



MINUTES OF THE **MEETING OF FOWLMEERE PARISH COUNCIL**
which was held in the Pavilion Room, Fowlmere Village Hall on
TUESDAY 28th JANUARY 2025 at 7:30 PM

PRESENT: Cllr Baker-Oxley, Cllr Brock, Cllr Bryan, Cllr Collinson, Cllr Hobro. Cllr Lennon
(arrived at 20:09) Cllr Mulholland (Chair), Cllr Roberts.

IN ATTENDANCE: The Clerk and approximately 40 members of the public

BUSINESS TO BE TRANSACTED

In accordance with LGA 1972 schedule 12 10(2) (b) which states that business must be specified.

25/001 Apologies for absence (LGA 1972 s 85(1))

Cllr Sargeant (personal commitments).

25/002 Declarations of interest & requests for dispensations in agenda items (Localism Act 2011 s 31 s33)

There were none to declare

Cllr Brock made it known that works on his house are being undertaken by a Playgroup parent.

25/003 Minutes of Previous Meeting ([click here](#)) (in accordance with standing order 12a)

Proposal: That Fowlmere Parish Council herewith agree the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 14th November 2024.

Proposed by: Cllr Mulholland

Seconded by: Cllr Brock

motion passed

25/004 For council to formally receive minutes of Committee Meetings as agreed by said committees

- a) Finance Committee (22nd October 2024) ([click here](#))
- b) Planning Committee (7th November 2024) ([click here](#))
- c) Planning Committee (5th December 2024) ([click here](#))

Proposal: To receive the above minutes

Proposed by: Cllr Mulholland

Seconded by: Cllr Baker -Oxley

motion passed

25/005 Public Participation Session (including reports received in advance)

a) County Council update: ([December report](#)) ([January report](#))

Full Report on website. Highlighted points below:

- The 25/26 Budget for CC was being set. The bulk of residents Council Tax goes to County Council (£1.2 billion). 2/3 of this goes on adult social care.
- Proposed budget increase of 4.99% (Split 2.99% general budget & 2% for adult social care) to be voted on in February.
- There are longterm problems in trying to get patients out of hospitals and get into social care.
- County implementing the real living wage for those working in Adult social care
- An extra £21million budget for highways over next 3 years.

Pipers Close - Update

- Full repair works of broken drains and gullies along Pipers Close have been agreed. This will need a road closure permission which takes around 13 weeks. Works should take place in April May. While works are taking place further camera investigations and jetting of the system will take place. If more damage is discovered this will be acted upon.

Q Cllr McDonald was asked to look into the gully cleaning/clearing programme as they are bad across the whole village.

A Cllr McDonald noted that a new gully cleaning routine was now in place. He will check on when Fowlmere is scheduled.

Q It was noted that in the new GAIST report for (published 2 weeks ago) Fowlmere was now mostly red with the paths and roads in bad condition.

A This was being escalated to officers for attention. Fowlmere should be next on the list for re-surfacing. Cllr McDonald to check.

b) District Council update: ([December & January report](#))

Full Report on website. Highlighted points below:

- Council Tax is increasing for vacant properties - Council trying to reduce the number of empty properties in the district. Incentive to bring them back into use. Successful in other parts of the country
- New Government powers for empty commercial properties. Might help with The Swan, which is now on the market.
- Consultation gone out on the 4 day week. Chair and Vice Chair to liaise.
- SCDC providing Business support group to advise the PC and others.

c) Open Forum started @ 19:43

Open Forum to provide an opportunity for members of the public to raise questions and to comment on any other items that are on the current agenda.

