

**THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
WHEATLEY HILL PARISH COUNCIL
HELD ON MONDAY 8 SEPTEMBER 2014**

Present: Councillor M Nicholls (Chair)
Councillors J Miller, Mrs M Nicholls,
Mrs L Stewart and Mrs C Stogdale

Apologies: Councillors Mrs E Carr, E Goyns, Mrs M Goyns
and B Maddison

1 THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING held on 14 July 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. The Officer advised that she would be covering the Wheatley Hill area for the next 5 to 6 weeks.

Members were advised that since the last meeting held in July there had been 193 incidents which included 33 reports of anti-social behaviour, 12 burglaries, 5 thefts of or from a motor vehicle and 4 incidents of criminal damage. There had been a 14% reduction in recorded crime year to date and an 8% increase in anti-social behaviour year to date.

Reference was made to the on-going problems associated with horses in the village. The Officer acknowledged the problem and explained that the situation was not unique to Wheatley Hill but was a county wide problem. It was pointed out that, by law, the Police had very few powers to tackle the problems related to horses.

The Chair made reference to various problems throughout the village, particularly those related to the Front Street and absentee landlords. Members were advised that following meetings with Durham County Council it was proposed that the Community Action Team (CAT) would be deployed in Wheatley Hill.

The CAT brought together residents and a range of organisations to tackle housing and environmental issues by identifying local priorities and making the best use of resources. The CAT provided resources to target particular areas and problems. They were able to use enforcement powers to encourage owners, occupiers and landlords to take responsibility for their neighbourhood and properties.

They dealt with issues which included improving housing standards and the management of privately rented property; empty properties; ensuring that rubbish that had been dumped in gardens, on streets and on waste ground was removed; assisting with improvements to buildings and abandoned land; investigating noise issues; challenging under-age sales of alcohol and tobacco;

implementing energy efficiency schemes and advising on consumer rights and dealing with cold callers.

The Officer asked that she be advised of the timetable set for the CAT programme in Wheatley Hill.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

4 STREET WARDENS

There was no Street Wardens present at the meeting.

5 CORRESPONDENCE

(1) Request for Financial Assistance

Wheatley Hill Working Men's Club Football Team

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

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.

**East Durham Community Transport Limited
Hartlepool and District Hospice
1st Wheatley Hill Brownies**

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(3) Wheatley Hill Mothers Club

The Clerk reported the receipt of an invitation from Wheatley Hill Mothers Club to attend an evening with the Easington Ukulele Band on 1 October 2014.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(4) Neighbourhood Wardens Telephone Number

The Clerk reported that from 1 August 2014 there had been a change to the telephone number to contact the Neighbourhood Wardens.

The current 03000261018 number for the East Durham area would be phased out and calls would automatically be diverted to the countywide number for 3 months. From 1 November 2014 the 03000261018 number would have a recorded message advising people to re-dial the 03000261000 number.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(5) Cessation of Smoking in Playgrounds

The Clerk reported the receipt of further correspondence from Durham County Council in relation to the introduction of a voluntary code banning people from smoking at outdoor play areas in the county.

The County Council had produced a consultation document and were consulting with park users, stakeholders and the general public to obtain their views. If the initiative was supported it was hoped to introduce the code later in the year.

Whilst the Parish Council did not have responsibility for any play parks they did support the introduction of a voluntary code.

RESOLVED that Durham County Council be advised that the Parish Council supported the cessation of smoking in playgrounds.

(6) East Durham Association of Parish and Town Councils

The Clerk reported that the next meeting of the East Durham Association of Parish and Town Councils would be held on 9 September 2014.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(7) Training Sessions

The Clerk reported details of County Durham and Cleveland County Training Partnership training events to be held during the period September to November 2014.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

6 PLANNING MATTERS

(i) Applications

DM/14/02043/FPA – Erection of single storey pitched roof extension to rear of existing dwelling at 9 Church Park, Wheatley Hill, Durham DH6 3SJ for Miss G Armstrong

DM/14/02230/FPA – Erection of part first floor/part two storey extension including balcony at side of 18 Weardale Park, Wheatley Hill, Durham DH6 3QQ for Ms L Evans

(ii) Approvals

DM/14/01981/FPA – Erection of first floor extension to rear at 13 Granville Terrace, Wheatley Hill, Durham DH6 3JQ for Mr C McCallum

DM/14/01431/FPA – Erection of two storey extension to side of dwelling including hip to gable roof extension, loft conversion including construction of 3 no dormer roof extension to rear and erection of single storey extension to front of existing dwelling at 33 Wheatley Terrace, Wheatley Hill, Durham DH6 3RW for Mr J Lowe

DM/14/01546/FPA – Hay and machinery storage building at Low Crows Farm, Wheatley Hill, Durham DH6 3QL for Mrs Maureen Waters

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

7 DELEGATES REPORTS

The Chair provided an update on the following:-

- Village Bus – Proposals were being considered to provide a village bus which would serve the areas of Wheatley Hill, Thornley, Trimdon and Ludworth.
- Bus Routes – Details of changes to a number of bus routes including the number 22 were provided.
- Durham County Council – Further savings were required to be made by the County Council over the next couple of years.

