

CHRISTCHURCH PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of Christchurch Parish Council held in the Community Centre on Monday 13 November 2023 at 7.30pm

Present: Cllrs J Hughes (Chairman), P Owen, S Potter, A Sparrow, Cllr D Roy (FDC), D Gibbs (Clerk), six parishioners

081/23-24 Apologies for Absence

Cllrs J Bliss, R Feeney, J Hayes, Cllr M Summers (FDC)

082/23-24 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman thanked Mr Sutton for laying a wreath at the Remembrance Service at the War Memorial.

083/23-24 Public Time

Several members of the public spoke in connection with the two planning applications to be considered under item 092/23-24. Their comments are recorded in the minutes under that reference.

084/23-24 Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 October were correctly recorded and signed as being a true record.

085/23-24 Matters Outstanding

- a) Pavement outside Field Lodge, Upwell Road - No further update
- b) Affordable housing proposal - The drafting of the residents' survey is nearing completion.
- c) Household items outside property in Upwell Road - No further update.
- d) Wayside Estate pedestrian safety - A meeting is being arranged with the Local Highways Officer to visit to discuss possible solutions.
- e) Parishioner engagement - Cllr Sparrow reported that the questionnaire is available online via a link and QR code printed in the November edition of The Heron. Printed copies will be available on request from Cllr Sparrow. A summary of feedback will be presented to the next meeting.
- f) Santa Run - This will take place on Saturday 16th December from 6.00pm. Volunteers are needed to collect donations. Half of the money collected will be retained by the Council and members will consider an appropriate use for the funds.
- g) Highway weeds - Members commented that the weed growth is becoming more noticeable.
- h) Play equipment inspections - Cllr Sparrow has prepared a draft of the new checklist.

086/23-24 Police Report

The Clerk reported that no meetings had taken place. He notified members that nitrous oxide has been reclassified as a Class C drug under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, placing restrictions on the sale and possession, which should lead to a reduction in the number of empty canisters being dumped around the parish.

087/23-24 County & District Councillors Reports

Cllr Roy reported that he will be attending a meeting of the Hundred of Wisbech Internal Drainage Board. As part of his role on the new District Council Rural and Farming Advisory Committee, he is now compiling a list of local farmers. He noted that Steve Barclay MP is now the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

The Government has announced the fifth round of Safer Streets funding for policing projects, with £1 million allocated to Cambridgeshire Police. This includes a budget for local crime and community safety initiatives.

The deadline for the enforcement action relating to the caravan behind Syringa House will be mid-March, six months from the date of the notice.

088/23-24 Clerk's Report

The Clerk reported on meetings attended and correspondence received, including the County Council's Steady On Your Feet falls prevention programme, the District Council's hate crime resources pack, an invitation to the FDC Carol Service and the forthcoming closure of the Sixteen Foot Bank throughout January and February for water main replacement.

089/23-24 Members and Residents Issues

- a) Dog walking area at the Dun Cow - A resident has complained to the District Council and Elgood's Brewery regarding the proposal to create a secure dog training area in the grounds of the pub. Members agreed that there is no action necessary on their part.
- b) Hare coursing - Cllr Owen reported that hare coursers had been seen around the village. The Clerk reminded members that they should report all such matters to the Police immediately. The Clerk will write an article for The Heron.

090/23-24 Recreation Ground Extension

Cllr Hughes reported that more hedging has been delivered and volunteers held a planting day last weekend. He is awaiting a quote for weed clearance and grass seeding. Townley School will be involved in further planting sessions.

091/23-24 Highways

Members discussed potential projects for the Local Highways Improvement application for 2024/25. Village gateway installations on Padgetts Road were suggested. A decision will be made at the next meeting. Members also noted that there is still a missing street light adjacent to the former Memorial Hall site on Church Road and asked the Clerk to arrange for this to be reinstalled.

092/23-24 Planning

Members considered the following applications:

- a) F/YR23/0879/O - Erect up to 6 x dwellings (outline application with matters committed in respect of access) and the formation of 5 x accesses and footpath Land North West of The Ferns, Padgetts Road, Christchurch

One resident spoke against this proposal, citing concerns regarding drainage and the precedent for further development in the vicinity in the future. Members noted that the site was identified in the Emerging Local Plan process as suitable for residential development. Concern has been expressed about traffic speeds on this part of Padgetts Road and this development would strengthen the Parish Council's case for a reduction in the speed limit. Members welcomed the inclusion of a pavement connecting the site to the existing pavement in Church Road and wondered whether street lighting could be included in the proposal to further aid road safety.

Members resolved to offer no objection to the application.

- b) F/YR23/0891/F - Change of use of field to paddock land including the erection of stable block, and formation of a new access and hardstanding, involving culverting a drain - Land South West of 10 Brimstone Close, accessed from Fen View, Christchurch

Several residents spoke against this proposal, citing issues in relation to the earlier construction of Brimstone Close by the same contractor, as well as expressing concerns regarding the removal of waste from the site via Fen View. They questioned the suitability of Fen View as the access road to this site, particularly for agricultural vehicles. They presented a petition signed by 54 residents of Fen View against the proposal. Members noted that the site was identified in the Emerging Local Plan process as suitable for residential development.

Members shared the residents' concerns, but resolved to offer no objection.

093/23-24 Finance

- a) The management accounts as at 31.10.23 showed income of £21,192.59 and expenditure of £12,846.12, resulting in a surplus of £8,346.47 and total funds held of £49,664.73.
- b) The Clerk reported that the Barclays Bank accounts were closed by the bank, but the funds have not been transferred to the new NatWest accounts. Barclays have not provided an explanation for this.
- c) The Clerk reported that the National Agreement on Local Government Salaries for 2023/24 had finally been implemented and that the Chairman has been provided with details of the new salary level for the Clerk, including backpay from 1 April 2023.

- d) Members noted the following sums received since the last meeting:

Barclays Bank (interest).....	£	29.24
Christchurch Bowls Club (donation).....	£	4,856.21

Members were invited to consider options for the use of the donation in accordance with the wishes of the Bowls Club.

- e) Members ratified the following payments issued since the last meeting:

Hedgehogs R Us (hedgehog highway surrounds).....	£	315.00
Information Commissioner (registration fee)	£	35.00
Royal British Legion (poppy wreath)	£	33.98

- f) Members approved the following accounts for payment:

Clerk salary and home office allowance	£	649.13
S Freeland (expenses).....	£	88.99

- g) Members considered a request from the Christchurch Recreation Ground Charity for a short-term loan to cover cash-flow whilst they resolve issues with Barclays Bank. Cllr Owen declared a pecuniary interest in this item as part of any loan approved would be paid to him as a reimbursement of payments he has made on behalf of the charity. The charity has applied to open a new account with NatWest, but this will take up to a month. In the meantime, a new account has been opened with Starling Bank, but it was unclear whether the new account had been opened in the name of the charity or an individual.

Members agreed to provide a loan of £2,000 to be repaid when Barclays Bank release the charity's funds, if the new Starling Bank account is in the name of the charity.

- h) The Clerk invited members to consider potential projects for inclusion in the Council's budget for 2024/25, which must be finalised at the January meeting. Consideration of a draft budget will be included on the agenda for the December meeting.

094/23-24 Policies and Procedures

Members considered the following policies and procedures and resolve to readopt them:

- a) Complaints Procedure
- b) Grievance Policy
- c) Disciplinary Policy

095/23-24 Matters for Next Meeting

Budget for 2024/25, Local Highway Improvement application for 2024/25, Bowls Club donation.

096/23-24 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next Meeting of the Parish Council will be Monday 11 December.