- At the start of the open forum the Chair gave answers to the most frequently asked questions that had arisen since the open morning. 1) Why can't Playgroup go to the Village Hall and 2) Why can't Playgroup go to IoN science. 3) Why can't the PC fund either of the first 2 options.
 - 1) The Playgroup had looked into moving to the Village Hall previously and had met with members of the Village Hall Committee who had been clear that there was no spare capacity for Playgroup at the Village Hall. The Village Hall is run independently of the PC.
 - 2) The Playgroup had looked into a move to IoN science a year ago. The projected increased running costs of being on this site meant that it was not viable.
 - 3) Even if either of the 2 options above were viable, an option where the PC spent money to solely fund education was beyond the PC's powers as the funding of education was the responsibility of the County Council. The PC had taken advice and had been told that it should not "double fund"
- The Chair then asked Cllr Hobro to speak about Public Works Loans who explained that these are a routine way for Town & Parish councils borrow money. It's flexible and interest rates are lower than other sources that are available. Different ways of doing it: interest only, short term long term etc , - possibly refinancing at a later date. The URC project is planned to be self-funding and not raise the precept. If that were not the case a £100k loan would require a £10-15 per household per year additional sum on the precept but this is not the plan.
- The Chair then took comments from the floor; these included
- Can the PC guarantee completing the purchase by September? (new school year) with comments about playgroup relocating, planning consultancy, the Village Hall, cost and risks and reliance on volunteers.
- Support for the PC investing time looking into the project
- A move to IoN science was undesirable as it would quickly cease being a "community playgroup" and would become IoN science's nursery.
- Community led affordable childcare provision, not only supports children, but gives social opportunities for adults.
- Not helping Playgroup will have a knock on affect at the school; will affect families moving to the village.
- The URC would become a whole community space for all, not just for the young.
- Government is extending early years funding so Playgroup as a tenant would be secure.
- This was a now or never opportunity to purchase the building.
- PC Communication could be better.
- Naysayers aren't offering any realistic alternatives.
- A Heritage town planner (lives in the village) thought the project was interesting and offered to give where possible.
- Could more use of reserves be made to keep any loan as small as possible?
- A former member of the URC congregation explained that they had carried out regular condition surveys and had kept the building well maintained. They explained that the balcony was only unsafe as the handrail was now too low by modern safety standards. There was no risk of collapse just a risk of falling.
- The business case development document was both praised and criticised by different contributors for being well researched and presented on the one hand and not thorough enough on the other.
- The more ambitious scenarios could bring problems with parking.
- Expertise in village should be made use of.
- We would be letting down todays children and those not yet born if Playgroup was to close.
- 20:20 public participation ended

25/006 URC Chapel ([working document click here](#))

Proposal: To agree in principle to pursue the purchase of the URC Chapel, subject to change of use planning permission and listed building consent being granted to allow for the main chapel building to be used for community use.

Cllr Hobro set out the proposal:

- Crossroads in life of the chapel, has served the village for the last 200yrs, last 50 yrs Playgroup has been there, as well as hosting numerous other community events, serving the village alongside the Village Hall.
- Opportunity for the village. Community use would enrich the village.

- OR allow The Chapel to be sold - becoming a residence and lose playgroup, and have a negative impact on the school. Danger of a becoming a dormitory village.
- Feedback from the village has been mostly positive with some voices of caution - every probing question is invaluable.

Other comments noted by Cllrs included:

- Good opportunity for village that won't come again. If Playgroup goes it will have a negative affect on school which does bring people to the village
- Concern was raised about too much emotion. The Chapel and Playgroup should be looked at separately.
- To keep on developing the proposals to make a decision on this exciting and imaginative project
- Mention made about space being available at VH and accounts showing VH running at a deficit.
- Running and utility costs need to be looked at again; seem a bit low.
- Some Cllrs thought volunteers would be hard to get. Other Cllrs thought there would be no problem.
- Saving the playgroup and buying The Chapel are two different matters.
- Exciting and imaginative project. A vote against is a vote to stop and abandon the project here and now and opportunity will disappear forever.
- Feedback has raised important points and provides a useful checklist. Good to have our due diligence sharpened by comments. Help us iron out the plans.
- Concern that accounts were missing post Covid. This was explained that the congregation did the accounts themselves but as the numbers fell so did the people volunteering. When they closed they had a surplus.
- Any loan would be secured against the precept and not the building. This was a leap of faith that might go wrong.
- The building could be sold in the future.
- A meeting with SDCD business support officers had been very positive with help advice available when needed. They will give us a neutral and unbiased set of eyes on our plans detached from the emotions in the village.

In moving to a vote the Chair requested that standing order 3(s) be used to record how Cllrs have voted.

Proposal: To agree in principle to pursue the purchase of the URC Chapel, subject to change of use planning permission and listed building consent being granted to allow for the main chapel building to be used for community use

Proposed by: Cllr Hobro

Seconded by: Cllr Mulholland

motion passed 5:1

In Favour: Cllr Baker-Oxley, Cllr Brock, Cllr Collinson, Cllr Hobro, Cllr Mulholland

Against: Cllr Roberts

Abstained from the vote (did not vote): Cllr Bryan, Cllr Lennon

Proposal: To form a Delivery Committee formed of 5 Councillors and approve the draft Terms of Reference ([click here](#))

Cllrs who emailed in advance who wished to be considered for the committee: Cllr Baker-Oxley, Cllr Brock, Cllr Collinson, Cllr Hobro, Cllr Mulholland

Proposal: To form a Delivery Committee formed of 5 Councillors and approve the draft Terms of Reference

Proposed by: Cllr Mulholland

Seconded by: Cllr Collinson

motion passed

To elect Cllr Baker-Oxley, Cllr Brock, Cllr Collinson, Cllr Hobro to the delivery committee

