

# MANEA PARISH COUNCIL

## MINUTES OF MEETING

21 MARCH 2011 – 7.00 pm.

**Present:** Councillor Emery, Chairman; Councillors Archer, Buckton, Mrs Desborough, Jolley and Lockett.

**Apologies:** Councillors Cole and Risbridger.

The minutes of the meetings of 14 February and 2 March 2011 were confirmed and signed.

### **M130/10 Councillor Mrs Palmby – Resignation of membership from Parish Council**

The Clerk reported the resignation of Councillor Mrs Palmby from membership of the Parish Council and read to members her letter of resignation, in which she explained her reasons for making this decision.

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

### **M131/10 The Standards Board for England – Members' Code of Conduct**

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

Councillors Buckton and Lockett made amendments to their register entries.

### **M132/10 Matters arising from minutes of last meeting**

#### **(1) Open space at Station Road/Jolley Close, Manea (minute M116/10 (1))**

The Clerk reported information received, via the solicitors acting for the Parish Council, from the Legal Services Team at Fenland District Council.

The e-mail from an officer within the Legal Services Team Fenland District Council (FDC) states that she had been instructed to take no further action in this matter and that a member of FDC's Corporate Management Team would be discussing the situation with Manea Parish Council.

Members expressed their surprise at this statement from Fenland District Council (FDC), given the assurance given by Mr Pain (Corporate Director at Fenland District Council) at the last meeting of Manea Parish Council that FDC's Legal Services Team would continue its efforts to achieve a satisfactory resolution to this matter.

In addition, the Chairman reported that the Manea village sign, which had "disappeared" a few weeks ago, had been returned to this site. Following its return, the sign has been re-painted by Mrs V Haldane and will be affixed again to its post within the next few days.

The Chairman reminded members of the outstanding work to provide ducting for the electricity supply at this site.

Members decided that

- (1) the information reported by the Clerk be noted and that he would raise, with Mr Pain, the Parish Council's concerns in this regard;
- (2) a letter of thanks be sent to Mrs Haldane;
- (3) Councillor Jolley would arrange the necessary electricity ducting works at this site.

**(2) County Council's Village Maintenance Budget (minute M122/10 (3))**

Members considered, in the light of the reduction in funding to be provided by the County Council in 2011/12, whether to meet the additional cost of continuing to provide the same level of village grass cutting or to reduce the level to accord with the reduced funding available.

Members decided that

- (1) the current level of village grass cutting be maintained, the Parish Council meeting any additional costs incurred;
- (2) the company which currently undertakes this grass cutting be invited to continue to undertake this work, with the request that the cost be not increased for 2011 (given that the County Council has reduced by 25% the level of funding that it will be providing to the Parish Council to meet the cost of this work).

**(3) Winter Service and the Localism Agenda – Opportunities for Third Party Working (minute M123/10)**

The Clerk reported on the meeting that he had attended on 24 February 2011 to discuss this proposal in greater detail and the most practical way forward.

The Clerk showed members a gritting route that had been suggested by the representatives of the Local Highway Authority (LHA), based upon the streets identified previously by Parish Council members. In addition, the representatives of the LHA recommended that the Parish Council purchases an additional salt bin, to be located in the vicinity of Festival Close.

The Clerk explained that the method of spreading salt would be by using a special barrow, which would be provided by the Local Highway Authority (LHA). The LHA will be providing training for those members of the community who would be undertaking this service.

For operation of this service, The Local Highway Authority requires a named individual as a point of contact within the village.

Members decided that

- (1) the information reported by the Clerk be noted;
- (2) the gritting route suggested by the Local Highway Authority be revised to include a couple of additional roads in the village;
- (3) the Chairman would enquire of Councillor Cole whether he would be prepared to act as the point of contact for this service;
- (4) an additional salt bin be ordered from the County Council.

#### **(4) Highway issues (minute M126/10)**

The Clerk reported the response from the Local Highway Authority in relation to the issues raised at minute M126/10, namely that

- the person who had caused the verge damage (through vehicle parking) at the junction of Station Road/Wimblington Road has agreed to both refrain from parking there and to make good the verge with top soil
- a further letter has been sent to the owner/occupier of 74b Station Road, requiring the cutting back of the trees/hedges at this property.

Members decided that the actions of the Local Highway Authority to address these issues be noted.

