offering a free survey to assess **Accessibility for Play** facilities across the District. It was hoped there might be some funding available in due course to help with any improvements that could be made to make the facilities more inclusive. She thought the District Council would be writing to parishes. (Press Release listed under 24/119 Correspondence refers)

Ref: Sanctuary Housing (Agenda Item 24/118)

The subject of empty Sanctuary Housing dwellings in the village was briefly discussed with District Councillor Dupré. She reiterated her message given at the Annual Parish Meeting that Sanctuary had told the District Council it was focussing on repairs to homes currently occupied with tenants. It was understood they planned to carry out maintenance and improvements to empty properties as a separate exercise, grouping works to improve efficiency.

Ref: King's Development (Agenda Item 24/107)

Chairman reported that there was still outstanding items at the King's Development in The Slade. He cited that the verge had not made good and no street sign erected. Councillor Dupré said she would take this up with the District Council.

8.00pm Chairman closed the open session for Councillor's reports. He thanked Councillor Dupré and she left the meeting.

24/104 **Public Participation**

There were no members of the public present.

24/105 **Minutes**

Minutes of the Meeting of 8 May 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 L Holdaway, seconded Chairman.

24/106 **Matters Arising**

Minute 24/096 Highways and Streetlighting Clerk gave update on proposed CCC works on Byway 12 and confirmed the Officer said he had spoken to the resident in the area.

Minute 24/092 Finance and General Administration – Review of Budgets and reserves A copy of the revised budget and reserves reflecting changes made at 8 May meeting had been circulated.

The order of the agenda was discussed.

Resolved to re-order agenda to deal with items 24/112 and 24/114 next, whilst K Mackender still present. Proposed L Holdaway, seconded K Mackender.

24/112 **Finance**

- a) **Approval of amended Fixed Asset Register** (previously circulated)

Resolved to approve the amended Fixed Asset Register. Proposed L Holdaway, seconded S Wilkin.

- b) **Internal Auditor's report** (previously circulated)

Resolved that the Internal Auditors Report for 2023/24 had been received and considered. No actions required. Proposed L Holdaway, seconded S Wilkin.

24/112 **Finance (cont)**

- c) **Approval and signing off the Section 1 - Annual Governance Statement of the 2023/24 Annual Governance and Accounts Return.**
 AGAR Section 1 had been previously circulated together with JPAG guidelines. The Statement was reviewed and completed in the meeting.
Resolved that the AGAR 2023/24 Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement, as completed in the meeting, be approved and signed by the Chairman. Proposed L Holdaway, seconded S Wilkin. *Clerk*
- d) **Approval and signing off the Section 2 - Statement of Accounts of 2023/24 Annual Governance and Accounts Return.**
 AGAR Section 2 had been previously circulated. Details confirmed.
Resolved that the AGAR 2023/24 Section 2 Statement of Accounts be approved and signed by Chairman. Proposed K Mackender, seconded L Holdaway *Clerk*
 The Notice of Audit and associated documents would be posted up this week and the period of inspection would run from 17 June to 26 July. *Clerk*
- e) **Appointment of Internal Auditor**
Resolved to re-appoint LGS as Internal Auditor for 2024/25. Proposed L Holdaway, seconded Chairman. *Clerk*
- f) **Approve receipts and payments for June 2024 (previously circulated)**
 Documentation had been checked by Chairman.
 Noted Truelink had not included charge for all the cuts at the recreation ground on the May invoice and this was being pursued by Clerk. *Clerk*
 Agreed to pay the April and May invoices as presented to-date. Invoice for May edition of What's On was awaited and query regarding VAT on the April invoice. Chairman advised there was no printing costs for May to come in. *Clerk*
 The Wicksteed cheques had been released on completion of installation of all the plaques. Wicksteed had also dealt with puddles forming on the platform of the climbing frame.
 The Annual Report had been printed and circulated to householders. Zurich insurance had been paid and renewal of policy confirmed. There had been no increase in price following the minor changes made to the schedule.
Resolved to note the updates and approve the receipts and payments schedule for June, and to release cheques. Proposed L Holdaway, seconded S Wilkin. *Clerk*
- g) **Approve completion of new bank mandate signatories**
 In the absence of the new signatory, completion of the form was deferred to July meeting.

24/114 **Administration Matters****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 24/114a) and 24/114b) 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.

- a) **Approval of RSPB Lease**
 The draft lease had been circulated to Councillors to review.
Resolved to return lease to solicitors for amendments to Clause 8 as discussed at meeting. Proposed M Housden, seconded K Mackender. *Clerk*

24/114 **Administration Matters (cont)**b) **Deed of Public Right of Way and Parking**

Clerk had chased solicitors for Fixed Fee quotes as requested. Those received now considered. Agreed to update Village Hall Committee with recommendation to get their acceptance and start the process.

