

MANEA PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING

18 APRIL 2016 – 7.35 pm.

Present: Councillor Emery, Chairman; Councillors Mrs Berry, Mrs Desborough, Drinkwater, Fielding, Hirson, Ms Hookway and Risbridger.

Apologies: Councillor Cole.

In attendance: District Councillor Buckton.

The minutes of the meeting of 14 March 2016 were confirmed and signed.

M160/15 Open Form

(1) Manea Pit

A number of parishioners addressed the council, all expressing their opposition to the proposal of Manea Parish Council to arrange the installation of fencing around Manea Pit to prevent access to the area by otters (minute M152/15 refers).

One of the parishioners expressed the opinion that this proposal is a very emotive issue in the village and parishioners are concerned that the council is on the verge of making a decision on the matter without listening to the community's concerns. She asked the council to defer making a decision, to provide the community with the opportunity to hold a public meeting prior to further discussion of the matter by the council.

The parishioner made reference to the Nolan principles of fairness etc in relation to decision-making by councillors and questioned whether Parish Council monies should be used for the provision of "otter proof" fencing. She expressed the opinion that this matter needs discussion by the community before a decision is made by the Parish Council; the Parish Council ought, in her opinion, to make decisions which reflect the views of parishioners.

The Chairman explained the process which had been followed by the council to date, including the obtaining of quotations for the work; in addition, he commented that members of Manea Parish Council had been elected by the community to make decisions on behalf of parishioners and that there is no requirement for the council to seek public endorsement to its decision-making.

Another parishioner, a member of the Manea Action Plan Implementation Group, referred to the Manea Action Plan and made the point that the plan makes no reference to the need for such fencing around Manea Pit. He commented that the money in the Parish Council's possession belongs to the community and should be spent diligently on services, schemes and projects which operate for the benefit of the community. He added that the Parish Council must follow the necessary accounting practices.

The parishioner takes the view that the action proposed by Manea Parish Council is, in effect, a loan to the Carp Syndicate and questioned whether a local council has powers to grant loans to local groups. He commented that the Precept for a Band D Council Tax equivalent property in Manea had increased by 55.9% for the

financial year 2016/17, primarily because of the need to replace the majority of the street lighting within the village; from the perspective of Council Tax, Manea is now the most expensive place to live in Fenland.

The parishioner commented that it is important for the Parish Council to possess a financial contingency at a sufficient level to meet all elements of unforeseen expenditure; he enquired as to the council's contingency plans in the event that contingency monies are spent on the installation of "otter proof" fencing and the income from fishing fees, to reimburse that cost, were to cease. He made the point that there are some pockets of severe deprivation in Manea, with some residents struggling to "make ends meet"; he asked the council to be careful with its spending of taxpayers' resources.

District Councillor Buckton expressed the opinion that the Parish Council should not proceed with the installation of fencing around Manea Pit at this time. He commented that he is not aware of any evidence that otters would appear soon and destroy the fish and wildlife at Manea Pit. He made the point that Manea Pit is a community space and not a fishing lake. He added that there appears to be no business case for the proposal; the need for this fencing appears to be based upon speculation and scare-mongering by a small group of individuals who are looking for the council to protect their hobby.

District Councillor Buckton expressed the opinion that the proposed fencing would not only prevent access to the pit by otters but also other wildlife and certain members of the public (if they have mobility issues). He expressed the view that many people would be happy to take the risk that otters would eat the fish in Manea Pit and be prepared to pay an increased level of Precept to compensate for the loss of income to the Parish Council as a result of the loss of fishing fees. He commented that the asset value of Manea Pit is as a community asset for the parishioners, as opposed to its value as a fishing lake.

District Councillor Buckton suggested that the Parish Council should pursue this matter no further unless it undertakes an impact assessment, a risk assessment and public consultation.

Mr C Carson, a member of the Manea Pit Management Committee, commented that otters are more widespread within Fenland than most people realise; some otters had been seen at locations close to Manea. He made the point that if otters were to gain access to Manea Pit, they would eat the fish. He is concerned that if otters (which are a protected species) were to be seen in Manea and no fencing were in place, people would "take the law into their own hands".

Mr Carson expressed the opinion that the logical action to take - to both protect otters and fish - is to seek to prevent otters' access to Manea Pit; this could only be achieved by the installation of appropriate fencing. This is the advice that he gave at 23 March 2016 meeting of the Manea Pit Management Committee (minute PMC43/15 refers).

