

1204
Witchford Parish Council

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**Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 1st February 2012 at
7.30pm at St Andrews Hall, Main Street, Witchford.**

Present: Mr G Jellicoe (in the chair), Mr G Matthias, Mr I Allen, Mrs R Lacey, Mr T King, Mr H Palmer, Mr A Shields
Apologies: Mr I Brand, Mrs S Bromley-Allen, Mrs D Field, County Councillor Mr W Hunt, District Councillor Mrs P Wilson
In attendance: District Councillor Mr G Wilson, Mr A Howe WPGA

- 363 The Clerk declared a professional and personal interest in item 5.11. Cllr Matthias declared a personal interest in item 13
- 364 A member of the public attended the meeting to express his concern about the planning application for a new dwelling to the rear of No29 Manor Close, in particular that the access track across the back of the Common is not suitable for heavy construction vehicles and will be severely damaged if so used. The Parish Council noted these concerns.
- 365 Mr A Howe of the Witchford Playing Fields Association gave a presentation to the Parish Council about plans for upgrading the changing rooms at the **village hall** in Bedwell Hey Lane. Mr Howe reported that the existing facilities were not suited to the demands of the increasing number of teams using the hall and football field, and that the Football Association now has higher standards for changing rooms. Therefore the WPGA is proposing to construct a new stand-alone building on the field to provide two new changing rooms, referee's changing room, community meeting room, small kitchen and storage space. This building could potentially be used by other community groups and sports clubs. Mr Howe reported that the proposals would free up space inside the main hall, thus enabling the WPGA to look at improvements to that building as a future project. There will be an **informal presentation of the proposals for the public on Saturday 25th February 2012 at the village hall in Bedwell Hey Lane. Residents and hall users are invited to drop in at any time 12-3pm on that day** to view the proposals and give their comments.
- 366 The Parish Council raised a number of points with Mr Howe. The Parish Council in principle supported the concept of providing new changing rooms and free-ing up space within the hall, thus allowing internal improvement works to take place. However, Councillors questioned the phasing of the proposed works, suggesting instead that the new changing rooms should be built, without the proposed new meeting room and kitchen, and then improvement works on the hall should take place before consideration is given to whether to building the proposed extra meeting room and kitchen. This would ensure that improvements to the main hall itself were prioritised, and would also give the WPGA time to assess whether there was in fact sufficient demand for another meeting room in the village. Councillors stressed that the original purpose of allotting most of Witchford's S106 fund to the village hall was to upgrade the village hall for the whole community, and that the money was intended as a 'nest egg' to attract further funding. Councillors indicated their view that the football clubs who will benefit from the new changing facilities should make a firm contribution.

- 367 Mr Howe said that advice the WPFA had been given is that the new meeting room was an important part of the proposal in order to attract grant funding from external bodies, as it showed that the development was not just sport-based. The WPFA had considered using portacabins for temporary changing rooms, but that grant-making bodies do not support portacabins. The WPFA is in a 'chicken and egg' situation at the moment, as it cannot apply for match funding from external bodies until it has drawn up a business plan and has planning permission. Parking associated with the development is an issue the WPFA will be looking at. The plans for the hall development were not confirmed yet and the WPFA were seeking views and comments before putting together the final proposals. Cllr Gareth Wilson added that it would be important for the WPFA to be able to demonstrate wide-ranging proactive consultation on the proposals as part of any future bids for external funding.
- 368 The Chairman thanked Mr Howe for attending the meeting and responding so openly to the Parish Council's questions.
- 369 The **minutes** of the Parish Council Meeting held on 4th January 2012 were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chairman.
- 370 The Clerk will inquire of Cllr Bromley-Allen if she is able to attend the AGM of Ely-Soham Dial-A-Ride on Tuesday 14th February on behalf of the Parish Council.
- 371 The Parish Council noted an update from Cambridgeshire County Council's Rights of Way and Access Team on changes to the Team's structure to be implemented on 20th February 2012. The Team will be split into two, with the rights of way officers, who are responsible for the on-the-ground maintenance of public paths including supporting the Parish Paths Partnership, in the Local Infrastructure and Street Management Service and the Definitive Map officers in the Assets and Commissioning Service.
- 372 It was felt that the Parish Council did not need to send a representative to 'Getting Your Message Across' training about promoting local public paths, set up by the County Council, as Witchford had already produced an updated walks leaflet in 2010.
- 373 A letter was received from UK Power Networks in response to the Parish Council's complaint about 'flickering' in the electricity supply. UK Power Networks explained that these brief power interruptions are due to the operation of an automatic switch on the overhead lines bringing power to Witchford from the Ely Primary sub-station. Wind-borne debris, trees and birds can cause this to happen. Once the fault has cleared, power is automatically re-connected. This usually last a few seconds only. These automatic switches mean that power can be shut-down and restored very quickly, without the need for an engineer to attend the site.
- 374 The Parish Council considered a letter from Bendall Roberts Solicitors regarding vehicular access to property along Mills Lane, which is registered as a public footpath. Following discussion and a review of the evidence currently available to it, the Parish Council **resolved** that it would write back to the solicitors asking their client to demonstrate that it has lawful authority to use Mills Lane with a vehicle.