Clerk

8.30pm Resumed order of agenda

24/107 **Planning Applications**

24/00137/FUL Land South West of Ely Model Aircraft Club, (off Hive Road) Witcham. Retention of open fronted storage building and retrospective change of use to mixed agricultural and straw thatching yard

Resolved that the Council had concerns. Required Conditions – regarding there to be NO burning of old thatch on site. Shouldn't be taken back to yard. Proposed K Mackender, seconded S Wilkin.

Clerk

24/00253/FUL High Point, Hive Road, Conversion and extension of single storey dwelling to create one and half storey dwelling. Proposed amendments including reduce height of building, noted.

Kings Development, The Slade. Some issues had been passed to District Councillor to investigate (Minute 24/103)

24/108 **GP Surgery**

Planning consent had been granted for new GP Surgery at Stretham, and Mereside Surgery were seeking consent to use the Parish Council's letter submitted earlier in the year supporting a new surgery.

Resolved to approve that Mereside Surgery submit the Council's letter as part of their NHS Business Case submission. Proposed L Holdaway, seconded Chairman.

Clerk

8.35pm K Mackender left the meeting.

24/109 **2024 Annual Parish Meeting**

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of 15 May 2024, were received and considered. Item regarding cutting back vegetation on verge of Mepal to Witcham road had been discussed with County Councillor (Minute 24/103).

24/110 **Highways and Street Lighting Matters**a) **Items reported to Highways Authority**

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/roads-and-pathways/roadworks-and-faults>

Noted a gate had appeared on the public right of way at the layby on the road between Mepal and Witcham. L Holdaway would follow up to make sure access on to the public right of way was not blocked. It was noted there had been several flytipping events at this location.

LH

Chairman reported that he had been informed that a vehicle had been abandoned between The Orchards and Westway Place, which had now been reported to DVLA and ECDC.

Chairman

It was also noted that the County Council would be re-introducing weed treatment on roadside twice a year – commencing 26 June 2024, across the County, and repeated again in October. Manual weed clearing had been undertaken in some parts of the County and they were awaiting quotes from ECDC and their contractors, to deal with areas in the East Cambridgeshire area.

Highways had no objection to the access (noted red line was tight by front door on the planning application). They were concerned pavers on County Council's verge and so owner must maintain and the bollards could protect verge, so to be left. Noted there had been suggestion of wildflowers being sown either side of the entrance which

24/110 **Highways and Street Lighting Matters (cont)**b) **County Councillor's report – Headleys Lane – verge and flooding issues adj Pond Farm development.**

County Council would maintain thereby showing active management of the strip of verge along this north/west side of Headleys Lane.

This had been dealt with under item 24/103 above.

24/111 **Speedwatch and MVAS Monitoring**

The village Speedwatch Co-ordinator's report was presented by Chairman. It was noted a site training session had been planned for 11 June but had been deferred to end of June. Chairman advised that risk assessments were carried out for each speedwatch site. The volunteers had completed the Indemnity forms for the Police under the Speedwatch scheme but it was not clear what this covered and further clarification to be sought from Co-ordinators. The camera was now in the ownership of the Parish Council.

*Clerk
GB*

The MVAS speed data for May had been circulated by the Chairman and was noted.

24/113 **Recreation Ground and Cemetery Matters**

- a) **Weekly inspections** of play equipment and recreation ground had been completed by the Chairman and he advised there were no issues to raise. He advised he had repainted some of the benches on the recreation ground and done some weeding and clearing of brambles that are not included in the Truelink contract at present. The plaques had been installed on all the pieces of fitness equipment as reported earlier. The grass was being cut more frequently and was now looking much better.

Resolved to arrange for further additional grasscutting sessions to be carried out as necessary to ensure suitable for cricket and the Peashooting Championships in July. Proposed L Holdaway, seconded M Housden.

Clerk

- b) **Overhanging tree High Street.** It was reported that a trailer stacked very high with bales had caught a bough on the trees that had been cut back along High Street, as per ECDC consent for tree works, earlier that morning. The driver had asked for more to be cut off.

Resolved that as there appeared to be no problems for other trailers and lorries, further tree works would be kept under review for the present. Proposed L Holdaway and seconded S Wilkin.

All Cllrs

- c) **Enquiries for use of recreation ground from commercial organisation and a nearby Cricket Club**

Sutton Cricket Club had contacted the Chairman on the Thursday before one of their matches. This was short notice and nothing further had been heard. A commercial organisation that was hiring the village hall had asked if on hot nights in the summer they could go out and use the recreation ground. This was discussed but in-keeping with past requests of this nature it was decided not to make an exception and grant consent.

