

## **Witchford Parish Council**

Clerk: Mrs S M Monteith, 174 Main Street, Witchford Ely, Cambridgeshire, CB6 2HT  
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### **Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2009 at 7.30 pm in St Andrew's Church**

**Present:** Mr G Jellicoe (in the chair), Mrs D Field, Mr H Palmer, Mrs S Bromley-Allen, Mr G Barber, Mrs L Langley

**Apology:** Mr I Brand, Mr G Matthias, Mr W Hunt, Mrs P Wilson

**In attendance:** Mr G Wilson, Mrs S Bowd (for items 197 and 198 only)

- 194 There were no declarations of interest.
- 195 Mr Terry King was **co-opted** to fill the vacancy on the Parish Council and duly signed the declaration of acceptance of office
- 196 The **minutes** of the Parish Council meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2009 were taken as read, approved and were signed by the Chairman.
- 197 The Responsible Financial Officer corrected the total estimated balance in the precept calculations to £8327. It was agreed that the precept for the year 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011 be £42,560. Mrs Bowd explained that this gives a band D equivalent of £51.21 based on a tax base of 831 against the current year's band D equivalent of £50.67
- 198 From 5<sup>th</sup> October, East Cambridgeshire District Council's waste contractors have collected from Witchford on Mondays which has resulted in the Parish Council Handywoman having to work on Sunday evenings to tie up the bags ready for collection on Monday morning. It was agreed that with effect from 5<sup>th</sup> October 2009, One of Mrs Bland's working hours will be paid at time and a half to compensate her for working at an unsocial hour on Sunday evenings.

### **Report from District Councillors**

- 199 In response to a question Councillor Wilson stated that he believed that waste collection from Witchford had been moved to a Monday as part of a rationalisation programme to enable the District Council's contractors to complete collections of paper and black sacks on the same day throughout the District.
- 200 Councillor Wilson expressed the view that East Cambridgeshire District Council had serious problems with its finances and it was his view that there would be cuts in services and redundancies with council tax rises likely to be more than inflation. He believed the reasons for this included, interest rates having gone down, fewer developments in the area so fewer planning fees and section 106 contributions and the amount of money paid to consultants. He was concerned that, despite these problems, the District council still appears to be considering new masterplans, a country park and leisure centre. Councillor Wilson was asked to report to the next meeting of the Parish Council, how many people responded to the Ely masterplan and how much did it cost. The Parish Council noted the apparent lack of senior management at the District Council, bearing in mind that it understood that the Chief Executive had been working half time since the summer and now has been signed off until at least January, coupled with the recent loss of the Director of Finance. Councillor Wilson was asked to pass on at the Policy and Resources Committee on 15<sup>th</sup> December, the serious concerns of the Parish Council regarding the lack of senior management and finances of the District Council.

