

**THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE WHEATLEY HILL PARISH COUNCIL
HELD REMOTELY ON 13 JULY 2020**

Present: Councillor J Miller (Chair)
Councillors M Goyns, L Stewart, L White

Apologies: Councillors E Carr, B Miller, C Stogdale

Prior to the commencement of business, the Clerk advised that this meeting was being held remotely via ZOOM in accordance with The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

1 The Minutes of the last meeting held on 8 June 2020 a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were approved and signed by the Chair.

2 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No public joined the meeting.

3 POLICE

Members were advised that since the last meeting 105 incidents had been reported which included 8 anti-social behaviour, 2 burglaries, 1 criminal damage and 3 vehicle crimes.

Year to date anti-social behaviour and crime were down 31% and 30% respectively.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

4 COUNTY COUNCILLORS REPORT

There was no County Councillor report.

5 CORRESPONDENCE

(1) Letters of Thanks

The Clerk reported the receipt of thanks from the following.

Citizens Advice County Durham
Wheatley Hill Community Association
Wheatley Hill Senior Citizens Club
Monday Afternoon Out Club Social
Mr J Huntington
Village Foodbank

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(2) Temporary Road Closure Order - B1279 The Avenue/Hartlepool Road, Thornley

The Clerk reported that an Order was being made under the provisions of Section 14(1) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 to close to all vehicular traffic a 162M length of the B1279 that extended southwards from its junction with the C65 Moor View, Thornley, and included a 40M section of Hartlepool Road South between Fencote House and the B1279 from on 19 July 2020.

The closure was necessary to enable crane access associated with electricity sub-station works to be undertaken. Throughout the period of closure an alternative route would be available to vehicular traffic.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

6 PLANNING

DM/20/01461/FPA - Conversion of existing conservatory to habitable room at 9 Sandwich Terrace, Wheatley Hill DH6 3LN

DM/20/01734/FPA – Loft conversion and rear dormer window plus single storey rear extension at 14 Sandwich Terrace, Wheatley Hill DH6 3LN

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

7 HEAD GROUNDPERSONS 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.

8 CLERK'S REPORT

(1) Covid-19 - Update

The Clerk provided an update on the following matters associated with Covid-19.

(a) Cemetery

The Clerk reported that the Cemetery was now operating as normal.

(b) Heritage Centre

The Clerk reported that CDS Security had installed a new alarm keypad in the Cemetery office at a cost of £351.28. This would allow Cemetery staff access to the office without the need to use the main entrance to the Heritage Centre.

It would provide a physical separation between staff and volunteers, allow those using the building to observe social distancing requirements and enable the Heritage Centre to re-open safely.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(2) Allotments

(a) Allocations

The Clerk reported that following the last meeting plots 8, 9 and 10 were offered to applicants from the waiting list.

Applicants numbered 6/2019 and 1/2020 declined the offer of an allotment and asked to be removed from the waiting list.

The plots were subsequently offered to applicants 2/2020, 3/2020 and 4/2020 from the waiting list.

Members were advised that applicant 2/2020 accepted plot 8, applicant 3/2020 accepted plot 10 and applicant 4/2020 had accepted plot 9.

RESOLVED that that information given, be noted.

(b) Transfer of Allotment 4 and 6

The Clerk reported that the tenant of allotments 4 and 6 had died and his wife had requested permission to transfer both plots into her name.

Allotment 4 had been a joint tenancy and the additional tenant had confirmed they would like to be removed from the tenancy.

RESOLVED that the transfer of allotments 4 and 6 be approved.

(c) Applications

The Clerk reported the receipt of two applications for an allotment.

RESOLVED that applications 6/2020 and 7/2020 be accepted onto the waiting list for an allotment.

(3) Dispensations for Non-Attendance at Meetings

Consideration was given to the report of the Clerk which sought approval to grant a dispensation to extend the period of absence for any Councillor who was unable to attend meetings for a six-month period due to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Members were advised that Section 85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972 stated that if a member of a local authority failed throughout a period of six consecutive months from the date of his/her last attendance to attend any meeting of the authority, he/she would cease to be a member of the authority. This requirement could be waived, and the time limit extended if any failure to attend was due to a reason approved by the Authority, in advance of the six-month period expiring.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions the Parish Council had been unable to meet physically since March 2020 and had moved to holding its meetings remotely via ZOOM.

During this period it meant that Councillors through no fault of their own, perhaps due to illness, lack of equipment, failure of equipment, internet connection problems or a mixture of all, found themselves unable to attend a meeting for a period approaching six months.

To avoid disqualification, Members were asked to pre-approve any Councillor for an automatic six-month extension of absence, immediately before they reached the six-month point. The reason for failure to attend would be recorded as circumstances arising from the Covid-19 pandemic.

