

**THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE WHEATLEY HILL PARISH COUNCIL  
HELD ON 13 SEPTEMBER 2021**

**Present:** Councillor J Miller (Chair)  
Councillors E Carr, J Collingwood, M Goyns,  
J Huntington, B Miller, L Stewart, C Stogdale, L White

**Also Present:** Mr J Frost and Ms E Innes

- 1** The Minutes of the last meeting held on 13 July 2021 a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were approved and signed by the Chair.

- 2** **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

The Chair welcomed Mr J Frost and Ms E Innes to the meeting.

Ms Innes advised that she was seeking clarification in relation to vases and flower holders that could be placed on purchased graves in the Cemetery.

The Chair advised that a Cemetery site visit was held 19 August 2021 where it was reported that the number of vases and ornaments being placed around the memorial stones in the cremated remains section was creating a tripping hazard and making it difficult for visitors to walk freely between the memorials. It was also making strimming and cutting the grass difficult and dangerous.

Because of the limited walking space between the memorial stones in the cremated remains section it was recommended that only two additional flower holders per memorial stone would be allowed subject to conditions.

It was explained that Ms Innes was confusing a purchased grave with a cremated remains grave and there had been no change to the placing of vases and flower holders on purchased graves.

Mr Frost explained that he had also sought clarification in relation to vases and flower holders that could be placed on purchased graves in the Cemetery and accepted the Chairs explanation.

Mr Frost advised wished to raise concerns related to the continuing decline of the village. Mr Frost referred to the number of empty and boarded up properties on the Front Street, the increase in traffic speeding through the village and the road safety issues associated with cars double parked at the entrance to Johnson Estate. Mr Frost stated that because of the levels of anti-social behaviour residents were scared and fearful to go out at night. He also felt that there was not the infrastructure to accommodate any further new housing developments in the village.

The Chair advised Mr Frost that the Parish Council were aware of the issues raised and were equally concerned. The Chair and Parish Council were actively working with local Police, the Police and Crime Commissioner, County Councillors and the County Council to address the issues.

**RERSOLVED** that the information given, be noted.

- 3** **POLICE**

There was no Police report.

Councillor B Miller reported that following the last meeting it was confirmed that the flats on the Front Street had been vandalised and since then there had been a second incident of vandalism.

The Chair reported that E Kay, the Inspector at Peterlee had been promoted to Chief Inspector at Durham City. G Smith was the Acting Inspector at Peterlee and H Gott the Acting Sergeant.

The Chair advised that the 3 County Councillors were meeting the Acting Inspector to discuss various Policing issues and the lack of reporting to the Parish Council would be raised. The Police had asked the County Councillors to contribute towards the cost of a long lens camera which they had all agreed to subject to conditions related to its use.

The Chair reported that a serious aggravated burglary had taken place in the village.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

#### 4 COUNTY COUNCILLORS REPORT

The Chair provided an update on the following issues.

- Potholes – various locations reported to Durham County Council.
- Waste/Dog Bins – new bins installed at Pizza Nova and Sandwick Terrace.
- Pizza Nova Trade Waste – Trade waste bins overflowing. Business had been advised to better manage their waste.
- Proposed new play park at the Greenhills Centre.
- Durham City Youth Project – Currently in the village Tuesdays and Thursdays. Sexual health minibus visiting the Greenhills Centre to work with young people. A detached youth worker would be present in the village on a more regular basis and was organising a bus trip and an event for young people at the Greenhills Centre. Further discussions would be held with the Greenhills in relation to moving forward with a detached youth work or providing something regularly at the Greenhills. Plans for a changing room facility at the football pitch would benefit the Youth Project who could use the football pitch and changing rooms.
- Public Seating – County Councillors wanted to connect the Division by encouraging people to walk between the villages but there was a lack of seating throughout the Division area. County Councillors had met with Durham County Councils Clean and Green team to discuss the installation of new seating at locations throughout the division. In Wheatley Hill it was suggested a seat be located adjacent the fire station and on the grassed area near the football pitch.
- Dodds Close – work had started on the new fencing.
- Meeting with the Police and Crime Commissioner, Joy Allen, to discuss public confidence in the Police. Possibility of piloting a Safer Community Co-ordinator to be based in Wheatley Hill. Funding for the position to potentially come from the Neighbourhood Budget, the AAP and the Parish Council. To keep costs down Wingate and Sherburn Hill (for Ludworth) could be involved.
- Section 106 Funding – £21,180.79 still available. This would increase once the new bungalows were complete giving the potential to fund another project in the village.
- Levelling up Funding.
- DLI – A report outlining options for the DLI was due in September.
- Durham County Council Headquarters – A report was due in September.

