

# Wisbech St Mary Parish Council

## Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Wisbech St Mary Parish Council held on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2023 at Wisbech St Mary Community Centre – Sidings Room

Attended by: Councillors: M Knight MBE DL (Chairman), D Wheeler (Vice Chairman), J Humphrey, B Britain, M Fryett, S Mann, A Weldon, R Blackmore & G Booth.

FDC Councillors: G Booth & D Cutler | CCC Councillor: S Count

Members of the public: 1

### 1. OPEN FORUM - Parishioners are invited to address the Council.

- Cllr Diane Cutler as The Chairman of Murrow Street Pride reported that the Coronation Afternoon Tea was a huge success and was enjoyed by many local residents, information has now been shared publicly regarding the grant funding awarded to the event by the Parish Council following the elections and the end of purdah rules.
- Cllr Diane Cutler as The Co-Ordinator of Parson Drove & Wisbech St Mary Ward Community Speedwatch reported that only Gull Road in Guyhirn was monitored during April due to availability of volunteers during the elections; with road side sessions in all villages resuming in June.

### 2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE - Received and accepted from Cllrs Allen & Scrimshaw, CCC Cllr S King and FDC Cllr M Humphrey.

### 3. DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

To receive elected Councillors Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

All newly elected members read and signed the declaration of acceptance of office, Countersigned by the Proper Officer/Clerk.

### 4. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE – CHAIRMAN

(a) For Council to elect a Chairman & Vice - Chairman for the municipal year 2023-2024.

Cllr David Wheeler as the incumbent Chairman requested nominations for Chairman. Cllr J Humphrey nominated Cllr Mark Knight MBE DL to be Chairman, this was seconded by Cllr Britain. Cllr Knight accepted the position and was unanimously elected.

Cllr Knight thanked Councillors for their support and said that Cllr David Wheeler would be an incredibly hard act to follow but he would endeavour to be the best Chairman he can be.

Cllr Knight as the new Chairman requested nominations for Vice-Chairman. Cllr J Humphrey nominated Cllr David Wheeler and gave the view that he had been an excellent Chairman and would be of great support and guidance to the new Chairman, this was seconded by Cllr Weldon. Cllr J Humphrey expressed appreciation to Cllr Wheeler for everything he has done for the Parish Council in his four years as Chairman. Cllr Britain nominated Cllr Mark Fryett, this was seconded by Cllr Blackmore. Cllr Fryett declined the nomination at this time.

Cllr David Wheeler duly accepted the position and was unanimously elected.

(b) To receive elected Chairman & Vice – Chairman Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

Cllr Knight read and signed the declaration of office for Chairman, Countersigned by the Proper Officer/Clerk.

Cllr Wheeler read and signed the declaration of office for Vice-Chairman. Countersigned by the Proper Officer/Clerk.

### 5. REGISTER OF INTEREST

To receive elected Councillors updated Register of Interest Forms.

The Clerk collected the completed forms and advised any remaining Councillors that they need to be completed and returned to her within 28 days of the election (by 1<sup>st</sup> June 2023).

### 6. TO CONSIDER MEMBER REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION

The Clerk reported that all Councillors present have completed dispensations to discuss Councillor Allowances at Item 17, these are only valid for the duration of the meeting.

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## **7. MEMBERS DECLARATION OF INTEREST** for items on this agenda.

Items 15.7(l) and 16.2 Cllr Knight declared a non-pecuniary interest as the Handyman is his brother.

## **8. APPOINTMENTS & NOMINATIONS TO OUTSIDE BODIES**

For Councillors to consider Parish Council representations to relevant outside bodies.

The Clerk advised that the Parish Council currently has representations on Wrydecroft Windfarm and The Middle Pit & Tholomas Drove Wash Pit Fund.

Cllr Knight was happy to continue as the representative on Wrydecroft Windfarm for the administrative term of four years.

The Middle Pit & Tholomas Drove Wash Pit Fund Charity trustees present at the meeting were all happy to continue, these being Cllrs Wheeler, Fryett, Mann & Blackmore with apologies being received from Cllrs Allen and Scrimshaw; the clerk will confirm their reappointment as trustees on their return.

