

**THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE WHEATLEY HILL PARISH COUNCIL
HELD REMOTELY VIA ZOOM ON 12 APRIL 2021**

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

Apologies: Councillors E Carr, C Stogdale

Also Present: County Councillor L Hovvells
Paul Howell MP

The Chair asked Members to observe a minute's silence as a mark of respect following the death of His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh

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 March 2021 a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were approved and signed by the Chair.

2 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Chair welcomed C Hackworth and G Tempest to the meeting.

Mr Hackworth expressed his concern at the on-going and escalating levels of anti-social behaviour (ASB) in the village. He outlined the frustration felt by himself and residents that Wheatley Hill, along with neighbouring villages, was being let down by the Police and more needed to be done to put a stop to the ASB. Mr Hackworth was concerned at the lack of a Police presence in the village and felt that the former pit villages were being left behind.

In addition, Mr Hackworth outlined his concerns related to the proposed refurbishment of the former health clinic and the lack of consultation undertaken by Durham County Council with residents. Details of representations he had made to Durham County Council and the Police regarding this were outlined.

The Chair provided an update on discussions that were being held with the Police in relation to ASB. County Councillor Hovvells reported that G Paul, Acting Head of Development and Housing had been asked to put together a development plan for Wheatley Hill following concerns raised in relation to the state of the Front Street area, the number of empty properties and ASB.

Councillor B Miller referred to the increasing amount of litter in the village, particularly litter generated from the takeaways located on the Front Street. It was suggested that an additional litter bin, located in the vicinity of the takeaways, would help the situation.

3 PAUL HOWELL MP

The Chair welcomed Paul Howell MP to the meeting.

Mr Howell gave an update on the various issues he was dealing with and advised that he was keen to familiarise himself with the area and issues facing Wheatley Hill. Moving forward Mr Howell stated that he would like to work with the Parish Council and would be

willing to attend meetings when possible and lend his support.

Mr Howell reported that he had met with the Chief Constable and it was acknowledged that under reporting of crime and anti-social behaviour was a problem. Mr Howell was proposing to write to all residents living in Wheatley Hill and Wingate to seek their views on what they wanted to see happening in their area. Reference would be made to asking residents if they were aware of how to report crime and anti-social behaviour.

Reference was made to a letter the Parish Council was proposing to write to the Chief Constable requesting a meeting to discuss how the Parish Council could work with the Police to tackle the on-going anti-social behaviour. P Howell advised that he fully supported the Parish Council in this matter and would be willing to attend a meeting to discuss the situation further.

The Chair stressed that the Parish Council were not criticising the Police but were looking for ways in which everyone could work together to find solutions to improve the situation for everyone.

The Chair thanked Mr Howell for his attendance and input into the meeting and extended an invitation for him to attend whenever it was possible given his other commitments.

4 POLICE

The Police provided a report of incidents reported between 1 March to 1 April 2021.

Members were advised that since the last meeting incidents reported included 13 anti-social behaviour, 2 vehicle thefts, 1 criminal damage to a vehicle, 6 burglaries and 15 criminal damage. Year to date anti-social behaviour was down 7% and crime had increased by 3%.

The Police reported that a male youth had been arrested for various racially aggravated offences. He had admitted to one of the offences and the matter would be referred to the youth offending service. Eight youth targets had also been identified and these would be referred to Durham County Councils anti-social escalation process. The Police had requested Durham County Council to board up several empty properties in the village to prevent further damage.

Members expressed concern at the level of anti-social behaviour currently taking place in the village. Reference was made to the lack of a Police presence and community engagement. It was felt that the Police response to incidents reported was poor or non-existent.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

5 COUNTY COUNCILLORS REPORT

County Councillor L Hovvels provided an update on the following issues.

- Front Street – G Paul, Acting Head of Development and Housing had been asked to put together a development plan for Wheatley Hill following concerns raised in relation to the Front Street, the number of empty properties and anti-social behaviour.
- Wheeled Bin Thefts – Bins were being stolen from the Aged Miners bungalows and taken to the Community Centre grounds and set on fire so the youths could inhale the fumes to get high. Under reporting of the thefts did not give a true picture of the scale of the problem. Councillor Hovvels had approached the Chief of the Fire Service, the Police Inspector and the Director of Public Health to ask for their help and they had confirmed they would work together to tackle this. The fire service would lead on

delivering sessions at Wheatley Hill Fire Station and it was also proposed to go into schools.