Proposed by: Cllr Mulholland

Seconded by: Cllr Lennon

motion passed

To elect Cllr Mulholland to the delivery committee

Proposed by: Cllr Brock

Seconded by: Cllr Lennon

motion passed

Proposal: The Council, taking into account the report from Councillor Brock ([click here](#)), empowers the Clerk to appoint and instruct planning consultants to give advice and carry out work as considered necessary by the delivery committee to obtain planning permissions for the URC project, listed building consent, and any other planning related regulatory consents; the extent of the work and URC project, and the choice of firm to be decided by a simple majority vote of the councillor members of the delivery committee. In this resolution "Planning consultants" includes, without limitation, architects, ecological, traffic, noise, heritage and drainage consultants

- Motion is to give the delivery committee the ability to move forward with the project.
- Planning applications can be complicated, the PC may need to call on external advice if planning officers request it. Eg: traffic survey, noise survey, ecological impact statement etc.

- 3 firms asked to give quotations using the early draft of the business plan. Estimates are for the project in its fullness. Figures include all listed, heritage, ecological constant whoever we need. Will look to do as much of the legwork ourselves but may not have professional independence to provide the opinions that go behind a report or survey stating what will be acceptable or otherwise.
- In the first instance to be paid from reserves.

Proposed by: Cllr Brock **Seconded by:** Cllr Collision **motion passed 6:1**

Most members of the public left at 21:07. 7 members of the public remained.

25/007 Road Safety and Highways

- a) Items reported to CCC Highways

Items can be reported by any Cllr or member of the public by [clicking here](#)

Many blocked gulleys have been reported

- b) Speedwatch and MVAS [update] No speedwatch due to the weather and lack of volunteers.

Cllr Lennon has got some quotes to buy an additional MVAS. These will be put together to go on the next agenda for consideration.

Cllr Lennon - left the meeting @ 21:12

- c) LHI working group (including bollards near Triangle/Bus Stop & Chrishall Grange LHI) [update]

to note: LHI Bid from Chrishall Grange has been submitted by Chrishall Grange residents, with FPC support based on the advice received from the CC Highways Officers.

- d) **To note:** Intended signalisation to Flint Cross junction on the A505 and Active Travel Corridor to include Fowlmere ([click here](#))

- The final 3 options for improving the A505 all included traffic lights at the Flint Cross Junction.
- They all also include an active travel corridor from Melbourn through to Granta park, which include Fowlmere. This should see improved cycle provision.
- Mobility Hubs are planned, including in Fowlmere, where permanent services stop and an on demand bus takes over
- There are various options for improved busses depending which option is chosen.

25/008 Reports from meetings attended and/or training attended

- Clerk attended Anglian Water MAG meeting.
- Cllr Hobro and Mulholland met with the SCDC Business Support team

25/009 Damage to The Butts fencing and gate

To note: Damage to fencing and gate on December 20th by a stolen van.

The area was made safe on the day and an Insurance claim is currently pending.

Cllr Brock fed back that he had been asked to pass on praise to the PC for getting on with swift repairs.

The Chair gave particular praise to the staff at the school who had acted quickly to keep the children safe.

25/010 The Swan

To note: SCDC Environmental Health to begin to arrange their own contractors once compliance date has passed on week ending 12th January.

To note: SCDC Compliance (formerly enforcement) officers now involved with Principle Compliance Officer now leading the case. District Cllr Hobro to be kept in the loop.

25/011 Anglian Water Liaison

To note: Site meeting being arranged for February.

25/012 Trees, Grass and Hedges

- a) Round Moat

To note: planned ([tree report](#)) works have taken place

To note: emergency works taken place due to Storm Darragh (1 large tree & 3 smaller trees)

- b) Protected Verges.

Proposal: To agree to quote of £800 per visit (2 visits) for cutting of protected verges along London Road as in previous years. Cuts to take place in April & September.

Proposed by: Cllr Bryan

Seconded by: Cllr Collinson

motion passed

25/013 Cemetery Management

- a) Recent and upcoming interments, memorials and transfers.

There were none

- b) **To note:** UK Power Networks site visit to trace electricity cable install route to the Chapel in early 2000's. The angled route means grave plots have been lost.

25/014 Other Items to note:

a) Village Defibrillators -

Clerk had been contacted by Community Response at East of England Ambulance Service, due to a problem accessing the defibrillator.

It turned out the issue was the person had gone to the Village Hall defibrillator (and not the PC one at the Chequers) and that EEA did not have the code for this defibrillator as it is not registered on their system (known as "The Circuit") meaning this defibrillator is not accessible to the public.

The Clerk has contacted the VHMCA so that this can be resolved.

Having an inaccessible defibrillator can be more dangerous than having no defibrillator at all.

b) Village Benches - all benches cleaned w/c 20th Jan ([click here](#))

Possibility to organise a volunteer village day to oil/paint benches.

c) Skate Park Maintenance update ([click here](#))

Contractors had been to carry out maintenance. They stated the ramp was in very good condition given that it is being well used. Annual maintenance will keep it in good continued use for many years to come.