#### **M133/10 Manea Parish Plan**

Further to minute M103/10 (2), the Clerk reported on the meeting held on 23 February 2011; he informed members that

- the meeting was attended by in excess of 60 people, including 4 members of the Parish Council.
- some of the issues raised by attendees were:
  - the possible inability of the existing infrastructure to support future housing growth
  - the need to retain existing facilities, including the Fire Station, within the village
  - retention, and possible improvement, of public transport provision
  - the importance of engaging, by whatever means are most appropriate (not simply by a survey form), with the whole community when developing a new community-led plan
  - how will the process be funded and what would be the anticipated time commitment of Steering Group members?
- around 15 people had registered their interest in becoming a member of the Steering Group; this information is now held by the Community Development Team at Fenland District Council.
- once the Parish Council appoints two representatives to the Steering Group, the Community Development Team at Fenland District Council will contact all volunteers to arrange an initial meeting.

Members decided that the information reported by the Clerk be noted and that Councillors Archer and Jolley be appointed as the Parish Council's representatives on the Steering Group.

#### **M134/10 Playing Field and play area issues**

- (1) Manea United Football Club - the Clerk reported a request from Manea United Football Club (MUFC) for the Parish Council to consider reducing the fee levied currently for use of the playing field and the pavilion for home matches. MUFC states that the Cambridgeshire FA suggests that a sum of £30, rather than the current fee of £40, would be more appropriate for the facilities provided currently.

Members are aware that in July 2010 (minute M34/10 (7) refers), MUFC asked the Parish Council as to what the club receives for the £40 per match fee that it pays. The Parish Council's response at that time was:

- Use of the playing field and pavilion on match days, for friendly matches and for training sessions
- Use of electricity, heating and water at the pavilion

- A contribution towards the costs of cleaning, maintenance and insurance of the pavilion
- Cutting of the grass at the playing fields (which currently cost the Parish Council £70 per cut)
- A contribution towards the costs of Caretaking undertaken at the site.

Although wishing to support and encourage activities and services within the parish, members are of the view, being mindful of the cost of maintaining these facilities, of which MUFC is the primary user, that the current fee is appropriate and justifiable. Furthermore, once the new pavilion is provided, MUFC will enjoy new, high quality facilities; it is not proposed currently to increase the match fee when the new pavilion is available.

Members decided that the fee of £40 per match be retained and that Manea United Football Club be informed of

- the reason, as set out above, for this decision and be reminded of what is currently provided by Manea Parish Council, as detailed to MUFC in July 2010, for the fee paid;
- the fact that the fee has not been increased for the financial year 2011/12;

(Councillor Emery declared his personal interest in this item of business, by virtue of his membership of the Football Club Committee)

- (2) Future development of facilities – Further to minute M117/10 (3), Councillor Jolley reported that the agents acting on behalf of the Parish Council had been asked by Fenland District Council for some further information in relation to the planning application for a new pavilion; this information has been provided and a decision on the application is expected by early April 2011.

Councillor Jolley reported also that the Clerk had submitted an application for a grant of £100,000 from Fenland District Council's Rural Capital Grants Fund and that both he and the Clerk would be meeting with a representative of Cambridgeshire ACRE on 25 March 2011 with the aim of developing an application for additional funding from other sources.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

- (3) Skateboard Park – Further to minute M69/10 (2), the Chairman enquired of Councillor Archer whether there had been any progress in obtaining the anticipated contribution of £10,000 from Fenland District Council towards the cost of this project. Councillor Archer responded that nothing further more had been heard from the Leader of Fenland District Council on the matter.

In addition, the Chairman reported that he had now installed the waste bin, provided by Fenland District Council, at the Skateboard Park.

Members decided that

- (1) following his receipt from Councillor Archer of the "evidence" to support the Parish Council's claim for financial support from Fenland District Council, the Clerk would send a letter to the Leader of Fenland District Council in relation to this matter;
- (2) the installation of a waste bin be noted.
- (4) Car Park – Further to minute M107/10 (4), Councillor Jolley commented that the minor remedial works to the surfacing of the car park had not yet been undertaken.

The Chairman undertook to pursue the matter, as a matter of priority, with the contractor.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

## M135/10 Parish Council protocol for planning applications

Councillor Buckton presented a report that he had prepared, with the aim of the Parish Council implementing a protocol for its consideration of planning applications.

Councillor Buckton explained that his report had arisen as a result of a number of recent events in relation to planning applications that had come before Manea Parish Council and the way in which they have been considered by Parish Council members. He stated his view that some of the issues raised by these events call into question the efficacy of the Parish Council in dealing with contentious planning applications and, if subjected to serious scrutiny, may render the council liable to charges of inconsistency at best and, at worse, bias towards some applicants and against others.