Councillor B Miller advised that the County Council had done an excellent job of re-surfacing Gable Terrace.

## Wheatley Hill Parish Council – 13 September 2021

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

### 5 CORRESPONDENCE

#### (1) Request for Financial Assistance – Wheatley House Moving Forward

The Clerk reported the receipt of correspondence from Wheatley House Moving Forward requesting financial assistance towards groundworks at Wheatley House.

RESOLVED that a donation of £1,000 be made from the Section 137 Budget.

#### (2) Wheatley Hill Community Association - Christmas Tree

The Clerk reported the receipt of correspondence from Wheatley Hill Community Association asking the Parish Council to donate a large Christmas Tree to the Greenhills Centre for their “Countdown to Christmas 2021 Launch Event”

It was suggested that the Parish Council donate a 16 foot Christmas Tree to the Greenhills Centre for the Christmas event as well as a smaller Christmas tree for the reception area.

RESOLVED that approval be granted to donate 2 Christmas Trees to the Greenhills Centre.

#### (3) Letter of Thanks – Pit Pony

The Clerk reported the receipt of correspondence from Mr Blake thanking everyone involved in the restoration and re-siting of the pit pony on the A181 roundabout.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

### 6 PLANNING

There were no planning matters.

### 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) Allotments

##### (i) Plots 11, 12, 17 and 19

The Clerk reported that a site meeting with the tenant of plots 11, 12, 17 and 19 was needed to discuss the improvements required on all four plots as well as a possible new access to the plots adjacent the football field from within the site.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

##### (ii) Plot 18

The Clerk reported that at the allotment site meeting held 8 July 2021 the tenant of plot 18 agreed to cut back and clear the plot. To date there had been no improvement and the plot was still overgrown.

**RESOLVED** that the Clerk contact the tenant of Plot 18 and advise that the tenancy would be terminated if there was not an immediate improvement on the plot.

**(iii) Plot 14**

The Clerk advised that following the last meeting the tenant of plot 14 was contacted regarding the overgrown state of the plot. Members were advised that the tenant had given up the tenancy and the plot could be re-allocated.

**RESOLVED** that plot 14 be allocated to applicant number 9/2020 from the waiting list.

**(iv) Plot 16**

The Clerk reported the receipt of correspondence from the tenant of plot 16 requesting that the tenancy be amended to a joint tenancy.

**RESOLVED** that plot 16 be amended to a joint tenancy.

**(v) Applications for an Allotment**

The Clerk reported the receipt of 2 applications for an allotment.

**RESOLVED** that applicant 3/2021 and 4/2021 be accepted onto the waiting list for an allotment.

**(2) Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2021**

The Clerk reported that Mazars LLP had completed the annual audit for the year ended 31 March 2021.

Members were advised that Mazars had reviewed Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) and in their opinion the information was in accordance with proper practices and no other matters had come to their attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements had not been met.

**RESOLVED** that the information given, be noted.

**(3) New Play Park - Greenhills Centre**

The Clerk had previously reported that Wheatley Hill Community Association (WHCA) had obtained a quotation for the supply and installation of a new play park at the Greenhills Centre.

Members were advised that the quotation was £85,000 plus £17,000 VAT giving a total cost of £102,000. WHCA had successfully applied to Durham County Council for £65,000 Section 106 funding. They had also applied for £5,000 from each of the 3 County Councillors and had intended asking the Parish Council for a contribution of £5,000.