RESOLVED that during the period when remote meetings were necessary due to Covid-19 restrictions, any Councillor who was unable to attend meetings of the authority for six months, would automatically have their period of absence extended for a further six months by Council. This was pursuant to Section 85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972.

(4) Annual Insurance Premium 2020/2021

The Clerk reported that the annual insurance premium for 2020/2021 had been received from Zurich Insurance in the sum of £5,222.10. The previous year's premium was £5,669.98.

Members were advised that Zurich were offering a 3 year long term agreement at a reduced premium of £4,690.07 for the 3 years.

RESOLVED that the 3 year agreement in the sum of £4,690.07 be accepted.

(5) Wheatley Hill Community Association

The Clerk reported the receipt of a request for financial assistance from Wheatley Hill Community Association.

Members were advised that the hot water boiler, which supplied the kitchen and toilets with hot water had failed. The boiler had been getting progressively worse and an engineer had tried replacement parts and various other fixes, but it was now beyond economical repair. The boiler was essential to their operation and if not replaced it could mean the closure of the Meals on Wheels service.

Quotations had been sought and the cost of the work done to date and a new boiler was £1,200 plus VAT. Members discussed the need for the Meals on Wheels service, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic.

RESOLVED that £1,200 be paid to Wheatley Hill Community Association to cover the cost of a new boiler.

(6) Village Foodbank

The Clerk reported that at a previous meeting Members had given a commitment to provide a financial donation of up to £500 to ensure an adequate supply of stock was maintained in the village foodbank.

The Parish Council had been advised that stocks were running low and the Chair had purchased supplies to the value of £51.78.

RESOLVED that the Chair be reimbursed £51.78 for the food supplies purchased for the village foodbank.

(7) Policies

The Clerk reported that work to update all the Parish Councils policies was on-going.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(8) Wheatley Hill Surgery

The Chair reported that he had been advised that during the Covid-19 pandemic Wheatley Hill surgery was operating as an administrative centre for the East Durham Medical Group (EDMG) and doctors were working from other surgeries throughout the partnership.

The Chair had contacted County Councillor L Hovvels who had raised the issue with the EDMG.

Members were advised that the EDMG had advised that during the Covid-19 pandemic the demand of appointments at the surgery had dropped significantly. Therefore, they had taken the decision to use the surgery as their administrative

centre as a temporary measure during the pandemic.

Councillor Goyns reported that there were no physical appointments available at the surgery. Patients were being offered a telephone consultation and residents had reported that if they needed to see a Doctor, they were being offered appointments at alternative surgeries.

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

9 PAYMENTS

The following schedule of payments was circulated together with figures for all income and expenditure as at 30 June 2020.

CHQ NO	PAYMENT TO	DETAIL	COST	VAT	TOTAL
Internet Banking	Horns Garden Centre	Cemetery Supplies	83.33	16.67	100.00
Internet Banking	Durham County Council	Website Hosting and Support	613.76	122.75	736.51
Internet Banking	Npower	Electric - Heritage Centre	124.83	6.24	131.07
Internet Banking	Durham County Council	Machine Fuel	46.90	9.38	56.28
Internet Banking	Playsafety Limited	Annual ROSPA Inspection	69.10	13.70	82.80
Internet Banking	British Gas	Gas - Heritage Centre	280.65	14.03	294.68
Internet Banking	J Davies	Reimbursements	135.86	24.16	160.02
Internet Banking	J Thompson	Telephone Allowance	25.00		25.00
Internet Banking	Zurich Municipal	Annual Insurance Premium	4,690.07		4,690.07
Internet Banking	Payroll	Wages - July 2020	4,478.22		4,478.22
Internet Banking	HMRC/DCC	PAYE/Pension - July 2020	2,776.39		2,776.39
Internet Banking	JAC's Accountancy Limited	Payroll Services - July 2020	15.40	3.08	18.48
Direct Debit	British Telecom	Telephone/Internet	48.39	9.68	58.07
Direct Debit	O2	Chairs Mobile Telephone	26.31	5.26	31.57
Invoice 38	Co-Op Bank	Service and Commission Charges	13.65		13.65
		TOTAL	13,427.86	224.95	13,652.81

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted and the payments be approved.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT

There was nothing to report.

11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Overhanging Trees

Councillor M Goyns reported overhanging trees on the footpath leaving the village along Wingate Lane on the old A181.

RESOLVED that the matter be referred to Durham County Council.

12 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED that under the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admission of Meetings) Act 1960 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that personal and confidential information would be disclosed.

13 STAFFING ISSUES

The Clerk provided Members with an update on staffing issues.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

.....Signed

.....Dated