

THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE

WHEATLEY HILL PARISH COUNCIL

HELD ON MONDAY 13 JUNE 2011

Present: Councillor M Nicholls (Chair)
Councillors Mrs M Goyns, E Goyns, J R Lamb,
B Maddison, Mrs M Nicholls and Mrs C Stogdale

Apologies: Councillor Mrs E Carr and Mrs L Stewart

- 1 THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING held on 16 May 2011, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were approved and signed by the Chair.**
- 2 COMMUNITY POLICING**

The Chair welcomed PC Brown and PCSO Taylor to the meeting.

The Officer advised that since the last meeting there had been 76 reported incidences in the area which included 1 burglary, 5 criminal damage, 7 thefts and 1 theft from a motor vehicle.

Councillor Mrs M Goyns reported cars racing through the village at very high speed and provided details of 2 occasions when cars had used the road as a race track. The Chair agreed that this was an ongoing problem which had been brought to the attention of Durham Constabulary and Durham County Council. A speed watch had been undertaken and suggestions included the possibility of installing a speed hump to slow the traffic down.

The situation was further complicated by vehicles parked at the entrance to Johnson Estate which resulted in traffic leaving the estate having to pull out into the middle of the road to check for oncoming traffic. There was concern that cars racing up and down the street at speed could hit a vehicle exiting Johnson Estate. The Officer agreed to speak to the beat Officer and consider the possibility of undertaking a further community speed watch.

Councillor Mrs C Stogdale referred to the ongoing problems associated with the pizza shop on Vincents Corner. As previously reported cars continued to park in this area which restricted visibility for other traffic. There was also the added complication of youths congregating on the footpath. Suggestions had included the installation of bollards in this area to prevent vehicles parking. In addition vehicles delivering to the premises were often parked across the road which caused a road safety hazard.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

3 STREET WARDENS

There were no Street Wardens present at the meeting.

4 CORRESPONDENCE

(1) Request for Financial Assistance

Royal British Legion – Wheatley Hill Women’s Section

The Clerk reported the receipt of a request for financial assistance from the Royal British Legion, Wheatley Hill Women’s Section.

RESOLVED that a donation of £300 be made from the Section 137 Budget.

(2) Letter of Thanks

The Clerk reported the receipt of a letter of thanks from the EDWE Centre, Dodds Close.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(3) Durham County Council - Overview and Scrutiny Review of Area Action Partnerships

The Clerk reported the receipt of correspondence from the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and the Area Action Partnership (AAP) Working Group, Durham County Council.

Members were advised that Durham County Council’s AAP Working Group were undertaking a review of AAPs. The review group were gathering evidence to consider if AAP’s were “fit for purpose” and “fit for the future”.

The Working Group were gathering evidence on the difference that AAP’s had made in their local communities, what had worked well, what areas could be improved and what opportunities there were for AAPs in the future. The Working Group was seeking views in respect of the following key themes: -

- Governance arrangements
- Resources
- Community involvement and engagement
- Impact
- Performance Management

The Chair advised that he felt the AAP's had had a slow start but were now progressing and were making a difference in their local communities. Within the East Durham AAP youth had been identified as a priority and a number of schemes and projects initiated had been a success. Overall it was felt that the AAP's undertook a worthwhile and valuable role within the community.

Councillor Mrs M Goyns felt that the East Durham AAP Co-ordinator did not always deliver what was promised. Members did not always receive timely answers to requests and the Co-ordinator often attended meetings but failed to provide satisfactory answers to issues which had previously been raised. In addition tasks were often delegated to Officers who appeared to have little knowledge of the issues they were being tasked to deal with.

RESOLVED that the comments of the Parish Council be forwarded to Durham County Council.

5 PLANNING MATTERS

Consideration was given to the following planning application received from Durham County Council: -

Proposed replacement windows at St Godrics RC Primary School, Thornley Road, Wheatley Hill for St Godrics RC Primary School

RESOLVED that no objection or comment be made to Durham County Council.

6 DELEGATES REPORTS

(i) Wheatley House

The Chair advised that it was proposed to undertake a survey of Wheatley House to ascertain if any of the window lintels were missing.

(ii) Clinic

The Chair provided an update on the current situation.

(iii) Affordable Housing

The Chair advised that a walkabout would be undertaken at the end of June with the Residents Association and Housing Officers to consider suitable sites for affordable housing in Wheatley Hill.

(iv) The Embassy

The Chair advised that the Embassy had been demolished.

(v) West House

The Chair advised that West House had been demolished and it was hoped that bungalows would be the preferred option for this site rather than flats.

(vi) Lengthsman

The Chair advised that he had contacted Mr J Lowes, Clean and Green Manager for the Eastern Division, Durham County Council, to discuss the provision of a Lengthsman in Wheatley Hill.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted and further developments be awaited.