Reports from County and District Councillors

- 375 Cllr Gareth Wilson reported on meetings he had attended during January at East Cambridgeshire District Council. The Audit and Budget Sub-committee has been considering the District Council's internal committee structure and also looking at how the District Council measures its own performance. Cllr Wilson then discussed the District Council's budget for 2012-13. There will be no need to make significant cuts, and the District Council will be putting an additional £665,000 into its savings reserves, bringing

this up to nearly £1million. The District Council could find no funding for the Ely-Soham Dial-A-Ride Service. The District Council element of the Council Tax for 2012-13 will rise by 2.9%.

Requests for donations

- 376 The Parish Council considered requests for donations from organisations and individuals in the parish. The Parish Council has powers under various items of legislation to grant aid organisations and individuals for the benefit of the parish as a whole, for groups of residents or for individual residents.
- 377 Witchford Colts Football Club applied for a grant of £2190 to purchase age appropriate sized goals, nets and corner flags, as required by the Football Association. The Parish Council resolved to grant £1525 under s19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976. This will cover the cost of the new goals.
- 378 1st Witchford Guides applied for a grant of £200 to purchase 3-4 folding plastic tables for cooking. The Parish Council resolved to grant £200 under s137 of the Local Government Act 1972.
- 379 1st Witchford Brownies applied for a grant of £130 towards rent and photocopying. The Parish Council resolved to grant £130 under s137 of the Local Government Act 1972, but as a one-off.
- 380 Mrs D Field applied for a grant of £190 for gates at the new permissive path she is providing for the village. The Parish Council resolved to grant £190 under s137 of the Local Government Act 1972.
- 381 The Clerk was asked to write a notice for the Witchfordian advising that the Parish Council may be able to support with a financial grant properly organised events in the village to mark the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2012.
- 382 Councillors discussed the possibility of using locally produced bark chippings for topping up the surfacing at the Common Road play area. The Clerk was asked to investigate if there is a British Standard or similar for this type of surfacing.
- 383 The Clerk advised that two separate applications have been made by the Parish Council to the Cambridgeshire County Council's **Minor Highways Improvements Funding Scheme**. One application is for a package of works to reduce traffic speeds and improve safety for pedestrians at Grunty Fen Road, including constructing a footway within the existing highway verge along the western side of Grunty Fen Road to highway specifications, length 45m, to link to the current permissive footpath, extending the 30mph zone to south of the existing telegraph pole, introducing a 40mph zone extending 400m from the end of the 30mph zone, to slow traffic on the dangerous bend on the approach to the village, and erecting a 'Witchford' signpost at an appropriate location on Grunty Fen Road thus alerting drivers that they are entering a residential area.
- 384 The other application for funding is for a package of works at the entrance to the village from the east on Ely Road, to enhance the new verge gates. Works include providing rumble grit strips at the approach to the gates along Ely Road from the east, relocating the 30mph zone to the gates, placing a 'carriage clock' style 30mph and village name sign on each gate and implementing a 40mph zone along Ely Road eastwards, extending 400m east from the gates.
- 385 It is not known when the County Council will make its decision on which bids for funding it will support under this scheme.

