

## WITCHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 13 November 2024 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall, Witcham

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

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

**24/171 Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received and accepted from L Holdaway (personal)

**24/172 To receive declarations of interest from Councillors on any items on the agenda**

Pecuniary interests - none

Personal interests: M Housden, Member Witcham Events Cttee, (Min 24/182c)  
K Mackender landowner in the vicinity (Min 24/178  
24/01094/TPO Bury Meadows)

Prejudicial interests (and to inform the Chairman if they wish to speak on the matter during public participation) – none

**24/173 Dispensations**

To note any new Dispensations granted: Nil

**24/174 Reports from District and County Councillors**

Monthly reports for November, previously circulated, were noted.

7.35pm Chairman opened the meeting to welcome Councillor Dupré and Councillor Inskip, and he invited them to give updates.

**Cemetery:** County Councillor L Dupré referred to the County Council Officer's advice regarding riparian responsibilities following the trial hole that had been excavated on 4 November in the verge where the pipe from the ditch on the west side of the cemetery boundary entered the drainage system in the verge. The Officer had advised that the trial hole proved there was a buried chamber at this location, which they had now built up for easier access in the future. However, there appeared to be a damaged pipe within the verge, approx. 30m in length to the west of the site. This would indicate that an historic roadside ditch was culverted but the culvert had since failed. He had advised that under common law, presumption is that in most circumstances roadside ditches do not form part of the highway but instead fall under the responsibility of the adjacent landowner (the riparian owner). At this location there is no evidence that the historic ditch, now filled in, was part of the highway and therefore the maintenance responsibility, including that of the pipe, lies with the adjoining owner. It did not fall within the County Council's remit as the highway authority to resolve the issue as the flooding is not impacting on the integrity or safety of the highway itself. He had further advised that the adjoining landowners, (as riparian owner), would be responsible for maintenance of the ditch (pipework). As the Lead Local Flood Authority, they could write to the landowner reminding them of the maintenance responsibilities.

The Chairman reminded the meeting that there had been a path that ran along this verge, albeit that for some time now it had grown over. Also that in more recent times Anglian Water had excavated an area of this verge for water works. To be further discussed under item 24/184 Highways for decision on action.

See  
Minute  
24/184

24/174 **Reports from District and County Councillors (cont)**

**Pond Farm development:** boundary Headleys Lane, verge encroachment. Response from Local Highways Officer was noted. The Officer would speak to builder to instruct that the hedge be removed. The hedge needs to be removed and moved back adjacent to the path in front of the property to be in line with what is left of the original hedge and inside of the line of the telegraph poles in the verge. To be further discussed under item 24/184 Highways.

See  
Minute  
24/184

Chairman thanked Councillor Dupré for all her help and continued support in these issues.

District Councillor M Inskip gave an update about the Planning Department being restructured and the focus on pre-application procedures and expected changes regarding determinate date for decisions.

G Byrne gave brief summary on the recent talks that he and S Wilkin had had with representatives from Mepal Parish Council regarding extending 40mph speed limit all the way down the Mepal/Witcham Road and a path to improve safety for pedestrians. Mepal Councillors were to discuss setting up speedwatch sessions to help monitor the situation. He asked the County Councillor for advice on how to proceed. Councillor Dupré confirmed that the Local Highways Officer had ordered works to clear and recover as much of the path on this road as possible. She advised that an application under the Local Highways Improvement Programme (non-complex) could be an option and details were on the County Council website. G Byrne advised that most of the length of road to be covered fell within the Mepal parish.

See  
Minute  
24/184

24/175 **Public Participation** There were no members of the public present.

7.50pm Chairman thanked L Dupré and M Inskip for attending and closed the open session.

24/176 **Minutes**

Minutes of the Meeting of 9 October 2024 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman, and the agenda of the same date was signed by the Chairman as confirmation of the business transacted at that meeting. Proposed Chairman, seconded S Wilkin.

24/177 **Matters Arising**

*24/169 Witcham Fire Engine* – Chairman reported it was still at Peterborough. If it were to come back to Witcham it would have to be stored indoors in a dry environment, and the Fire Service would retain ownership.

Also noted that the village sign paint repairs had been completed and G Byrne undertook to liaise with the company and arrange for collection. (Minute 24/144) Chairman to arrange for re-installing on site.

GB/  
Chairman

24/178 **Planning Applications and Tree Works**

*24//01094/TPO Bury Meadows Points A to B*, Requirement to ensure a clear surface is maintained which is wide enough to be safely used by pedestrians, horse riders and vehicles, as is required by its status as a Public Byway Open to All Traffic. The current useable width of the public right of way has been reduced to 1.5m in places, primarily by encroaching, briars, blackthorn and hawthorn.

