

THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE

WHEATLEY HILL PARISH COUNCIL

HELD ON MONDAY 12 SEPTEMBER 2011

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

Apologies: Councillors E Goyns and Mrs L Stewart

1 THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING held on 11 July 2011, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were approved and signed by the Chair.

2 COMMUNITY POLICING

The Chair welcomed Sergeant S Hawkes to the meeting.

The Officer advised that there had been a 50% reduction in the number of assaults a 75% reduction in the number of thefts from or of a motor vehicle and a 6% reduction in the number of incidents related to anti- social behaviour.

Reference was once again made to the growing number of crimes related to the theft of lead and metal. This was a continuing problem which was being experienced throughout the Country. The Police continued to target local scrap merchants and a number of arrests had been made in the area. A number of successful Police operations had been undertaken in the area and the Police would continue to work in partnership with other agencies to combat this widespread problem.

The Chair referred to a village walkabout held on 8 September 2011 at which a number of properties, mainly owned by private landlords, were identified as being in a bad state of repair. The walkabout involved a number of organisations, including the Police and Durham County Council.

Members were advised that following the walkabout a number of actions were agreed which included: -

- The drawing up of an Action Plan identifying lead Officers and their tasks
- A press release advising residents of the walkabout and the Action Plan that was being put in place
- A leaflet drop in the immediate area advising residents of the actions to be taken
- Landlords would be invited to a meeting
- Durham County Council would be advised of the concerns related to the properties and the lengthy process involved in cleaning properties and boarding up premises, particularly as Wheatley Hill was now a regeneration area.

Members were advised that many private landlords were absent and showed little or no interest in their properties, many of which were not fit for human habitation.

The Chair referred to the continuing problems associated with the Pizza shop on the Front Street and the many complaints received regarding vehicles parking on the yellow lines outside the premises. This issue had previously been raised and there was no possibility of the yellow lines being extended or the erection of bollards. The Police advised that they would continue to enforce and monitor the area and issue tickets where necessary.

The Chair made reference to the number of horses that were tethered on Council land around Wheatley Hill. Members were advised that Durham County Council was aware of the problem and Compound Officers were in the process of having the horses removed as soon as possible. The Police advised that they would be accompanying the Compound Officers during removal of the horses and escorting them out of the area.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

3 **STREET WARDENS**

The Chair welcomed a Street Warden from Durham County Council to the meeting.

Members were advised that during August there had been 16 reported incidences of which 3 were vehicle related, 11 related to rowdy nuisance and 2 were animal related.

The Chair advised that he had received a complaint from a resident regarding horses tethered on a grassed area near his property. The Warden was aware of this problem and apologised as she had been led to believe that the problem had been resolved. The Chair advised that Durham County Council were now dealing with the problem.

The Chair thanked the Street Warden for her attendance at the meeting.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

4 **CORRESPONDENCE**

(1) **Requests for Financial Assistance**

(i) **East Durham Citizens Advice Bureau**

The Clerk advised that at the last meeting a request from East Durham Citizens Advice Bureau for financial assistance was deferred to allow further information to be sought on the service provided in Wheatley Hill and the level of contributions from neighbouring Parish Councils.

To date this information had not been received.

RESOLVED that consideration of this item be deferred.

(ii) **Hartlepool and District Hospice**

The Clerk reported the receipt of a request for financial assistance from Hartlepool and District Hospice.

RESOLVED that a donation of £50 be made from the Section 137 Budget.

(iii) **Wheatley Hill Working Men's Club - Football Club**

The Clerk reported the receipt of a request for financial assistance from Wheatley Hill Working Men's Club Football Club.

RESOLVED that a donation of £500 be made from the Section 137 Budget.

(iv) **Wheatley Hill Disabled Club**

The Clerk reported the receipt of a request for financial assistance from Wheatley Hill Disabled Club.

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

(2) **Letters of Thanks**

The Clerk reported the receipt of the following letters of thanks: -

Wheatley Hill All Saints Church
County of Durham School Benevolent Fund
St Godric's RC Primary School

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(3) **Durham Constabulary**

The Clerk advised that during the summer recess it came to the attention of the Parish Council that Durham Constabulary had undertaken a number of initiatives which targeted the scrap metal industry and the theft of copper and lead.

As a result of these initiatives the Police made a number of arrests and a letter was sent to the Police from the Parish Council congratulating them on their efforts.