The Clerk explained that WHCA were not VAT registered and were unable to re-claim the VAT. This left a shortfall in funding of £17,000. The Chair and Clerk subsequently met with WHCA to discuss the shortfall and County Councillor Miller agreed to increase his contribution to £10,000.

The Parish Council were being asked to consider a contribution of £10,000 which would leave £7,000 to be funded by WHCA. If approved the play park would be funded as follows; Section 106 - £65,000; Councillor Miller - £10,000; Councillor Hovvells - £5,000; Councillor Varty - £5,000; Wheatley Hill Parish Council - £10,000; WHCA - £7,000 giving a total of £102,000.

**RESOLVED** that approval be granted for a contribution of £10,000 towards the new play park at the Greenhills Centre.

**(4) Changing Room Facilities – Football Field**

Consideration was given to the report of the Chair which gave details of a proposal to provide a permanent changing room at the Parish Councils football pitch, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

Members had previously discussed the option of building a changing room at the football pitch but due to the costs involved this was not a feasible option.

The Chair had researched purchasing a secure portable changing room unit and had approached three companies Portable Offices, Sports Changing Rooms and MAC Container Company Ltd. All three companies were able to provide units that were suitable, and each company could offer a range of different options depending on size and price.

Details of the various sizes and prices were outlined with the recommendation being to purchase a 40 foot x 10 foot unit with two changing room areas and a communal area from MAC Container Company Ltd.

The cost of the unit was £25,318 excluding VAT but the price would be determined by the final specification of the unit. MAC Containers were not the cheapest, but the units were anti-vandal proof and they were the only company offering a 12-month warranty and bespoke design. Any order placed would require a non-refundable deposit with the balance payable on delivery.

The chair explained that due to the location of the football pitch it would be costly to connect the unit to the mains electricity. It was therefore proposed to purchase and install solar panels on the unit. Several companies were approached including Contact Solar who could offer a 4kW fully installed system with 4.8kW storage facility at a cost of £7,295 excluding VAT. This was not the cheapest option but offered the best solution for the unit and the largest battery size.

The total cost for the changing room unit and solar panels was £32,613 excluding VAT. If Members were minded to agree to the recommendation the Chair and Clerk would meet with the football coach to discuss the proposal in further detail and obtain feedback. A site meeting would also be required with MAC Containers to agree the final specification of the unit, the cost and the siting of the unit given its remote location.

The Chair advised that an application would be made for £21,180.79 Section 106 money that was still available. If required, an application would also be made to the 3 County Councillors and the East Durham AAP. Any shortfall would need to be met by the Parish Council.

**RESOLVED** that approval be granted, in principle, to purchase a changing room unit with solar panels and further developments be awaited.

**(5) Remembrance Sunday**

The Clerk reported that last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic and following guidance from the Royal British Legion and the announcement of a national lockdown from 5 November 2020 the annual Remembrance Day service at Wheatley Hill Cemetery had to be cancelled.

This year the Wheatley Hill branch of the Royal British Legion had advised that they did not wish to take part in this year's annual Remembrance Day service on 14 November 2021.

The Parish Council would therefore organise the Remembrance Day service and it was suggested that a small working group be established to do this. Councillors Stewart, Collingwood and White agreed to form a small working group and it was also suggested that if any resident wished to be involved, they would be welcome. It was suggested that an invite to all residents to join the working group be posted on the Parish Councils website and Facebook page.

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

(6) Cemetery – Cremated Remains Section

The Clerk reported that a resident had erected a small structure, designed to hold three flower vases, over a memorial stone in the cremated remains section. The Head Groundsperson had explained to the resident that the structure was not allowed and asked that it be removed. The resident refused to remove the structure and to resolve the issue a Cemetery site visit was held 19 August 2021.

The Head Groundsperson reported that the number of vases and ornaments being placed around the memorial stones in the cremated remains section was creating a tripping hazard and making it difficult for visitors to walk freely between the memorials to lay flowers. The number of vases and ornaments was also making strimming and cutting the grass difficult and dangerous.