The proposal is to clear back the emerging surface vegetation 2m either side of the current clear usable surface. This vegetation is primarily bramble and young blackthorn suckers. To enable safe use of the route by horse riders any encroaching vegetation/branches within this clearance width will be pruned

24/178 **Planning Applications and Tree Works** (cont)

to provide a clearance height of 4m from ground level. These works will have no impact on any mature trees growing within the boundary of the byway. Due to the density of the vegetation required clearing, this work will be carried out using a tractor mounted flail, ensuring the ground is firm on the date these works are carried out.

**Resolved** that the Council had concerns. The contractors must adhere to the exact specification given in the application. The reason for pointing out is because historically in 2007 it was cut back excessively. The tree work specification should be the absolute maximum of the specification in the schedule, at all points. All work subject to TPO protection to maintain the rural characteristic of this drove. Proposed G Byrne, seconded S Wilkin.

Clerk

24/01052/FUL Magnolia Place 9 Silver Street Proposed ground floor front extension and loft conversion.

**Resolved** that the Council had no concerns. Proposed K Mackender, seconded G Byrne. (1 objection)

Clerk

The following ECDC decision was noted:

24/00826/FUL 24/00898/FUL Park House, The Slade First floor extension over existing flat roof. Approved

24/179 **Finance and Administration Matters**

8.33pm

Exclusion of the Press and Public: It is hereby 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 confidential nature of the business about to be transacted at agenda item 24/179a) to 24/179e) namely salaries, grass/grounds contract, quotes, RSPB lease and deed of public rights of way & car park, 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.

- a) **Approval payment of NJC Salary award backdated to 1.4.24.**  
**Resolved** to accept the recommendations of the NJC salary award, backdated to 1 April 2024. Proposed G Byrne, seconded Chairman. (to be paid in December salaries)
- b) **Quotes for Grass and Grounds Maintenance 2025/27**  
**Resolved** to accept the quote from Truelink for period 1 March 2025 to 28 February 2027. Proposed J Lucas, seconded Chairman.
- c) **Quotes for bus shelter repairs and signage Village Hall**  
Some quotes for the bus shelter repairs had still not been received and the weather was now unsuitable for some of the works to be done. The mock-up for the signage to replace existing at village hall drive had still not been received.  
**Resolved** to defer following up these items until weather suitable for the works, Spring 2025. Proposed Chairman, seconded G Byrne.
- d) **RSPB Lease** Despite a number of emails and telephone calls over the past few months the solicitor had still not come forward with the new Lease for signing. Clerk to contact RSPB.
- e) **Deed Right of Way and Parking for Village Hall** The instruction had been issued to solicitors by both sides. Terms of business documents had been received. Forms being completed by Clerk, Chairman and Vice-Chairman.

Clerk

Feb  
Agenda

Clerk

8.45pm Chairman re-opened meeting to the public. No members of the public present.

24/179 **Finance and Administration Matters** (cont)

- f) **Receipts and payments schedule** for November 2024 had been circulated. Documentation had been checked by S Wilkin and K Mackender.

**Resolved** to approve the receipts and payments for November 2024 and release payments, (listed at foot of Minutes). Also that with there being no December meeting, Clerk to make arrangements for December payments to be made and reported at the next meeting in accordance with Financial regulations. (Listed at foot of Minutes). Proposed J Lucas, seconded Chairman.

Clerk

Clerk gave update on outstanding reimbursement for April What's On regarding VAT charge

**Resolved** that as this was small amount of money the Council would write it off and make the full reimbursement on the next cheque run. Proposed K Mackender, seconded Chairman

Clerk

- g) **Quarterly reconciliations and budget report** previously circulated. Bank statements presented at meeting. Receipts to date (including full Precept) £44897.90, Payments £34809.65. Balance £62678.43 including all earmarked reserves. Budget report noted.

**Resolved** to approve the Quarterly reconciliations to 30 September 2024 Proposed S Wilkin, seconded J Lucas.

- h) **Bank Accounts**

Clerk confirmed Fixed Term Deposit £25k had been set up as instructed at previous meeting (2.75% for one year). Interest rates on other savings accounts noted. Details from the bank regarding switching of Treasury account to Community account with effect 14 January 2025 was noted.

Clerk

Clerk reported that the bank had still not amended the bank mandate to include G Byrne.