A letter of acknowledgement had since been received from the Police thanking the Parish Council for their kind remarks.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(4) **Durham County Council - Civic Service**

The Chair reported the receipt of an invitation for the Chair of the Parish Council to attend a Civic Service on 18 September 2011.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(5) **East Durham Association of Parish and Town Councils**

The Clerk advised that the next meeting of the East Durham Association of Parish and Town Councils would be held on 20 September 2011.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(6) **Infinis - Proposed Wind Farm**

The Clerk reported the receipt of a letter of thanks from Infinis Wind Holdings following a meeting with their representatives to discuss the proposal for a Wind Farm at Wingate Grange Farm.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

5 PLANNING MATTERS

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

Proposed boundary fence (retrospective) at 118 Wordsworth Avenue for Mr P Watson

Proposed Stables at 25 Lynn Terrace for Mr D Hughes

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

6 DELEGATES REPORTS

(i) Wheatley Hill Roundabout

The Chair advised that Mr D Hill, who worked for the Mid Durham Projects Club, Children and Young People's Services, Durham County Council, had provided the Parish Council with the following quotation for the erection of a new pony and tub on the Wheatley Hill roundabout.

Remove original pony and tub	£500
Manufacture, paint and treat new pony	£1,600
Restore track with new sleepers	£275
Restore coal tub chassis	£475
Manufacture and treat coal tub body	£350
Install new pony and tub on roundabout	£1,725
Exterior treatments	£500
Transport	£500
Total cost of the project	£5,925

The Chair advised that both Trimdon Foundry and Thornley Parish Council had been approached with regard to contributing towards the costs.

Thornley Parish Council had advised that they were not prepared to contribute towards the costs and Trimdon Foundry would be considering the matter at their next meeting. The Chair was confident that as the roundabout was on a Heritage Trail match funding may be available, particularly as the project involved vulnerable young people.

Following discussion it was agreed that the Clerk contact the Clerk to Trimdon Foundry Parish Council to ascertain their position.

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

7 HEAD GROUNDSPERSONS REPORT

(i) General

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.

(ii) Memorial Bench

The Clerk advised that an application had been received from Mrs Hedley for a memorial bench to be erected in the Cemetery.

RESOLVED that the request be approved and Mrs Hedley be accepted onto the waiting list.

(iii) Provision of Poop Scoop Bags

Members were advised that since Durham County Council no longer provided free poop scoop bags the Parish Council had been supplying free bags to residents of Wheatley Hill.

RESOLVED that a further supply of poop scoop bags be purchased at a cost of £34.75 for 2000 bags.

8 CLERK'S REPORT

(1) Allotments

The Clerk provided an update on the following allotments and stable blocks: -

Stable Block No 23 - Mr P Anderson

The Clerk advised that at the last meeting it was reported that Mr P Anderson no longer resided at Black Lane Bungalow, Wheatley Hill and was subletting his stable block.

Following the meeting Mr Anderson was advised that as he no longer lived at Black Lane Bungalow and had sub-let his stable block, he was in breach of his tenancy agreement and the tenancy had been terminated with immediate effect.

Members were advised that Mr Anderson subsequently contacted the Clerk and initially claimed he lived at Black Lane Bungalow. When challenged on this, Mr Anderson confirmed that he actually lived in a caravan in the garden of Black Lane Bungalow.

Mr Anderson also claimed that he had not sub-let the stable block and had spent a considerable amount of money on the site.

Following a lengthy discussion it was agreed that as Mr Anderson lived in a caravan in the garden of Black Lane Bungalow this did not represent a residency within Wheatley Hill which was one of the Parish Councils conditions to be eligible to hold the tenancy of an allotment or stable block.

RESOLVED that the Clerk contact Mr Anderson and advise that as he was no longer a resident of Wheatley Hill he was not eligible to hold the tenancy of the stable block and the tenancy would be terminated with immediate effect.

Allotment No 14 – Mr A Stevenson

At the last meeting it was alleged that Mr Stevenson had sold the tenancy of allotment No 14 for £200 and it was agreed that the tenancy be terminated.

Mr Stevenson had since advised the Parish Council that he has not sold the tenancy of the allotment.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(2) **Annual Allotment/Stable Block Rent Fees 2011/2012**

The Clerk advised that the annual fees for allotments and stable blocks for 2011/2012 were now due.