**9. TO SIGN AND APPROVE MINUTES OF MEETING** dated 17<sup>th</sup> April 2023. The Council resolved including any amendments to accept as a true record, the minutes of the meeting. These were duly signed by the Chairman.

## **10. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES** (information only). - Nil

## **11. REPORTS FROM DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCILLORS** - Agenda item time limited to 10 minutes.

Prior to introducing this item, The Chairman congratulated Cllr Cutler on her election and Cllr Booth on his re-election to Fenland District Council.

- Cllr Booth reported that due to purdah rules and his recent re-election; no meetings had yet taken place. Cllr Booth also reported that the Sayers Crescent, WSM Footpath is still being investigated and has received emails confirming that the issue is being looked into.
- Cllr King sent his apologies for the meeting and circulated his report via email, which received the following comments:
- Cllr Fryett expressed frustration that issues are reported as being looked into without any action being taken to resolve. Cllr Fryett recognised that this was not the fault of Cllr King especially as a lot of the parish is not in his division, and he was the messenger relaying information from the CCC Local Highways Officer (LHO).
- Cllr Booth recommended recording issues on the online reporting tool in future, as he believed that issues are possibly monitored and measured better by logging them on the online system.
- The Clerk reported that she now has a spreadsheet that lists all open Highways issues, which will be sent for comment or update to the LHO following every Parish Council meeting.
- Cllr Count expressed his own frustrations that issues in the Parish were not being resolved quickly enough; he reported that a meeting was being arranged for the new Executive Director of CCC to visit the area and see the issues first hand.
- Cllr Count recommended populating the minutes with the current highway issues in future, he also reported that the online reporting system was due to be redesigned and upgraded, and was currently out to tender.
- Cllr Count reported CCC would be receiving an extra £3.6m from government for Highways which would be for the whole of Cambridgeshire, and is representatively a small amount.
- Cllr Count also reported that there will be an extra three 'Dragon Patchers' to deal with the backlog of highways issues.
- Cllr Count expressed concern that school admission figures are rising in the area, with a lack of schooling places available.
- Cllr Count reported that the window for representations regarding the 'Mega Incinerator' proposal for Wisbech had closed; with every level of elected members across all parties having made strong opposition to its development, and will now be decided by the Secretary of State.
- Cllr Wheeler expressed frustration that more dragon patchers are being brought in to repair roads, when the 'repairs' are coming apart within a week.
- Cllr Wheeler requested that Cllr Count brings to the attention of the new Executive Director how long the village of WSM is waiting to have its LHI Scheme installed, first applied for in April 2020 the 2021/2022 scheme has only just gone through its safety audit and costs have increased enormously during this time, this is just unacceptable.
- Cllr Count agreed to liaise with the Clerk to confirm timings of site visits with the CCC Executive Director.

## **12. TO CONSIDER PLANNING MATTERS**

### **12.1. Planning applications determined by Fenland District Council (FDC).**

Cllr Britain expressed frustration over the length of time applications are taken to be decided, he used the example of F/YR22/0901/O Erect 1 x dwelling involving the demolition of existing building (outline application with matters committed in respect of access) at Land South East of The Chimneys Gull Road Guyhirn Cambridgeshire that was validated in July 2022 and is still pending consideration. Cllr Booth reported

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that he had investigated this matter on Cllr Britain's behalf and this application is going before Planning Committee at the end of May.

The Chairman expressed frustration regarding how lengthy the planning process is and also the outstanding Gypsy and Travellers Housing Needs Assessment, which determines whether plots are required.

Cllr Booth reported that the report is scheduled to be ready by the second stage of the new Local Plan for consultation, which in his opinion could be almost a year away.