25/015 Progress of ongoing projects

a) Allotments project [update]

Waiting to hear from County regarding access via their land

b) New project ideas - none.

25/016 Finance

a) To note: the financial situation of the council up to 21st January ([click here](#))

b) Bills paid since last meeting (as per financial regulation 5.5)

- DD Doro Care UK **£538.39** (Nov & Dec, Jan) (personal alarms) (LGA 1972 s137)
- DD British Gas Lite Cemetery **£29.36** (Dec & Jan) (Chapel Electricity) (Parish Councils Act 1957, s3)
- DD SCDC **£35.96** (Dec & Jan) (Cemetery Bin Collection) (LGA 1972 s.214(2))
- DD Lebara Mobile **£9** (Nov, Dec) (Parish Council telephone line) (LG(fp)A 1963 s.5)
- DD Virtual Landline **£7.90** (Nov, Dec) (Parish Council telephone line) (LG(fp)A 1963 s.5)
- DD Unity Trust credit card admin charge **£9** (Nov, Dec, Jan) (LGA 1972 s.111)
- DD Microsoft **£17.52** (Dec & Jan) (Microsoft 365 subscription) (LGA 1972 s.111)
- DD SSE Street Lighting **£106.30** (Parish Councils Act 1957, s3)
- Clerks Salary, NI, HMRC & Pension (**£confidential**) (Nov & Dec) (LGA 1972 s.112)
- Fowlmere Village Hall **£72.00** (Nov & Dec) (meeting room hire) (LGA 1972 s.134(4))
- Hardy Landscapes **£1500** (Last grass cut/Wild grass cut Round Moat/The Butts) (Open Spaces Act 1906 ss9-10)
- Storage Rent and expenses **£300** (Dec & Jan, Feb) (LGA 1972 s.111)
- Office Sundries **£239.62** (Nov & Dec & Jan)(LGA 1972 s.111)
- Fowlmere PCC **£5** (meeting room hire) (LGA 1972 s.134(4))
- Shelford Tree Services **£280** (emergency removal fallen tree Chrishall Rd) (Open Spaces Act 1906 ss9-10)
- Mills & Reeve **£1382.80** (Professional Services) (LGA 1972 s.111)
- Hardy Landscapes **£490** (Leaf Collection Jacksons Way/Isons Close) (Open Spaces Act 1906 ss9-10)
- Unity Bank Charges **£12** (Nov & Dec)(LGA 1972 s.111)
- Hope CIC **£400** (Mobile Food Bank) (Food Act 1984 s.50)
- Red Shoes Accounting **£49.50** (LGA 1972 s.111)
- Philimore Garden Centre **£46.80** (Christmas tree) (LGA 1972 s.144)
- Royston & District Transport Donation **£200** (Local Govt & Rating Act 1997s.26)
- Shelford Tree Services **£475** (Emergency removal of fallen tree in Round Moat) (open spaces Act 1906 ss9-10)
- Hardy Landscapes **£1240** (Laurel Bush reduction/Leaf Collection/The Butts/Hedge trimming) (Open Spaces Act 1906 ss9-10)
- Ian Wilson **£286.09** (The Butts emergency repairs) (open spaces Act 1906 ss9-10)
- Starboard Systems Ltd (Scribe) **£357.12** (LGA 1972 s.111)

Proposal: To Note Bills Paid

Proposed by: Cllr Collinson

Seconded by: Cllr Baker Oxley

motion passed

c) Income

- Interest Redwood Bank - Dec **£324.84**
- Interest Redwood Bank - Jan- **£335.66**
- Interest Cambridge Building Society - Annual - **£2314.45**
- Peppercorn Rent FVH - **£1.00**

d) Precept: (*report from finance committee*)

Proposal: To accept the recommendations from the Finance Committee and request a precept of **£63.552.32**

- Cllrs complimented the Clerk on a very thorough budget report.
- It was noted that when inflation was high the precept rise was kept under inflation. Now inflation was lower it was appropriate to catch up.
- New use of ear-marked reserves should keep future increases on the lower-side moving forward.

Proposed by: Cllr Baker Oxley

Seconded by: Cllr Collinson

motion passed

e) Internal Auditor

Proposal: To accept the quote for £185 for the Internal Auditor (*circulated with agenda*).

Proposed by: Cllr Bryan

Seconded by: Cllr Brock

motion passed

Meeting closed at 21:34

Any business to be considered at a Parish Council meeting must be delivered to the clerk for inclusion in accordance with Standing Order 9b. Please use "Agenda Item Request form" ([click here](#)) and include as much information as possible including any proposal.