Members were advised that the level of fees had remained static for a number of years. Due to increased costs related to the upkeep of the allotments and particularly the recent excessive use of water at the site it was suggested that the annual fees be increased.

Following a lengthy discussion it was agreed that allotment fees be increased to £30 per annum and stable blocks be increased to £60 per annum.

Councillor M Nicholls requested that it be placed on record that he did not support such a high increase in annual rent charges.

RESOLVED that the annual rent fees be increased to £30 per annum for an allotment and £60 per annum for a stable block.

(3) **Code of Conduct Post Standards for England Abolition**

The Clerk advised that following the abolition of Standards for England next year the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) was not recommending that local Councils introduce a new local Code of Conduct.

Members were advised that it was NALC's view that a Parish Council may satisfy its future duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct using methods which did not include adopting a voluntary Code of Conduct. In NALC's opinion this could be achieved by: -

- Ensuring that the "Nolan Principles" were endorsed and adopted by Council
- Confirming and publicising Councillors' commitment to observe the Nolan Principles
- Adoption of a new complaints procedure which accommodated complaints specific to the acts or omissions of individual Councillors for which the Council took corporate responsibility (except if legal liability arose for the Councillor concerned). If a complaint specific to the acts or omissions of individual Councillors was upheld by a Council, no sanctions (except censure) could be imposed on the Councillors as they would be

unenforceable. The Council would need to decide how it made amendments if it upheld such a complaint. This may include taking a particular action, providing a written apology to the complainant, or the payment of compensation

- Promote and provide relevant training for Councillors

It was NALC's view that a Council's complaints procedure must enable complaints to be made in respect of Councillor conduct and any such complaints would be dealt with under the Council's standard complaints procedure.

As a voluntary Code of Conduct adopted by a Council would not impose legal obligations on individual Councillors, and because sanctions for their misconduct were limited, and enforceability of sanctions was difficult, NALC did not recommend that a Parish Council adopted one. Once the new legislation was in force, it was recommended that a Parish Council withdraw its existing Code of Conduct without replacing it.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(4) Annual Insurance Premium

The Clerk advised that the annual insurance premium for 2011/2012 had been received from Zurich Municipal in the sum of £6,474.25. The previous year's premium had been £7,221.00.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(5) ROSPA Annual Inspection

The Clerk reported the receipt of the annual ROSPA inspection carried out at the football pitch at Quilstyle Road. The Clerk took Members through the content of the report and outlined any actions that were required.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(6) Cemetery Wall

The Clerk reported the receipt of correspondence from Mr P Burr, Facilities and Maintenance Manager, Service Direct in relation to the erection of the new Cemetery wall.

Mr Burr had confirmed that the work currently being undertaken by Service Direct to construct a boundary wall at the Cemetery would not be complete as originally planned. The revised completion date was now 14 October 2011. Service Direct had apologised for the delay and inconvenience and gave assurances that the delays were due to circumstances beyond their control. Particularly, but not exclusively the poor weather encountered over the summer holiday period and quality issues relating to the bricks used to construct the wall.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(7) Roof Repairs - Heritage Centre/Cemetery Bungalow

The Clerk advised that quotations had been sought for minor roofing repairs to both the Heritage Centre and the Cemetery bungalow. G M Builders of Wheatley Hill had provided a quotation for materials plus labour of £200.

Following liaison with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Parish Council, the works were authorised.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(8) Mobile Telephone Expenses

The Clerk advised that increasingly both the Chair and Clerk were using their mobile telephones more frequently which was leading to increased costs.

It was suggested that the Chair be given a monthly contribution of £50 and the Clerk a £25 contribution towards their monthly mobile telephone costs.

RESOLVED that the Chair be awarded a £50 contribution and the Clerk a £25 contribution towards mobile telephone costs per month.

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

(i) Public Rights of Way

Councillor Mrs C Stogdale made reference to a gate which had been erected at the fishing pond and prevented public access.

The Chair advised that he would request a site meeting with the Public Rights of Way Officer, Durham County Council to clarify the Public Rights of Way at this location.

(ii) Wheatley Hill Walkabout

It was agreed that the Clerk contact the Police and advise that the Parish Council fully supported the proposed actions resulting from the village walkabout on 8 September 2011.

..... Signed

..... Dated