

Wisbech St Mary Parish Council

Minutes of the Meeting of Wisbech St Mary Parish Council held on Monday 11th December 2023 at Thorney Toll Village Hall, Thorney Toll

Attended by: Councillors: C Allen (Chairman), J Humphrey (Vice-Chairman), M Fryett, A Weldon, B Britain, R Blackmore, G Booth, S Mann & D Scrimshaw.

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

Members of the public: 4

1. RESIGNATION OF MARK KNIGHT AS CHAIRMAN AND PARISH COUNCILLOR

Cllr J Humphrey (as the Vice - Chairman) opened the meeting with the announcement that Cllr Mark Knight had resigned as Chairman and as a Parish Councillor, he gave a brief summary of his achievements during his term and recommended that the Parish Council send a letter of thanks for his service. The resignation was accepted and the letter was approved by Council.

2. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

(a) For Council to elect a chairman for the remainder of the municipal year 2023-2024.

Cllr Britain proposed Cllr Allen for Chairman, seconded by Cllr Booth. With no further nominations; Cllr Allen accepted the position and was duly elected Chairman for the remainder of the municipal year 2023/24.

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

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

3. OPEN FORUM - Parishioners are invited to address the Council.

- Cllr Diane Cutler as the Co-Ordinator for the Parson Drove & Wisbech St Mary Ward Community Speedwatch (CSW) reported that the scheme is taking a Winter break for December and January and will resume sessions in February 2024.

4. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE - Received and accepted from CCC Cllr S Count & FDC Cllr M Humphrey.

5. TO CONSIDER MEMBER REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION – None Received

6. MEMBERS DECLARATION OF INTEREST for items on this agenda. – None Received

7. TO SIGN AND APPROVE MINUTES OF MEETING dated 13th November 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.

8. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES (information only).

The Clerk reported:

- A meeting had been arranged with Jacob Hobbs from CCC for 10:30am the following morning (Tuesday 12th December 2023) at the Guyhirn Community Room to discuss the LHI designs for WSM and Guyhirn following the Councillor walk throughs, to which any Councillors with an interest were invited to attend.
- The handyman had trimmed the overhanging branches of a tree that was obscuring a streetlight on Selwyn Corner, Guyhirn. The home owner that raised the concern was happy this was completed to a satisfactory standard.
- The future item requested by Cllr Booth regarding WWII names of the fallen being added to Murrow War Memorial will be added to January's agenda due to December's agenda being full.

9. REPORTS FROM DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCILLORS - Agenda item time limited to 10 minutes.

- Cllr Booth reported his attendance at today's meeting of Full Council at Fenland District Council where items included the approval of a new Councillor Allowance Scheme, which should be followed by a report regarding the Parish Councillor Allowance Scheme.
- FDC is trying to recruit new planning officers with a deadline of 8th January 2024 for applications, which unfortunately was struggling to find adequate recruitment for the more specialist roles like Senior Enforcement, Conservation and Tree Officer.
- Cllr Booth also reported that the Polling Place review was discussed at Full Council and the Parish Councils recommendation to utilise Guyhirn Community Room had been dismissed by officers due to poor access and lighting. Cllr Booth disagreed with officers' decision and requested that they assess again due to the improvements the Parish Council

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has recently made to the area, this request was agreed to.

- Cllr King circulated his CCC report prior to the meeting and drew attention to the issue of Bellamy Bridge where the opportunity had arisen to apply for a joint LHI bid in the current 2024/25 round via Gorefield Parish Council. Cllr King requested the Parish Councils approval of this in principle; to be able to take the matter forward, which would also include obtaining the approval from Parson Drove Parish Council. This would involve each Parish Council having an input into the design of the scheme and being invoiced separately on a per capita basis (with WSM being the greatest Parish incurring the largest cost). This was agreed unanimously by Councillors and Cllr King agreed to follow up. The Clerk recommended that the Council factored this potential extra cost into precept setting discussion.
- Cllr Fryett expressed frustration at the poor service being received during the handover between LHO's as he is still awaiting collection of the marker posts. Cllr Fryett did acknowledge the report from the home owner regarding the overgrown trees on Hooks Drove and appreciated the update. Cllr King agreed to escalate the outstanding issues to a more senior officer.
- Cllr Fryett drew attention to the junction signage request for Back Road, Murrow and advised that the Clerk had reported the issue via the online reporting tool following the last meeting, as he was copied into the email that advised the LHO of the report reference number. Cllr King requested that this email was forwarded to him. The Clerk agreed to follow up. Cllr Fryett clarified that the lineage had been refreshed and was adequate but a sign to indicate the presence of a give way junction was needed.
- The Chairman expressed concern regarding a bad dip at the junction of Cants Drove on Murrow Bank, and in his opinion high speeds combined with the dip could cause an accident. Cllr King reported that he had today been made aware of this issue and will follow up.
- The Chairman also expressed frustration that the bad dip at the end of Gull Drove towards the junction with Black Drove had still not been repaired. Cllr King to obtain an update.