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 an Allotment

The Clerk reported the receipt of a request for an allotment from Mr Aaron Telford of 53 Luke Terrace, Wheatley Hill, Durham DH6 3RY.

RESOLVED that Mr Aaron Telford of 53 Luke Terrace, Wheatley Hill, Durham DH6 3RY be accepted onto the waiting list for an allotment.

(iii) Annual Rents

The Clerk reported that the annual rent letters would be issued at the end of September.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(2) Budget Setting 2015/2016

The Clerk reported the receipt of correspondence from Durham County Council advising of the indicative forecast of reductions in Local Council Tax Support Scheme Grant for the period 2014/15 to 2017/18. The County Council had advised that there were no plans to change the scheme adopted by the council in 2013/14.

The forecasts provided could be used for budget planning purposes but the current position was not final, as this would be based on the Tax Base forecasts undertaken in October 2014.

Using the updated Tax Base and the forecast grant reductions the Parish Council would see a decrease in its Tax Base of 9.1 and a reduction in grant of £4,381.00.

There was also the possibility of the Government extending the Council Tax capping controls in 2015/16. This could affect councils with a Band D Council Tax in excess of £140.00 and if implemented would place restrictions on the ability of councils to increase their Council Tax by more than 1% to 2% without approval through a local referendum.

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

(3) Government Pay Negotiations - National Minimum Wage

The Clerk reported that the National Minimum Wage (NMW) would increase from £6.31 to £6.50 per hour on 1 October 2014. The new hourly rate was above the current SCP5 rate of pay and as the National Minimum Wage was a statutory requirement any employee on SCP5 would have their pay increased to £6.50 per hour with effect from 1 October 2014.

In the absence of the National Joint Council for Local Government Services reaching a pay agreement for 2014/15 before 1 October 2014 councils with employees on SCP5 salaries or less would need to increase their pay in accordance with the NMW Regulations 2014, with effect from 1 October 2014.

Employees currently on SCP5, £12,435 per annum would have their pay increased to £12,540 per annum.

RESOLVED that the SCP5 pay grade be increased to £12,540 per annum from 1 October 2014.

(4) The Openness of Local Government Bodies 2014

The Clerk reported that the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 issued under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 came into force on 6 August 2014. This amended the requirements of the Public Bodies (Admission to meetings) Act 1960.

The new provisions provided that whilst a person could not provide a verbal running commentary at a meeting they could:

- (a) Film, photograph or make an audio recording of a meeting,
- (b) Use any other means for enabling persons not present to see or hear proceedings at a meeting as it took place or later,
- (c) Report or comment on the proceedings in writing during or after a meeting or orally report or comment after the meeting.

The Parish Council was now required by law to allow any member of the public to take photographs, film and audio-record the proceedings and report on all public meetings.

The Parish Council was required to provide “reasonable facilities” to facilitate reporting of public meetings. Filming and recording of private meetings would not be allowed.

Standing Orders would continue to control the behaviour and activities of those wishing to film or record meetings.

Standing Orders which currently prohibited the recording or filming of public meetings would need to be amended. The Parish Council would also need to consider adopting a policy on the filming of members of the public, and ensure that children and vulnerable adults were protected without undermining the transparency of the meeting.

The Clerk also reported on the new requirements related to the recording of certain decisions made by officers, the public availability of any such records and any background papers and their retention.

RESOLVED that;

- (i) the information given, be noted,
- (ii) Standing Orders be amended to reflect the changes,
- (iii) the Clerk draft a policy for consideration at the next meeting

(5) Additional Office Accommodation

The Clerk reported that due to the increased popularity and success of events held by the Heritage Society their need for more space within the

Heritage Centre was becoming apparent. In addition the Head Groundsperson often found it difficult to undertake his administrative duties in the small office located within the Centre.

Discussions had been ongoing with Members, cemetery staff and the Heritage Society in relation to the provision of portable office accommodation adjacent to the Heritage Centre. This would allow cemetery staff to be relocated to more appropriate accommodation and free up additional space in the Centre for the Heritage Society.

Members discussed the range of options available and the associated costs. Particular reference was made to the need for the building to be in keeping with its surroundings and its security.

With regard to costs, the Heritage Society had offered a financial contribution towards the cost of the new accommodation. The Society would also be responsible for any refurbishment works in the Centre.

Finance for the additional office accommodation was discussed and it was considered that a budget in the region of £10,000 was required to fund the project.

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

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.

12 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(i) Fly Tipped Rubbish

Councillor C Stogdale reported fly tipped rubbish on the footpath at Gore Hill Burn Bridge.

(ii) Footpath at Co-Op Store, Quilstyle Road

The Chair reported that the footpath at the side of the Co-Op Store on Quilstyle Road was covered in rubbish and weeds and was in need of a clean-up. The Chair had made enquiries and it was unclear who was

responsible for the footpath.

RESOLVED that the issues be reported to Durham County Council.

..... Signed

.....Dated