Members decided that the comments, opinions and suggestions of the parishioners be noted and taken into account at minute M167/15.

(2) Manea Dinners group

A parishioner sought to present an application from the Manea Dinners group for financial support (to meet the cost of storage at Manea Village Hall) from Manea Parish Council, for consideration as "any other business" at this meeting.

The Clerk reminded members that to consider any business which is not included on the published agenda would be unlawful and suggested that the application be included as an item on the agenda for the next meeting.

Members decided that the situation be noted and that the application from the Manea Dinners group for financial support (to meet the cost of storage at Manea Village Hall) be considered at the next meeting of Manea Parish Council.

M161/15 Members' Code of Conduct

The Clerk reminded members of the need to inform the Monitoring Officer at Fenland District Council of any changes to the content of their Register of Member Interests forms.

Members decided the information reported by the Clerk be noted and acted upon.

M162/15 Progress on actions from minutes of last meeting

(1) New pavilion for Manea (minute M147/15 (1))

The Clerk reminded members of the current level of financial resources available for this project and of the need to secure a substantial amount of grant funding to be able to deliver the project.

Councillor Hirson, again, enquired of members as to why the construction of a such a building is felt to be necessary. He expressed the opinion that such a building would be used by a very small section of the community - primarily young males - and questioned whether, on that basis, the council should be investing hundreds of thousands of pounds into such a project. Councillor Hirson expressed the opinion that the council should be investing in the provision of facilities which would be of benefit to the whole community, possible replacement of the current Manea Village Hall.

Members decided that

- (1) the situation be noted and that opportunities for securing further funding towards the cost of delivering this project would be investigated and pursued;
- (2) there would be a detailed discussion at the next meeting of Manea Parish Council on the future of this project.

(2) Cranmore Lots allotments site (minute M147/15 (2))

The Clerk informed members of his understanding that the legal process associated with the sale of the Cranmore Lots allotments site is progressing but had still been unable to obtain formal confirmation as to the current position in that regard from the council's solicitors.

The Clerk mentioned that he had discussed this matter with the estate agent who had dealt with the sale of this land; he too had been unable to obtain an update from the council's solicitors; he suggested that the council may wish to consider engaging a different firm of solicitors to undertake the legal work associated with the sale of this land.

Members decided that

- (1) the information reported by the Clerk be noted and that he would, again, seek to obtain an update from the council's solicitors in relation to the sale of the allotments site;
- (2) in the event that the Clerk is unable to obtain confirmation that the sale of the allotments site is progressing, the council would consider engaging a different firm of solicitors to undertake this work for the Parish Council.

(3) Parish street lighting (minute M147/15 (3))

The Clerk reminded members that he had forwarded to them the information that he had received from Fenland District Council as to which of the Category 1 lights had been replaced.

Members decided that the current situation be noted and that the Clerk would seek to ascertain from Fenland District Council information as to how replacement of the Category 2 lights in Manea could be progressed.

(4) Manea Youth Club (minute M147/15 (4))

The Clerk informed members that he had received a letter from the Youth and Community Co-ordinator at Cambridgeshire County Council, informing him that Manea Parish Council's application to the County Council's Community Reach Fund for the sum of £500 to contribute towards the cost of YPM's provision of a youth club at Manea, had been successful and that, following the County Council's receipt from the Clerk of a completed Acceptance of Award form, a cheque would be sent to the Parish Council.

The Clerk reported that he had sent to the Youth and Community Co-ordinator at Cambridgeshire County Council, on 31 March 2016, a completed Acceptance of Award form.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

(5) Local Highway Improvements 2016/17 (minute 153/15)

The Clerk reported that he had informed the Local Highway Authority (LHA) that Manea Parish Council is both disappointed and disgusted with the amount and quality of the work which had been undertaken very recently by the Local Highway Authority to Byall Fen Drove and had invited an appropriate officer of the LHA to attend a meeting of Manea Parish Council to explain the situation.

Although it had not been possible for an appropriate officer of the LHA to attend this meeting of Manea Parish Council to explain the situation, the officer who would have attended if available had provided to the Clerk an e-mail setting out the situation with regard to the works undertaken at Byall Fen Drove.

The Clerk read to members the e-mail that he had received. In the e-mail, the officer of the LHA makes the point that he had produced information for the local press recently, which had explained to the public the situation in respect of Byall Fen Drove.