- Dodds Close - Councillor Hovvells attended a site meeting with the Parish Council on 6 April 2021 to discuss the proposals to fence the green open space to prevent unauthorised access to this area.
- Numerous reports had been made to Durham County Council related to empty and run-down properties, fly tipping and litter, criminal damage, potholes, metal bollard at Alexandra Terrace, anti-social behaviour at Marley fields, criminal damage to property and broken fencing and windows.
- A clean up of the Gore Burn area and the black path which ran from Wheatley Hill to Thornley had been requested.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

6 CORRESPONDENCE

(1) Greenhills Centre

The Clerk reported the receipt of correspondence from the Greenhills Centre advising that they had re-opened on 12 April 2021 and were offering a limited number of activities.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

7 PLANNING

(i) Application

DM/21/00826/FPA – Proposed storage building at Green Lane Nurseries, Green Lane, Wingate, Trimdon Station

(ii) Approvals

DM/20/03216/FPA – Balcony bordered by timber railing above flat roof kitchen extension (Retrospective) at Thorne Villa, 23 Woodlands Avenue, Wheatley Hill, Durham

DM/20/03254/FPA – Two storey side and rear and single storey front extensions at 7 Sandwick Terrace, Wheatley Hill, Durham

DM/20/03648/FPA - Single storey extension to provide dining room/gym storage at Wheatley Hill Primary School, Wheatley Hill, Durham

DM/20/03621/FPA – Refurbishment into 5 individual self-contained flats at Community Health Clinic, School House, Front Street, Wheatley Hill, Durham

The Clerk reported that the application was considered by Durham County Council's Area Planning Committee on 9 March 2021. The Chair of the Parish Council and County Councillor Hovvells had attended the meeting and spoke against approval of the application.

The Clerk advised that the Police had initially supported the Parish Council and objected to the application. They subsequently withdrew their original letter and replaced it with a letter supporting the application. Without the support of the Police the application was approved.

Members were advised that residents M Hedley and C Hackworth had expressed concern at the decision and made representations to the Police, Durham County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner, details of which were outlined.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

8 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.

9 CLERK'S REPORT

(1) Dodds Close - Fencing

The Clerk reported that Members had previously been advised that an application for Section 106 funding had been submitted by Durham County Councils Clean and Green section to install hooped perimeter fencing at Dodds Close. It was expected that the application would be considered by the Section 106 Working Group by the end of April 2021.

Members were advised that the original proposal included the installation of 6 anti-motorcycle barriers and a boom gate for machine access to maintain the land.

At a site meeting held on 6 April 2021 Durham County Council advised that only 1 anti-motorcycle barrier would be installed. The fencing would be installed directly into the grass and there would be no barriers on pathways. The racecourse fencing around the Pit Wheel would be removed and replaced with the hooped fencing.

A copy of a plan showing the original design together with the revised proposal had been circulated to each Member.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(2) Anti-Social Behaviour

The Chair reported that due to the on-going and escalating problems related to anti-social behaviour in the village it was proposed to write to the Chief Constable, J Farrell requesting a meeting to discuss how the Parish Council would work with the Police to tackle the problem and improve the situation.

A copy of the draft letter was circulated to Members. If approved it would be copied to P Howell MP, L Hovvels, Chair of the Police and Crime Panel and S White, Acting Police, Crime and Victims Commissioner.

As the problem was not confined to Wheatley Hill it was suggested that the neighbouring parishes of Wingate, Ludworth and Thornley be asked to consider submitting a similar letter to the Chief Constable.

RESOLVED that;

- (i) the letter to the Chief Constable be approved
- (ii) the draft letter be forwarded to Wingate, Ludworth and Thornley Parish Councils with a request that they write a similar letter to the Chief Constable.

(3) Allotments

(a) Application – 2/2021

The Clerk reported the receipt of an application for an allotment.

RESOLVED that applicant 2/2021 be accepted onto the waiting list for an allotment.

(b) Allotment 6

The Clerk reported that the tenant of allotment 6 had requested a larger plot.

RESOLVED that the tenant of allotment 6 be accepted onto the waiting list for a larger plot.

(4) Internal Audit 2020/2021

The Clerk reported that the Internal Audit would be undertaken on 23 April 2021 by Mr G Fletcher.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(5) Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the Year Ending 31 March 2021

The Clerk reported that the external audit date had been set for 30 June 2021.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(6) Pit Pony – A181 Roundabout

The Clerk reported the receipt of the quotation from Mrs Hill for the restoration and re-siting of the pit pony on the A181 roundabout, details of which were outlined to Members.

Members were advised that the horse was originally made and installed by the Mid Durham Projects Club in 2012 at a cost of £6,000. This was financed by £5,000 from Councillor M Nicholls' Members Initiative Fund and £500 each from Wheatley Hill and Trimdon Foundry Parish Councils.

It was suggested that Trimdon Foundry and Thornley Parish Councils be asked to consider contributing towards the cost of the restoration and re-siting.

