

## Minutes of the Meeting of Fiskerton Parish Council held on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> November 2023 at 7:00pm in Fiskerton Village Hall

**Present:** Cllrs A Walker, P Whitt, C Darcel, C Hill, K Brereton, J McGeachie, L Matthews, D/Cllr T Bridgwood and residents

*Open session started at 7.00pm.*

### **286/23 Open Session: suspension of standing orders for up to 15 minutes:**

One resident spoke about:

- legislation in connection with the Neighbourhood Plan (NP). It was explained that a NP must largely be in general compliance with the Local Plan and cannot contradict the Local Plan's strategic intent.
- the parish losing extra Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) money by not having a NP. It was noted that no CIL monies have been lost as none at all have been paid to FPC to date.
- matters regarding site selection and the village surveys of 2023 and 2019. It was noted that the Central Lincs Local Plan had been formally adopted with the preferred site. It was explained that whilst the 2019 survey had been all about the NP, the 2023 survey had had a wider remit and included questions on the NP. The 2023 survey was useful in confirming, or otherwise, the current views of residents from those views expressed from 2019.
- there are no residents involved in working on the NP, but it should be a community effort. It was explained that residents have opportunity to be involved through an item on each month's agenda, public sessions, and two forthcoming drop in consultations. A formal Regulation 14 consultation is the next step which will be run through WLDC.

A second resident spoke:

- about the poor surfacing which has been applied to the concrete surface of Meadowbank Road. It has been reported to LCC by resident(s), but no action has been taken. FPC will follow this up and also report it on Fix My Street. **Action: Clerk.** Residents are encouraged to also report matters directly to LCC themselves.
- to offer congratulations on the response to the recent flooding issue. In response to the resident's query, FPC suggests that residents store sandbags themselves, at least until the riverbank is fixed. It was explained that the bank and water levels are being monitored by the Environment Agency (EA); and any changes of concern should trigger a response and implementation of the Emergency Evacuation Plan. The EA has had to reprioritise its work to address post-Storm Babet recovery work, repairs to the riverbank are planned for 2024. A public meeting is being arranged, which is likely to be in January 2024, with local authorities invited to attend.
- On another matter, the resident, who is caring for the Jubilee tree, was advised that it can now be planted in the church grounds. **Action: Cllr A Walker** to liaise with resident.

*Meeting started at 7.21pm.*

**287/23 Apologies for absence:** Cllr P Whitt for any late arrival, and the Clerk.

**288/23 Declarations of interest:** Cllr L Matthews re. item 22, as he sits on the VHMC.

**289/23 Approve draft minutes of meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2023 as a true record:**

*Item 259/23 – FOI update – amend to read: 'repeating things that could become confusing'. With this amendment, it was **RESOLVED** to accept the minutes as a true record, and they were duly signed. **Action: Clerk***

**290/23 To receive observations of the District and County Councillors:**

**D/Cllr T Bridgwood:**

- The results of the Judicial Review on RAF Scampton are awaited, and WLDC have issued a press release today. A letter has been sent to the new Home Secretary.

- Police Inspector Head has given his annual report to WLDC. The Police are taking an evidence-based approach (assessed quarterly), with speeding being the current priority for Fiskerton (NC07 area). This is one of the lowest crime figures areas in West Lindsey. Other issues will be addressed as they occur.
- The Flood Working Group report includes an overview of the Humber 21 Strategy and has been developed over 3- or 4-years regarding waters in the Humber estuary area rising. D/Cllr T Bridgwood has suggested, and will continue to push, for a similar strategy for the local area. A report in the Guardian newspaper has reported that the Environment Agency, nationally, will have to cut a third of its planned flood mitigation schemes due to rising costs.

#### **D/Cllr C Darcel:**

- WLDC is to imminently send letters to 200 people who have been affected by the recent flooding. The letter will explain the help which these people can access from LCC and WLDC. He is particularly concerned about the impact of the flooding in Langworth; and the losses and heartbreak which flooded residents have experienced there. He is trying to persuade WLDC to help those who haven't been able to get insurance. Although Fiskerton was not flooded in the recent flood event, it does face future problems which need addressing.
- He is paid to represent the people in Cherry Willingham Ward, which includes Fiskerton, so if he can see a majority of Fiskerton residents not wanting 250 homes north of Ferry Road (as per the 2019 village survey results), as was the case 7 or 8 years ago, then he would not be doing his job if he did not support the residents who did not like that plan. He stands by his decision taken at that time to change his mind.