The officer of the LHA states that the recent project on Byall Fen Drove was a capitally-funded widening scheme funded by a Transport Delivery Plan allocation of £140,000. It was completed to schedule and high standard with the road widened to six metres for almost half a mile. Over a six weeks period the road was closed with access limited to local residents and businesses, including the quarry. It was noted towards the end of the scheme that the road outside the boundary of the County Council's works had deteriorated rapidly. An emergency order was, therefore, raised to make safe any defects.

In the e-mail, the officer of the LHA makes the point that part of the original brief for this project was to prepare the road as a whole for surface dressing this summer, as part of the county-wide surface treatment programme. A budget of £15,000 was identified originally for patching works from the total £140,000 available. After further inspection, this has been increased to £100,000, to rectify the aforementioned level of deterioration.

As much larger equipment was necessary to undertake this level of repair, an additional road closure was in operation during week commencing 21 March, during which time County Councillor Connor visited the site to discuss the details and issues associated with these additional areas.

Members decided that the response from the Local Highway Authority be noted.

M163/15 Planning applications

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

- (1) Erection of a two-storey dwelling on land north of 1 Orchard Way, Manea - F/YR16/0172//F (applicant: Mr R Purser).

That the application be supported.

- (2) Roof alterations, incorporating dormers to front and rear, to form first-floor living accommodation to existing dwelling at 8 Festival Close, Manea - F/YR16/0129/F (applicants: Mr and Mrs Stevens).

That the application be supported.

M164/15 Police matters

Although no representative of the March and Chatteris Policing Team was present at the meeting, PCSO Carol Holloway had provided a report detailing recent incidents of crime and disorder which had been reported to the Constabulary, as well as updating the Parish Council on other relevant matters, since the last meeting of the Parish Council. PCSO Holloway's report mentioned that

- she had been patrolling Manea and had spoken with residents regarding any concerns that they may have; she had also engaged with youngsters using the skateboard park and had visited the school
- in terms of crime trends in the area, there is very little to report; there had been a burglary at the Royal British Legion Club and a theft at the Rose and Crown public house
- the New Horizons outreach vehicle had been parked outside of the Rose and Crown public house earlier today (between 9.30 am and 10.30 am) so that parishioners could engage with the Constabulary through "having a cuppa with a copper".

Members had no issues to raise, for reference by the Clerk to the local policing team.

Members decided that the information reported by the Clerk, on behalf of PCSO Holloway, be noted

M165/15 Reports from District and County Councillors for the parish

Councillor Connor, the County Councillor for the electoral division which includes Manea, was not present at the meeting.

District Councillor Buckton informed the Parish Council that he had nothing particular to draw to the attention of members at this time. He did, however, update members in relation to repair works to the fencing of the play area at Williams Way, Manea; the owner of the fencing is Circle Roddons Housing Association, which had committed to addressing the situation; the Parks and Open Spaces Manager at Fenland District Council is applying pressure to Circle Roddons Housing Association to consider this matter to be a priority issue.

Members decided that the situation be noted and that in the event that the repair works are not undertaken within a reasonable timescale, the matter be drawn to the attention of the local MP.

M166/15 Public open spaces

- (1) Manea Cemetery - the Chairman informed members of damage which had been caused recently by a person or persons unknown to four headstones and one grave in Manea Cemetery. He had met on-site with a relative of the person whose grave and headstone had suffered damage and had suggested to that person that the matter be reported to the Constabulary.

In addition, the Chairman reported to members that because of issues with the drains at the cemetery, the garden of a neighbouring property is experiencing flooding. He made the point that drain clearing works and repairs would need undertaking in the not too distant future.

Members decided that

- (1) the situation with regard to the damage to headstones and a grave be noted;
 - (2) the situation with regard to drainage at the cemetery be noted and that the situation be monitored, with clearing and repair works being considered at a future meeting.
- (2) Playing field - members were made aware that the mower which is used by the council's playing field "caretaker" had ceased working and requires replacement.

Members decided that the situation be noted and that the Chairman and Councillor Fielding would investigate the purchase of a replacement machine.

- (3) Village green - further to minute M138/15, the Clerk reported the quotation from the contractor which undertakes tree works on behalf of Manea Parish Council for pruning the Yew tree at the village green (so that its branches no longer cross the boundary of neighbouring properties).

Members decided that the quotation for pruning works, as recommended by the contractor, to the Yew tree, in the sum of £325.00 (plus VAT), be accepted.