It was suggested that due to the limited walking space between the memorial stones in the cremated remains section that only two additional flower holders per memorial stone be allowed subject to the following conditions.

- The holders must be placed either side of the memorial stone so as not to impede access between the stones and grass cutting.
- The holders must not be made of glass, pottery, or any other fragile material.
- Other than those built into the memorial stone, holders must not be affixed to the stone.
- Holders were placed at owners' risk and the Council would not be liable in the event of its loss or damage however caused.
- Any flower holder not complying with the Council's conditions would be removed.

The Clerk advised that the Parish Councils Cemetery Information booklet would be updated. It was suggested that when an Exclusive Right of Burial was purchased a copy of the booklet be issued with the deed.

RESOLVED that only two additional flower holders per memorial stone be allowed in the cremated remains section subject to the conditions outlined.

(7) Cemetery Bungalow and Heritage Centre

The Clerk reported that at the last meeting reference was made to the possibility of bats nesting in the Heritage Centre. Members were advised that following an inspection there was no evidence of any bats in the Heritage Centre.

The Clerk had previously reported that two quotations had been received for work to the cemetery bungalow and Heritage Centre and Durham County Council had provided the following quotations.

Cemetery Bungalow - £3,622.20

Heritage Centre - £20,182.70

Durham County Council had advised that the Heritage Centre tower would require a

structural survey and for this reason their quotation excluded any work to the tower. Because of this a further quotation was being sought from T Manners and Sons Ltd who were based in Bishop Auckland.

It was suggested that the quotation from Durham County Council for the work to the cemetery bungalow be accepted and the quotation from T Manners be awaited before any decision was made regarding the Heritage Centre.

**RESOLVED** that the quotation for the work to the Cemetery bungalow in the amount of £3,622.20 from Durham County Council be accepted.

**(8) Community Defibrillator – Abbots Court**

The Clerk reported that following the last meeting Abbots Court nursing home were contacted and they had agreed to the installation of a community defibrillator on their building.

The Clerk had contacted the Rotary Club of Durham who had provided a quotation of £1,398 inclusive of £233 VAT for the defibrillator and cabinet.

The Rotary Club would consult with Abbots Court regarding the location and installation of the defibrillator. Once installed Abbots Court would take on all responsibility for the defibrillator and cabinet.

**RESOLVED** that approval be granted to purchase a Wel Medical defibrillator and cabinet to be located at Abbots Court nursing home at a cost of £1,398 inclusive of VAT.

**(9) Pit Pony – A181 Roundabout**

The Clerk reported that the pit pony had been restored and re-sited on the A181 roundabout and the invoice for £2,300 had been paid to the People's Workshop.

Members had previously been advised that Trimdon Foundry Parish Council had contributed £750 towards the cost of the work. Members were advised that in addition to a letter of thanks from the Parish Council the Chair had also sent a letter of thanks.

**RESOLVED** that the information given, be noted.

**(10) Dog Bags**

The Clerk reported that an order for 10,000 dog bags had been placed at a cost of £122.28 exclusive of VAT. Members were advised that the number of dog bags being used had increased over the past year.

The Chair suggested that in future the Parish Council place an order for 20,000 bags. The Clerk advised that the cost for 20,000 was £237.36 exclusive of VAT.

**RESOLVED** that the Parish Councils order for dog bags be increased to 20,000.

**9 PAYMENTS**

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

CHQ NO	PAYMENT TO	DETAIL	COST	VAT	TOTAL
Direct Debit	British Gas	Gas - Heritage Centre	28.52	1.42	29.94
Direct Debit	e-on Next	Electric - Heritage Centre	55.35	2.77	58.12

