

MANEA PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING

23 MAY 2016 – 7.00 pm.

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

Apologies: Councillor Mrs Berry.

In attendance: District Councillor Buckton.

The minutes of the meetings of 18 April and 12 May 2016 were confirmed and signed.

M1/16 Open Forum

(1) Manea Pit

A parishioner addressed the council, asking that members think carefully about any decision they might make with regard to the installation of "otter proof" fencing around Manea Pit, particularly in the light of the level of public objection to such a measure. She expressed the opinion that a decision to proceed with such a measure at this time would be flawed.

The parishioner referred to the protection afforded to otters and commented that other animals (as well as otters) would be prevented access to Manea Pit as a result of installing "otter proof" fencing. She expressed the opinion that the council should produce a business case for this proposal, to include the costs of maintaining the fencing; she enquired as to whether: a health and safety assessment been undertaken; the route of the fencing been finalised and, if so, that information should be shared with the public; the council had sought the necessary permissions from relevant agencies. In addition, she enquired as to why the Parish Council had obtained tenders for the fencing works if it had not already decided to install "otter proof" fencing around Manea Pit.

Another parishioner mentioned that she had submitted, around three weeks ago, a list of questions, via the Clerk, to the members of Manea Parish Council in respect of the possible installation of "otter proof" fencing around Manea Pit and that, to date, she had received no response. In addition, she mentioned "otter surveys" which she believes the council would be required to undertake before it would be in a position to install such fencing. She sought clarification as to whether the Parish Council had obtained the consent of the Environment Agency to erect fencing.

In response to the parishioner's comment regarding the list of questions that she had posed of the Parish Council, the Chairman expressed the opinion that all of the questions had been answered via discussion at recent meetings of Manea Parish Council, the Manea Pit Management Committee and the public meeting which took place on 12 May 2016.

A member of the Carp Syndicate commented that after public meeting held on 12 May 2016 there was a lot of publicity saying that most villagers oppose the installation of "otter proof" fencing around Manea Pit. However, some members of the Carp Syndicate are in the process of undertaking a survey of public opinion and, although not all households had been visited yet, 368 signatures of support had been obtained so far; the ratio of support for the installation of "otter proof" fencing is currently is 4 to 1.

The member of the Carp Syndicate expressed the opinion that the decision on this matter is one for the council, which is elected to make decisions on matters relating to the assets under the council's control; there is no need for the council to consult the public as part of any of its decision-making.

Members decided that the comments, opinions and suggestions of the parishioners be noted and taken into account at minute M12/16.

(2) New pavilion for Manea

A parishioner expressed the opinion that Manea parish Council should be considering the provision of a multi-use community building as opposed to a new pavilion. He alleged that no consultation with the football clubs which use the current pavilion had been undertaken.

In response, the Chairman commented that there had been consultation with all of the users of the playing field and the current pavilion at the time of Manea Parish Council making its first application to Fenland District Council funding under its Rural Capital Grants Fund and making its original application for planning permission; that was around four years ago. In addition, the plans for the new pavilion have been on display at Manea Gala each year since their preparation.

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

(3) Village issues

A parishioner mentioned that he had sent an e-mail, via the Clerk, to the members of Manea Parish Council regarding a number of issues of concern within the village (such as the condition of the highway network, level of maintenance of the open spaces, defective street lighting etc) but, to date, he had received no response.

The parishioner stated that he expects to receive a response to his e-mail and expressed the opinion that this situation is a further demonstration that Manea Parish Council does not care about the people it represents.

Members decided that the comments of the parishioner be noted and that the Chairman would ensure that he is provided with a response to the issues that he had raised via his e-mail to the council.

M2/16 Election of Chairman

Councillor Emery was elected as Chairman of the Parish Council for the municipal year 2016/17 and made his Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

M3/15 Election of Vice-Chairman

Councillor Mrs Desborough was elected as Vice-Chairman of the Parish Council for the municipal year 2016/17.