M167/15 Manea Pit

Members considered the minutes of the meeting of the Manea Pit Management Committee held on 22 March 2016, noting particularly minute PMC43/15 which detailed concerns expressed by certain members of the community in relation to the proposal of Manea Parish Council to arrange the installation of "otter proof" fencing around Manea Pit (minute M152/15 refers).

Further to minute M152/15, Councillor Fielding had arranged for a meeting on site between the contractor which had submitted the lowest quotation for the installation of "otter proof" fencing around Manea Pit and certain members of the Manea Pit Management Committee to discuss the matter. As a result of that meeting, a revised (still the lowest) quotation had been provided by the contractor.

Members discussed, having regard for the comments made by members of the community at minute M160/15 (1), what action to take in relation to the proposal (at minute M152/15) to install appropriate mesh fencing (plus gates) as a means of preventing otters from being able to access Manea Pit (to preserve fish stocks and wildlife habitats).

The Chairman made the point that, having listened to the comments made and views expressed at minute M160/15 (1), this is obviously a contentious issue for certain members of the community. He expressed the opinion that installation of fencing around Manea Pit would not be an ideal situation but he is concerned that if otters were to

access Manea Pit, all of the good work undertaken at the pit over recent years would be "undone"; wildlife habitats as well as fish stocks be affected.

The Chairman read to members details of the income and expenditure for each financial year (since acquisition of Manea Pit in 2019/10) in relation to Manea Pit.

The Chairman proposed that a decision on this matter be deferred to the next meeting of Manea Parish Council; this would afford the local community the opportunity to hold a public meeting prior to any decision being made by the council.

Councillor Hirson expressed his concern that the Parish Council appears to be considering spending public money for the benefit of the small number of people who wish to fish at Manea Pit.

Members decided that

- (1) the contents of the Manea Pit Management Committee minutes be noted;
- (2) a decision on whether to proceed with the installation of "otter proof" fencing at Manea Pit be deferred to the next meeting of Manea Parish Council.

M168/15 The Ship Inn, Purls Bridge, Manea

Members considered the comments of a parishioner in relation to the current situation regarding The Ship Inn and its possible future as a community asset.

The parishioner mentioned that this public house is closed and in a poor state of repair. She informed the council of her understanding that lending institutions would not make finance available to potential purchasers/investors to refurbish this property.

The resident suggested that, as Manea Parish Council had opposed every planning application for alternative uses of this property, on the basis that it should be retained as a community asset, the council may wish to purchase and refurbish the property.

The Chairman responded to the resident's suggestion, making the point that Manea Parish Council is merely a consultee in respect of planning applications and that the decisions to refuse planning permission for an alternative use of this property had been made by Fenland District Council, as Local Planning Authority (and appeals against the decisions of the Local Planning Authority had been dismissed by the Planning Inspectorate). He added that Manea Parish Council has no need for this property and does not possess the financial resources required to make such a purchase.

Members decided that the comments and suggestion of the parishioner be noted and the response of the Chairman be endorsed.

M169/15 Street naming

Members considered an invitation, by e-mail, from Fenland District Council to comment, by 20 April 2016, upon the street name proposed for the new development on land north-east of 9 Park Road, Manea.

The name proposed is Crystal Close.

With the e-mail, Fenland District Council had provided a practice note containing advice to district ward members and local councils regarding the relevant factors to be taken into account when considering suggested street names.

Members feel unable to support the street name of Crystal Close, as they can see no rationale for such a name. They indicated that they would prefer either Park Close (as the site is accessed off Park Road) or Guys Close (because of the proximity of the site to the S M Guy Memorial Playing Field).

Members decided that Fenland District Council be informed of Manea Parish Council's views, as set out above, in relation to the proposed name of Crystal Close for the new development on land north-east of 9 Park Road, Manea.

M170/15 Parish Council website

Members considered a proposal from the council's website host to upgrade the Manea Parish Council website to a Responsive design; this would enable improved viewing of the website contents on tablets and mobile devices; the cost of upgrading the website would be £245.00 (plus VAT).

Members consider it to be important to both keep up-to-date with advances in technology and maximise access by the public to the website content.

Members decided that the Manea parish Council website be upgraded to a Responsive design.