10. TO CONSIDER PLANNING MATTERS

10.1. Planning applications determined by the Fenland District Council (FDC). - **Noted**

10.2. Planning applications for discussion:

(a)	F/YR23/0938/A	Display of 3 x illuminated signs, 3 x non-illuminated signs and 1 x illuminated pole sign at J S Holmes Ltd High Road Wisbech St Mary Wisbech Cambridgeshire PE13 4RQ The Parish Council recommended APPROVAL.
(b)	F/YR23/0984/RM	Reserved Matters application relating to detailed matters of access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale pursuant to outline permission F/YR22/1085/O to erect 2 x dwellings (2-storey 4-bed) at Land East of The Bell 8 Murrow Bank Accessed from Front Road Murrow Cambridgeshire The Parish Council recommended REFUSAL based on concerns regarding the access being too close to the corner and visibility splays.
(c)	F/YR23/0990/PIP	Residential development of up to 3 x dwellings involving the formation of 2 x new accesses (application for Permission in Principle) at Land West Of 37 Mill Road Murrow Cambridgeshire The Parish Council recommended REFUSAL based on the following discussion: The Council noted the reduction in properties from that of application F/YR23/0796/PIP but still considered that any development in this location would go against LP3, LP12 and LP16 of the Fenland Local Plan; in that the development would be outside the main settlement of Murrow and would set a precedent of extending the boundary based on a similar dismissed appeal decision at Sandbank, Wisbech St Mary (F/YR22/0706/O). Councillors also noted concern that no further development should be undertaken on Mill Road which would result in more traffic until a footpath is installed. If Officers are minded to approve the PIP then the Parish Council recommend that a footpath is installed prior to commencement of development. They also noted concern regarding drainage and flooding.
(d)	F/YR22/1029/F APPEAL	Change of use of land for the stationing 1 x mobile home residential purposes and 1 x touring caravan, and the erection of an ancillary dayroom (part retrospective) at Land North of The Spinney Galls Drove Wisbech St Mary Cambridgeshire The Clerk included this appeal notification that was not on the agenda due to time constraints for a response. The Parish Council wished to stand by their original recommendation of REFUSAL based on the lack of an up-to-date Gypsy/Travellers Housing needs assessment which determines whether plots are needed and the fact that this is within Flood Zone 3.

10.3. 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 Update

The Clerk reported that due to the confidential nature of the update, Councillors were advised to note the response and read the report from FDC Planning via the OneDrive papers.

11. CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED

(a) WSM Football Club – Request for a letter of support regarding 3G pitch project.

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Cllr Humphrey reported that a letter of support was needed to send to the FA as part of their grant application. It was agreed by majority vote for the letter to be written.

Cllr Booth declared a non-pecuniary interest as a substitute committee member on Fenland District Councils Planning Committee.

12. HIGHWAYS MATTERS

12.1. Street Lighting

The Clerk reported that the Street Light Inspection had been completed by Electrical Testing Ltd and the lengthy report was on the Council OneDrive for perusal. The matter will be on January's agenda for full consideration but wanted to bring early attention to the few marked red or amber on the report. The single unit marked as red has already been disconnected by UKPN and the Clerk will report further on the matter in January.

Cllr Weldon requested confirmation on whether the street light to the rear of no.12 Lindens Close had been flagged as it had recently been struck by the refuse vehicle. The Clerk confirmed that this streetlight was marked as green on the report.

The Clerk reported that streetlight 038 on Church Road, WSM at the junction of Churchfield Way had been reported as having the door to the electrics open and asked for permission to send Wisbech Electrical to investigate. This was agreed by the Council and the clerk to follow up.