M4/16 Appointment of Parish Council Officers

Members of the Parish Council were appointed, unopposed, to act in the following offices of the Parish Council for the municipal year 2016/17:

- Allotments Officer: Councillor Emery
- Cemetery Officer: Councillor Cole
- Child Protection Officer: Councillor Mrs Berry

- Footpaths and Trees Officer: Councillor Mrs Desborough
- Pavements and Street Lighting Officers: Councillors Hirson and Ms Hookway
- Recycling Officer: Councillor Risbridger
- Roads Officers: Councillors Drinkwater and Fielding.

M5/16 Appointment of Parish Council members to the Manea Pit Management Committee

Councillors Cole, Mrs Desborough, Emery and Hirson were appointed as the Parish Council's representatives on the Manea Pit Management Committee for the municipal year 2016/17. Councillors Hirson and Emery were appointed as Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the committee respectively for the municipal year 2016/17.

M6/16 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.

M7/16 Progress on actions from minutes of last meeting

(1) New pavilion for Manea (minute M162/15 (1))

The Clerk informed members that he had no updates to report with regard to this project and reminded them of their decision at the last meeting of the council (minute M162/15 (1) refers) to have, in the light of concerns raised by Councillor Hirson (as set out at minute M162/15 (1), a detailed discussion at this meeting on the future of this project.

Members decided that the general situation be noted and that, to enable this matter to be given proper consideration, a separate meeting of Manea Parish Council, with the proposed new pavilion being the sole item of business on the meeting agenda, be arranged.

(2) Cranmore Lots allotments site (minute M162/15 (2))

The Clerk informed members that he had been able, since the last meeting of the council, to make contact with the solicitor who is now dealing with legal process associated with the sale of the Cranmore Lots allotments site. The solicitor had explained to the Clerk the reason for the delay in the process (due primarily to departure from the company of the solicitor who had been dealing with the matter previously) and the current position on concluding matters.

The new solicitor informed the Clerk that she had drafted a new contract and ordered an index map search from Land Registry; she anticipates keeping any further delays to a minimum.

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

(3) Parish street lighting (minute M162/15 (3))

The Clerk informed members that he had made contact with the Head of Assets and Projects at Fenland District Council, with the aim of obtaining information as to how replacement of the Category 2 lights in Manea could be progressed. The response from that officer, in summary, is that this matter needs to be arranged directly by each Parish Council with Balfour Beatty.

In his response to the Clerk, the Head of Assets and Projects at Fenland District Council (FDC) states also that Parish Councils would soon receive from FDC a letter outlining how those councils could apply for the financial contributions from FDC.

The Clerk reminded members that it may be possible for a number of local councils to take a joint approach to this matter.

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

(4) Street naming (minute M169/15)

The Clerk reported that he had been informed by the Street Naming Officer at Fenland District Council (FDC) that one of the names suggested by Manea Parish Council - that being Guys Close - for the new development on land north-east of 9 Park Road, Manea had accepted by the developer and approved by FDC.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

M8/16 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 single-storey side and rear extensions and detached double garage to existing dwelling at 15 High Street, Manea - F/YR16/0283/F (applicants: Mr and Mrs M Bills).

That the application be supported.

- (2) Change of use of land to domestic use and erection of a detached double garage at plot 2, east of Rose Cottage, Fallow Corner Drove, Manea - F/YR16/0299/F (applicants: Mr and Mrs D Cole).

That the application be supported.

(Councillor Cole declared his pecuniary interest in this planning application, by virtue of his being one of the applicants for the proposal, and retired from the meeting for the duration of the discussion and voting thereon)

- (3) Erection of an equipment cabinet ancillary to the existing lattice tower at One2one, Allpress Farm, Byall Fen Drove, Chatteris - F/YR16/0302/TE1 (applicant: Arquiva Limited).

That the application be supported.

- (4) Erection of a single-storey extension to side of existing garages to form store to serve existing dwelling at Grebe House, Horseway, Chatteris - F/YR16/0317/F (applicants: Mr and Mrs K Carter).