#### 12.2. Planning applications for discussion:

(a)	<a href="#">F/YR23/0356/VOC</a>	Removal of condition 3 (access) relating to planning permission F/YR21/0257/F (Change of use of land for domestic purposes and the erection of a 4-bay garage with hobby room above) at Land North West of Hollycroft Bungalow High Road Wisbech St Mary Cambridgeshire <b>The Parish Council recommended REFUSAL. Councillors considered the original access sufficient due to the annex being tied to the main house.</b>
(b)	<a href="#">F/YR23/0359/F</a>	Erect 1 x dwelling (2-storey 4-bed dwelling) with attached ancillary single-storey 2-bed annexe at Plot 2 Pitt Farm Spencer Drove Guyhirn Cambridgeshire <b>The Parish Council recommended APPROVAL.</b>
(c)	<a href="#">CCC/23/041/VAR</a>	S73 application to vary Condition 9 (Highways Works) of CCC/21/215/FUL, by amending the approved plans relating to the footpath along Barton Road at Land North of Barton Road East of Gadds Lane and West of The Still Wisbech Cambridgeshire <b>The Parish Council recommended REFUSAL. The Council considers the footpath a vital installation for children and staff on the grounds of health &amp; safety and recommend that the footpath remains required to be installed prior to occupancy. Therefore, recommend that the variation of condition 9 is refused.</b>

12.3. Planning Enforcement (ENF/257/19) Land south east of Gore Villas, Mill Road, Murrow relating to a breach of condition 6 of planning permission F/YR18/0190/VOC – Complaint.

The Clerk reported that a Stage One complaint had been written and sent to FDC, and she had been informed that a response should be issued by 17<sup>th</sup> May 2023.

### 13. CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED

(a) WSM Primary Academy – Thank you letter for Coronation Support. - **Noted**

### 14. HIGHWAYS MATTERS

#### 14.1. Street Lighting

Cllr Fryett raised the question whether Streetlight 136 Outside 171 Front Road, Murrow had been looked at yet as it is working but is noticeably dimmer than it should be. The Clerk advised that it had been reported to be investigated and will chase the contractor.

#### 14.2. Highways

(a) 20mph LHI Scheme – Back Road, Murrow – Update

The Clerk gave FDC Cllr Cutler 150 paper surveys to be distributed to residents on Back Road, Murrow as she had kindly volunteered to get them delivered by the end of the week.

(b) Any other Highways issues to be raised by Councillors.

Cllr Fryett reported that the public footpath that runs between Front Road, Murrow and Murrow Lane in a South Easterly direction has become badly overgrown. The Clerk reported that this footpath is part of the Greenwich Meridian Trail and will contact the Rights of Way Officer at CCC for investigation.

Cllr Booth requested support from the Parish Council into the possibility of Parson Drove Parish Council applying for Silvers Lane to have a weight limit installed; as it is an important route for local residents to access the Doctors Surgery in the village but is being used as a rat run for HGVs. Cllr Fryett proposed the council support the possibility and Councillors agreed with this suggestion. Clerk to follow up with a letter of support.

### 15. FINANCE MATTERS

15.1. To receive the Finance & Budget Report for 2023/24 to date.

The bank reconciliation of 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2023 balanced at £111,914.92 which was agreed to and signed off by Cllr Gavin Booth.

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The Clerk circulated the report via the OneDrive for Councillors perusal and briefly explained that the reconciliation will now include the funds held within the CCLA PSDF, which is currently at £50,000 and any dividends will be paid into the current account.

The Clerk recommended Councillors consider raising the maximum investment into the PSDF due to the high interest rate it is currently receiving, this will also involve amending the Investment Policy. The Chairman requested for this to be added to the next agenda for further discussion.

15.2. To receive the Internal Audit Report to 31 March 2023 and reappointment of Internal Auditors

The Clerk reported that the Council have received a clear internal audit report with no official recommendations, the only point noted was regarding a couple of small invoices in the Clerks name and not the Parish Council. The Clerk explained these were included in her Clerk expenses and were for items purchased online where there was no opportunity to add a company name.

Following discussion Council agreed to reappoint Auditing Solutions for the Internal Audit 2023/24.

15.3. Approval of end of year accounts following the completion of Internal Audit

The accounts were unanimously agreed by the Council and signed off by the Chairman.

