

CHRISTCHURCH PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of Christchurch Parish Council held in the Community Centre on Monday 11 March 2024 at 7.30pm

Present: Cllrs J Hughes (Chairman), J Bliss, R Feeney, J Hayes, S Potter, A Sparrow, Cllr D Roy (FDC), D Gibbs (Clerk), three parishioners

141/23-24 Apologies for Absence

Cllr S Count (CCC), Cllr J French (CCC), Cllr M Summers (FDC)

142/23-24 Chairman's Announcements

None.

143/23-24 Public Time

Mr Benjamin asked about the content of the Christchurch History website. Cllr Feeney advised him that he hoped to find a way to make the material available again.

Road repairs were raised again, particularly the slow response times to serious potholes. The Chairman reported that works are planned on two locations in Padgetts Road at a cost of £426,000.

Cllr Hayes reported that a resident had enquired about the possibility of relocating the bin outside the former village shop. The Clerk will investigate.

144/23-24 Membership of the Council

Two candidates had expressed an interest in the vacant position on the Council. Members considered the personal statements submitted by the candidates. A written ballot was held and the Clerk confirmed that Bryan Burfield was co-opted. He signed his declaration of acceptance, witnessed by the Clerk. The Chairman thanked both candidates for their interest.

145/23-24 Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 February were correctly recorded and signed as being a true record.

146/23-24 Matters Outstanding

- a) Pavement outside Field Lodge, Upwell Road - The Clerk reported that work is due to commence shortly.
- b) Affordable housing proposal - No further update.
- c) Household items outside property in Upwell Road - Clarion Housing is hoping to clarify which tenant is responsible for the area fronting onto Upwell Road.
- d) Wayside Estate pedestrian safety - No further update.
- e) Parishioner engagement and communications - Cllr Feeney will be publicising the new Facebook page to increase traffic. The working group will meet shortly to consider wider communications issues.
- f) Santa Run - The Clerk is still trying to contact the organiser.
- g) Bowls Club donation - The Bowls Club has asked for formal confirmation of the donation. The Clerk will provide this. Cllr Sparrow reported that the Club has expressed a preference for the money to be used for a project in the centre of the village. The bus shelter area was suggested. Further discussion will take place with the former members of the club.

- h) Outdoor gym and play equipment inspections - Fenland Leisure Products will undertake this year's inspections.
- i) Annual Parish Meeting planning - The Clerk confirmed that he has issued invitations to several speakers. Village groups will be invited to talk about their work. Posters and leaflets will be used to remind residents.

147/23-24 Police Report

The Clerk reported that no meetings have taken place.

148/23-24 County & District Councillors Reports

Cllr Roy reported that Clarion Housing had attended the March meeting of the District Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee. There are currently 120 empty homes across the district. The District Council is introducing council tax penalties for empty and second properties to encourage people to bring them back into use. New legislation requires properties to be brought to a higher standard during renovations. The Committee encouraged Clarion to explore opportunities to engage more local contractors to speed up the turnaround period and the District Council will promote these new opportunities. A wider programme of upgrading will be required to meet new standards. Upgrading of some older properties may not be viable. The Committee also questioned the response times for emergency call-outs. It is hoped that many of these issues can be resolved before Clarion's next appearance at the Committee.

Nick Harding has retired from his post as Head of Planning and a temporary appointment has been made pending the arrival of his permanent successor.

Cllr Roy met with the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Constable regarding the insufficient police presence in the villages. It is hoped that the recent increase in police numbers may help.

The District Council is seeking a policy change at Cambridgeshire Highways to require utility companies to resurface roads from kerb to kerb after excavations to reduce the number of small patches on the road surface.

The local health bodies are developing a GP hub in Wisbech to offer out of hours and one stop access to medical facilities. Supporting data is provided by the long-running University of Cambridge Fenland Study that examines the impact of lifestyle and environmental factors on health and is also looking at the effects of Covid.

