

**THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
WHEATLEY HILL PARISH COUNCIL
HELD ON MONDAY 14 JULY 2014**

Present: Councillor M Nicholls (Chair)
Councillors Mrs E Carr, B Maddison,
J Miller and C Stogdale

Apologies: Councillors E Goyns, Mrs M Goyns
M Nicholls and Mrs L Stewart

- 1 THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** held on 9 June 2014 a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were approved and signed by the Chair.

2 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There was no public present at the meeting.

3 COMMUNITY POLICING

The Chair welcomed PCSO S Kinghorn to the meeting.

Members were advised that since the last meeting there had been 107 incidents which included 21 reports of anti-social behaviour, 10 burglaries, 1 theft, 1 theft from a motor vehicle and 4 incidents of criminal damage. In addition, there had been a marked increase in the number of incidents related to off road bikes.

The Chair made reference to the increase in burglaries and expressed concern that the statistics were high in comparison to previous months.

The Chair reported an increase in the number of horses tethered at various locations throughout the village and the increase in horses being kept in residential gardens. East Durham Homes had been made aware of the situation in relation to their properties and would need to investigate. The situation was more complicated when the properties belonged to absentee landlords.

Reference was once again made to the problems associated with pony and traps being raced on the main road, particularly by children. The Officer acknowledged the problem but advised that, by law, there was no age limit with regard to the driver, and there was no requirement to wear a helmet or saddle.

It was pointed out that there had been no improvement at the entrance to Johnson Estate where visibility was routinely obstructed and restricted by vehicles parked on East View.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

4 STREET WARDENS

There was no Street Wardens present at the meeting.

5 CORRESPONDENCE

Wheatley Hill Parish Council – 14 July 2014

(1) Requests for Financial Assistance

(i) East Durham Community Transport Limited

The Clerk reported that at the last meeting of the Parish Council Members deferred consideration of a request for financial assistance from East Durham Community Transport Limited in order to obtain further information in relation to usage of the service by residents in Wheatley Hill.

Further correspondence providing details of usage in Wheatley Hill had been received, details of which were outlined to Members.

RESOLVED that a donation of £100 be made from the Section 137 Budget.

(ii) Vitalise

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

RESOLVED that no donation be made.

(iii) 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.

(iv) 1st Wheatley Hill Brownies

The Clerk reported the receipt of a request for financial assistance from 1st Wheatley Hill Brownies.

RESOLVED that a donation of £150 be made from the Section 137 Budget.

(2) Letters of Thanks

The Clerk reported the receipt of the following letters of thanks.

St Godric's RC Primary School
Wheatley Hill Constitutional Club

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(3) Shotton Colts

The Clerk reported the receipt of a request from Shotton Colts Football Club requesting permission to use the Parish Council's small football pitch for the 2014/2015 football season.

RESOLVED that approval be granted for Shotton Colts Football Club to use the small football pitch for the 2014/2015 season.

(4) Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places

The Clerk reported the receipt of correspondence from Durham County Council advising that under the Electoral Administration Act 2006, as amended by the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013, the Council was required to review its polling arrangements by 31 January, 2015 before the next Parliamentary General Election and then every five years thereafter.

The purpose of the review was to ensure that all electors had such reasonable facilities for voting as were practicable in the circumstances. The review commenced on 1 July and ended on 29 August 2014.

The County Council were seeking feedback on any aspect of polling districts and polling places currently used and any suggestions for possible alternative venues.

RESOLVED that the County Council be advised that the Parish Council were satisfied with the current arrangements for Wheatley Hill.

(5) Cessation of Smoking in Playgrounds

The Clerk reported the receipt of correspondence from Durham County Council which gave details of a consultation on plans for a voluntary code banning people from smoking at outdoor play areas in the county.

The County Durham Tobacco Control Alliance believed that by reducing children's exposure to smoking and making it less socially acceptable, children were less likely to take up the habit themselves.

If members of the public were in support of the idea, 178 council-owned play areas would be declared smoke-free. The owners of the remaining 129 play areas, mostly owned by Parish Councils and Community Associations, would be asked to sign up to a voluntary code. It was likely that Parish and Town Councils would also be asked to support this initiative. As the proposal for smoke free play areas in the county would be on a voluntary basis it would not be enforceable, but through a consultation process and use of polite notices people would be asked to respect this request.

The scheme would involve the installation of signs at play areas which, it was assumed, would be paid for by Parish Councils wishing to support the scheme. Councils would need to inform residents why they had joined the

scheme to try and make it work on a non-enforceable basis with residents taking their own actions to stop or not smoke in play areas.

RESOLVED that the Parish Council support the initiative and further developments be awaited.

(6) World War 1 Candlelit Vigil

The Clerk reported that as part of the programme of World War 1 commemoration events a candlelit vigil would be held at the war memorial in Wheatley Hill Cemetery on 4 August 2014.

A representative from the Parish Council had been invited to read a poem at the event.

RESOLVED that Councillor Mrs Carr be nominated to represent the Parish Council at the Candlelit Vigil on 4 August 2014.

6 PLANNING

(i) Applications

DM/14/01652/FPA – Installation of enclosed plant equipment at Wheatley Hill Primary School, Wheatley Hill, Durham DH6 3RQ for Mr P Grimes.