- 201 Councillor Bromley-Allen will represent the Parish Council at the Ely and Soham Dial-a-Ride annual general meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2010.
- 202 A letter was noted from 1<sup>st</sup> Witchford Guides thanking the Parish Council for their donation and explaining the use to which this had been put.
- 203 A diseased horse chestnut tree has been cut down in Elm Close. The Parish Council had had this tree inspected by the Parish Tree Warden and the East Cambridgeshire District Council Tree Warden who both concluded that it was dangerous. The ownership of this land is not clear but neither East Cambridgeshire District Council, nor the Parish Council own this land. The Land Registry reference for this land is CB7411 and RH Spicer 1974 Ltd is indicated as having title absolute. Meadow Croft Developments are mentioned. The Land Registry map shows each individual dwelling to have its own title, leaving the access roads and verges. In view of the fact that the Parish Council paid for a hedge to be cut in this area last year, East Cambridgeshire District Council paid for the tree to be removed. However, they state that notwithstanding this recent one-off assistance, they have been advised by their legal department that their opinion is that because the Parish Council has been maintaining this land since 1979, then they consider that the Parish Council would also be responsible for maintaining the trees.
- 204 The Parish Path Partnership Application form for 2010/2011 was noted. The Chairman and clerk will complete this on behalf of the Parish Council in the New Year.
- 205 A request was noted from a local resident for help in identifying a five mile route for a guided sponsored walk in memory of a local boy who died in an accident some months ago. The Chairman and Councillor King will work out a suitable route and Councillor Field and the clerk hope to attend the walk.
- 206 A response from County Highways was noted following the Parish Council's suggestion regarding time-restricted changes to road markings in the area of Rackham School as an aid to safety in the area. The Parish Council had suggested a dedicated bus stop and a single yellow line on the north side of the road, additional to the single yellow line on the south side. The County state that finance is not available at the moment for these improvements and believe that some of the issues could be dealt with by enforcement. They believe that the issue is related more to Safer Routes to School rather than County Highways and pointed out that they did not believe that Rackham School had applied for funding from Safer Route to School for this purpose. It was agreed to send copies of this correspondence to Rackham School and also to Greys bus company.
- 207 It was noted that the Parish Council's bids under the Jointly Funded Minor Highways Improvements Programme 2010-11 had not been approved. The Parish Council had applied for improvements for pedestrians in Grunty Fen Road and for the extension of the cycle way from Wentworth to Witcham Toll.
- 208 As part of the development of the new Household Waste Recycling Centre, the County Council are required to set up a Local Liaison Group and they requested two members from Witchford Parish Council. It was agreed that the Chairman and Councillor Palmer would attend this group. Councillor Palmer will take advice from the Monitoring Officer of East Cambridgeshire District Council to be certain that his membership of this group is appropriate in view of the fact that his home is very close to the site. Councillor Langley will be the reserved member of the Group.
- 209 The meeting dates for 2010 were approved.
- 210 The Youth Club had expressed the wish to carry out a graffiti project and asked if they could graffiti the bus stop outside the front of St Andrew's Hall. The Parish Council did not believe this was an appropriate location for this project and instructed the clerk to refuse this request but to wish them well in finding an alternative location.
- 211 A good response had been received to the Parish Council's note in the Witchfordian asking for those interested in an allotment to contact the clerk. So far twelve residents have come forward. It was agreed that the working party would meet on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2009 to discuss what land could be available in the village. The clerk has put a note in

the Witchfordian asking that anyone with land they consider suitable and which would be available for rent by the Parish Council, contact her for an informal discussion.

- 212 It was noted that consent had been granted by the District Council for change of use from agricultural land to equestrian/agricultural land on land south of 41 Ward Way Witchford and that a condition of this consent is that "all access to the site for vehicles associated with the equestrian use of the land shall be from the southeast entrance to the site only and no access shall be made from Ward Way". At the Parish Council meeting in October 2009 it was noted that Mills Lane is not a public right of way for vehicles, it is a footpath that it is possible that this access can be used only for those with a prescriptive right for agricultural use or where a licence has been granted. (minute 1079/152). Following some research by the Chairman, It was noted that use of Mills Lane to conform with the planning consent is unlikely to be thought of as intensification of use.
- 213 A faulty light near Rackham School was reported. It was noted that some faulty street lights have still not been repaired. The clerk will again contact the County Council.
- 214 The three year grass cutting contract is due to expire shortly and tender documents have been sent out for the new contract to run from April 2010 for three years
- 215 The clerk had been contacted by a resident regarding the pollarding of a tree in the Broadway. It was not thought that this was on Parish Council land but in any event, the Parish Tree Warden had no objection.
- 216 A tree at the junction of Main Street/Granta Close was still reported to be causing an obstruction in the sight-line of vehicles coming out of Granta Close. It was agreed that the Tree Warden and Chairman would take a further look at this.
- 217 The Chairman reported by overgrowth on byway 12 is currently being cleared by the County Council.
- 218 It was reported by Councillor Field that the refurbished noticeboard is now ready to be put back on the site.
- 219 It was proposed by Councillor Barber, seconded by Councillor Bromley-Allen that the bank reconciliation and the cheques on the schedule of cheques be approved.
- 219 The next Parish Council meeting will be on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2010.

***All Parish Council meetings are open to the public.***

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.50 p.m.

Signed: ..... Chairman

Date: .....