

## WITCHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 8 January 2025 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall, Witcham

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

*In attendance* Parish Clerk/RFO  
District Councillor M Inskip

Chairman opened the meeting and wished everyone a Happy New Year.

25/001 **Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received and accepted from S Wilkin (personal). Apologies also received from County Councillor L Dupré

25/002 **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

25/003 **Dispensations**

To note any new Dispensations granted: Nil

25/004 **Reports from District and County Councillors**

Monthly reports, previously circulated, were noted.

7.33pm Chairman opened the meeting to welcome Councillor Inskip, and invited him to give any updates. It was noted that preliminary setting up for the road works on the road out of Sutton to Earith (The Causeway) had commenced and it was expected the route would be closed as per notices from mid-week. Cllr Dupré had asked for the straight piece of road along the bank to be included if possible but this would not be in this current schedule of works – possibly next year.

Chairman closed the open section and Councillor Inskip stayed on to observe.

25/005 **Public Participation** There were no members of the public present.

25/006 **Minutes**

Minutes of the Meeting of 13 November 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 J Lucas.

Minutes of the Meeting of 12 December 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 J Lucas and Chairman

25/007 **Matters Arising**

There were none.

25/008 **Neighbourhood Plan**

Chairman gave a report on the public meeting held at the Village Hall on 14 December, which had started off the 8 week consultation period for this stage of making the Plan. So far there had been 3 online responses and the Clerk advised she had received a couple of responses from statutory bodies and expected this would pick up now that people were back to work after the holiday period. Some Councillors pointed out that completing the response form required access to the documents at the same time as having the response form open which was tricky on some appliances. People did not need to respond to every question - can be just items they are interested in. It was noted provision had been made for access to hardcopies of the documents at 4 addresses in High Street, Silver Street and The Slade, as well as the Council's website.

**Resolved** that Clerk should contact the Lead for the Working Group to pass on the Council's comments including the suggestion to put a copy of the referenced document at the bus shelter for people to borrow short term and return. Also the Working Group should put a post on the community Facebook page giving details and highlighting where hardcopies are available, and offering assistance if required. The Council agreed with the Lead of the Group that it would be helpful to put a reminder out in the newsletter, ie. "What's on in Witcham". Proposed K Mackender, seconded G Byrne. *Clerk*

**Resolved** that Clerk should complete the 'end of grant report' for current grant (£98 underspend), and despatch next grant application which was being prepared by the Consultant for the Group. Proposed J Lucas, seconded K Mackender. *Clerk*

25/009 **Recreation Ground and Cemetery Matters**

- a) **Weekly inspections** of play equipment and recreation ground had been completed by the Chairman and there was nothing to report for action. L Holdaway said a resident had approached her asking about planting more trees to make shade at the play area. The Council had decided not to plant up the area with trees as they bring problems with leaves, roots, management of safety surfacing and equipment, and cleaning etc. Clerk confirmed she had received signed contract back for grasscutting.
- b) **The village sign** had been fully repainted and re-erected, and was looking very good. Councillors thanked G Byrne for arranging transport and Chairman for arranging re-erection.
- c) **Cemetery:** Clerk reported that County Council had been in touch with landowners regarding riparian responsibilities for drainage pipe in highway verge on Mepal Road. It was noted that the level of water in the ditch was now very low having been flooded during December when there had been a lot of rain.

25/010 **MVAS, Speed Watch and Speed Reduction Measures Mepal-Witcham**

- a) Chairman had circulated the latest monthly speed data report which was noted and G Byrne advised that the Speed Watch sessions would be restarting soon.
- b) Joint Working for Application under Local Highways Initiative Programme (Witcham and Mepal Parish Councils) – Extend 40mph speed limit for remainder of Mepal Road, Witcham and Witcham Road, Mepal (C127) and improvements for path verge to improve safety for pedestrians/horseriders/cyclists. As referenced in Minute 24/192, noted that Mepal Parish Council felt they needed to gather more evidence and discuss further before making final decision in Council to undertake this joint project. Reducing the speed limit at Bridge Road in Mepal was also a priority for them. Speeding by the Pavilion entrance on Witcham Road was of concern.

25/010 **MVAS, Speed Watch and Speed Reduction Measures Mepal-Witcham**  
(cont)

**Resolved** that a further meeting between the representatives of the two Councils and the Clerks was needed to discuss proportionate expenditure for each Council, get a better idea of costs, what further evidence was required to support each Council – including the additional portion for measures at Bridge Road, Mepal. Clerk to set up meeting and start process for further guidance from County Council Officer regarding application, scoring and guide to costs. Proposed Chairman, seconded K Mackender.

*Clerk*

25/011 **Finance and Administration Matters**

**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 25/011a) to 25/011c), namely RSPB lease, deed of public rights of way & car park, and staff matters, 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.