Reference was made to the security of the horse once re-sited. The Clerk agreed to contact Mrs Hill to enquire about the proposed fixings for the horse.

RESOLVED that Trimdon Foundry and Thornley Parish Councils be asked to consider contributing towards the cost of the restoration and re-siting of the pit pony on the A181 roundabout.

(7) Trade Waste Contract 2021/2022

The Clerk reported that Durham County Council had advised that the annual trade waste contract for 2021/2022 would be increased by 2%. The contract for the previous financial year was £648.96.

RESOLVED that the quotation be accepted.

(8) Grounds Maintenance Contract 2021/2022

The Clerk reported that Durham County Council had provided a quotation of £1,701.60 inclusive of VAT for the following summer/winter bedding.

Supply and delivery of 960 summer bedding plants for the pit wheel, 2 tubs and bed at Woodlands Avenue.

Supply and delivery of 960 winter bedding plants for the pit wheel, 2 tubs and bed at Woodlands Avenue.

Supply and delivery of Cemetery bedding plants.

Supply and delivery of bedding plants for 2 tubs at Wheatley House and 1 tub at Marley Fields.

RESOLVED that the quotation be accepted.

(9) Hanging Baskets – Aged Miners Bungalows

The Clerk reported that in 2020 the Parish Council had been unable to provide hanging baskets at the Aged Miners Bungalows due to the Covid pandemic.

Horns Garden Centre had provided a quotation of £30 per basket to re-fill, giving a total of £270 for 9 baskets.

RESOLVED that Horns Garden Centre be instructed to re-fill 9 hanging baskets at a cost of £270.

(10) Policies and Procedures

The Clerk reported that a review had been undertaken of the Councils Risk Management Policy and Risk Management Strategy.

A review has also been undertaken of the following policies and procedures and where necessary minor amendments and/or updates were made.

Child Protection Policy

Code of Conduct

Complaints Policy

Data Protection Policy

Document Retention Policy

Equal Opportunities Statement

Financial Regulations

FOI Publication Scheme

Fraud and Corruption Policy

Grants and Donations Policy

Health and Safety Statement

Internal Audit Policy

Public Filming, Recording and Reporting at Council Meetings

Public Participation Policy

Respect and Dignity at Work Policy

Social Media and Electronic Communication Policy

Standing Orders

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

10 PAYMENTS

The following schedule of payments was circulated together with figures for all income and expenditure as at 31 March 2021.

Wheatley Hill Parish Council – 12 April 2021

CHQ NO	PAYMENT TO	DETAIL	COST	VAT	TOTAL	
Internet Banking	Horns Garden Centre	Cemetery Supplies	19.14	3.83	22.97	
Internet Banking	Peterlee Fire Company Ltd	Fire Extinguisher Service	11.96	2.39	14.35	
Internet Banking	Durham County Council	Machine Repairs	38.00	7.60	45.60	
Internet Banking	e-on Next	Electric - Heritage Centre	47.90	2.40	50.30	
Internet Banking	British Gas	Gas - Heritage Centre	83.77	4.18	87.95	
Internet Banking	J Davies	Reimbursements	307.66	57.93	365.59	
Internet Banking	J Dent	Skip Hire	230.00	46.00	276.00	
Internet Banking	Shaw & Sons Limited	Receipts and Payments Book	65.00	13.00	78.00	
Internet Banking	J Thompson	Reimbursements	23.87	3.19	27.06	
Internet Banking	Anglian Water Business	Water - Allotments	46.69		46.69	
Internet Banking	Anglian Water Business	Water Rates - Cemetery Bungalow/ Heritage Centre/Cemetery	915.96		915.96	
Internet Banking	Durham County Council	Council Tax - Cemetery Bungalow	1,948.15		1,948.15	
Internet Banking	J Davies	Heating Allowance - 1st Instalment	100.00		100.00	
Internet Banking	J Thompson	Telephone Allowance	25.00		25.00	
Internet Banking	Payroll	Wages - April 2021	4,624.81		4,624.81	
Internet Banking	HMRC/DCC	PAYE/Pension - April 2021	2,459.73		2,459.73	
Internet Banking	JAC's Accountancy Limited	Payroll Services - Annual Pension Report	30.00	6.00	36.00	
Internet Banking	JAC's Accountancy Limited	Payroll Services - April 2021	15.40	3.08	18.48	
Direct Debit	British Telecom	Telephone/Internet	27.16	5.43	32.59	
Direct Debit	O2	Chairs Mobile Telephone	26.67	5.33	32.00	
Invoice 47	Co-Op Bank	Service and Commission Charges	13.75		13.75	
			TOTAL	11,060.62	160.36	11,220.98

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

11 RISK MANAGEMENT

Please refer to minute number 9 (10).

..... Signed

.....Dated