

**THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
WHEATLEY HILL PARISH COUNCIL
HELD ON MONDAY 9 JULY 2012**

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

1 THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING held on 11 June 2012, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were approved and signed by the Chair.

2 COMMUNITY POLICING

There were no Police present at the meeting.

3 STREET WARDENS

There were no Street Wardens present at the meeting.

4 CORRESPONDENCE

(1) Requests for Financial Assistance

(i) Crimestoppers

The Clerk reported the receipt of a request for financial assistance from Crimestoppers.

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

(ii) Butterwick House Children's Hospice

The Clerk reported the receipt of a request for financial assistance from Butterwick House Children's Hospice.

RESOLVED that no donation be made.

(iii) Wheatley Hill Women's Section - Royal British Legion

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

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 Disabled Club
All Saints Parish Church

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(3) East Durham Citizens Advice Bureau

The Clerk reported the receipt of correspondence from the East Durham Citizens Advice Bureau in relation to changes to the outreach service in Wheatley Hill.

Members were advised that the Board of East Durham Citizens Advice Bureau had met to consider cuts in funding and the changes that would need to be made to outreach services in the area.

It was explained that a number of Area Action Partnership Members had committed funding to ensure that services in their area remained open. Unfortunately no funders had come forward in respect of meeting the costs of the Wheatley Hill outreach service which would be withdrawn in July.

Members were advised that there was an appointment only service at Thornley Medical Centre every Thursday as well as a fortnightly Friday session at Thornley Library. Clients could also visit the Peterlee Bureau every week day.

Reference was made to correspondence received from the Bureau in March, 2012 and the subsequent letter sent by the Parish Council requesting additional information in relation to: -

- The level of contribution from other Parish/Town Councils
- The level of outreach service provided in other areas
- The level of use of the outreach service in Wheatley Hill

To date the bureau had not responded to any of the Parish Council's queries.

Following a lengthy discussion, it was RESOLVED that: -

- (i) the Clerk write to the East Durham Citizens Advice Bureau outlining the Parish Council's disappointment at the closure of the outreach service in Wheatley Hill
- (ii) the Clerk request additional information in relation to the level of contribution from other Town/Parish Councils and the level of outreach service provided in other areas
- (iii) the Clerk contact neighbouring Town/Parish Councils to ascertain the level of grant funding they provided to the bureau and the level of service they received.

(4) Durham Constabulary

At the last meeting the Clerk was instructed to write to Durham Constabulary acknowledging the work undertaken by PCSO Sharon Bowman in Wheatley Hill.

The Assistant Chief Constable of Durham Constabulary had replied thanking the Parish Council for their letter of appreciation and had given an assurance that the kind remarks of the Parish Council would be conveyed to PCSO Bowman.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(5) Wheatley Hill Heritage Society – Request to Update Facilities

The Clerk reported the receipt of correspondence from the Wheatley Hill Heritage Society.

Members were advised that the Heritage Centre provided a unique centre piece for the village of Wheatley Hill and provided a venue for local and family historians to research the area. The accommodation within the Heritage Centre was small and previous discussions in relation to an extension to the building had proved too costly. The Heritage Society was however still anxious to improve on the experience they could offer to visitors to the centre.

With this in mind, the Heritage Society had begun discussions which centred on alterations to the kitchen area to create a refreshment room. The proposal was for the erection of a small conservatory to the side of the Heritage Centre, which would be used as a refreshment area. The additional space would provide room for 3 small round bistro type tables and chairs. As well as installing a new sink and units the sink would be moved to where the computer was sited at present and the computer would be moved to where the sink was.

Whilst this work was underway in the kitchen area, the Society would provide a bench type desk arrangement along the wall where the table was at present, to provide an area for computer related research, which would leave the exhibition hall available for visitors.

Members were advised that all costs associated with the work and equipment would be met by the Heritage Society and work would be carried out by specialist contractors.

The Clerk circulated photographs which depicted the Heritage Centre with various designs of conservatories attached to the side to give Members an idea of what it would look like.

Following a lengthy discussion, it was RESOLVED that the proposals be approved, in principle, and further developments be awaited.

5 PLANNING MATTERS

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

Single storey side extension at High Crows House, Wheatley Hill for Mrs J Hughes.

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

6 DELEGATES REPORTS

There was nothing to report.

7 HEAD GROUNDS PERSONS REPORT

General

The Clerk advised 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.

8 CLERK'S REPORT

(1) Allotments/Stable Blocks

(i) Waiting List

The Clerk reported that an Allotment Sub Committee was held on 21 June 2012.

Mrs Dinsdale and Mr Barnett were invited to attend the meeting to discuss the division of stable block 23 into 2 allotments.

Members were advised that both Mrs Dinsdale and Mr Barnett failed to attend the meeting. The Clerk contacted Mrs Dinsdale who subsequently confirmed she was still interested in the plot. The Clerk was unable to contact Mr Barnett on the telephone number he had supplied and had left several messages to which there had been no response. The Clerk advised that she would write to Mr Barnett.

The Chair advised that an application for an allotment had been received from Mr Paul Broughton of 58 Peterlee Cottages, Wheatley Hill DH6 3RH.

RESOLVED that: -

- (1) the Clerk contact Mr Barnett regarding his application for an allotment
- (2) Mr Paul Broughton of 58 Peterlee Cottages, Wheatley Hill DH6 3RH be accepted onto the waiting list for an allotment.

(ii) Allotment Watch

The Clerk advised that at the Allotment Sub Committee held on 21 June 2012, PCSO Sharon Bowman provided details of Allotment Watch, an initiative to deter crime and vandalism at allotment sites.