1207

- 386 A page outlining the Parish Council's proposals for traffic calming and speed reduction works in the village has been added to the Witchford Online website.

- 387 The Parish Council noted that an application to this fund has also been made on behalf of the A142 Cycleway Working Party.
- 388 Cllr Jellicoe circulated photographs of littering at Sandpit Lane adjacent to the Village College, along Pools Road where recent hedge-cutting has exposed a lot of litter, and along Witchford Road in the vicinity of the entrance to the Household Waste Recycling Centre. The Clerk was asked to write to Witchford Village College to request that it could organise some litter picking along its boundary, and to East Cambridgeshire District Council asking that litter clearance takes place on Pools Road. The Parish Council discussed the increase in litter along Witchford Road since the new HWRC has been open. The Clerk was asked to write to East Cambridgeshire District Council to request that the verges along Witchford Road as far as the village are cleared; this will also provide a base-line against which to monitor littering from the HWRC. The Clerk was also asked to write to Cambridgeshire County Council referring to commitments previously given to the HWRC Liaison Group that the operator will be responsible for clearing litter in the vicinity of the centre.
- 389 The Parish Council discussed reports of persons driving across the grass area at Elm Close to access the front of properties. The Clerk was asked to write to householders to ask them to refrain from doing so as this area is a village amenity.
- 390 It was noted that the new salt bin purchased by the Parish Council for outside the primary school was stolen during the Christmas period. Councillors agreed that they might purchase a new bin if still desired by the school, as long as the school undertook to receive the bin from the highways depot, keep the bin safe until it was ready to be placed on site, and firmly fix the bin to the ground so that it could not be removed.
- 391 The Parish Council agreed to continue its membership Parish Paths Partnership in 2012-2013.
- 392 Cllr Jellicoe reported back from the Cambridgeshire County Council Enterprise, Growth and Community Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee of 12th January 2012, at which the future level of bus subsidies was discussed. The Parish Council asked the Clerk to write to the County Council to get confirmation that there will be no further cuts to the number 9 service to Witchford.
- 393 It was noted that the school contract buses are coming through the village, along Main Street to the LWBP roundabout, on a regular basis. Previous discussions have stressed that these buses should only come through the village if they are turning down Grunty Fen Road, and should generally use Common Road and exit onto the bypass. The Parish Council asked the Clerk to write to the County Council Education Transport section about this.
- 394 Cllr Lacey reported back from the East Cambridgeshire 'Shape Your Place' Seminar that she and Cllr Bromley-Allen had attended on behalf of the Parish Council on 18th January 2012. This website would complement the Neighbourhood Panel by linking with other panels so that people can see what is also going on in the wider area. Parish Councils can have links to web pages via their own site or have pages on the Shape Your Place site. Trends and ideas that may be of interest may be highlighted. The website would show that the Neighbourhood Panels and Parish Councils are doing their job and be more transparent for all concerned, and could be used by people who cannot get to a Neighbourhood Panel meeting. It is intended that the Shape-your-Place website operates as a one-stop-shop for the public to raise concerns and to see that something is being

done to address them. The website will be set up using funds left over from setting up the Fenland Shape Your Place site and ongoing costs will be met by using existing staff to maintain the site. There will be no censorship of posts to the site, but posts will be monitored for inappropriate language and content. There is also an online questionnaire about how the Shape Your Place website should be set up, which Cllr Lacey will complete on behalf of the Parish Council. The

Parish Council will consider asking Mr Howe to link the Witchford Online website to the Shape Your Place website when it is operational.

PLANNING

- 395 12/00051/FUL Land rear of 29 Manor Close Witchford
Erection of 1 3 bedroom bungalow

The Parish Council **objects** to this proposal. The proposal is not appropriate for the location, is out of character with the location and is against government planning guidance on building in gardens, access to the proposed property would be over common land, the access track to the property is not suitable for an intensification of traffic, the proposed development would generate traffic and parking issues that would be detrimental to public enjoyment of the Common. The Clerk will advise the Planning Authority accordingly.