**291/23 Chairman's report:** Nothing to report.

#### **ALLOTMENTS:**

**292/23 Report from Allotment Inspectors, and to consider and resolve on the following as required:**

- Update on production of draft risk assessment report:** The draft has been completed and requires forwarding to Cllr L Matthews for review. **Action: Cllr K Brereton, Cllr L Matthews.**
- Update on untended plot:** No progress due to recent flooding matters taking precedence.
- Update on talks with tenant of the grazing land:** No progress due to recent flooding matters taking precedence.
- Update on putting plans into place to increase number of plots:** This stage is reliant upon completion of the preceding actions. Recent flooding did affect the allotments, so this will require consideration.
- Agree any further steps:** FPC cannot proceed until the previous actions have been dealt with.

#### **FINANCE**

##### **293/23 ACCOUNTS**

- Receive circulated schedule of payments/receipts made for October 2023:**  
The schedule was noted.
- To approve any known non-regular accounts for payment for November 2023:**  
**Reimburse Cllr A Walker for items purchased for recent flood risk activities at £72.11 + £14.42 VAT:**

**RESOLVED** with one abstention (Cllr A Walker) to approve the abovementioned reimbursement to Cllr A Walker (for shovels, tie wraps, hi-viz vests, torches and batteries) to be taken from the Emergency Response budget. **Action: Clerk**

All this equipment will be returned to FPC in due course for storage against future use.

**c. Confirm verification and signing of bank reconciliation and bank statements for April – June 2023 (Quarter 1)**

Not yet completed due to issues with Cllr J McGeachie's email. **Action: Cllr A Walker** to send link to documents on Dropbox. **Action: Cllr J McGeachie.**

**294/23 Note 2023/24 national pay award:** A £1.00 per hour increase was noted.

**295/23 Review budget heads:** No changes were made.

**296/23 To consider draft budget for 2024/25:** Cllr A Walker and the Clerk have produced the draft budget. This included consideration of the overall trends as shown by data from the last 7-8 years, as well as applying a 5% inflation figure. Grass cutting costs are expected to increase significantly; and the play area requires attention (note: grants can be applied for towards the total costs). At a proposal from Cllr J McGeachie, seconded by Cllr C Darcel, it was **RESOLVED** unanimously that the estimated precept request to WLDC remains unchanged from the previous year at £24,687.00. **Action: Clerk**

**297/23 To resolve on precept estimate to be submitted to WLDC:** This decision was taken within the previous item.

**PLANNING: to consider and agree actions as required:**

**298/23 Neighbourhood Plan – update, draft policies, liaison with school, public consultation, resolve to submit NP draft plan documents to WLDC and move to Regulation 14 consultation:**

Cllr J McGeachie is due to visit the school soon. Two public drop-in sessions are due to be held. Feedback from those, and from the recent village survey answers are to be fed into NP policies being finalised. Then the NP documentation will be circulated to all. The aim is to get the Draft NP to Regulation 14 status in December 2023, and onto the WLDC website. At this point, the Plan will carry weight with planning applications. Regulation 14 consultation, which runs for six weeks, should provide public feedback which can be fed into further refining the Plan.

**299/23 Village questionnaire – update:** The survey was extended to a four-week period due to the recent flooding threat. This allowed residents more time to respond. The survey has been available online, with hard copies available from the village hall or deliverable to homes on request. There have been 42 responses to date, and 52% of these respondents are aged 50 – 70, 21% are aged 30 – 50, and 19% are aged 70 – 90. There have been fewer responses from the younger age groups. It was noted that this is a low number but that the feedback is evenly distributed across the village and does follow the trends of previous surveys. It was further noted that the survey has been widely advertised through Fiskerton News, the website, Parish Council noticeboard, and posters across the parish. It was suggested that response numbers be looked at in other parishes for their NPs.

Answers to all survey questions were then reported on.

**230/23 Planning application 147131 – correspondence from D/Cllr T Bridgwood:**

D/Cllr T Bridgwood summarised his strong concerns around fire safety, noting that lithium-ion battery fires cannot be put out, and the mitigation is to stop a fire from spreading, allowing it to burn out. Explosive gases can build up, and water courses can be contaminated. There is a lack of compliance by the applicant with supplied documents, and there is no Fire Risk Strategy in place.

D/Cllr T Bridgwood advised that he has asked for this application to be 'called in' to WLDC Committee.