That the application be supported.

- (5) Erection of a single-storey building for sale of equestrian equipment, involving the demolition of existing building, at Wenny House, Iretons Way, Chatteris - F/YR16/0343/F (applicant: Mrs Amanda Johnson).

That the application be supported.

M9/16 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

- the Constabulary had received a report of inconsiderate parking on Westfield Road, involving a vehicle being parked on double yellow lines; the situation had been remedied through a Police Officer giving "words of advice" to the owner of the vehicle
- PCSO patrols in the vicinity of the primary school continue and no matters requiring Constabulary intervention had been witnessed
- the New Horizons outreach vehicle had been parked outside of the Rose and Crown public house on 18 April (between 9.30 am and 10.30 am), so that parishioners could engage with the Constabulary through "having a cuppa with a copper", but she had received no visitors. Further such engagement events are planned.

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.

M10/16 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 the Parish Council at this time.

In response to a question from Councillor Drinkwater, Councillor Buckton confirmed that he is pursuing action from Circle Roddons Housing Association to achieve repair works to the fencing of the play area at Williams Way, Manea.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

M11/16 Public open spaces

- (1) RoSPA inspection – members considered the undertaking of works to address the issues raised by the annual RoSPA reports in respect of the playing field and the skateboard park.

A copy of the RoSPA reports had been provided to members, by the Clerk, in advance of the meeting.

Members decided that they would make an assessment, as part of the annual village inspection, scheduled for 20 June 2016 (immediately prior to the meeting of the Parish Council), of the maintenance works required to address the recommendations of the RoSPA reports, subsequent to which an approach for undertaking those works would be formulated.

- (2) memorial bench - further to minute M139/15, the Chairman reported that the memorial (for the late Ian Woodard) bench, manufactured (by FJS) free-of-charge to the Parish Council, is ready for installation. The council's spare bench (which bears a plaque commemorating VE/VJ day) and is being stored by Councillor Cole, is still available for siting at an appropriate location within the village. The Chairman suggested that members may wish to give some thought to this matter.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

M12/16 Manea Pit

Members considered the minutes of the meeting of the Manea Pit Management Committee held on 26 April 2016, noting that the minutes contained no recommendations to Manea Parish Council.

Further to minute M167/15, members considered further whether to proceed with the installation of "otter proof" fencing at Manea Pit.

Councillor Cole commented that he had listened carefully to all of those members of the public (supporters and objectors) who had spoken at recent meetings of Manea Parish Council, the Manea Pit Management Committee and the public meeting which took place at the Royal British Legion Club on 12 May 2016 in relation to this issue. He expressed the opinion that there is a considerable amount of misinformation being spread around the village regarding this issue; one of the sources is the District Councillor for Manea. He made the point that the Parish Council works very hard to do what it thinks is best for the whole community of Manea; the council is in no doubt that the pit is a facility to be enjoyed by the whole community; it does not consider it to be a facility provided simply for the benefit of anglers; he has seen it used by many other people, including elderly and disabled persons and pupils of the village school.

Councillor Cole stated his pleasure that Manea Parish Council had been able, with the support of local volunteers, to provide and develop a valuable public amenity. He mentioned that 72 otter holts had been created locally; he expressed the opinion that there are now a considerable number of otters in the area and it is inevitable that they would, at some time, discover Manea Pit. Consequently, he considers it necessary to install "otter proof" fencing around Manea Pit to protect both the existing fish and wildlife habitats at Manea Pit and any otters which discover the pit. He posed the question "what is so bad about the proposed fencing?" He expressed the opinion that a lot of fuss is being made about nothing.

Councillor Fielding mentioned the increasing financial constraints being faced by the District and County Councils and the consequent need for Town and Parish Councils to be in a position financially to deliver or support services which would otherwise be lost to the community. He made the point that if Manea Parish Council wishes to be in such a position without continually increasing the Parish Precept, it needs to maximise its opportunities to both retain and increase income from other sources; it is predicted that the annual income from fishing fees from 2016/17 onwards would exceed by around £4,000 the cost of maintaining Manea Pit; that "profit" can be used to contribute towards the cost of delivering services. If fishing activities were to cease at Manea Pit, the associated income would be lost.