Councillor Buckton explained to members the issues which had caused him concern, as detailed in his report; these include:

- objectors encouraged to make their views known to the Parish Council
- members declaring interests unnecessarily in planning applications
- a lack of flexibility in relation to the consideration of certain types of planning application.

Councillor Buckton reminded members of a decision made at minute M87/09 relating to a policy for the consideration of planning applications, which does not appear to be followed by the Parish Council.

In conclusion, Councillor Buckton proposed that the following protocol be adopted for future meetings:

1. An item is put into the next Manea Matters advising that where planning applications are to be considered by the Parish Council they will appear on the agenda for the forthcoming meeting and that agendas are published on the Parish Council website. Any interested parties are, therefore, able to see when a particular planning application will be discussed and are able to attend the relevant meeting to listen to, although not take part in, that discussion and decision.
2. To further facilitate public attendance for planning matters, this item to be moved up the agenda so that planning matters are discussed at the beginning, rather than the end of Parish Council meetings.
3. Unless there is a clear and unequivocal interest, the presumption should be that all members take part in the decision making process for planning applications. If the view of the council is to be valued, it is vital that as many members as possible participate in this process, however difficult it may be. The safeguard against spurious allegations is that one individual is unlikely to be able to affect the overall outcome.
4. Parish Councillors **do not** offer individual support to applicants or opponents on planning applications. The Council view is arrived at from consensus and to step outside of this collective responsibility significantly undermines the role of the council and members alike.
5. Unless a clear majority of those present votes in favour of a proposal, the District Council should be informed that the Parish Council does not have a view on the application.
6. That the Parish Council operates the policy adopted at minute M87/09, i.e. in relation to planning applications outside the village development area boundary, each application be treated on its merits.

There was a lengthy discussion of the issues raised by Councillor Buckton, particularly in relation to the declaration of members' interests in planning applications.

Members decided that

- (1) the proposals listed at 1 and 2 above be approved and put into effect immediately;
- (2) no decision be made at this time in relation to proposals 3 to 6 inclusive but they be considered further by the Parish Council, at an appropriate time, following the local elections in May 2011;
- (3) they would benefit from advice from the Monitoring Officer (MO) at the District Council (FDC) on probity and ethics matters (such as declaring interests, standing orders, the role of councillors, code of conduct, FDC's code of conduct on planning applications etc) and requested that the Clerk asks the District Council to arrange a presentation from the MO, after the local elections, on these issues, This could either be part of a Parish Council meeting or on a separate date.

### **M136/10 Planning applications**

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

- (1) Erection of a two-storey detached dwelling with balcony and integral double garage on land north-east of 14A Station Road, Manea – F/YR11/0156/F (applicants: Mr and Mrs D Barnes)

*That the application be supported.*

*(Councillor Emery declared his personal interest in this application, by virtue of a current business relationship with an objector to the application)*

- (2) Erection of 2 x two-storey 3-bed dwellings, involving demolition of existing dwelling, at 11 Westfield Road, Manea - F/YR11/0175/F (applicant: Cole Properties (Manea) Ltd).

*Decline to comment, as the applicant is a member of the Parish Council.*

- (3) Erection of a detached domestic storage building for existing dwelling (retrospective) at 61 Station Road, Manea - F/YR11/0187/F (applicant: Mr T Robinson).

*That the application be supported.*

### **M137/10 Finance**

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

#### **Income**

|                         |   |           |
|-------------------------|---|-----------|
| Manea Women's Institute | Contribution towards orchard project            | £20.00    |
| Mr Tolfree              | Photocopies of Parish Council documents         | £3.40     |
| Various (via P Catling) | Carp Syndicate fees and fishing ticket purchase | £180.00   |
| Heritage Lottery Fund   | Grant aid (50%)                                 | £3,850.00 |
| Turner and Son          | Burial fee - Larkins                            | £385.00   |

|              |  |           |
|--------------|--|-----------|
| Total Income |  | £4,438.40 |
|--------------|--|-----------|