(i) Approvals

CE/13/01221/FPA – Erection of canopy and retrospective erection of store extension and widening of rear access at Wheatley Hill Service Station, Durham Road, Wheatley Hill, Durham DH6 3LJ for Mr Raw.

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

7 DELEGATES REPORTS

- New Clinic – The Chair reported that work had started on the new clinic.
- Wingate Grange Wind Farm – Several meetings had been held with Infinis to discuss the arrangements for the management of the Wingate Grange Wind Farm Employability Fund which would be administered by East Durham College. The Chair explained that he had previously met with Infinis, in his capacity as a County Councillor, and had not been satisfied with their response to questions posed to them regarding the Wind Farm.

It was pointed out that at this stage Infinis did not have planning permission for the turbines and it felt premature to be discussing anything before the application was determined.

The Clerk reported that a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), between Infinis and East Durham College, was signed on 9 July 2014. The MOU

outlined the arrangements in detail for the management of the Wingate Grange Wind Farm Employability Fund.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

8 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.

9 CLERKS REPORT

(1) Allotments/Stable Blocks

(i) Waiting List

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

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(ii) Request for Stable Block

At the last meeting of the Parish Council the Clerk reported the receipt of a request for a stable block from Mr J Tyers of 20 Burns Street, Wheatley Hill, Durham DH6 3LA.

Consideration of the application was deferred in order to seek confirmation the Mr Tyers was a resident of Wheatley Hill. The Clerk reported that since the meeting Mr Tyers had provided written evidence that he lived in Wheatley Hill.

RESOLVED that Mr J Tyers of 20 Burns Street, Wheatley Hill Durham DH6 3LA be accepted onto the waiting list for a stable block.

(2) Annual Insurance Premium 2014/2015

The Clerk reported that the Annual Insurance premium for 2014/2015 had been received from Zurich Municipal in the sum of £6,388.07. The previous year's premium was £6,569.14, a decrease of £181.07.

RESOLVED that the quotation from Zurich Municipal be accepted.

(3) ROSPA Safety Inspection 2014

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 and the recommended actions be undertaken.

(4) Pension Choices and Discretions

The Clerk reported that the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) changed on 1 April 2014 following a review of public sector pension schemes. Everyone paying into the LGPS at that date had been moved into the new scheme, which would provide different benefits from 1 April 2014.

As a scheme employer in the LGPS there were a number of choices and discretions that were related to benefits that could be awarded to scheme members. Under the regulations governing the new LGPS from April 2014, there were a number of discretions the Parish Council needed a written policy on.

The Clerk advised that a meeting was held on 18 June 2014 with Mr N Orton, Durham County Council's Payroll and Pension Manager. At the meeting N Orton advised that the County Councils approach would be to only consider exercising discretions where it was in the Council's financial interest to do so. It was therefore doubtful whether any of the choices and discretions would ever be used.

The Clerk reported that at the meeting there was a consensus amongst those parish councils present that they would be happy to follow the County Councils lead on the choices and discretions. The Clerk took Members through the discretions in detail.

N Orton also provided details in relation to the potential pension deficits and liabilities for parish councils. Currently, parish council pension liabilities were "pooled" due to the way in which DCC had set up the parish council structure in their LGPS. There were therefore no individual liabilities assessed but an overall liability for our sector. It was possible to calculate individual parish council liabilities but this would require the actuary to undertake additional work for every parish council in the scheme. Mr Orton advised that the "pooled" facility was more advantageous to parish councils as if you were assessed individually and no longer had any LGPS members your individual scheme would be wound up and the necessary liabilities charged to your parish council. These could be substantial amounts.

Parish councils would therefore not be faced with a big liability individually but collectively they were paying 3.5% additional employer's contribution to repay any deficits over an 18 year period. Employer's rate may change at the next triennial valuation depending on the actuaries' findings in relation to parish council liabilities at that time. The next valuation was due in three years' time as we had just had one for 1 April 2014.

RESOLVED that the Parish Council follow the County Councils lead and only consider exercising discretions where it was in the Council's financial interest to do so.

(5) Infinis – Wingate Grange Wind Farm

The Clerk advised that the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Infinis and East Durham College was signed on 9 July 2014. The MOU outlined the arrangements for the management of the Wingate Grange Wind Farm Employability Fund.

Resolved that the information given, be noted.

(6) Planning Application – Wheatley Service Station

The Clerk reported that at a meeting of Durham County Council's Central and East Durham Area Planning Committee held on 13 May 2014 the application for the erection of a canopy and retrospective erection of store extension and widening of rear access at Wheatley Service Station was deferred to allow further dialogue with the applicant regarding measures to minimise the use of the rear access by HGV's.

Members were advised that a further meeting was held on 3 July 2014 and at the request of the Planning Committee the applicant had agreed to remove the car wash facility from the site. This was to enable easier manoeuvring of HGV's within the site and encourage large vehicles to use the front access/exit. It was hoped this would further reduce the numbers using the rear exit.

The applicant had also erected on-site exit signs, directing vehicles to the A181 rather than using the rear access.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

10 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.

11 RISK MANAGEMENT

The Clerk advised that there was nothing to report.

..... Signed

.....Dated