15.4. To complete and approve Section 1 of the Annual Governance Statement 2022/2023

Agreed by Council and Signed by the Chairman and Clerk. The Clerk drew attention that assertion 9 was marked as N/A following the 2021/2022 External Auditors Report.

15.5. To approve the completed Section 2 Accounting Statements for 2022/2023

Agreed by Council and Signed by the Chairman and Clerk. The Clerk drew attention that box 11b was marked as N/A following the 2021/2022 External Audit Report.

15.6. For Councillors to note the appropriate sum for the purpose of S137 (4) (a) of the Local Government Act 1972 for 2023-2024 is £9.93 per elector. - **Noted**

15.7. To approve payment of outstanding accounts:

Item	Description	Total Amount	Power	
(a)	Clerk April Salary	£1355.91	LG Act 1972 S112	Agreed
(b)	Clerk HMRC Tax and NI	£275.45	LG Act 1972 S112	Agreed
(c)	Clerk Monthly Expenses (April)	£58.79	LG Act 1972 S112	Agreed
(d)	Nest Pensions – April (Direct Debit)	£93.78	LG Act 1972 S112	Agreed
(e)	Npower Lighting April Energy	£577.78	Parish Councils Act 1957 S3	Agreed
(f)	Tamar IT – Microsoft 365 (Direct Debit)	£13.54	LG Act 1972 S111	Agreed
(g)	Swarco UK Ltd – WSM MVAS/SID	£3822.00	Highways Act 1980	Agreed
(h)	RoSPA Playsafety – Pond Inspections	£180.00	Public Health Act 1936 S260	Agreed
(i)	North Level Internal Drainage Board - Rates	£15.54	Financial Provisions Act 1963	Agreed
(j)	Rapier Signs – Maximum Height Sign	£35.00	LG Misc Prov Act 1976 S19	Agreed
(k)	Auditing Solutions Ltd – Internal Audit	£378.00	Accounts & Audit Regulations 1996	Agreed
(l)	Mr Stephen Knight - Handyman	£87.50	Open Spaces Act 1906 S9-10	Agreed
(m)	Guyhirn Community Hall – April Hall Hire	£40.00	LG Act 1972 S134	Agreed
(n)	Severn C Products Ltd T/A School Bears - Coins	£1182.00	LG Act 1972 S137	Agreed
(o)	Kevin Clarke – War Memorial Cleaning	£187.00	War Memorials Act 1923 S1	Agreed
(p)	Zurich Insurance - Annual Renewal	£1266.32	LG Act 1972 S111	Agreed

15.8. For Councillors to ratify payments made by the Chairman and Clerk using their powers as outlined in the Financial Regulations under **Budgetary Control and authority to spend (4.1)** arranged for the following invoices to be paid due to time constraints:

Item	Description	Total Amount	Power	VAT Element
(a)	Reimbursement D Wheeler – Solar Lights	£233.91	Parish Councils Act 1957 S3	Agreed

The Council **resolved** to **authorise** the expenditure for the month of April and **ratified** the payments already made totalling £9802.52. The Clerk reported that the Npower April invoice of £577.78 and the Zurich Invoice for the Insurance renewal at £1266.32 arrived after the agenda was published.

## 15.9. Grant Applications

(a) Murrow Book Café – Running Costs - £1500.00

LG Act 1972 S137

Following discussion and consideration of the group's current bank balances, Councillors agreed to give a grant of £500 which was based on the £9.93 per elector allowance for a grant paid out under the S137 power. As the application detailed that roughly 40 parishioners attended, Councillors felt that was an appropriate amount to approve. Proposed by Cllr Britain and seconded by Cllr Blackmore and unanimously agreed to by Councillors.

## 16. PARISH PROPERTY

### 16.1. Maintenance

The Chairman raised the issue of Grass Cutting, and following his election as Chairman wanted to investigate which areas are supposed to be cut, by whom and how often. The Clerk advised that she has maps of the verges that the grass cutting contractor is supposed to be following on behalf of the Parish Council and will forward those to the Chairman.