District Councillor M Inskip was thanked for attending and he left the meeting at 8.20pm

- a) **RSPB Lease.** Clerk reported on update from legal adviser. Regarding requirements for the Clause - **Resolved** that should the Council wish to sell the land, provision should be made for RSPB to be offered the opportunity to purchase the land first. However, the Council has a duty to get best value so would not be obliged to sell it to them if a better offer was received. Proposed K Mackender, seconded Chairman.
- b) **Deed Right of Way and Parking for Village Hall.** The nominated Council representatives had now completed proof of identity in the engagement process with the solicitors. Draft was now awaited. Chair of Village Hall had confirmed she had chased up their legal advisers to get the draft prepared urgently.
- c) **Clerk's Hours 2024/25**  
After discussion, **Resolved** to approve payment of 100 hours to Clerk for extra work carried out in respect of increased workload, projects, Neighbourhood Plan and extra meetings. Proposed K Mackender, seconded G Byrne.

*Clerk*

*Clerk*

8.40pm Chairman re-opened meeting to the public. No members of the public present.

- d) **Renewal ACRE Membership**  
**Resolved** to approve renewal of ACRE Membership, £72. Proposed K Mackender, seconded J Lucas.
- e) **Receipts and payments schedule** for January 2025, together with list of payments for December 2024 had been circulated. Documentation had been checked by J Lucas and K Mackender. **Resolved** to approve the receipts and payments for January 2025 and December 2024. (Listed at foot of Minutes). Proposed J Lucas, seconded K Mackender.

*Clerk*

*Clerk*

25/013 **Consultations**

- a) ECDC Rural Settlement List for 2025/2026. Noted.
- b) CCC Business Planning and Budget Consultation – no one nominated to attend.

25/013 **Consultations** (cont)

- c) SLCC - Parish/Town Council's - views on consultations with statutory bodies which run into hundreds of pages that need to be examined by Councillors in order to respond, and to note that silence could be taken as support. Eg. Greater Cambridge initiatives, Bus Franchise etc. Councillors confirmed that they would like such consultations to be simplified by the consulting body producing a summary that was intelligible to a lay person, say maximum 2 pages. **Resolved** Clerk to respond to SLCC supporting concerns as discussed. Proposed G Byrne, seconded Chairman.
- d) SLCC - Strengthening the Standards and Conduct Framework for Local Authorities in England. Noted and no response for submission.
- e) Modified Witchford Neighbourhood Plan (Submission Version) - comments invited by 14 January 2025. Noted and no response for submission.

Clerk

25/013 **Highways and Street Lighting Matters**

There was nothing reported under this item.

25/014 **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 – St Marys Surgery to be awarded Alternative Provider Medical Services (APMS) contract to provide primary medical services from Priors Field Surgery. This was very pleasing news.

CAPALC webinar 30 January 2025 regarding The Big Lunch 2025, Saturday 7 – Sunday 8 June, complementing VE Day 80 activities in May.

CAPALC 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary VE Day 8 May 2025

CAPALC Bulletin

Cambs ACRE Rural Affordable Housing Programme

Cambs ACRE new local nature recovery project for local councils – to be forwarded to the Neighbourhood Plan Conservation Group lead for a response for Council to consider.

East Cambs Parish Council Conference - 11th February 2025 at Littleport Leisure Centre – no one nominated.

ECDC Meetings: Council, Planning <https://eastcambs.gov.uk/about-council/meetings-agendas-and-minutes>

ECDC Free event for East Cambs landlords

ECDC White Ribbon Campaign

CCC Highway Events

CCC Environment & Green Investment Committee – adopted Action Plan for supporting communities to develop Community Energy projects. [Community Energy | Cambridgeshire County Council](#).

NALC Bulletins, newsletters

OWS10 Stakeholder update Middle Level Barrier Bank as part of the Ouse Washes project.

In closing the meeting Chairman asked that everyone read their emails regularly and respond promptly to help and support Clerk. Use of the out of office facility discussed for people to use when not accessing emails eg absences and holidays.

24/015 **Date of next meeting:** 12 February 2025

Meeting closed at 8.55pm

**Schedule of Receipts and Payments**

	£	£	£
January receipts and payments			
Receipts: UK Power Networks (substation)	86.69		86.69
Payments:			
002185 Places4People	3289.00	657.80	3946.80
002186 Village Hall Neighbourhood Plan Meetings	188.00		188.00
002187 Truelink	80.00	16.00	96.00
002182/188 BACS Salary Expenses	892.74		892.74
002189 Npower St lights	44.07	2.20	46.27
002190 Cambs ACRE membership fees			72.00
c/p MS online services – 7 licences emails	34.30	6.86	41.16
December payments			
Receipts: NIL			
Payments:			
002179 Truelink	272.40	54.48	326.88
002180 TEEC	216.00	43.20	259.20
002181/BACS Salary Expenses	716.24		716.24
002183 Cartridgesave Ltd	25.85	5.17	31.02
002184 Reimbursement What's On Editor (Apr)	54.65		54.65
c/p MS online services – 7 licences emails	34.30	6.86	41.16

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