7 HEAD GROUNDSPERSONS REPORT

The Clerk advised that routine work had been undertaken in the Cemetery since the last meeting, details of which were outlined to Members.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

8 CLERK'S REPORT

(1) Allotments

The Clerk reported that a meeting of the Allotment Sub-Committee was held on 10 June 2011.

Members were advised that in general the allotments were in a poor state of repair. Many of the gardens and stable blocks appeared to be unused and the majority were not well maintained. Fly-tipping was a constant problem and was managed as best as possible with the County Council removing the rubbish and re-charging the Parish Council for the work.

Attention was drawn to the following: -

Allotment No 7 - Mr M Kelsey (JNR)

The Clerk advised that it had come to the attention of the Parish Council that the tenant of this allotment no longer resided in Wheatley Hill and was living in Trimdon. Under the Parish Council's rules, only residents of Wheatley Hill were eligible to hold a tenancy.

RESOLVED that Mr Kelsey be advised that his tenancy had been terminated on the grounds that he no longer resided in Wheatley Hill.

Allotment No 17 - Mr R Cowie

The Clerk advised that this large corner plot was overgrown and appeared to be unused. A horse was often kept on the site but this was irregular. The Parish Council had previously contacted the tenant requesting that the garden be maintained to a higher standard.

RESOLVED that the tenant be contacted to ascertain if he still wished to retain the tenancy and if he did, he be advised that it needed to be maintained to a higher standard.

Stable Block No 21 - Mr W Kelsey

The Clerk advised that there was a lot of rubbish on this stable block which appeared to be scrap and included a fridge and cooker. The tenant of this block was present on site and advised that he would remove the rubbish at the stable block and gave an insurance that he did not burn rubbish on the site.

RESOLVED that the situation continued to be monitored.

Stable Block No 22 - Mr W Thompson and Mr Newton

The Clerk advised that stable block No 22 appeared to be unused and was not well maintained. There were two piles of burnt rubbish dumped outside the block and it was unclear if the rubbish had been fly-tipped or if it had come from the stable block.

The tenant had also erected a locked gate at the end of the track to prevent fly-tipping. However this prevented any access to the allotments and it was unclear how fly-tipped rubbish could have been tipped beyond a locked gate. The gate also prevented access for the removal of the fly-tipped rubbish by Durham County Council.

RESOLVED that the tenant be;-

- (i) advised to clear the block and keep it maintained to a satisfactory standard,
- (ii) be instructed to remove the locked gate as this was a public right of way,
- (iii) the tenant be advised to remove the rubbish from outside the block and not to undertake any further burning of rubbish on site.

Stable Block No 23 - Mr P Anderson

The Clerk advised that this stable block was overgrown and appeared to be unused. The plot was not secure and was therefore subject to flytipping. Rubbish also appeared to have been burnt on the site.

The Parish Council had previously queried the use of this block and was concerned that sub-letting was taking place. There had been complaints about this block and following a request to the tenant there appeared to have been little improvement. There had been allegations that the tenant no longer lived at the address provided to the Parish Council and the site was being sublet to another resident living in Wheatley Hill.

RESOLVED that Mr P Anderson be advised that as he was in breach of his tenancy agreement the tenancy would be terminated.

(2) Cemetery Wall

The Clerk advised that Direct Services had erected a one meter square demonstration wall to allow Members the opportunity to view what the finished Cemetery wall would look like.

Members expressed concern in relation to the demonstration wall and felt that all it achieved was to demonstrate the type of brick that would be used. It was felt that a site meeting was needed with Mr Burr to discuss Members concerns and clarify a number of issues.

RESOLVED that the Clerk contact Mr P Burr to arrange a site meeting.

(3) Website

The Clerk advised that work was underway to provide the Parish Council with a website and Members would be kept advised of progress.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted and further developments be awaited.

(4) Purchase of New Computer

The Clerk advised that the Parish Council's computer, purchased over six years ago, was in need of replacement. Following discussion it was agreed that the Clerk be authorised to purchase a new computer for the Parish Council.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(5) Poop Scoop Bags

The Clerk advised that Durham County Council no longer provided Poop Scoop bags.

The Clerk advised that Poop Scoop bags could be purchased at a cost of £40.75 for 2,000 bags inclusive of VAT and delivery.

RESOLVED that approval be granted to purchase 2,000 Poop Scoop bags at a cost of £40.75.

9 PAYMENTS AND ORDERS

The Clerk presented Members with a written report of all payments and receipts made since the last meeting.

Members were also provided with details of the financial position of the Parish Council in comparison with the Annual Budget.

RESOLVED that the report be received and the payments itemised be approved.

10 RISK ASSESSMENT

The Clerk advised that there was nothing to report.

11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Stray Dog

Councillor B Maddison advised that a stray dog had been reported and provided details of the location and times.

RESOLVED that the Clerk report the matter to Durham County Council.

..... Signed

..... Dated