

CHRISTCHURCH PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of Christchurch Parish Council held in the Community Centre on Monday 8 January 2024 at 7.30pm

Present: Cllrs J Hughes (Chairman), R Feeney, J Hayes, S Potter, A Sparrow, Cllr S Count (CCC), Cllr D Roy (FDC), D Gibbs (Clerk), one parishioner

113/23-24 Apologies for Absence

Cllr J Bliss, Cllr J French (CCC), Cllr M Summers (FDC)

114/23-24 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman paid tribute to former councillor Peter Owen who passed away in December. Members observed a minute's silence in his memory.

115/23-24 Public Time

A group of residents hopes to revive Christchurch Street Pride and will meet immediately before the February meeting of the Parish Council to ascertain the level of interest.

Cllr Sparrow mentioned that a resident of Upwell Road had reported flooding in her garden. The Clerk will investigate this.

Cllr Feeney noted that the new Facebook page is already attracting interest, even though it hasn't been advertised yet.

116/23-24 Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 December were correctly recorded and signed as being a true record.

117/23-24 Matters Outstanding

- a) Pavement outside Field Lodge, Upwell Road - The contracts have been signed and the work will commence soon.
- b) Affordable housing proposal - The residents' survey was distributed in December. Members noted an unfortunate typographical error in the wording of one of the questions.
- c) Household items outside property in Upwell Road - Some of the rubbish has been removed. There has been no feedback from Clarion Housing Group.
- d) Wayside Estate pedestrian safety - The Clerk has been unable to arrange a meeting with the Local Highways Officer to discuss possible solutions.
- e) Parishioner engagement - Cllr Sparrow reported that only 13 surveys were returned. He circulated a summary of the responses to be discussed at the next meeting.
- f) Santa Run - Members agreed that the event had been successful and thanked Cllr Hayes for arranging it. She reported that she had been unable to contact the organiser regarding the Council's share of the proceeds of the collection. The Clerk agreed to pursue this.
- g) Bowls Club donation - Members discussed possible uses for the funds, including improvements to the bus shelter area. To be agreed at the next meeting.
- h) Play equipment inspections - Cllr Sparrow will complete the checklist once the final items of gym equipment have been installed.

118/23-24 Police Report

The Clerk reported that no meetings had taken place. There have been several reports of hare coursing in the area.

119/23-24 County & District Councillors Reports

County Council - Cllr Count apologised for being unable to attend meetings on a regular basis but reminded members that he is always available to assist if required. He reiterated his support for the latest Local Highway Improvement application at the junction of Upwell Road and the Sixteen Foot Bank and expressed his concerns regarding recent maintenance of the Sixteen Foot Bank.

The County Council has compiled a list of roads with defects caused by ground conditions, but the total cost of repairing these roads has been estimated to be in excess of £300 million. The Council is seeking additional funding from the Government to address this issue, but this may not be forthcoming. A report to the next Highways and Transport Committee meeting will consider options, including the prioritisation of repairs. It has been suggested that schemes should be prioritised by traffic levels, however Cllr Count has highlighted the need for a risk assessment to be included, especially on roads such as the Sixteen Foot Bank, where surface conditions have been a factor in recent fatalities

The consultation on the County Council's budget plans is now open. An increase of 5% in their precept is anticipated. The Combined Authority's precept will treble from £12 to £36, mainly to provide continued subsidies for underused bus services. Cllr Count is seeking to widen the catchment of the bus network to include villages such as Christchurch. The proposed budget includes provision for the reintroduction of weed killing and the highway maintenance budget will increase.

Cllr Sparrow mentioned that a highways contractor had recently carried out a programme of overnight works to cut drainage grips in verges throughout the village using an air spade, causing disturbance to residents and leaving soil on the roads. Within weeks, the grips had filled with debris and were no longer functioning effectively. Cllr Count will discuss this with highways officers.

District Council - Cllr Roy thanked Cllr Count for his support in dealing with recent flooding issues. He stressed the need to look at previous flooding issues to anticipate where problems may arise in the future. The District Council's budget consultation is now open. Cllr Roy is monitoring the situation regarding the caravan behind Syringa House as the deadline for removal approaches.

120/23-24 Clerk's Report

The Clerk reported on correspondence received, including the County Council's budget briefing for Parish Councils, a traffic order for a closure of the Sixteen Foot Bank north of Cotton's Corner Bridge, the District Council's Pride in Fenland awards nominations, and Keep Britain Tidy's Buy Nothing New month.

121/23-24 Members and Residents Issues

- a) Churchyard flooding - the contractor developing the adjacent site installed pumps to drain the site but the water found its way into the churchyard. The Church Warden contacted the District Council and the contractor and the matter was resolved.
- b) Outdoor gym equipment installation - the items have been installed to the rear of properties in Wayside Estate, whereas the intention was to place them closer to the children's play equipment. Members agreed to relocate the items.
- c) Annual Parish Meeting planning - the meeting is scheduled for 23 April. Members considered potential speakers, including a local archaeologist who worked on the excavation of Stonea Camp, the Local Energy Advice Programme, foodbanks, Cambridgeshire Fire & Rescue Service. Further suggestions are invited.

- d) Christchurch Street Pride - it is hoped that the Street Pride group can be reinstated. Some equipment may be stored in the container outside the Community Centre. The details of the bank account are still being investigated.
- e) Manea Fire Station closure - Cllr Sparrow spoke to Steve Barclay MP regarding the closure and he asked for a letter of support to be submitted to assist him in his discussions with Cambridgeshire Fire & Rescue Service.

122/23-24 Recreation Ground Extension

Cllr Hughes reported that the inclement weather has prevented much progress on the site. There is more hedging to be planted. Quotes are being obtained for other elements of the project.

123/23-24 Highways

Members approved the addition of solid white lines and enhanced signage at the junction of Upwell Road and Sixteen Foot Bank as the Council's Local Highways Improvement application for 2024/25. They agreed a contribution of £1,000 towards the project. Cllr Hughes noted that the scheme has the full support of the two County Councillors.

124/23-24 Finance

a) The management accounts as at 31.12.23 showed income of £26,048.80 and expenditure of £14,140.17, resulting in a surplus of £11,908.63 and total funds held of £53,226.89.

b) The Clerk reported that he is still trying to resolve issues with the Barclays Bank accounts and that the balances held by the Christchurch Recreation Ground Charity have been transferred into the Council's account by the bank.

c) Members approved the following accounts for payment:

Clerk salary and home office allowance	£ 467.13
Fenland Leisure Products Ltd (bench installation).....	£ 2,814.00

d) Members approved the following payments from the Barclays Bank account on behalf of the Christchurch Recreation Ground Charity:

Boyd Sport & Play Ltd.....	£ 5,868.00
Christchurch Recreation Ground Charity	£ 18,258.31

e) Members considered and approved the draft budget for 2024/25. They resolved to maintain the precept at the current level of £18,500.

Members discussed ways to communicate their plans to residents and wider issues relating to parishioner engagement. A number of possible solutions were tabled, including Councillor surgeries at coffee mornings and similar events, and a suggestions box in the Community Centre. A working group comprising Cllrs Feeney, Hayes and Sparrow will consider these and other options.

125/23-24 Policies and Procedures

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

- a) Data Protection Policy
- b) Publication Scheme
- c) Code of Conduct

126/23-24 Matters for Next Meeting

Further analysis of the survey results, the Annual Parish Meeting, communications.

127/23-24 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next Meeting of the Parish Council will be Monday 12 February.