149/23-24 Clerk's Report

The Clerk reported on correspondence received, including the County Council's new weed spraying policy, a closure of the Sixteen Foot Bank between Cotton's Corner Bridge and the county boundary, the Great British Spring Clean, the Combined Authority's survey on electric vehicles and charging points, the launch of the Volunteer Cambs online volunteering portal, a playground inspection course run by Fenland Leisure Products and the College of West Anglia's Repair Café.

150/23-24 Members and Residents Issues

- a) Crown Road - Cllr Hayes reported that there had been further issues with a resident of Crown Road.
- b) Junction of Upwell Road and Church Road - Cllr Hayes highlighted concerns regarding poor visibility at the junction, exacerbated by parked vehicles. The Clerk offered to discuss further signage with the Local Highways Officer.
- c) Dog fouling - Areas highlighted include outside Townley School. The Clerk asked members to provide more information that might enable the culprit to be identified for enforcement action.

151/23-24 Recreation Ground Extension

Quotes have been obtained for the supply of two footbridges. A contractor will be required to install the footings on which they will sit. Members considered a quote of £6,900+VAT from NPS Fencing for the preparation and seeding of the site and the installation of the fencing and gates around the dog exercise area. They agreed to accept the quote and to issue a cheque for £2,400 as a deposit. The funding for this will come from the Whitemill Environment Fund grant.

152/23-24 Highways

Members considered the County Council's new weed spraying policy and resolved to opt into the contract.

153/23-24 Planning

Members considered three applications and resolved as follows:

- a) F/YR24/0078/F - Installation of air source heat pump to front of existing dwelling - Annabelle, March Road, Tipps End
Members resolved to offer no objection.
- b) F/YR24/0122/F - Erect a single-storey extension to front of existing dwelling and erect a boundary fence 1m high (max) - 4 Fen View, Christchurch
Members resolved to offer no objection.
- c) F/ YR24/0161/F - Erect 1 x dwelling (2-storey 4-bed) in association of existing farm, and formation of an access - Land South of 4 Hole in the Wall Cottages, Padgetts Road, Christchurch

Members resolved as follows:

That the proposed dwelling will provide continuity for one of the largest family farms in the Parish by supporting the succession currently taking place. Family farms such as this are a traditional feature of the Fenland landscape and play an important role in the local rural economy, providing direct employment and supporting other local businesses, as well as feeding the nation.

The design of the proposed dwelling fits comfortably alongside the five existing dwellings at Hole in the Wall Farm and the remote location minimises any potential visual harm or impact on other properties. Policy LP3 states that development elsewhere will be restricted to that which is demonstrably essential to the effective operation of local agriculture, and this is clearly the case in respect of this application.

To offer this application their full support.

154/23-24 Finance

- a) The management accounts as at 29.2.24 showed income of £26,518.13 and expenditure of £23,480.71, resulting in a surplus of £3,037.42 and total funds held of £44,355.68.
- b) The Clerk reported that the long-running issues with Barclays Bank had now been resolved.
- c) Members considered options for future banking arrangements and resolved to remain with Barclays Bank. The previous decision to open accounts with National Westminster Bank (minute 033/22-23(c)) was reversed as new information regarding charges has come to light that was not evident at the time.
- d) Members resolved to transfer the compensation of £425 received from Barclays Bank to the Recreation Ground Charity.
- e) Members resolved to transfer to recycling credits totalling £132.37 received from Fenland District Council to the Recreation Ground Charity.

f) Members approved the following accounts for payment:

Clerk salary and home office allowance	£	467.13
Cambridgeshire ACRE (subscription).....	£	65.00
Christchurch Recreation Ground Charity (see above).....	£	557.37

155/23-24 Policies and Procedures

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

- a) Equality and Diversity Policy
- b) Homeworking Policy
- c) Expenses Policy

156/23-24 Matters for Next Meeting

Bowls Club donation, parishioner engagement.

157/23-24 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting of the Parish Council will be Monday 8 April.