Councillor Hirson expressed the opinion that the Parish Council needs to ignore the "threats" from both sides of the argument and make a decision on how to proceed in this matter.

The Chairman read to members a letter which had been published in last week's Cambridgeshire Times newspaper regarding damage which had been caused by otters to fish stocks at a local fishery. In addition, he mentioned that both the Environment Agency and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds in the region had installed "otter proof" fencing at a number of their sites.

Councillor Ms Hookway expressed the opinion that most of the time the public are not interested in the work of Manea Parish Council. She expressed the view also that comments made by certain people on social media had caused animosity within the village. Councillor Miss Hookway stated that she would not support any proposal that would result in enclosure of the pit area.

The Chairman invited members to consider whether the Parish Council should undertake a Parish Poll in relation to this matter; he mentioned that, according to the Elections Team at Fenland District Council, the cost of such a poll would be no less than £1,000. In response, Councillor Cole proposed that no Parish Poll be undertaken; the proposal was seconded by Councillor Mrs Desborough. On being put to the vote, the proposition was carried by 5 votes (with the Chairman using a casting vote) to 4.

The Chairman then called for a vote on his proposal that the installation of "otter proof" fencing around Manea Pit be approved in principle, subject to the council undertaking all appropriate assessments and evaluations and obtaining all necessary permissions/consents This proposal, having been seconded by another member of the council, was carried by 6 votes to 2.

Members decided that

- (1) the contents of the Manea Pit Management Committee minutes be noted;
- (2) the Parish Council would not hold a Parish Poll in relation to the possibility of installing "otter proof" fencing around Manea Pit;
- (3) the installation of "otter proof" fencing around Manea Pit be approved in principle, subject to the council undertaking all appropriate assessments and evaluations and obtaining all necessary permissions/consents (from organisations such as the Environment Agency and Natural England).

M13/16 Financial matters

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

Income

H M Revenue and Customs	VAT refund 2015/16	£5,701.88
B Fletcher	Allotment rent	£200.00
P Lawrence	Allotment rent	£425.00
Cambridgeshire County Council	Financial support for Manea Youth Club	£500.00
Various (via I Fost)	Sale of fishing tickets	£271.00
Carp Syndicate	Membership fees 2016/17	£2,490.00
Fenland District Council	Precept: first 50%	£32,531.50
Fenland District Council	Council Tax Support Grant: first 50%	£678.50
Ouse Washes Landscape Partnership	Reimbursement for cost of pond dipping nets	£229.90
Total Income		£43,027.78

Expenditure

Manea Village Hall	Room hire on 18 April 2016	£10.00
Mrs A Ryman	Wages and expenses	£59.26
T Jordan	Salary (less income tax of £149.40 and NI of £9.00), other expenses and allowances	£754.96
E.on	Electricity for pavilion (includes VAT of £2.46)	£51.64
E.on	Electricity for village green (includes	£7.78

	VAT of £0.37)	
E.on	Electricity for sports area (includes VAT of £0.38)	£7.96
E Mason and Son	Grounds maintenance works: April 2016 (includes VAT of £176.00)	£1,056.00
Public Works Loans Board	Loan re-payment	£95.39
Magpas	Donation	£500.00
Cambridgeshire County Council	Manea Youth Club Q4 2015/16	£1,168.12
Young People March Ltd	Manea Youth Club Q1 2016/17	£1,374.66
I Cooper	Internal audit of 2015/16 accounts	£225.00
Playsafety Limited	Annual RoSPA inspections (includes VAT of £30.80)	£184.80
Haine Tree Services Ltd	Works to Yew tree at village green (includes VAT of £65.00)	£390.00
M Short	Reimbursement for the purchase of petrol for lawn mower	£12.00
Total Expenditure		£5,897.57

In addition, the Clerk reported to members on the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank accounts as at 30 April 2016 (in the total sum of £89,872.25), together with the month-end figures for each of the preceding six months and as at 30 April 2015.