Cllr Fryett reported that he had received a request for a light to be installed beside/behind the new glass Bus Shelter at Tholomas Drove. Following further discussion, it was agreed for the clerk to contact Wisbech Electrical for a quote to install a column and solar streetlight at the location.

12.2. Highways

(a) To consider a proposed disabled persons parking bay on Chapel Avenue, WSM.

Following discussion, the Parish Council raised no objections to the DPPB and the Clerk will inform the relevant officer at CCC.

(b) To discuss a request for a pedestrian crossing at High Road/Gull Road, Guyhirn.

Cllr Booth reported that a resident had expressed concern regarding a safe pedestrian route from Guyhirn to Rings End. Crossing the road at the sharp bend that connects High Road to Gull Road can be dangerous as visibility is poor and traffic speeds can be fast. Cllr Booth stated that he had informed the resident that major works like footpaths and crossings will likely have to be part of a LHI application and that the bids for the current round had already been agreed by the Parish Council. Cllr Booth explained that a pedestrian crossing across High Road somewhere near the Oliver Twist PH over to a new footpath that extends all the way to meet the existing footpath near the layby on Gull Road had been suggested by the resident. Following further discussion, it was agreed to bring this back when next years LHI applications are decided.

Cllr Britain expressed frustration that the steps and slope that lead from Guyhirn up to the A47 had deteriorated further with the hand rails now being missing. The Clerk reported that every attempt to contact National Highways to maintain this area had failed. Cllr King offered to try and obtain assistance for this issue. The Clerk to forward information to Cllr King.

Cllr King also informed the Parish Council that the cost of a zebra crossing is now £38,000 which is over and above the current maximum funding available of £25,000 via an LHI bid which would mean the cost to the Parish Council would be considerable. Cllr King recommended a cheaper alternative of incorporating an informal crossing onto a build out via a future traffic calming scheme.

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

The Chairman reported that the road surface had broken up on Chapelfield Road, Guyhirn at the junction with Waverley Close. The Clerk to report this on the CCC reporting tool.

Cllr Fryett expressed concern that the two new bus stop poles installed at Foleys Drove require a hard standing area for the benefit of residents waiting to use the bus. The Clerk advised that this would likely have to be a privately funded highways initiative and recommended the item be added to the next agenda for full discussion and consideration. This process was agreed to and the Clerk to add it to January's agenda.

13. FINANCE MATTERS

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

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The bank reconciliation of 1st December 2023 balanced at £122,590.02 which was between the Barclays Current Account of £47,672.52 and £75,000.00 invested with the CCLA PSDF. The Clerk reported that all expected income had been received for this financial year. The report was agreed to and signed off by Cllr David Scrimshaw.

13.2. To receive the Detailed Budget Review 2023/24 and for members to consider draft precept.

The Clerk circulated paper copies of the working document which included budget, variance and forecasted figures as well as the first draft calculation for next year's precept. The Clerk started discussions by detailing that VAT will no longer be included in the precept calculations; during the course of the year VAT is paid out and claimed back quarterly, which meant that all expenditure would be excluding VAT. The Clerk explained that a precept increase was likely due to rising costs in all markets ranging from purchase of assets to maintenance costs. The Clerk recommended that Councillors examine the figures from both documents ready for January's precept setting meeting. The Clerk reported that the calculations factored in a net tax base formula to give Councillors an exact cost to the tax payer. Councillors requested that increases at increments of 1% ranging between 5-10% was provided for January's meeting. The Clerk agreed to provide these figures and the agreed budget and precept amount will be decided in January 2024 for the following year, along with the allocated cash reserves.

13.3. To receive the Investment Reports for 2023/24 to date.

(a) CCLA PSDF – Current yield and return.

The Clerk reported that the investment had made £2,272.55 since its inception on 17th March 2023 with a current yield of 5.2614%.

(b) CCLA COIF – The Middle Pit & Tholomas Drove Wash Pit Fund Charity – Current yield and return. The Clerk reported that the investment had made £2,152.10 since its inception on 16th May 2023 with a current yield of 5.1459%.

13.4. To approve payment of outstanding accounts:

Item	Description	Total Amount	Power	
(a)	Clerk November Salary (Inc Back Pay Award)	£1896.61	LG Act 1972 S112	Agreed
(b)	Clerk HMRC Tax and NI	£699.65	LG Act 1972 S112	Agreed
(c)	Clerk Monthly Expenses (November)	£179.98	LG Act 1972 S112	Agreed
(d)	Nest Pensions – November (Direct Debit)	£171.65	LG Act 1972 S112	Agreed
(e)	Npower Lighting November Energy	£946.62	Parish Councils Act 1957 S3	Agreed
(f)	Tamar IT – Microsoft 365 (Direct Debit)	£13.54	LG Act 1972 S111	Agreed
(g)	Mr Stephen Knight – Handyman November Work	£375.00	Open Spaces Act 1906 S9-10	Agreed
(h)	Chairman Quarterly Allowance Q3	£20.00	LG Act 1972 S15 (5)	Agreed
(i)	Councillor Quarterly Allowances Q3 (TOTAL)	£165.00	Local Authority (Members Allowances) (England) Regs 2003 S25 (1b)	Agreed
(j)	Viking Direct – Office Consumables	£159.26	LG Act 1972 S111	Agreed
(k)	WSM Sports & Comm Centre – Bellamy Bridge Mtg	£80.00	LG Act 1972 S134	Agreed
(l)	SLCC – Annual Membership Fee	£229.00	LG Act 1972 S143	Agreed
(m)	Electrical Testing – Street Light Inspection	£3294.00	Parish Councils Act 1957 S3	Agreed

The Council resolved to authorise the expenditure for the month of November totalling £8230.31. The invoices were checked and signed off by Cllr Fryett. Payments were made via cheques signed by the only remaining Councillor/Officer on the mandate and all counterfoils were checked and signed off by Cllr Booth.

13.5. Grant Applications

(a) Murrow Book Café – Running Costs - Between £500 - £1250. LG Act 1972 S137

The Clerk reported that this was the second application for this financial year, having previously been awarded £500 in May under S137. Councillors considered that the group currently has enough funds to survive until the end of this financial year but would provisionally approve an award of £500 in April 2024 (the next financial year).

Cllr Booth reported that £5000 was due to be offered to the Parish Council from Wrydecroft Windfarm to be awarded (via the Parish Council) to community groups at a maximum of £1000 per application; and this

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could be something Murrow Book Café could apply for once the funding becomes available. The Clerk to inform the group of the decision and recommendation.

(b) WSM Sports & Community Centre – Grass Cutting - £5000.

LG (Misc Prov) Act 1976 S19

Following discussion, the full grant amount was awarded. Proposed by Cllr Booth and seconded by Cllr J Humphrey and unanimously agreed to by Councillors.

14. PARISH PROPERTY

14.1. Maintenance – No items of discussion

14.2. Handyman

(a) For Councillors to consider the repair of the Little Jetty tarmac path.

The Clerk circulated photographs of the current damage to the tarmac path which is believed to have occurred due to tree roots. Cllr J Humphrey agreed to speak to the home owner whom the tree belonged to for approval to cut the section of roots which were believed to be causing the break-up of the path. The Clerk agreed to defer the item until a discussion had been had with the home owner.

(b) For Councillors to consider any other potential work orders

Cllr J Humphrey expressed concern regarding dog fouling around the new playground in Guyhirn and recommended signs be installed warning dog owners to make sure they bag all dog fouling and use the bins provided. The Clerk asked whether the District Councillors attending the meeting could obtain some hard backed signs from FDC. FDC Cllr Cutler & Booth agreed to follow up.

14.3. Bus Shelters

The Clerk reported that the powder coated metal panel in replacement of the broken glass section of the Bus Shelter opposite the Wheel PH on the High Road, WSM had been dispatched by Shelter Solutions and will be delivered directly to Paul Tibbs for installation.

14.4. Planters

Cllr Scrimshaw reported that he was keen to get the Murrow Seadyke planter relocated and was having trouble sourcing sleepers from his current contact, but will try a different supplier. Cllr Scrimshaw asked for approval to be reimbursed if he paid cash and this was approved by Council.

Cllr Britain volunteered to raise the sponsorship plaque on the Selwyn Cottages Planter and asked whether any others needed doing. It was determined that no others needed doing at this time.

14.5. Office Assets

(a) For Councillors to consider the purchase of a brighter projector (Vivitek DX273-EDU XGA (4:3) 4000 Lumens Projector) at a cost of £355.00 (Exc VAT)

Following discussion and consideration that the Parish Council already had a projector it was determined that a better one was needed if the Council was to move forward with operating in a more digital manner. The purchasing of the projector was approved unanimously by Councillors.

15. GUYHIRN MATTERS

(a) For Councillors to discuss Guyhirn Pond dredging and funding from Wrydecroft Windfarm.

Cllr Booth reported on this item by announcing that the Parish Council had been offered £10,000 of funding from Wrydecroft Windfarm even though the application was going to be withdrawn following a refusal from Anglian Water Flourishing Environment Fund. The two grants were intended to jigsaw funding together for the dredging of Guyhirn Pond and improve the community area. The Clerk reported that an application could be made to The National Lottery – Awards for all, who were relatively quick on their decisions. Following further discussion, it was agreed to accept the £10,000 from Wrydecroft Windfarm, the Clerk to look for potential alternative funding avenues (including potentially being able to fund via the Parish Council budget) and to set up a meeting between ADC drainage Ltd and Guyhirn Councillors to understand the logistics and timings of the project.

(b) CCC Land Licence for Community Room Car Park – Update

The Clerk reported that she had contacted CCC Farms team requesting a meeting on site and until they respond, the matter is still pending.

(c) War Memorial Relocation – Update

The Clerk reported that a meeting had taken place on Tuesday 5th December 2023 between herself, the

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Chairman and Mr & Mrs Rooney who own the land behind the Guyhirn Playing Field and currently have access over the land where the War Memorial was likely to be relocated. They agreed that the current access over the Parish Council land was acceptable as access to their field and their only condition was that there was 6m gap from the centre of the access road to the War Memorial to ensure any agricultural vehicle could safely manoeuvre. The Clerk to draw up a contract outlining this agreement with the condition mentioned for both parties to sign.

The Clerk also reported that a provisional date for the Public Consultation had been booked with the Guyhirn Community Room for Saturday 17th February 2024. The Chairman recommended that this be moved to the end of March due to his existing commitments. The Clerk to liaise with the Chairman and follow up.

16. POLICE MATTERS

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

The Clerk circulated the Crime Statistics from the month of October 2023, the total amount of crime reported in the Parish was 21; with Guyhirn at 9, having the most reported crime.

17. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

To consider any items for a future meeting agenda.

Cllr Fryett requested training for using the new iPads and anything available from CAPALC. The Clerk advised that training will be given to all Councillors for the new iPads in a group session, the date of which will be advised to Councillors in due course. The Clerk supported Councillors undertaking CAPALC training and that due to having some new Councillors and there was a budget allowance for this was happy to arrange anything required.

18. EXEMPT ITEM

To consider entering into a closed session under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 to hold Co-option Interviews.

Cllr Booth raised the question as to why the interviews should be conducted in closed session.

The Clerk agreed that as Co-option was neither a staffing matter nor was there any sensitive financial information, she could not find a reason for the interviews to be held in private session.

The Chairman recommended that the public could remain. The Parish Council and the candidates agreed to this process.

19. CO-OPTION

The Chairman welcomed the three candidates to the meeting with the Clerk reporting that one candidate had withdrawn. The Chairman also noted that the Parish Council was lucky to have three good candidates wishing to become Parish Councillors.

The three candidates were interviewed separately and were asked why they wished to become a Parish Councillor and what skills could they bring to the Parish Council.

Following interviews and two rounds of voting, (due to no one candidate receiving absolute majority in the first round); the Chairman announced that Gloria Culyer had been Co-Opted to Wisbech St. Mary Parish Council.

Gloria Culyer signed the Acceptance of Office as a Co-Opted member of Wisbech St. Mary Parish Council.

The Chairman advised the two unsuccessful candidates that the Parish Council had a further vacancy and would they like to be automatically put forward should this again go to co-option, both candidates were very keen and accepted this process.

The Clerk provided the new Councillor with a welcome pack which included the register of interests form, current Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Code of Conduct and the most recent Finance & Budget Report.

The Chairman closed the meeting by wishing everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and thanked the Councillors for their commitment throughout the year.

20. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 15th January 2024

7:00pm

Murrow Village Hall

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DATES OF MEETINGS FOR 2023/2024

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 9:30 pm

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

Chairman

Cllr Charles Allen