**RESOLVED** that Cllr A Walker will circulate a link to the WLDC website where the planning application and comments can be seen, and for the Planning Committee to draft a response for submission to WLDC. **Action: All, Planning Committee, Clerk**

**CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED:** None.

## **NEW ITEMS: to consider and agree actions as required:**

### **231/23 Recent threat of flooding events:**

LCC have advised of temporary closures to Public Rights of Way in respect of the collapsed riverbank. As these seem, in places, to be unwarranted, Cllr A Walker to ask for clarification.

#### **Action: Cllr A Walker**

Cllr A Walker summarised recent flooding events as follows:

- Storm Babet hit on a Friday, and the next day the Barlings Eau overflowed onto fields at Short Ferry.
- The Fiskerton penstock (near Ferry Ales Brewery) was opened to try to relieve some of the flooding pressure. The nearby pumping station was opened and was completely overwhelmed, which led to the fields in the village being flooded.
- Cllr A Walker had then attempted to contact the Environment Agency (EA) and then C/Cllr I Fleetwood.
- C/Cllr I Fleetwood pressured LCC as the Lead Flood Authority to try to get the valve closed. Allegedly, LCC were putting pressure on Witham 3<sup>rd</sup> Drainage Board who in turn were also applying pressure to the EA. The EA were not responding.
- On the following Tuesday, the valve was finally closed, and the water level began to drop. By 10pm Tuesday night, reports had appeared on social media of the riverbank having breached. Cllr A Walker then phoned all relevant agencies, none of whom had any concerns as their systems were not showing any breaches. The Police then arrived before midnight and began advising residents to evacuate. It was subsequently discovered that the riverbank breach had been noted from 5pm that day.
- On the following day, Wednesday, the Emergency Response Centre was set up in the village hall.

Community spirit was evident throughout.

- Cllr C Darcel expressed thanks to the two villagers who had helped him to distribute sandbags. He is lobbying authorities to have the water level in the Witham maintained at 1 metre lower than the bank. This would make a huge difference to Short Ferry and Langworth. He is pleased to see a transducer installed at Five Mile Bridge to monitor the water level at Fiskerton. Data from this will help with future measures downriver. He has concerns about the new sea barrier at Boston as this could cause flooding problems for Fiskerton – when in use, the sea barrier will hold the water back in Fiskerton area. The Forty Foot Drain at Boston has been decommissioned.
- Cllr A Walker noted that the EA were asked many times how any flooding would profile ie. where and how deep it would flood. It has been computer modelled. No answer was forthcoming.

#### Communication –

Where information had been imparted, it had been obtained mostly from C/Cllr I Fleetwood, the District Cllrs, and senior WLDC Officers rather than from official channels.

- All relevant agencies had, once the emergency had been declared, held twice-daily tactical; and once-daily strategic; meetings. Very little of the information from these meetings was being passed back to the community. The wrong houses were evacuated, and those houses close to the flooding were ignored until 4 days later after a lot of nagging.
- There appears to be a lack of accountability for owning the situation, and no apparent person in charge. Proceedings were all committee based. Therefore, no-one appears to have been in a position to be able to release information. It is felt that there was a lack of preventative planning and that the authorities were waiting for the bank to breach, then they would take reactive action.

- Facebook was invaluable although there are associated security concerns.
- The fact that residents were coordinating sandbags and putting on their own night patrols shows the lack of official help and support.
- Lack of communication is felt to have been the primary risk to life.
- Sir Edward Leigh, who attended, has asked for a parish council report to be given to him.
- Cllr A Walker advised that he had emailed anybody considered 'relevant' to inform them that he was not convinced that they had got the evacuation right. No responses were forthcoming so a second email had been sent to advise a loss of confidence in the decision makers. This resulted in a senior EA official becoming our contact, and Cllr A Walker has since had several emails/conversations. Once matters die down, he would like to visit the EA offices in Lincoln to meet people and see how their processes work.

Future:

- Lincs Resilience Forum are holding a Community Emergency Planning session on 22<sup>nd</sup> November; attended by D/Cllr T Bridgwood, Cllr A Walker and Cllr K Brereton.
- Look to create a Fiskerton Emergency Plan (note: law coming into effect that public buildings which can hold more than 100 will need to produce a Plan. Such an Emergency Plan will facilitate immediate help before the agencies turn up. An Emergency Plan will cover many different emergency scenarios, not just flooding.
- Consider holding a PC list of vulnerable residents.
- Consider building up PC stores of sandbags for residents.
- Arrange a Public meeting
- Continue to pressure the EA to tell the PC what the condition of the bank is, challenge the decision on PROW closures, and ask LCC to get some streetlights turned on in the at-risk streets

At 9pm, at a proposal made by Cllr A Walker to suspend Standing Orders to allow the meeting to continue, was not carried. Therefore, only a few essential agenda items were then addressed before closing the meeting. The remaining agenda items to be deferred to the next meeting.