Clerk

- i) **Review draft 2025/6 Budget and Precept**

Following announcement of pay award for 2024/5 and the Chancellor of the Exchequer's announcement about changes to employers' National Insurance contributions – thresholds and rates, the Clerk had revised the figures in the 2025/6 budget. Grasscutting and grounds maintenance budget increased by £500.

Clerk

Earmarked reserves were examined including CIL receipts.

**Resolved** to provisionally earmark CIL receipts of £19737 to Cemetery (half), path across village green (quarter) Mepal Road speed reduction etc (quarter). Proposed K Mackender, seconded G Byrne.

Clerk

**Resolved** to approve expenditure budget of £21200, Expected income £2200, and to set the Precept at £19000. Proposed J Lucas, seconded K Mackender.

Clerk

- j) **Policies**

Clerk had amended Biodiversity Policy as discussed at previous meeting, Minute 24/162a). Copy previously circulated

**Resolved** to approve adoption of the Biodiversity Policy. Proposed Chairman, seconded G Byrne.

Proposals for Xmas newsletter circulated. Chairman and Clerk to complete and arrange for circulation end November.

Clerk/  
Chairman24/180 **Neighbourhood Plan**

- a) **Minutes of the working party's meetings** held on 17 October and the 7 November 2024 had been previously circulated.

**Resolved** to receive and note the Minutes of October and November meetings. Proposed S Wilkin, seconded G Byrne.

Chairman advised that the Working Group would like the survey results, Design Code and Draft Plan documents to be posted on the

24/180 **Neighbourhood Plan (cont)**

Council's website again together with the Events leaflet and this was agreed. Noted that as the Council's website had no useable Neighbourhood Plan page, information would have to be put on the 'News' page as with previous uploads about the work of the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group. Consultant to provide Clerk with link so that residents could access the online response form.

WNPWG

- b) **Draft Neighbourhood Plan (Proof-read edition)** had been received for examination and approval by the members of the Council.

**Resolved** that the draft Neighbourhood Plan is approved for the purposes of the Regulation 14 Pre-Submission consultation to commence at the earliest convenient date. Proposed K Mackender, seconded G Byrne.

Clerk

It was hoped that the public event could be booked for 14 December at the Village Hall. Booking to be confirmed. All Councillors invited to attend.

A draft of the leaflet for the event had been received from the Consultant and circulated to Councillors earlier in the day. Copies available at the meeting.

**Resolved** that Clerk should contact the Consultant as it was noted there was nothing specific recorded in the leaflet about the survey results regarding burial and cremation facilities. Chairman authorised to do final review of the leaflet and feedback to the working group. Proposed K Mackender, seconded S Wilkin.

Clerk

Chairman

9.30pm J Lucas gave her apologies and left the meeting

24/181 **Consultations**

The Council had been invited to submit views/comments on the following:

- a) **East Cambridgeshire District Council - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy 2025-2028.**

**Resolved** that the Council had no views to submit. Proposed K Mackender, seconded G Byrne.

- b) **Enabling Remote Attendance and Proxy Voting at Local Authority Meetings** (Government proposal)

**Resolved** that the Council had no views to submit. Proposed K Mackender, seconded G Byrne.

24/182 **Recreation Ground and Cemetery Matters**

- a) G Byrne advised that there was grease appearing on a part on the surfer fitness equipment. Chairman said he would deal with.

**Weekly inspections** of recreation ground and play equipment had been completed by the Chairman and other than surfer reported above, there were no issues to raise.

Chairman

Chairman to monitor weather and turn tap off at cemetery when temperatures dip low to freezing.

It was noted that the grass at the cemetery, around the village sign and the banks and play area was long and the contractor should get another cut in if possible before the weather turns. The top of the recreation ground had been cut at the end of October.

Clerk

- b) **Ely City Cricket** - use for matches in 2025 season

**Resolved** that in principle the Council would consent to Ely City 3<sup>rd</sup> XI Cricket team to using the recreation ground for the 2025 season, subject to receipt of further information regarding dates and arrangements. Proposed K Mackender, seconded G Byrne.

- c) **Witcham Events Committee Application** for consent to use recreation ground for Christmas Tree and Lights Celebrations (Minute 24/164b).

Clerk

24/182

**Recreation Ground and Cemetery Matters (cont)**

Revised application had been circulated 8.11.24. However, earlier in the day the Committee Chair had withdrawn details for the erection of large Christmas tree on recreation ground and replaced with request for approval to replace with a smaller potted 6-8 feet Christmas tree. She asked if the tree could be planted as a permanent tree on the recreation ground.