Members were advised that as part of the scheme, notices and signs would be erected at the allotments advising holders that the scheme was in operation. In addition, shed alarms could be provided as well as magic markers to allow plot holders to mark their property.

Each allotment holder would be asked to sign up to the initiative and people would also be asked to report anything suspicious, such as trespassing, strange vehicles or known criminals in the area. Following this, the Police would circulate warnings, information and crime prevention advice using a community ring round system. This would ensure gardeners remained vigilant and contacted the Police if they spotted anything suspicious.

The initiative was designed to generate community intelligence and help protect the gardens.

Members felt that the initiative was a good idea and it was suggested that the Clerk liaise with PCSO Bowman to discuss the initiative further.

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

(iii) Water Supply

The Clerk reported that there had recently been a problem with the water supply to the allotments.

There was a hole in the ground approximately 30 foot deep outside 1 Quetlaw Road. Both the Coal Authority and Northumbrian Water Limited became involved and it was confirmed that the hole was the result of a collapsed mine shaft.

Members were advised that the Coal Authority took responsibility for the work which led to Northumbrian Water capping off the main water supply in the area, which included the allotments.

Once the problem was rectified and the area reinstated Northumbrian Water reconnected the water supply to the allotments on 21 June 2012.

Discussion ensued in relation to a request received from an allotment holder regarding a rebate to compensate for the lack of water at the allotments during the works.

The Clerk advised that the water supply to the allotments was interrupted for two weeks between 11 and 25 June 2012.

It was pointed out that the disruption to allotment holders was minimal and in addition it had rained during most of the 2 week period when the water was off. It was therefore felt that a rebate was not warranted.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(2) Cemetery Wall

The Clerk advised that a meeting was held with Mr Thompson, of Direct Services on 21 June 2012 to discuss the Cemetery wall. At that meeting, Mr Thompson provided the following update: -

- Coping stones – the manufacturer could supply a product to fill the chips in the coping stones, however, the filler would not be the exact colour of the stone and could make the situation worse. There was also the possibility that during bad weather, ice and snow could result in the filler popping out.
- All re-pointing work had been completed.
- All work to the joints between the railings and the coping stones had been completed.
- There was little that could be done regarding the expansion joints. The expansion filler could be removed but this could damage to the wall.
- Service Direct had agreed to tarmac all the damaged areas in the Cemetery grounds.

Mr Thompson reiterated that all work undertaken by Service Direct was guaranteed and any future defects in the wall would be rectified.

The Clerk reported that Service Direct had rectified all the snagging issues identified by Members and if they were now satisfied with the work then the job would be signed off and the final invoice paid. If Members were still unhappy then a site meeting could be held to take a further look at the areas of concern.

During discussion, Councillor Mrs Goyns wished it recording that she was not entirely satisfied with the quality of the work or the materials used, which she felt were below standard and would not stand the test of time. Councillor Goyns did however acknowledge that at this stage there was very little else that could be done to improve the situation.

Members felt that as Service Direct had completed all of the work requested, that upon completion of the tarmacing the work should be signed off and the final invoice paid.

RESOLVED that once the tarmac work was completed within the Cemetery grounds, the Clerk be authorised to pay the final invoice of £70,000 plus VAT to Service Direct.

(3) Greenhills Centre – Children’s Play Area

The Clerk advised that the Greenhills Centre had confirmed that the external gates to the centre would remain open over the weekend to allow access to the children’s play area.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(4) Code of Conduct – Localism Act 2011

The Clerk advised that under the Localism Act 2011 the former Code of Conduct would cease to have effect and every Council must adopt a new Code of Conduct on or after 1 July 2012.

Members were advised that NALC had issued a Code of Conduct and had recommended that every Parish and Town Council within County Durham should adopt the same Code. If a standard Code was not adopted, there was a risk that some Councils might adopt a Code containing unlawful or inappropriate provisions, which could put Councillors in a vulnerable position. It would also make the job of the Monitoring Officer and the Standards Committee extremely difficult.

A copy of the new Code of Conduct was circulated to each Member and if adopted, the Code would be publicised via the Councils noticeboard and website.

Members were also advised that under the Localism Act 2011, new Register of Interests forms were required on or after 1 July 2012. The Monitoring Officer was required to compile, maintain and update a new Register of Interests, which recorded the interests specified in the adopted Code. Each Member was asked to complete a new Register of Interests form.

The Clerk also outlined the requirements under the Act related to Declaration of Acceptance of Office, Declaration of Interests at meetings and Dispensations.

RESOLVED that the new Code of Conduct be adopted with effect from 1 July 2012.

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) Road Safety - Vincent's Corner

Councillor Lamb made reference to problems associated with vehicles parking at Vincent's corner and causing a road safety hazard. This was an ongoing issue and it was felt that it was only a matter of time before there was a serious accident at this location.

It was reported that there was a number of cars that were regularly parked on the corner obscuring the view for other motorists.

(ii) Nimmo Cottages

Councillor Maddison reported that the walkway between Nimmo Cottages was overgrown with weeds and needed to be cut back and sprayed with weed killer.

(iii) Lighting

Councillor Mrs Carr reported that the lights behind Alexander Terrace were permanently on. In addition there was a light out between either 10/11 Woodlands Avenue or 5/6 Aged Miners Bungalows.

(iv) Missed Refuse Collections

Councillor Mrs Stogdale advised that rubbish bins were not being emptied at the rear of The Avenue.

..... Signed

..... Dated