M171/15 Financial matters

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

Income

Carp Syndicate	Membership fees (x 9) for 2016/17	£1,080.00
C Howell	Allotment rent	£200.00
Total Income		£1,280.00

Expenditure

Manea Village Hall	Room hire on 14 March 2016	£10.00
Mrs A Ryman	Wages and expenses	£65.19
T Jordan	Salary (less income tax of £149.40 and NI of £9.00), other expenses and allowances	£699.58
E.on	Electricity for pavilion (includes VAT of £5.20)	£109.28
E.on	Electricity for village green (includes VAT of £0.46)	£9.72
E.on	Electricity for sports area (includes VAT of £0.49)	£10.25
E Mason and Son	Grounds maintenance works: February 2016 (includes VAT of £127.40)	£764.40
E Mason and Son	Grounds maintenance works: March 2016 (includes VAT of £134.00)	£804.00
Richard Yardy 2002 Ltd	Repairs to showers at pavilion (includes VAT of £17.34)	£104.06
M Williams	Reimbursement of cost of pruning of fruit trees at community orchard	£60.00

	(includes VAT of £10.00)	
FACT	Donation towards cost of running Dial-a-Ride service	£300.00
Sears Bros. Ltd	Verge cutting 2015 (includes VAT of £164.85)	£989.10
Fenland District Council	Elections re-charge (May 2015 elections)	£1,921.00
Anglian Water	Water for playing field	£51.72
Anglian Water	Water for cemetery	£18.09
Fenweb Limited	Website hosting (includes VAT of £84.00)	£504.00
Manea PCC	Hire of Church Rooms for Manea Internet Club	£130.00
Otter Stop Ltd	Site visit to Manea Pit (includes VAT of £40.00)	£240.00
Total Expenditure		£6,790.39

In addition, the Clerk reported to members on the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank accounts as at 31 March 2016 (in the total sum of £57,445.08), together with the month-end figures for each of the preceding six months and as at 31 March 2015.

The Clerk reported also on the Parish Council's year-end financial position, which showed income of £74,296.62 and expenditure of £56,991.72 to 31 March 2016; he gave explanations as to variances between the estimated income and expenditure for the year and the actual levels of income and expenditure in the financial year 2015/16.

Members decided

- (1) upon a proposal from Councillor Fielding, seconded by Councillor Mrs Desborough, that the income of £1,280.00 be noted and that the payments totalling £6,790.39 be authorised;
- (2) that the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank accounts as at 31 March 2016, together with the month-end figures for each of the preceding six months and as at 31 March 2015, be noted;
- (3) that the Parish Council's year-end financial position be noted.

M172/15 Magpas – request for financial assistance

The Clerk reported a request from Magpas for financial assistance towards the cost of providing emergency medical care at the scenes of accidents within Cambridgeshire.

The letter of request gave details of the number of accidents that it had attended over the previous twelve months period and examples of some of the costs it incurs in operating the service it provides.

Members decided that a donation of £500.00 (the same level of financial support provided in 2015/16) be made to Magpas.

M173/15 Correspondence

(1) Fenland Twinning Association

The Clerk read to members a letter from the Secretary of the Fenland Twinning Association (FTA), detailing the background to the FTA and the twinning links which it supports and informing the council of the visit to Stadt Nettetal (in Germany) which had been arranged for the period 8 to 12 September 2016.

In his letter, the Secretary of the Fenland Twinning Association makes the point that the twinning visit to Germany is open to all residents of Fenland (at a cost of £100 per adult and £80 per student); visitors from Fenland would "homestay" with families living in Stadt Nettetal.

Anyone interested in participating in this visit, should contact the Secretary of the Fenland Twinning Association, Mike Cornwell (at 107 Station Road, March, PE15 8NH, or 01354 653757, or fenlandtwinning@gmail.com).

Members decided that the content of the letter from the Secretary of the Fenland Twinning Association be noted.

(2) Request for use of Manea playing field

The Clerk read to members a request, received by e-mail, for use of the playing field on 12 June 2016 for a "Picnic in the Park" event (to "replace" the one which had been organised as part of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations in 2012 but had subsequently been cancelled because of the adverse weather conditions).

The event now proposed would run between 1.00 pm and 5.00 pm; would be free-of-charge and accessible by the whole community; there would be family games and possibly live entertainment. People would be invited to bring their own food and drink.

The requester states that Manea Gala Committee had agreed that the event would be covered by its insurance.

Members decided that the request for use of Manea playing field for a Picnic in the Park event on 12 June 2016 be approved and that such usage be free-of-charge to the event organisers.

M174/15 Next meeting

Members were reminded that the next meeting is scheduled for 23 May 2016, to commence at 7.00 pm, at the Village Hall, School Lane, Manea.

Meeting finished at 9.35 pm

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

Date:.....