**Resolved** that the Council consented to the Witcham Events Committee placing a potted 6-8 feet Christmas tree with lights on the recreation ground at any of the previously proposed sites. Also to install LED Christmas lights around village green area as shown on application dated 7 November. Unfortunately, the Council was unable to consent to the tree being planted permanently anywhere on the recreation ground. Proposed G Byrne, seconded K Mackender.

*Clerk*

Clerk had circulated the response from the ECDC Conservation Officer regarding internal adaptations to K6 telephone boxes.

*Jan agenda*24/183 **Speedwatch and MVAS Monitoring**

G Byrne reported that another volunteer had come forward to help with Speedwatch so they would now be able to facilitate sessions twice a month. The checks were successful and people were slowing down. Latest MVAS monitoring statistics had been circulated and were noted.

24/184 **Highways and Street Lighting Matters**

- a) Clerk had reported the overgrown path between High Street and Back Lane.

Regarding drainage at Mepal Road and flooding at the cemetery (Minute 24/174):

**Resolved** to ask County Council to pursue with appropriate landowners. Proposed Chairman, seconded S Wilkin.

Regarding Headleys Lane/Pond Farm development. (Minute 24/174):

**Resolved** to advise the Local Highways Officer dealing with the issue that the hedge needs to be removed and moved back adjacent to the path in front of the property, to be in line with what is left of the original hedge and inside the line of telegraph poles in the verge (County Council owned asset). Proposed Chairman, seconded S Wilkin. (photographic and planning application site map provided)

*Clerk**Clerk*

- b) CCC Capitally Funded Highway Maintenance Scheme:

Areas of concern within the parish were The Slade – crossing over at Witcham Toll to go to Sutton, and extend the path at Mepal Road.

**Resolved** that the Council put forward extending path at Mepal Road. Proposed K Mackender, seconded Chairman.

- c) Mepal Parish Council/Witcham Parish Council Joint Working project for improvements to path and speed reduction measures Mepal and Witcham Roads. G Byrne gave verbal report on the meeting on 6 November 2024: Mepal Parish Council representatives were keen to support further investigations to undertake this project. He offered to look into schemes such as the Local Highway Improvement Programme and report back to Council. (See also 24/174).

**Resolved** that the Council was happy to support identifying next steps for taking further forward. Proposed K Mackender, seconded Chairman.

*GB/SW*24/185 **Correspondence**

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

ECDC Rough Sleeper Count. Nil

Witcham Conservation Group meeting 22 October 2024 notes. (WNPWG)

24/185 **Correspondence** (cont)

ECDC Hedgehog Ecology and Management – free course (forwarded to Conservation group volunteers & confirmed 2 members of the group will attend).

CAPALC AGM 31 October 2024. Chairman had attended. Minutes awaited.

East Cambs Net Zero Villages Grant (passed to Village Hall).

East Cambridgeshire Community Fund closes 9 December 2024.

ECDC Press Release Local Plan [Council 17.10.24 | East Cambridgeshire District Council \(eastcambs.gov.uk\)](#)

ECDC Section 106 Grants and Facilities Improvement Grants, and CIL Guidance.

ECDC new website plans.

ECDC Community Safety Project Newsletter.

East Cambs Community Coordinator (CCC) updates.

ECDC Meetings: Council, Planning, Audit.

ECDC Press releases: one-stop-shop for residents, East Cambs groups encouraged to apply for community grant, Avoid being a bonfire bandit this autumn, Remember hedgehogs this autumn, Council takes significant step to end homelessness, Council takes significant step to end rough sleeping, Rescue Me campaign launched for Recycle Week, Pension Credit, CCC Second Chemical Weed Treatment Programme.

CCC Highway Events.

NALC Bulletins, newsletters.

CCC Capital Maintenance Prioritisation Process – stakeholder briefing

CCC TMC Incident Report

24/186 **Date of next meeting:** 8 January 2025

Meeting closed at 10.07pm

**Schedule of Receipts and Payments**

		£	£	£
Receipts:	Ely City Cricket Donation Recreation Ground	400.00		400.00
Payments	002174 Truelink	332.40	66.48)	
	“	392.40	78.48)	869.76
	002175 Reimbursement What's On Editor (Oct)	36.10		36.10
	002176 K&M Lighting	22.05	4.41	26.46
	002177/BACS Salary Expenses	536.66	-	536.66
	002178 Places4People	3347.00	669.40	4016.40
	c/p MS online services – 7 licences emails	34.30	6.86	41.16

Signed..... Dated .....