Cllr Booth reported areas of grass that have not been cut within the Parish and in his opinion the contractor is getting behind in his schedule due to the wet weather.

Cllr Fryett raised the question, how many times a year do we pay our grass contractor to cut the grass verges?

The Clerk answered that according to the invoices received at the end of the year it is four times a year.

The Chairman will arrange a meeting with the Vice-Chairman and Clerk to look into this matter further.

(a) For Councillors to consider the RoSPA report for Guyhirn Pond

Cllr Booth raised the points regarding a self-closing mechanism on the gate as well as fencing and extra deep-water signage between the pond area and Spencer Drove, as he believed these to be points Councillors needed to consider.

The Chairman agreed with that comment and noted that most of the report was rated as low risk except for the need for extra signage which was rated at medium.

Cllr Blackmore reported that when the new gate was made, the carpenter felt there was a considered risk to children's fingers by adding a self-closing mechanism.

The Council agreed to install extra signage and the Clerk to approach the Handyman to install.

(b) For Councillors to consider the RoSPA report for Wisbech St Mary Pond

The Chairman summarised the main points; the lifebuoy having been positioned in a location that has subsequently ended up within the water, and the broken fencing between the pond and the adjacent bungalow.

The Chairman recommended that the life buoy is relocated nearer to the fencing to the front; assessing this to be moved once the water levels come down and that Cllr Humphrey liaise with the owner of the bungalow as the fencing that is broken and missing to the left of the pond is their private property.

### 16.2. Parish Handyman – For Councillors to consider any potential work orders.

The following work orders were agreed by Councillors:

- Little Jetty Footpath – Strim, tidy and remove weeds.
- Guyhirn Car Park at the Playing Field – Trees and bushes to the front encroaching footpath to be trimmed.
- The grass area at WSM School top of Churchfield Way, WSM – needs mowing and putting on a fortnightly rota.
- Thorney Toll Village Hall – Grassed slope adjacent to the A47 needs strimming.

### 16.3. Bus Shelters – **No items of discussion**

### 16.4. Planters

The Chairman expected the summer bedding plants to be ready first week of June and will arrange distribution.

## 17. MEMBERS AND CHAIRMANS ALLOWANCE

(a) For Councillors to approve and adopt Members Allowances & Expenses Policy

(b) For Councillors to consider and approve Members Allowance for the coming year

(c) For Councillors to consider and approve Chairmans Allowance for the coming year

The Chairman opened all three parts of the item for discussion, by raising the question that as Parish Councillors have a certain level of responsibility, should they be paid a small allowance for their work?

The Clerk reported on the item by detailing that whilst the Parish Council could set their own allowance

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figure, consideration had to be given to the conclusions of the independent remuneration panel. The panel met in May 2021 and recommended that the annual Basic Allowance for an elected (not co-opted) Parish Councillor should be 1% of a District Councillor allowance equating to £50 and the Chairmans allowance should be 2% equating to £100. The Clerk explained that Chairmans allowance could be used to pay for items that a Parish Council couldn't otherwise do, for example to provide flowers for a funeral. The Clerk reported that £100 per Councillor and £500 for the Chairman was budgeted when the precept was set and recommended not going over this figure.

The Clerk reported that if Councillors agree to the Policy and to award themselves an allowance, they would be obliged to deduct income tax via the Parish Councils payroll system and at the end of the financial year must publish a notice stating the total that has been paid to each Councillor.

The Chairman summed up before going to proposals and voting by expressing his annoyance at Parish Councillors being classed as only doing 1% of the work a District Councillor does by the remuneration panel, and in his opinion the allowance recognises the role that every Parish Councillor agrees to take on.

Cllr Weldon proposed the Council approve and adopt the Members Allowance & Expenses Policy, this was seconded by Cllr Booth and unanimously agreed.

Cllr Weldon proposed the Council approve a Members Basic Allowance of £100 per year, this was seconded by Cllr Booth and unanimously agreed.

Cllr Booth Proposed the Council approve a Chairmans Allowance of £500 per year, with £100 being paid in line with the Members Basic Allowance, and any unspent of the £400 held to be paid to the Chairman at the end of the financial year, this was seconded by Cllr Fryett and unanimously agreed.