**Expenditure**

|                          |   |                  |
|--------------------------|---|------------------|
| E.on                     | Electricity for sports area   | £20.49           |
| E.on                     | Electricity for village green   | £28.52           |
| E.on                     | Electricity for pavilion  | £372.59          |
| Boston Seeds             | Seed mix for community orchard/woodland                               | £289.99          |
| Suffolk ACRE             | Insurance for pavilion  | £229.99          |
| P Catling                | Reimbursement of postage costs associated with Carp Syndicate 2010/11 | £19.44           |
| D A Pest Control         | Control of moles at playing field                                     | £50.00           |
| Fenweb Limited           | Website service 2010/11   | £456.00          |
| Fenland CAB              | Outreach Service (December 2010 to February 2011)                     | £120.00          |
| H M Revenue and Customs  | Clerk's Income Tax (December 2010 and January and February 2011).     | £200.54          |
| Mrs A Ryman              | Wages and expenses  | £79.64           |
| T Jordan                 | Salary (less income tax of £114.90), Broadband and other expenses     | £592.41          |
| Newman Groundworks       | Dyke clearance  | £320.00          |
| <b>Total Expenditure</b> |   | <b>£2,779.61</b> |

In addition, the Clerk reported to members on the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank accounts as at 28 February 2011 (in the total sum of £43,913.33).

Members considered the appointment of an Internal Auditor for the audit of the Parish Council's 2010/11 accounts. The Clerk informed members that the person who has undertaken this role for many years, Mr Barry Cundell, is willing to do likewise for the 2010/11 accounts.

Members decided

- (1) upon a proposal from Councillor Archer, seconded by Councillor Lockett, that the income of £4,438.40 be noted and that the payments totalling £2,779.61 be authorised;
- (2) that the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank accounts as at 28 February 2011 be noted;
- (3) that Mr Barry Cundell be appointed as the Parish Council's Internal Auditor for the 2010/11 audit of accounts.

**M138/10 Manea Pit**

Members received the minutes of the Sub-Committee meeting of 2 March 2011 and considered the recommendations therein (at minutes SC52/10, SC55/10 and SC56/10).

Members support the recommendations of the Sub-Committee at minutes SC52/10 and SC56/10 in relation to the provision of a website page relating to Manea Pit and to 2011/12 fishing fees respectively.

In relation to minute SC55/10, the Clerk reported the information provided by Mr C Carson as a result of his investigations into identifying the protective clothing necessary, and the likely cost of such equipment, for use by any volunteer undertaking, on behalf of the Parish Council, chainsaw work around the pit. The total cost of the protective clothing is not expected to exceed £150.00.

However, having considered the advantages and disadvantages of volunteers undertaking chainsaw works at the pit, members feel that such a practice should not be adopted and that, consequently, it is not necessary to purchase such protective clothing.

Councillor Buckton reported that mention was made at a recent Manea Connect meeting of the desire to find a location in the village for a "memorial" bench; at that meeting, Councillor Buckton had suggested that, subject to the agreement of the Parish Council, a location in the vicinity of Manea Pit may be appropriate.

Members decided that

- (1) the contents of the Sub-Committee minutes be noted;
- (2) in relation to minute SC52/10, the Clerk would ascertain the cost of an additional page, in respect of the pit and orchard/woodland, on the Parish Council's website;
- (3) with regard to minute SC55/10, chainsaw work at Manea Pit would only be undertaken by appropriately qualified/experienced persons and that, consequently, no protective clothing for this purpose be purchased by the Parish Council;
- (4) in relation to minute SC56/10, to endorse the recommendation of the Sub-Committee that (given the current economic circumstances, the level of increase in 2010/11 and the contribution that has been made by anglers to the improvements at Manea Pit) the fees for Carp Syndicate membership and fishing tickets for the 2011/12 fishing season be retained at the 2010/11 level;
- (5) Councillor Buckton would progress the installation of the "memorial" bench at an appropriate location in the vicinity of Manea Pit.

### M139/10 Correspondence

- (1) Shape Your Place website.

The Clerk reported on the Shape Your Place website, which has been developed over recent months by a number of public agencies (including Cambridgeshire County Council, Fenland District Council and Cambridgeshire Constabulary) and has been "live" in the Wisbech and the northern villages in Fenland since last autumn. The site is now being rolled-out to the rest of Fenland.

The Clerk informed members of the features of this new website.

Members decided that the information reported be noted and that the website be promoted by the Parish Council, via the posters and flyers provided, to residents within the parish.

- (2) Community ACTION (Spring 2011) magazine.

The Clerk reported receipt of the latest edition of this magazine.

Members decided that the magazine be circulated amongst members of the Parish Council.

(3) Fundays Funfair.

The Clerk reported an e-mail from Fundays Funfair, enquiring if the Parish Council would be interested in a small family funfair attending the village.

Members decided that this matter be referred to the Manea Gala Committee for consideration.

(4) Volunteer Centre, Fenland.

The Clerk reported the receipt of a package of information from this organisation, including: a letter explaining the aims of the Fenland Volunteer Bureau; details of outreach events being held during 2011; the organisation's accounts for 2009/10; the organisation's Annual Report for 2009/10.