The Clerk reported also on the Annual Audit of Accounts return for 2015/16 (which includes the Governance Statement and Accounting Statement), informing members that the document had been examined and approved by the council's Internal Auditor. The Internal Auditor is very satisfied with the Parish Council's compliance with relevant procedures and controls and the quality of the record keeping undertaken by the Clerk.

Members decided

- (1) upon a proposal from Councillor Fielding, seconded by Councillor Mrs Desborough, that the income of £43,027.78 be noted and that the payments totalling £5,897.57 be authorised;
- (2) that the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank accounts as at 30 April 2016, together with the month-end figures for each of the preceding six months and as at 30 April 2015, be noted;
- (3) that the Audited Accounts Annual Return for 2015/16 be approved and submitted to the External Auditor.

M14/16 Manea Dinners - financial assistance

Further to minute M160/15 (2), members considered an application for financial assistance from Manea Dinners - which is a not-for-profit group, run by volunteers, and provides a lunch once a week at Manea Village Hall at a very low cost to elderly residents of the village - towards its operating costs.

Currently, around 30 people attend the Manea Dinners sessions each week.

Members decided that financial assistance in the sum of £500.00 be awarded to Manea Dinners.

M15/16 Correspondence

(1) Manea Allotment Association

The Clerk read to members an e-mail from the Chairman of the Manea Allotment Association - which he had forwarded to members in advance of the meeting - querying the Parish Council's rationale for increasing the annual rent for the site rented by the association from £600 to £700 per annum with effect from October 2017.

In his e-mail, the Chairman of the Manea Allotment Association expresses the opinion that the "garden allotments" are a great community asset and, therefore, should be looked upon in the same light by the Parish Council. He makes the point that although there is good level of occupancy currently, this could change over forthcoming months if plot holders face such a price increase. He, therefore, requests that the council re-considers placing such a large increase on a currently successful community asset.

Members are of the opinion that the decision made in January 2016, when they agreed to increase all of the council's fees and charges, was correct. In making the decision in January, the council was mindful of the need to increase all of its sources of income as a means of continuing to meet its increasing financial commitments whilst seeking to minimise the increase in the Parish Precept. At that time, members also had in mind the fact that the amounts of funding which the council currently receive from Fenland District Council would continue to reduce and then cease.

With regard to the rent for the garden allotments site, members are mindful of the fact that the majority of the income received from Manea Allotment Association to date had been spent by the council on maintenance of the access road. They consider that the increase in the rent with effect from October 2017 works out to a small amount for each of each of Manea Allotment Association's tenants.

Members decided that no change be made to the decision made in January of this year to increase the annual rent for the site rented by the Manea Allotment Association from £600 to £700 per annum with effect from October 2017.

(2) Issues affecting the village

The Clerk read to members an e-mail from a parishioner - which he had forwarded to members in advance of the meeting - regarding certain matters discussed at the last meeting of Manea Parish Council; in the e-mail, the parishioner had expressed his opinions in relation to

- (1) the possible installation of "otter proof" fencing around Manea Pit (minute M160/15 (1) and M167/15 refer)
- (2) the provision of a new pavilion in the village (minute M162/15 (1) refers)
- (3) comments made by a parishioner regarding the Ship Inn, Purls Bridge, Manea (minute M168/15 refers).

Members decided that the content of the e-mail from the parishioner be noted and for which they would be mindful in any discussion of the topics mentioned by the parishioner.

M16/16 Next meeting

Members were reminded that the next meeting of the Parish Council has been scheduled for 20 June 2016, commencing at 7.00 pm, at the Village Hall, School Lane, Manea; this meeting would be preceded by the annual village inspection, commencing at 6.00 pm at the pavilion.

Meeting finished at 9.00 pm

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

Date:.....