## Wheatley Hill Parish Council – 13 September 2021

Internet Banking	Durham County Council	Machine Repairs	175.00	35.00	210.00
Internet Banking	Horns Garden Centre	Cemetery Supplies	84.06	16.81	100.87
Internet Banking	Durham County Council	Summer/Winter Bedding	1,418.00	283.60	1,701.60
Internet Banking	J Thompson	Reimbursements	36.66	5.75	42.41
Internet Banking	J Davies	Reimbursements	108.46	21.70	130.16
Internet Banking	Durham County Council	Website hosting & Support	622.97	124.59	747.56
Internet Banking	Mazars	External Audit	400.00	80.00	480.00
Internet Banking	The Peoples Workshop	Restoration & Re-siting of Pit Pony	2,300.00		2,300.00
Internet Banking	J Davies	Reimbursements - Mobile Telephone	78.00		78.00
Internet Banking	J Thompson	Telephone Allowance	25.00		25.00
Internet Banking	Payroll	Wages - August 2021	4,626.61		4,626.61
Internet Banking	HMRC/DCC	PAYE/Pension - August 2021	2,808.49		2,808.49
Internet Banking	JAC's Accountancy Limited	Payroll Services - August 2021	15.40	3.08	18.48
Direct Debit	British Telecom	Telephone/Internet	26.97	5.40	32.37
Invoice 51	Co-Op Bank	Service and Commission Charges	15.40		15.40
Direct Debit	British Gas	Gas - Heritage Centre	28.21	1.41	29.62
Direct Debit	e-on Next	Electric - Heritage Centre	55.09	2.75	57.84
Internet Banking	North East Granite Company Ltd	Cemetery Supplies	440.00	88.00	528.00
Internet Banking	CDS Security & Fire	Annual Maintenance Charge	487.00	97.40	584.40
Internet Banking	WEL Medical Limited	Defibrillator and Cabinet	1,165.00	233.00	1,398.00
Internet Banking	JRB Enterprise Ltd	Poop Scoop Bags	114.40	22.88	137.28
Internet Banking	Durham County Council	Machine Repairs	32.98	6.60	39.58
Internet Banking	Anglian Water Business	Water - Allotments	56.70		56.70
Internet Banking	Wheatley House Moving Forward	Section 137 Donation	1,000.00		1,000.00
Internet Banking	Wheatley Hill Community Association	Contribution to Play Park	10,000.00		10,000.00
Internet Banking	County Durham Association of Local Councils	Good Councillor Guide	19.20		19.20
Internet Banking	J Thompson	Reimbursements	11.96	0.81	12.77
Internet Banking	J Davies	Reimbursement - Mileage	50.50		50.50
Internet Banking	J Thompson	Telephone Allowance	25.00		25.00
Internet Banking	Payroll	Wages - September 2021	4,626.81		4,626.81
Internet Banking	HMRC/DCC	PAYE/Pension - September 2021	2,808.29		2,808.29
Internet Banking	JAC's Accountancy Limited	Payroll Services - September 2021	15.40	3.08	18.48
Direct Debit	British Telecom	Telephone/Internet	26.97	5.40	32.37
Invoice 52	Co-Op Bank	Service and Commission Charges	11.20		11.20
		TOTAL	33799.60	1,041.45	34,841.05

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

**10 RISK MANAGEMENT**

The Clerk advised that there was nothing to report.

**11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**(1) Roadworks - Re-Surfacing/Potholes**

Members reported various locations where work was required including Moore and Byron Street, the road between the Cemetery Gates and the chicane and Shakespeare and Burns Street.

RESOLVED that the issues be reported to Durham County Council.

**(2) Youths Congregating**

Members reported youths congregating and drinking in the middle of the road on the Front Street and around Percy Street. Youths had been seen congregating as early as 5am.

The Chair agreed to raise this at the meeting scheduled to be held with the Acting Inspector, G Smith.

RESOLVED that the matter be reported to the Police.

**(3) A181 Jet Garage**

Members reported that the A181 at the entrance to Wheatley Hill and the Jet Garage was an accident blackspot and suggested that a roundabout would help ease the traffic problems and road safety issues.

RESOLVED that the matter be reported to Durham County Council.

**(4) Wheatley Hill Community Association**

The Chair reported that he was resigning from his appointment as a Parish Council representative on the Board at Wheatley Hill Community Association.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

..... Signed

.....Dated