Members decided that the package of information be circulated amongst members of the Parish Council.

(5) Fenland Arts Association.

The Clerk read to members a letter from the Fenland Arts Association, in which the organisation gave an insight into the work that it carries out in promoting arts events in the district and the assistance and advice that it can provide to communities in relation to organising and managing such events.

Members decided that the information provided by the Fenland Arts Association be noted.

(6) Highway Wardens.

The Clerk reported a letter from the Local Highway Authority (LHA) regarding its new Highway Wardens scheme, which is being operated on a pilot basis in two parishes within the County.

Because of the success of the pilot arrangements, the LHA is now seeking expressions of interest in this scheme from other Town and Parish Councils within Cambridgeshire.

The Clerk read to members the role of Highway Wardens.

Members decided that Manea Parish Council would register its interest in this scheme.

(7) Library Service Review.

The Clerk reported on the County Council's strategy for the future of public libraries, which aims to maintain library services across the County whilst managing the financial savings which need to be found by the County Council.

The County Council's strategy includes externalisation of the service to a charitable trust, encouraging greater community participation and a review of the current library network.

The County Council will be holding public information meetings in each district; the Fenland meeting is scheduled for 6 April 2011 (7.00 pm at March Library).

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

### **M140/10 Items for Press Release or news stories**

Members considered whether there are currently any matters affecting the parish which would benefit from the issue of a Press Release or the production of a news story.

Members decided

- (1) that no matters have arisen since the last Parish Council meeting that would benefit from being the subject of Press Release or news story for public attention;
- (2) to note that the article and open letter agreed at minute M124/10 had now been published in Manea Matters.

### **M141/10 Open Forum**

One local resident raised the following issues:

- a) his opinion that there is insufficient highway and street name signage in and around the village, particularly in circumstances where one village road/street leads to another
- b) the relevance now of the Best Kept Village sign, given that some years have passed since this award was last won by Manea
- c) dog fouling within the village
- d) the sustainability of the local bus service.

The Chairman informed the local resident of the Parish Council's actions to enhance and develop the village, particularly in relation to addressing the dog fouling problems.

Members decided to note the comments made by the local resident and to take into account the comments made at a) and b) when undertaking the annual village inspection.

### **M142/10 Annual Assembly 2011 - Agenda items**

Members discussed possible agenda items for the Annual Assembly arranged for 18 April 2011.

Members decided that the agenda for the 2011 Annual Assembly would contain the same "standard" items that featured in the 2010 meeting and that publicity to the event is given via posters in the village and mention in a local newspaper.

### **M143/10 "Save Your Village Fire Station" campaign**

The Chairman reported to members on the "Save Your Village Fire Station" campaign.

The Chairman informed members that the future of the Manea Fire Station is under threat as a result of the requirement placed upon the Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service to reduce significantly its budgets with effect from the financial year 2011/12. He showed members a copy of a flyer which is being circulated locally, with the aim of encouraging the community to sign the petition and/or lobby local councillors and the Member of Parliament.

Members decided that Manea Parish Council should support the campaign for retention of a Fire Station in Manea, because of the detrimental effect that loss of this essential service could have upon the residents of Manea and the surrounding area, and to call upon the Member of Parliament to do likewise.

*(The Chairman agreed to this item of business being discussed as a matter of urgency because of the importance of early action being taken)*

**M144/10 Councillor Risbridger**

The Chairman informed members that Councillor Risbridger would be undergoing an operation in hospital later this week and suggested that a Get Well Soon card be sent to this councillor on behalf of the Parish Council.

Members decided that the Chairman would forward the Parish Council's best wishes for a speedy recovery, and send an appropriate card, to Councillor Risbridger.

**M145/10 Maintenance issues – Pump Corner and Manea Cemetery**

The Chairman reported on works to replace the chain at Pump Corner. He informed members that a suitable replacement chain had been obtained and that arrangements are in hand for its installation to take place; the cost of works will be met by the Street Pride group.

The Chairman informed members of works that had been undertaken, at no cost to the Parish Council, to repair a water leak at Manea Cemetery.

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

*(The Chairman agreed to this item of business being discussed as a matter of urgency to enable members to informed of the situation at the earliest opportunity)*

**M146/10 Next meeting**

Members were reminded that the next meeting of the Parish Council has been scheduled for 18 April 2011, following the Annual Assembly which commences at 7.00 pm, at Manea Village Hall.

**Meeting finished at 9.40 pm**

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

Date:.....