

CHRISTCHURCH PARISH COUNCIL

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

Present: Cllrs J Hughes (Chairman), J Bliss, B Burfield, R Feeney, J Hayes (to 109/24-25), Cllr S Potter, A Sparrow, D Gibbs (Clerk), Cllr D Roy (FDC), J Fenn (Middle Level Commissioners), M Pickering (Balfour Beatty) seven parishioners

102/24-25 Apologies for Absence

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

103/24-25 Chairman's Announcements

None.

104/24-25 Middle Level Commissioners

Mr Fenn outlined the background to this winter's works, which form part of an ongoing multi-year project to future-proof the middle level waterways. The work involves desilting to increase capacity and enhance resilience to extremes of weather and climate change.

Balfour Beatty is the contractor undertaking the work and Mr Pickering explained how the silt will be removed by excavators working on floating pontoons then removed onto the banks to dry out. The project includes educational work with local schools and opportunities for other community engagement.

The Chairman thanked Mr Fenn and Mr Pickering for attending the meeting and for providing an informative presentation on their work.

105/24-25 Public Time

A resident asked whether a flagpole could be erected to fly the flag of the Fens. The Clerk advised that planning permission may be required if the flag is not registered.

106/24-25 Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 October were correctly recorded and signed as being a true record.

107/24-25 Matters Outstanding

- a) Household items outside property in Upwell Road - Cllr Roy advised that he will be meeting a Clarion Housing Group Regional Director and will raise this issue.
- b) Wayside Estate pedestrian safety - The Clerk reported that following a meeting with the new Local Highways Officer it has become clear that a Local Highways Improvements application will be required in order to explore this further.
- c) Litter bin outside former village shop - No further update.
- d) Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service visit - Cllr Hughes confirmed that any Thursday afternoon at the Cake, Coffee & Chat would be suitable for the visit.
- e) Parish Council duty under Section 40 of NERC 2006 - Cllr Potter explained that online searches had provided several examples of a relevant policy. He agreed to produce a draft using sections of these documents.

108/24-25 Police Report

The Clerk reported that no meetings have taken place. He advised that the hare coursing season had started and asked Members and residents to report any suspicious activity to the Police.

109/24-25 County & District Councillors Reports

Cllr Roy advised Members that Elm Parish Council has arranged a meeting to consider the proposed Highways Strategy drafted by Cllr Summers. A similar meeting is to be arranged for Christchurch Parish Council. He noted that Cambridgeshire Highways is seeking proposals for inclusion in the new capital strategy. Concern has been expressed regarding the BT digital switchover, particularly in relation to devices such as lifelines and other non-standard equipment.

Cllr Roy outlined his understanding of the Combined Authority's consultation on bus franchising and the comparison between the two options being presented. The lack of competition in the Wisbech area might be a barrier to securing the services local communities require. The deadline for responses is approaching.

Cllr Hayes left the meeting.

110/24-25 Clerk's Report

The Clerk reported on correspondence received, including invitations to the Civic Carol Service and the Cambridge Council for Voluntary Service AGM, an appeal for gifts for older people, and the Highways stakeholder survey.

111/24-25 Members and Residents Issues

Members reported several hedges that are overhanging the pavement. The Clerk offered to investigate. Cllr Hughes reported that a resident had received an anonymous letter regarding a road safety issue. The matter was reported to the Police due to the content of the letter.

112/24-25 Recreation Ground Extension

Cllr Hughes reported that he had spoken to the contractor regarding the installation of an access culvert. This will require consent from the Middle Level Commissioners. Volunteers are obtaining quotes for the supply of telegraph poles.

113/24-25 Bus Shelter Project

The Clerk advised Members that the Council must purchase the plans from Cambridgeshire Highways. He will clarify the options and file formats.

114/24-25 Recreation Ground

Following an inspection of the Recreation Ground, Members discussed proposals to clear the Wayside Estate boundary of all vegetation, garden waste and self-seeded trees to improve the appearance, make grass cutting easier and prevent further waste. They also noted the need to pollard the willows on the northern boundary. The Clerk will contact the Probation Service regarding the availability of Community Service teams to undertake this work.

Members also voiced their concerns regarding the performance of the grounds maintenance contractor. They asked the Clerk to retender the contract to enable them to consider alternative contractors.

115/24-25 Highways

- a) Members considered potential projects for submission under the Local Highways Improvements scheme for 2025/26. They resolved to submit an application for speed reduction measures in Wayside Estate.

- b) Members considered potential projects for submission for the County Council's Capitally Funded Highway Maintenance Schemes for 2025/26. They resolved to submit Sixteen Foot Bank, Halfpenny Toll Road and Upwell Road.

116/24-25 Fenland District Council Infrastructure Delivery Plan

Members considered the scope of the consultation and agreed to focus on the public utilities. Ambulance response times were also mentioned. An informal consultation was agreed, including the forthcoming issue of The Heron and Facebook.

117/24-25 Fens Reservoir - EIA Scoping Consultation

Members were invited to submit their comments to the Clerk before the deadline to enable a response to be submitted.

118/24-25 Finance

- a) The management accounts as at 31.10.24 showed income of £21,340.75 and expenditure of £17,608.66, resulting in a surplus of £3,732.09 and total funds held of £46,151.92.
- b) Members noted the 2024/25 Local Government pay settlement.
- c) Members noted the following sums received since the last meeting:
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|---|------------|
| Fenland District Council (precept)..... | £ 9,250.00 |
| NatWest Bank (interest)..... | £ 13.23 |
- d) Members noted the following sum paid by direct debit:
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|---|---------|
| Information Commissioner's Office (registration)..... | £ 35.00 |
|---|---------|
- e) Members approved the following account for payment:
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| Clerk salary and home office allowance (inc backpay)..... | £ 598.17 |
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- f) The Clerk invited Members to consider potential projects for inclusion in the budget for 2025/26

119/24-25 Policies and Procedures

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

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

120/24-25 Public Time

A member of the Recreation Ground Extension project team asked about the terms of the Whitemill Environment Fund grant and the level of expenditure required to facilitate the release of the funds. The Clerk will clarify this.

121/24-25 Matters for Next Meeting

None.

122/24-25 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting of the Parish Council will be Monday 9 December.