

THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE

WHEATLEY HILL PARISH COUNCIL

HELD ON MONDAY 11 FEBRUARY 2013

Present: Councillor M Nicholls (Chair)  
Councillors Mrs E Carr, Mrs M Goyns, J R Lamb,  
B 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 28 January 2013, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were approved and signed by the Chair.

- 2 COUNTY DURHAM PLAN

The Chair welcomed Debbie Shanks and Andy Wood from the Spatial Policy Unit, Durham County Council, to the meeting.

D Shanks proceeded to give a short presentation on the County Durham Plan and explained that it was the County Councils preferred future approach to development and was one of the first new style local plans in the country.

Members were advised that County Durham's economy was suffering. Areas related to rising unemployment, particularly amongst young people, the loss of public sector funding, the decline in the house building industry and the proposals for welfare reform would impact on the most vulnerable within the community.

The vision and strategy of the Plan was to provide a spatial strategy which would provide the best chance for economic growth. Within the Plan there was a variety of employment and housing sites in a choice of locations. The County would be directing development to the most sustainable and deliverable locations. It would also look to protect and enhance the natural, built and historic environment of the area by building on strengths, such as its skilled workforce, heritage coast and transport.

The strategy was based on the 12 main towns but it also allowed for some development in most settlements, including Wheatley Hill.

With regard to new housing, it was reported that there would be approximately 30,000 new homes allocated across the whole of County Durham. East Durham was allocated approximately 4,700 or 6%. However, most of the new homes would be concentrated in the Peterlee and Seaham areas. Whilst no specific sites had been allocated for particular land use in Wheatley Hill this did not mean that unallocated sites in the settlement could not be permitted for housing within the terms of the Plan. Within the Plan all housing sites allocated were over 1.5 hectares. Following consultation this was now considered to be too large and sites under 0.4 hectares would now be looked at. The County Council would also be looking at the level of need for housing in the light of new household and population predictions, which would include elderly person's accommodation.

Members were given an assurance that their comments and concerns would be taken on board and discussed and considered as part of the consultation process. The next submission draft would be available in October/November 2013.

A Wood proceeded to set out the frame work for future Neighbourhood Plans. These Plans would need to reflect the spatial approach and strategic policies of the Plan and could identify more sites and allocations, but not less. He explained that if Members required further information regarding Neighbourhood Plans, he would happily attend a future meeting to discuss in more detail.

The Chair thanked D Shanks and A Wood for their attendance at the meeting.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

**3 WINGATE GRANGE WIND FARM**

The Clerk reported that Tim Mockridge, Infinis Wind Holdings Limited, had submitted his apologies.

**4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

**5 COMMUNITY POLICING**

The Chair welcomed PCSO A Robson to the meeting. The Officer reported that since the last meeting there had been 33 incidences reported which included 4 anti-social behaviour, 1 burglary and 2 thefts.

With regard to parking problems being experienced at Johnson Estate, the situation appeared to have improved over the last couple of weeks.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

**6 STREET WARDENS**

The Chair welcomed K Topping and F DGLISH, Street Wardens, Durham County Council, to the meeting.

K Topping reported that since the last meeting 4 calls had been received which included dog fouling, litter and a stray dog.

Councillor Mrs Stogdale advised that the level of dog fouling had not improved, and it was particularly bad around Woodlands Avenue and East View. F DGLISH advised that they were aware of the situation and were in the process of gathering evidence on who was allowing the fouling to take place.

The Street Wardens reported that during the recent heavy snow fall they had assisted elderly residents with snow clearing at Liddell and Ryan Terrace.

Councillor Mrs Goyns reported that a blue van was regularly parked on the corner at the Doctors surgery and blocked visibility for other motorists. PCSO A Robson advised that he would speak to A Jepson to see if any initial action had been taken against the owner of the vehicle.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

7 CORRESPONDENCE

(1) Letter of Thanks

The Clerk reported the receipt of a letter of thanks from the County of Durham School Benevolent Fund.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(2) All Saints Parish Church

The Clerk reported the receipt of an invitation from All Saints Parish Church to attend a Faith Supper and presentation for the Reverend R Davies, who was retiring. The presentation would be held on 26 February 2013 at 6.15 following Tuesday's evening service.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(3) Dispensation – Council Tax Setting

The Clerk reported the receipt of correspondence from the Department for Communities and Local Government which provided an update in relation to the need for Councillors to seek a dispensation in order to take part in setting the Council Tax.

The Parish Council had previously been advised that all Councillors, being Council Tax payers, had a disclosable pecuniary interest in any budget debate and would need to seek a dispensation in order to take part in the budget setting process.

The latest advice was that such dispensations were unnecessary. Council Tax liability applied to the generality of the population and Councillors had no unique position in this regard.

Being a Council Tax payer or being eligible for a discount under the new local arrangements for Council Tax support were pecuniary interests, but were not disclosable pecuniary interests as specified in the regulations. Therefore, Councillors did not need to seek a dispensation in order to participate in discussions or vote on decisions in the Council Tax setting process or local arrangements for Council Tax support.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

**8 PLANNING MATTERS**

There were no planning matters to report.

**9 DELEGATES REPORTS**

There was nothing to report.

**10 HEAD GROUNDS PERSONS REPORT**

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

**RESOLVED** that the information given, be noted.

**11 CLERK'S REPORT**

**(1) Allotments/Stable Blocks**

**Waiting List**

Members were provided with details of waiting lists for allotments and stable blocks.

**RESOLVED** that the information given, be noted.

**(2) Estimates of Expenditure 2013/14**

The Clerk reported that at the last meeting of the Parish Council Members resolved that the net spending requirement of the Parish Council for 2013/14 be set at £126,378. This was made up of a Local Council Tax Support Grant of £35,747 and an additional £90,613 precept.

The Clerk provided Members with a detailed breakdown of the various budgets for approval.

**RESOLVED** that the Councils estimates of expenditure for 2013/14, be approved.

**(3) Thornley Parish Council**

The Clerk reported that a request had been received from the Chair of Thornley Parish Council to assist with a burial on 12 February 2013.

Following liaison with the Chair of the Parish Council assistance was provided to assist with the burial.

**RESOLVED** that the information given, be noted.

**12 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.

**13 RISK MANAGEMENT**

The Clerk advised there was nothing to report.

..... Signed

..... Dated