## **18. GUYHIRN CAR PARK EXTENSION**

For Councillors to receive a report from the working group.

Cllr Britain expressed delight at how good the new car park now looks, and thanked all involved. Cllr Fryett reported that the project was almost complete and is very pleased to see how well the car park is being used. Cllr Fryett also reported that he has received the solar lights from Cllr Wheeler and is awaiting amendments to be made to the second gate [by adding a pole similar to the one attached to the height barrier gate] for the installation of the light. Cllr Fryett expressed concern regarding the installation of the lights as this would be working at a greater height than is considered safe for a ladder. Cllr Fryett to liaise with Cllr Wheeler to arrange suitable equipment for the installation.

## **19. KING CHARLES III CORONATION**

For Councillors to receive final reports regarding commemorative coins presentation assemblies.

Cllr Fryett reported that the Murrow Assembly went very well, he was accompanied by Cllrs Booth & Scrimshaw and all Councillors commented on how well behaved the children were and how gratefully they received their coins.

Cllr Blackmore reported that the Guyhirn Assembly had also gone very well, he was accompanied by Cllrs Allen & Weldon and Councillors commented on how enjoyable it was, particularly the singing.

Cllr Humphrey reported that the WSM Assembly had also gone very well, he was accompanied by Cllrs Wheeler & Knight, Councillors also remarked on how well behaved the children were and how they engaged with the presentation that Cllr Knight gave, the assembly was finished by the singing of the National Anthem.

## **20. POLICE MATTERS**

For Councillors to note Police Report & Crime Statistics for the Parish.

The Clerk circulated the Crime Statistics Report from the month of March 2023, the total amount of crime reported in the Parish was 21; with Murrow at 10, having the most reported crime.

Cllr Booth reported that he had received a complaint regarding parking outside WSM School, and had been advised that there is only one PCSO currently covering around 20 schools, but there would be some extra checks undertaken.

Cllr Fryett expressed frustration that parking outside Murrow School is also very poor, but appreciates that all the schools are suffering the same issue.

The Chairman raised the question as to whether Special Police Officers could undertake checks, as any Police presence could help deter poor parking? The Clerk to follow this up with the Police

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## 21. THORNEY TOLL VILLAGE HALL

For Councillors to receive any updates.

Cllr Weldon reported that events currently being held include Karate, Dance and Sunday Morning Church Group and private bookings were improving.

## 22. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

To consider any items for a future meeting agenda.

Cllr Britain expressed concern over whether all the building works on Gull Road in the location of the now demolished 'Dove Cottage' and 'Mole End' had the required planning permission. The Clerk advised that from researching on the planning portal; she believed that all current building works had planning permission, but was more concerned about whether all this building work was piecemeal development (by the same developer) and therefore was avoiding S106 contributions. The Clerk reported that she had brought this to the attention of Planning Officers at FDC and had asked them to investigate.

## 23. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 12th June 2023	7:00pm	The Chequers Public House – Tholomas Drove
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## DATES OF MEETINGS FOR 2023/2024

Monday 10th July 2023	7:00pm	Guyhirn Community Room
Monday 14th August 2023	7:00pm	Thorney Toll Village Hall
Monday 11th September 2023	7:00pm	Murrow Village Hall
Monday 9th October 2023	7:00pm	The Chequers Public House – Tholomas Drove
Monday 13th November 2023	7:00pm	Guyhirn Community Room
Monday 11th December 2023	7:00pm	Thorney Toll Village Hall
Monday 15th January 2024	7:00pm	Murrow Village Hall
Monday 12th February 2024	7:00pm	Guyhirn Community Room
Monday 11th March 2024	7:00pm	Thorney Toll Village Hall
Monday 15th April 2024	7:00pm	Murrow Village Hall
Monday 13th May 2024	7:00pm	WSM Community Centre – Sidings Room

Meeting closed at 8:45pm

.....Date:.....

Chairman

Cllr Mark Knight MBE DL