**294/23 Community Emergency Planning** – Lincs Resilience Forum are holding a Community Emergency Planning session on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2023, which will be attended by D/Cllr T Bridgwood, Cllr A Walker and Cllr K Brereton. Cllr C Hill advised that she is available to also attend.

**295/23 Launch of 2024 IGAS grant scheme – consider suitable projects:** Item deferred.

**296/23 Use of social media:** Item deferred.

**297/23 Road markings in village:** Item deferred.

**298/23 Updating the Circuit with the Village Hall defibrillator:** Item deferred.

**299/23 To consider matters raised in respect of the Village Hall accounts (Cllr C Darcel):**

- i. **grants from Big Lottery Fund, West Lindsey, The Hodgson Trust, The Bernard Sunley Foundation, and the parish council should all be listed against the restricted assets column in the accounts of the village hall rather than as income for the VHMC**
- ii. **receive proposal that VHMC return the £50.00 to the Hodgson Trust.**
- iii. **Consider if there was there a conflict of interest:**

Item deferred.

**230/23 Review play area risk assessment and agree for Chairman to sign off:**

Cllr K Brereton has reviewed the play area risk assessment and will provide a copy for the Chairman to sign off. **Action: Cllr K Brereton, Cllr A Walker.**

**231/23 Christmas tree:**

A proposal by Cllr C Darcel to spend £100.00 towards the cost of a tree was not seconded. At a proposal from Cllr A Walker, seconded by Cllr J McGeachie, **RESOLVED** with one against (Cllr C Darcel) to approve up to £250.00 to purchase a Christmas tree, with monies to be taken from the Lark Energy Fund reserves. **Action: Cllr A Walker.**

**232/23 Winter planting:** Item deferred.

**233/23 Clerk's annual leave w/c 18 Dec and w/c 25 Dec:** Item deferred.

**UPDATE REPORTS: to consider and agree actions as required:**

**234/23 Draft constitution documents for Village Hall: car park agreement, play area agreement, and Village Hall Management Committee constitution – any update from Charity Commissioners, joint meeting with VHMC with an independent Chairperson:** Item deferred.

**235/23 Village gateway project – installation of speed indicator devices, update on gates, LRSP review of new locations, LRSP speed survey:**

LRSP has reported on the siting of the new speed indicator devices. FPC may need to pay for three mounting posts to be installed at a total approx. cost of £900.00. The money can be taken from the Road Safety reserves. An extension to a fourth post will be free of charge. The speed indicator devices can be installed as soon as the posts go in. At a proposal by Cllr A Walker to spend up to £1000.00 on three mounting posts, seconded by Cllr L Matthews, it was **RESOLVED** with one abstention (Cllr C Darcel) to approve this expenditure. **Action: Cllr K Brereton.**

**236/23 Witham Valley Access Group – minutes 26/09/23, improving the Nelson Road-riverbank footpath:** Item deferred.

**237/23 Repairs/replacement play equipment:**

Cllr K Brereton is researching costs.

**238/23 Warm Spaces:**

There are three interested residents, and 4 potential venues across the village. FPC, District Councillors, and the Hodgson Trust may all be able to contribute financially towards this project.

**Action: Cllr J McGeachie** to lead on this project.

**239/23 Action log – to consider any other items which have an update:** Item deferred.

**MEETINGS:**

**240/23 Approve meeting dates for 2024:** Item deferred.

18<sup>th</sup> Jan; 22<sup>nd</sup> Feb; 28<sup>th</sup> Mar; 25<sup>th</sup> April; 23<sup>rd</sup> May; 20<sup>th</sup> June; 25<sup>th</sup> July; 19<sup>th</sup> Sept; 17<sup>th</sup> Oct; 21<sup>st</sup> Nov. APM - TBC

**241/23 Matters for inclusion on next agenda:** None.

**242/23 Date of next meeting:** 18<sup>th</sup> January 2024, 7 – 9pm, Fiskerton Village Hall

*Meeting ended at 9.09pm.*

**Mrs Michelle Vail Clerk/RFO to Fiskerton Parish Council**

**Dated 8.12.23**