Resolved that Clerk should issue standard letter. Clerk to also contact Village Hall Committee to ask them to include in their terms of let a note that the recreation ground was not included in the hire of the hall. Anyone wanting to use the recreation ground for organised activities must contact the Parish Council directly to make separate arrangements. It was also to be suggested that the Village Hall Committee might like to consider purchasing an air conditioning system to benefit users of the village hall. Proposed L Holdaway, seconded Chairman.

Clerk

- d) **Witcham Events Committee - Peashooting Championships 2024**
Chairman reported that the Committee had considered having a tractor on site for children but in the end this idea had been dropped.

- 24/115 **East Cambridgeshire Buildings of Local Interest Register**
 East Cambs District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council and other District Council's were collaborating with the Cambs Local Heritage List Project. Witcham had been assessed and individuals contacted. Items identified: Village Sign, Barn 21 High Street (to be removed as building demolished) and 32 High Street. Parish Council was invited to make comments/corrections/additional information.
Resolved that the Council should let East Cambs know that the original village sign (picture) had been renewed. Also to ask if the barn at the rear of High Street (old Coach House) had been found and considered for inclusion. Proposed by Chairman and agreed by all. *Clerk*
- 24/116 **Neighbourhood Plan**
 Minutes of meetings of April and May, plus copy of Community Action Plan, had been circulated by the Group and were noted.
 Locality had opened for receipt of applications for grants for making the Neighbourhood Plan, and this information had been passed to the Consultant and Group members on 4 June by the Clerk. The Consultant had responded to the Council and leader of the Group, submitting a new quote and said he saw no reason why the Witcham Neighbourhood Plan could not be completed in this current financial year. There had been a slight lift in prices of around 1%. (email circulated to councillors 10 June 2024). The grant application required urgent submission.
Resolved that the Group be asked to prioritise the work for the grant application, together with timelines and the proposed plan of activities for this next stage of the grant so that an application could be considered for submission by the Council at their meeting on 10 July 2024. Proposed L Holdaway, seconded S Wilkin. *WNPWG*
- It was noted from Group's Minutes of 28 May meeting that there was a request to use the Phone Box as a suggestion box for villagers to put comments/suggestions for the Group/WPC to consider. *WNPWG*
Resolved that Council had no objection to this proposal. Proposed Chairman and agreed by all.
- 24/117 **Witcham Village Hall and Witcham Events Committee**
 Request received that the Parish Council hold a copy of the Terms and Conditions for continuation of the World Peashooting Championship (previously circulated)
Resolved to accept a copy of the above Terms and Conditions and hold on Parish Council files. Proposed L Holdaway, seconded S Wilkin.
- 24/118 **Sanctuary Housing**
 Chairman reported that a resident had expressed concern that homes were standing empty at Westway Place and Martins Lane. This item had been covered under Minute 24/103
- 24/119 **Correspondence**
 The following items of information/interest, and invitations to events had been circulated and unless recorded below as otherwise, were noted:
- Cambridge & Peterborough Combined Authority - Join the Conversation – Bus Routes
 Safety of Lithium-ion Batteries and e-bikes and scooters
 CCC Promotion Concessionary Bus pass use, Walk this May
 TMC Incident report
 ECDC Meeting agendas and minutes and Planning decisions, and press releases
 ECDC Accessible Playgrounds – assessments across district
 ECDC Community Safety Partnership – Domestic abuse
 Plunkett Community Business Funding

24/119 **Correspondence** (cont)
 SLCC Martyn's Law Presentation
 British Racing School promotion Fun Day Newmarket 20 July 2024
 RSPB Operation Turtle Dove
 NALC Bulletins and Events, Pre-election advice, Youth Engagement Summit
 and CEO newsletters
 CAPALC Bulletins and training opportunities for Councillors
 CCC Events and training

24/120 **Date of next meetings:** 10 July 2024

Meeting closed at 9.25pm

Schedule of Receipts and Payments

		£	£	£
Receipts:	HMRC VAT Refund	9285.41		9285.41
	CAPALC Refund Training MH	20.00		20.00
	Grantscape Play Grant	14000.00		14000.00
	Precept	9250.00		9250.00
	ECDC CIL (Oct23/Mar24)	4686.68		4686.68
Payments	002151 LGS Services	155.00	31.00	186.00
	002152 Cartridgesave	107.34	21.47	128.81
	002153/5 Salary Expenses	839.06	-	839.06
	002156 TEEC (planning tracker)	48.00	9.60	57.60
	002157 Truelink Apr/May	522.00	104.40)	
		492.40	98.48)	1217.28
	c/p MS online services – 7 licences emails	34.30	6.86	41.16
	Payments since last meeting			
	002149 Ely Print Centre Annual Report (Minute 24/092h))	174.00	-	174.00
	002150 Zurich Insurance renewal (Minute 24/092e))	617.92	-	617.92

Signed..... Dated