COUNCILLOR REPORTS

- 396 A street light report has been submitted to Balfour Beatty for the light outside No132 Main Street, which is out. Light number 24 on Main Street is out; the Clerk will report this. It was noted that nothing has been done by East Cambridgeshire District Council with regard to replacing the street light in Manor Court Road; the Clerk will follow this up.
- 397 The contractor carrying out building works on behalf of Sanctuary Housing at Manor Court Road has advised the Parish Council that the footway between Manor Close and Manor Court Road will be closed for a short while during the week beginning 6th February and also on 15th-17th February, so that an underground electricity cable can be diverted. There may be temporary disruption to the electricity supply for neighbouring properties, who will be contacted directly about this by the contractor. An archeological survey of the site will take place on or about 22nd February.
- 398 Cllr Palmer inquired whether there will be further seeding of the wildflower meadow at Sandpit Drove this year, and Cllr Jellicoe confirmed that the Open Spaces Group has 5kg of wildflower seed available.
- 399 Mr Ken Sanders has been engaged to trim the hedge on the football-field side of Bedwell Hey Lane sometime during February.
- 400 The Open Spaces Group held a very successful and well-attended walk around the village footpaths on Sunday 22nd January. Thanks to Mrs Holton-Krayenbuhl for her interesting talk about local history and archeology.
- 401 The Clerk was asked to contact East Cambridgeshire District Council to arrange for hedge clippings left on the verge near the Broadway turning off Main Street can be cleared away.
- 402 The village Tree Warden and the East Cambridgeshire District Council Tree Officer have inspected the large ash tree at the Millennium Wood, and have advised the Parish Council that there is some dead-wood but no works are needed. No other problems were observable from the ground. The Parish Council agreed to instigate an annual review of large trees in the parish for which it is responsible.

1209

- 403 The Parish Council received notification from the Open Spaces Group about works that are proposed to be carried out at the Millennium Wood during February. Following the recommendations of the ECDC Tree Officer regarding the large ash tree, ivy will be removed in the upper crown only (at the level of the barn owl box upwards) which will maintain habitat cover on the lower trunk. Selected suckers at the base of the tree will be cut back. At the same time the

barn owl box will be cleared of ivy (as requested by a resident whose house backs onto the wood) and shavings placed in the base to encourage owls to nest. Other bird boxes and bat boxes will be checked and cleaned/repared, and locally sourced woodland flowers will be planted. These activities are part of the on-going management of the wood. At a time to be decided, the Parish Council Chairman George Jellicoe will arrange the securing of the logs (donated by himself and Howard Palmer) to serve as seats around the camp fire, to replace the logs that were burnt a year or two ago.

- 404 The Emergency Co-ordinator contact for Cambridgeshire County Council has been identified: Emergency Management, RES 1403, Shire Hall Castle Hill, Cambridge, CB3 0AP, Telephone: 01223 727947. The vilage Emergency Co-ordinator has been in contact with the County Council, and has made his first report to the Parish Council.
- 405 The Clerk was asked to write to East Cambridgeshire District Council to request a breakdown of the village's current S106 fund, what S106 contributions have been allocated to the village from developments at Mills Lane and Manor Court Road and whether there will be a S106 contribution to the village from any development on the land adjacent to Barton Close.
- 406 The Clerk reported on legal advice received relating to the Victoria Green Amenity Car Park area. Following discussion, the Parish Council **resolved** to continue to pursue this matter on behalf of the village. While further legal advice is being sought, the Parish Council stated that it would support any local resident who wished to pursue the matter themselves through the Local Government Ombudsman.
- 407 Cllr Shields will attend a meeting on 6th February 2012 at Witchford Village College to discuss the provision of sports facilities.
- 408 Cllrs Palmer and Jellicoe reported on the Household Waste Recycling Centre Liaison Group meeting on 30th January 2012. The had expressed the Parish Council's extreme concern at the number of vehicles trying to turn right into the facility from the Witchford direction. The County Council had advised that it would continue to monitor this situation.
- 409 It was agreed that the bank reconciliation for December and the clerk's monthly expenses be noted and the cheques on the schedule of cheques be approved.
- 410 **Diary Dates**
Date of next meeting Wednesday 7th March 2012
Woodland Group Meeting - 29th February 2012
A142 Cycleway Group Meeting - 22nd February 2012

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 10.05 p.m.

Signed:
Chairman
Date: