

MANEA PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING

19 DECEMBER 2011 – 7.00 pm.

Present: Councillor Emery, Chairman; Councillors Buckton, Mrs Desborough, Jolley, Risbridger and Woodard.

Apologies: Councillors Archer, Cole and Lockett.

The minutes of the meeting of 21 November 2011 were confirmed and signed.

M102/11 Open Forum

Charlemont Drive, Manea

A small number of members of the Charlemont Drive Residents' Committee attended the meeting, to enquire as to whether the Parish Council was aware of any progress regarding the highways and open space adoptions issues at the estate and to seek members' views regarding the provision of information and directional signage for Charlemont Drive.

The Chairman informed the residents of the update given by Mr Pain, Corporate Director at Fenland District Council (FDC), at the last Parish Council meeting (minute M95/11), i.e. that ownership of the land has now passed to the Crown, and that Mr Pain had undertaken to inform residents of Charlemont Drive of the current situation. The Chairman gave a commitment that the Parish Council would continue to meet the cost of cutting the grass at the open space until the land is transferred to Fenland District Council.

Members decided to indicate their support for residents' proposals for provision of an information sign at the entrance to Charlemont Drive (detailing the businesses which operate at the estate) and directional signage on the public highway, showing visitors to the village where to find Charlemont Drive. In addition, members suggested that the Residents' Committee may wish to contact both Cambridgeshire ACRE and Fenland District Council to see if these proposals could be eligible for grant funding.

M103/11 Councillor Lockett – Resignation of membership from Parish Council

The Chairman reported the resignation of Councillor Lockett from membership of the Parish Council and read to members his letter of resignation, in which he explained his reasons for making this decision.

In his letter of resignation, Councillor Lockett paid tribute to the work of the members of the Parish Council and the Clerk.

Members decided that Councillor Lockett's resignation be noted and that he be thanked formally, through a letter from the Clerk, for his services to the Parish Council and to the people of the village.

M104/11 The Standards Board for England – Members' Code of Conduct

Members were reminded of the need to ensure that their Register of Declarable Interests is kept up-to-date.

No members had any amendments to make to their register entries.

M105/11 Parish Council meeting procedures and practices

Councillor Jolley informed members of his concerns regarding some of the current meeting practices of the Parish Council, such as having Urgent Business on the agenda. He referred briefly to the advice given in The Good Councillor's Guide booklet produced by the National Association of Local Councils.

Councillor Jolley made the comment that the Parish Council is in a healthy financial position and that it should be possible to maintain this situation if effective practices are in place; he expressed the opinion that no payments should be made at a meeting unless contained within the Finance Report presented to the meeting by the Clerk.

Councillor Jolley mentioned the importance of planning and budgeting for all items of Parish Council expenditure and of having in place proper procedures for undertaking Parish Council business.

The Clerk endorsed the information and commended the advice given to members by Councillor Jolley and then added further comments in that regard.

The Clerk informed members that

- a) Agendas for meetings of local councils must be made available not less than three clear days in advance of a meeting (the clear days exclude the day of agenda despatch and the day of the meeting). It is good practice to also avoid weekends and Public Holidays – in the case of Manea Parish Council meetings (on Mondays), the latest day for agenda despatch would be the Tuesday of the previous week.
- b) Each agenda item should make it clear what the council will be considering and what decisions it is expecting to be taking at the meeting.
- c) Vague agenda items, such as Matters Arising, Any Other Business or Urgent Business, are not considered to be good practice, as such items do not make members of the public aware of the nature of the business to be transacted and the decisions to be taken at the meeting; local councils are not permitted to make unexpected decisions. It is actually unlawful to make financial decisions unless there has been compliance with the three clear days rule. The Clerk reminded members that he had, in recent months, replaced the Matters Arising agenda item with one which related specifically to reporting back on actions agreed at the previous meeting.
- d) If there is likely to be need for decisions to be taken as a matter of urgency, the council should consider delegating certain powers; this could be to a committee, sub-committee or an officer. However, meetings of committees and sub-committees are subject to the same three clear days rule as the council. No individual member of a local council can make decisions on behalf of the Council.
- e) In his experience, many of the matters which had been considered as urgent business in the past were often "fault reporting" issues raised with Parish Council members by residents (such as faulty street lamps and pot holes) or issues which could have been raised with the Clerk prior to agenda despatch or could have waited until the next Parish Council meeting for discussion.

Members decided

- (1) that the information and advice given by Councillor Jolley and the Clerk, as outlined above, be noted;
- (2) to approve the recommendations of the Clerk that
 - future agendas for meetings of the council do not include an Urgent Business or any other "in case" item
 - agendas are published as late as possible, but in compliance with the three clear days rule, to maximise the opportunity of members and the Clerk to include items on an agenda
 - the council should consider the delegation of powers to the Clerk to deal with matters which need to be addressed between Parish Council meetings

- members of the community should be encouraged to report faults directly to service providers – such as reporting pot holes and faulty street lights to the County Council – rather than to Parish Councillors, for raising at Parish Council meetings.

M106/11 Progress on actions from minutes of last meeting

(1) Joint meeting of local councils (minute M92/11 (3))

The Clerk reminded members of the invitation from Welney Parish Council to submit agenda items for the meeting scheduled for 13 February 2012.

Members decided that they would give thought to potential agenda items and report these to the next meeting of the Parish Council, so that they could be forwarded to the Clerk at Welney Parish Council.

(2) Highway issues (minute M100/11)

The Clerk reported the response from the Local Highway Authority (LHA) in respect of the highway maintenance issues raised by members at minute M100/11.

The LHA makes the point that there has been varying degrees of damage to many roads in terms of cracking and subsidence, due to the on-going drought situation, and a report is currently being prepared in respect of repair works needed to such damaged roads across the County. The locations identified by the Parish Council at minute M100/11 have been inspected by the LHA but are not considered sufficiently in need of repair work at this time to justify inclusion in this report.

The LHA has no funding outside of its maintenance budget to undertake significant repairs to the roads identified at minute M100/11 and it is unlikely that the situation will change in the current financial year.

Some members felt it would be beneficial for speed counts to be undertaken on Station Road and Westfield Road (in the vicinity of Glebe Close) and agreed to request the Local Highway Authority to make the necessary arrangements.

Members decided that response from the Local Highway Authority (LHA) be noted and that the LHA be requested to make arrangements for the installation of speed counters on Station Road and Westfield Road (in the vicinity of Glebe Close).

M107/11 Public open spaces

- (1) Skateboard Park – Further to minute M93/11 (1), the Chairman reported that the electrical contractor has still to undertake installation of the new CCTV system for the skateboard park area but he will pursue the matter with the contractor.

Members decided that the current situation regarding installation of a new CCTV system be noted.

- (2) Playing field – Further to minute M93/11 (2), Councillor Buckton informed members of the success of the “drop in” consultation event held by Fenland District Council on 29 November 2011.

The Chairman reported briefly on the Ouse Washes Landscape Project, which is being developed by Cambridgeshire ACRE as a potential scheme for Heritage Lottery funding. Manea Parish Council has been invited to suggest a project idea, possibly linked to the pit area.

Members consider that there is one particular resident of the village who may be able to provide historical content for this project.

Members decided that the information reported by Councillor Buckton and the Chairman be noted and that the Chairman would discuss the Nene Ouse Washes Project with the local resident suggested by the Parish Council.

M108/11 Planning applications

Members considered the following planning application and decided to submit to the Local Planning Authority the comments set out (in italics) below:

Installation of photovoltaic panels to roof of existing building (retrospective) on barn at Colony Farm, Fifty Road, Manea – F/YR11/0949/F (applicant: Mr M Heading).

That the application be supported.

In addition, the Clerk reported that planning application reference F/YR11/0829/F (proposing the erection of 5 x two-storey, 3-bed houses with attached garages on land north-east of 9 Park Road, Manea), considered by the Parish Council at minute M94/11, had been withdrawn by the applicant and that, consequently, the Local Planning Authority would be taking no further action regarding the application.

M10911 Reports from District and County Councillors for the parish

As neither the District Councillor (Councillor Archer) nor the County Councillor (Councillor Harper) for the parish of Manea was present at the meeting, it was not possible to receive reports from them.

During previous absences of the County Councillor, he had submitted a written report to the Parish Council. However, this has not been the case with the District Councillor.

Members decided that they would express their disappointment at the lack of reports, either in person or in writing, from the local District Councillor.

M110/11 Local Minor Highway Improvements

The Clerk reported that the County Council's Cabinet recently allocated funding in 2012/13 for the implementation of Minor Highway Improvement Schemes (MHIS) and that proposals are now being invited from community groups – such groups could be district, town and parish councils, community and residents' groups and charities - which wish to submit a bid for funding.

Under the MHIS, applicants are able seek up to £10,000 from the County Council as a contribution to their scheme. The applicant is expected to provide a contribution towards each project of at least 10% of the scheme cost.

Applicants are required to state within their applications how they feel that the proposal would benefit the community.

Projects could involve any highway measure or improvement that is considered to offer benefit to the local community. The Clerk informed members of the application process relating to this scheme and of the method of application evaluation/prioritisation that the County Council will operate.

Long-term maintenance of schemes will normally be the responsibility of the County Council, provided that the scheme is constructed to normal County Council standards.

The deadline for submission of applications is 1 February 2012.

Members "flagged up" the possible submission of schemes which had been submitted the County Council previously under the former Jointly Funded Minor Highway Improvements process in 2010/11 (requesting road safety measures along Park Road) and 2011/12 (requesting a raised crossing point across Station Road, in the vicinity of the school) and agreed to give thought to other possible schemes, to enable a final decision on the submission of an application at the next meeting.

Members decided that the information reported by the Clerk be noted and to agree the submission of an application at the next meeting of the Parish Council.

M111/11 Manea Pit

Members received the minutes of the Sub-Committee meeting of 24 November 2011 and considered the recommendation at minute SC62/11 relating to the allocation of funding to meet the cost of tree works.

With regard to minute SC62/11, the Clerk reported to members on the quotation which had been considered by the Sub-Committee at that minute (which ranged from a minimum of £2,400 to a maximum £4,800, depending upon the extent and time scale for undertaking the works) and a subsequent quotation which had been received since the date of the Sub-Committee meeting (for £2,200 for undertaking all the works as single contract).

Councillor Buckton expressed his concern regarding the behaviour of Councillor Archer towards Councillor Emery during discussion of minute SC48/11 of the Sub-Committee meeting of 27 October 2011, under the Manea Pit item, at the last meeting of the Parish Council (minute M96/11 refers).

Councillor Buckton felt that the comments made by Councillor Archer at minute M96/11 were not representative of the views of other members of the Parish Council. Councillor Buckton stated that he supported the action taken by Councillor Emery at minute SC48/11 and would wish to hear the views of other Parish Council in this regard. He stated that he was pleased to see that the Sub-Committee had, at minute SC58/11, endorsed the action taken by Councillor Emery in relation to the dredging works that he had arranged. Other members of the Parish Council shared the views expressed by Councillor Buckton.

Councillor Jolley made reference to minute SC58/11, insofar as it related to investigations regarding a chemical means of reducing silt at Manea Pit, and stated that he would oppose any proposal to introduce chemicals to the pit. A number of other members shared Councillor Jolley's concerns regarding the introduction of chemicals to the pit.

Councillor Buckton raised a number of issues in relation to the management of Manea Pit and the operation of the Sub-Committee in that regard. He made reference to the Terms of Reference of the Sub-Committee and the Strategic Plan 2008/11, to demonstrate the specific and distinct roles and responsibilities of the Sub-Committee and the Parish Council in relation to the management of Manea Pit.

Councillor Buckton expressed concerns regarding some of the funding decisions which had, in effect, been made by the Sub-Committee and also regarding the fact that the Parish Council has, to date, not maintained an effective overview of the management plan and given the Sub-Committee a steer in relation to prioritisation of works at Manea Pit. He made the point that It is the Parish Council which is ultimately responsible in law for health and safety, expenditure of public funds etc. and it is, therefore, appropriate that the Parish Council "tightens-up" its processes for scrutiny and oversight.

Councillor Buckton recommended to the Parish Council that

- a) the number of Parish Councillors on the Sub-Committee be reduced (from 5) to 4, ensure that they do not form a majority on the Parish Council;
- b) there should be feedback from the Chairman of Sub-Committee at every Parish Council meeting, to supplement the minutes of the Sub-Committee meeting;
- c) the monitoring of actions (works necessary to deliver the management plan) report considered at Sub-Committee meetings should be provided to the Parish Council alongside the Sub-Committee minutes;
- d) the Parish Council should undertake an annual review of the management plan, to identify works to be carried out, the likely costs and the priority that they should be afforded;
- e) all significant costs, other than health and safety or emergency works costing up to £500 require prior approval of the Parish Council;
- f) the Parish Council should actively seek wider community membership of the Sub-Committee.

Councillor Buckton also suggested that the Parish Council may wish to consider

- i. whether each Parish Council member of the Sub-Committee other than the Chairman should have an 'executive' responsibility, for example: fishing; ecology; health and safety (including maintenance of public use areas); works with specialist advisers and other groups and organisations to carry out work. Each executive member would be empowered to agree actions and report them to the Chairman, who, in turn, would report to the Parish Council.
- ii. revising voting rights of Sub-Committee members. All members should rightly have a voice and be able to contribute to discussion but not necessarily be able to make decisions.

Councillor Jolley stated that he shares fully the concerns expressed by Councillor Buckton regarding management of Manea Pit and believes that the Parish Council must play a stronger role in that process.

Members decided that

- (1) the contents of the Sub-Committee minutes be noted;
- (2) the quotation for works to trees at Manea Pit, in the total sum of £2,200, be accepted, subject to provision by the contractor of copies of relevant insurances;
- (3) the recommendations of Councillor Buckton, set out at a) to f) above, be approved; no decisions were reached in relation to the suggestions of Councillor Buckton at i and ii above;
- (4) they consider the comments made by Councillor Archer towards Councillor Emery at minute M96/11 to be unacceptable and they unanimously congratulated Councillor Emery for the action that he took at minute SC48/11 (in relation to the dredging works that he had arranged).

M112/11 Finance

The Clerk reported on the Parish Council's income and expenditure since the last meeting, as follows:

Income

Manea UFC	Hire of field for football matches	£280.00
Manea Gala Committee	Donation – use of field	£200.00
Various (via I Fost)	Fishing fees	£15.00
Turner and Son	Interment fee	£140.00

Anglia Memorials	Memorial inscription	£80.00
Total Income		£715.00

Expenditure

Mainstream Fisheries Ltd	Additional fish for Manea Pit	£660.00
Pat Sones	Reimbursement of expenses for woodland project	£17.84
Mrs A Ryman	Wages and expenses	£95.55
East of England Apples and Orchards Project	Fruit trees for woodland project	£555.00
Manea Village Hall	Room hire on 21/11/11	£7.50
T Jordan	Salary (less income tax of £131.92), Broadband and other expenses	£653.16
HM Revenue and Customs	Clerk's Income Tax (September, October and November 2011).	£370.06
Fenland District Council	Manea Youth Bus trip	£250.00
Total Expenditure		£2,609.11

In addition, the Clerk reported to members on the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank accounts as at 30 November 2011 (in the total sum of £53,672.63), together with the month-end figures for each of the preceding six months.

Members decided

- (1) upon a proposal from Councillor Emery, seconded by Councillor Mrs Desborough, that the income of £715.00 be noted and that the payments totalling £2,609.11 be authorised;
- (2) that the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank accounts as at 30 November 2011, together with the month-end figures for each of the preceding six months, be noted.

M113/11 Parish Precept and Concurrent Functions Grant 2012/13

Members considered the level of Parish Precept for the financial year 2012/13 and the submission of an application to Fenland District Council for a Concurrent Functions Grant in relation to the same period.

The Clerk presented a detailed report on the Parish Council's income and expenditure as at the half-year, the financial position as at 30 November 2011, estimates of income and expenditure for 2012/13 and various notes to aid members' deliberations regarding the level of Parish Precept to be set.

Further to minute M91/11, members considered allocating funding towards the operation of Manea Youth Club in 2012/13, i.e. meeting the annual cost (of £1,050) of a Level 1 Youth Worker.

Members decided, being mindful of the current economic circumstances and its financial position, that

- (1) the Parish Council's financial position as at the half-year, the income and expenditure position as at 30 November 2011 and the estimates for 2012/13 be noted;

- (2) the level of Parish Precept for 2012/13 be set at £19,000 (i.e. the same level as for 2009/10, 2010/11 and 2011/12);
- (3) financial support be provided to Manea Youth Club, to meet the cost of a Youth Worker in 2012/13;
- (4) application be made to Fenland District Council for a Concurrent Functions Grant, relating to the same items as in previous years, for 2012/13.

M114/11 Correspondence

- (1) Fenland Rural Roads Safety Action Network - request for financial assistance.

The Clerk reported a request from the Fenland Rural Roads Safety Action Network for financial assistance towards the organisation's costs of continuing its current campaigning projects to promote the reduction of speeds outside schools in Fenland and to move to the next level of campaigning.

The letter of request detailed the actions being undertaken by the Fenland Rural Road Safety Action Network (FRRSAN) and the success that the network appears to be having in changing the behaviour of motorists.

Members felt, however, that before being able to consider making a financial contribution towards the work of the FRRSAN, it would need information in relation to the meaning of "next level of campaigning", as contained within the letter of request, and an indication of the level of financial contribution that FRRSAN is seeking from the Parish Council.

Members decided that the information required by the Parish Council be sought, by the Clerk, from the Fenland Rural Roads Safety Action Network.

- (2) Street Lighting PFI – Cambridgeshire.

The Clerk reported a letter from Cambridgeshire County Council detailing the street lighting PFI project which has been operating across the County for around six months and the County Council's contractor is progressing well in delivering the street lighting replacement programme.

The main impact upon communities of installing this more energy efficient form of lighting is that there will be around 10% fewer lighting columns across Cambridgeshire.

Under this scheme, local councils are being offered the opportunity to adopt the columns that would otherwise be de-commissioned. Adoption of these lights would require the local council to meet both the maintenance and energy costs associated with operating these lights.

Details of this programme are available on the County Council's website, via the following link:
<http://www.lightingcambridgeshire.com/newlighting.aspx>.

Members decided that the information provided by the County Council be noted.

- (3) School bus stop at Westfield Road, Manea.

The Clerk reported an e-mail from the Social and Education Transport Team at Cambridgeshire County Council regarding a proposal to re-locate the existing school bus stop at Westfield Road - to an area of pavement at the entrance to Bedford View - with the aim of improving the safety of pupils who travel on the school bus to the Cromwell Community College, Chatteris.

The County Council is seeking the views of the Parish Council on that proposal.

Members stated that they are supportive of any measures which are likely to improve the safety of pupils who currently use this bus stop. They recall that they have raised their concerns previously with both with the Principal of the Cromwell Community College and the County Councillor for the Manea area, Councillor Geoff Harper, regarding the inadequacy of the current bus stop waiting area and how it is used by pupils.

Members indicated that if the County Council's assessment is that the alternative location would provide a safer situation for pupils, the Parish Council should support the proposal. They do feel, however, that the County Council may receive objections from the residents of Bedford View in respect of the proposed new bus stop.

When considering, at its last meeting, a planning application for the erection of 26 dwellings on land south-west of the Fire Station, Westfield Road, Manea (planning application reference F/YR11/0840/F), the Parish Council not only supported the application but also requested the Local Planning Authority to ask the applicant to consider the provision of a school bus shelter and an appropriately-sized waiting area.

Members decided that the County Council be informed of their views, as outlined above.

M115/11 Parish Council and community projects and initiatives

(1) Quality Parish Councils scheme

Further to minute M99/11 (1), Councillor Buckton circulated an updated draft version of the Manea Parish Council Community Engagement Strategy (minute 39/11 refers), for members' consideration between this meeting and the next.

Members decided that the Manea Parish Council Community Engagement Strategy be discussed at the next meeting.

(2) Community-led plan for Manea

Further to minute M99/11 (2), the Chairman reported on the latest position regarding the development of a new community-led plan for Manea. He informed members that, although he had been unable to attend the last meeting of the Manea Action Plan Group, he understood that the focus of the meeting had been the production of a questionnaire.

Members decided that the information reported by the Chairman be noted.

(3) Queen's Diamond Jubilee 2012

Further to minute M99/11 (3), the Clerk read to members an update report produced by Mr Lockett.

As part of the project, Mr Lockett has produced a database/directory for the village, which he suggests could be made available widely within the community. He and Councillor Buckton had attended the workshop arranged by Fenland District Council (minute M70/11 (3) refers) and the District Council has indicated that it is prepared to assist further.

Mr Lockett proposes to hold a meeting in January 2012 with those groups which have expressed an interest in participating in the celebrations.

The report included details of the current ideas, including a village parade, a street party and BBQ/concert at the playing field. These ideas are additional to the activities that will be lead by Mrs B Carson (minute M89/11 (2) refers).

Members decided that the information reported by the Clerk on behalf of Mr Lockett be noted.

(4) New pavilion for Manea

Further to minute M99/11 (4), Councillor Jolley reported that he is still working on production of the information required by Fenland District Council in relation to the application for Rural Capital Grant funding and that the planning agent acting on behalf of the Parish Council has produced an application for Building Regulations approval. Councillor Jolley has requested the planning agent to provide quotations for soil investigation works etc.

Members decided that the information reported by Councillor Jolley be noted.

(5) Manea Youth Bus

Further to minute M99/11 (5), Councillor Buckton reported that the trip to the indoor ski slope at Milton Keynes on 26 November 2011 had proved successful, with a number of young people from the village enjoying the experience. In addition, he informed members that he would be meeting with relevant officers at Fenland District Council later this week with the aim of developing a strategy for promotion of the Manea Youth Bus

Members decided that the information reported by Councillor Buckton be noted.

(6) Extending the Winter Maintenance Service 2011/12

Further to minute M99/11 (6), Councillor Buckton reported that gritting routes around the village had been agreed amongst the volunteers and that he proposed to provide information regarding the service to village residents.

Members decided that

(1) the information provided by Councillor Buckton be noted;

(2) the pavement leading to the doctor's surgery be added to the list of those to be gritted under this scheme;

(3) the proposals of Councillor Buckton for providing information to the community, including a press article, be supported.

(7) Open space at Station Road/Jolley Close, Manea

Further to minute M92/11 (1), the Clerk reported that the Parish Council's solicitors have now forwarded to the solicitors acting on behalf of the administrators the Parish Council's payment (of £1,500 plus VAT) in relation to that firm's fees for dealing with the land transfer.

Members decided that the information reported by the Clerk be noted.

M116/11 Dates of meetings for 2012

Members decided that meetings of the Parish Council in 2012 (all commencing at 7.00 pm and taking place in Manea Village Hall (subject to availability on each date) be held on the following dates: 16 January, 20 February, 19 March, 16 April (including Annual Assembly and community engagement event), 21 May (Annual Meeting of the Council), 18 June, 16 July, 13 August, 17 September, 15 October, 19 November and 17 December.

Meeting finished at 9.20 pm

Signature:.....(Council Chairman).

Date:.....