

**THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE WHEATLEY HILL PARISH COUNCIL  
HELD ON 12 DECEMBER 2022**

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

**1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence was received from Councillor J Collingwood.

**2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor J Miller declared an interest in item 10(1).

**3 The minutes of the last meeting held on 14 November 2022, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were approved and signed by the Chair.**

**4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

There was no public present at the meeting.

**5 POLICE MATTERS**

The Police reported that during November there had been 8 reports of anti-social behaviour, 14 thefts and 7 reports of criminal damage.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

**6 COUNTY COUNCILLORS REPORT**

Councillor J Miller provided an update on the following parish and county wide issues.

- Following the last meeting issues related to litter on the Front Street and overhanging trees behind the petrol station were reported. Once the trees were cut back the area would be swept.
- An issue raised at the last meeting related to a residential property was reported to the Community Action Team (CAT).
- Dr J Chandy was contacted regarding the Patient Participation Group. Dr Chandy had advised that meetings would be held online, anyone wanting to attend could provide their contact details to enable them to join the meetings. Councillor Miller had expressed concern in relation to the number of residents who did not have access to the internet and were unable to join the meetings.
- Issues related to the land opposite the primary school had been raised with Believe Housing who had clarified the position and confirmed that the land would be sold to the school.
- County Councillors Miller and Hovvels had attended a Christmas event at the Greenhills Centre which was well attended and enjoyed by everyone.
- The CAT had come to the end of their 11 week programme in Wheatley Hill. A debrief meeting would be held on Teams on 14 December 2022.
- County Councillors Miller and Hovvels had presented at a National Councillors Forum around the work being done with Warm Hubs. The presentation was available online.
- Emergency Plan – Wheatley Hill, Thornley and Trimdon Foundry Parish Councils had all signed up to the Emergency Plan. Haswell had opted out and would be developing

their own. Confirmation was still awaited from Trimdon Parish Council and Deaf Hill Regeneration Partnership. A leaflet providing information on the Emergency Plan had been ordered following the receipt of a grant from the County Councillors. The leaflet would be delivered to every household in the division.

- A meeting with Durham Agency Against Crime would be held in the new year.
- A meeting with neighbouring Parish Councils to discuss youth provision would be held on 13 December 2022.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

## 7 CORRESPONDENCE

### (1) Requests for Financial Assistance - Wheatley Hill Community Nursery

The Clerk reported the receipt of a request for financial assistance from Wheatley Hill Community Nursery to assist with costs related to a visit to a Christmas pantomime.

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

### (2) Messages of Thanks

The Clerk reported the receipt of messages of thanks from All Saints Church and the Lord Lieutenant of County Durham.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

### (3) Overhanging Tree – Cemetery

The Clerk reported the receipt of a request, from the owner of the property adjacent the Cemetery, to cut back an overhanging tree located in the Cemetery. Members were advised that quotations were being sought for the tree to be cut back.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

## 8 PLANNING MATTERS

There were no planning matters.

## 9 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.

## 10 CLERK'S REPORT

### (1) Allotment Site Visit – 5 December 2022

The Clerk reported that an allotment site visit was held on 5 December 2022 where the following issues were discussed;

- Internal Paths - An internal path had been installed around the perimeter of the communal gardens. It was suggested that internal paths be installed between each individual plot.

RESOLVED that internal paths be installed between each individual plot.

- **Stable Block 18** – The boundary fence needed repairing. There was currently exposed barbed wire which needed to be either removed or moved back to provide a secondary fence. The tenant had asked if the new fence could be erected on the outside of the original boundary fence.

RESOLVED that the tenant be authorised to erect a new boundary fence on the outside of the original boundary fence. The tenant would be given to the end of February to complete the fence.

- **Application 3/2022** - An application for an allotment had been received.

RESOLVED that applicant 3/2022 be accepted onto the waiting list for an allotment.

- **Plots 5, 6 and 7** – These plots were overgrown and in a poor state of repair. It was suggested that a letter be forwarded to the tenants advising that the plots must be maintained to a better standard or they would be evicted.

RESOLVED that a letter be forwarded to the tenants of plots 5, 6 and 7.

- The Clerk reported that following the last meeting letters were sent to the tenants of Plots 6, 14 and 18 advising that the plots were overgrown, in a poor condition and/or were not being used for their intended purpose.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

## (2) Precept and Budget Setting 2023/2024

The Clerk reported that at the last meeting of the Parish Council Members were provided with details of the figures related to the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) grant and tax base for the forthcoming 2023/2024 financial year. Members were advised that the LCTRS grant for 2023/2024 had increased from £8,432 to £9,321 which was an increase of £889 from the previous year and the tax base had increased from 777.9 to 779.6.

The Clerk provided Members with various options and a range of figures for consideration. It was pointed out that the LCTRS grant was reducing year on year and in previous years, the Parish Council had used reserves to keep the precept as low as possible. Members suggested a budget based on a standstill Band D charge which was an increase of 0.22% on the precept.

The Clerk took Members through the detailed budget based on this and advised that the Parish Council required £130,279 for the 2023/2024 financial year. It was suggested that the Parish Council use £3,792 of reserves to provide a precept of £117.166 which together with the grant of £9,321 gave a figure of £126,487.

As part of the budget process Members considered the burial and allotment fees and agreed that they be retained at their current levels.

RESOLVED that: -

- (i) the Parish Council set a budget of £130,279 for the 2023/2024 financial year
- (ii) approval be granted to use £3,792 of reserves to give a precept request of £117,166.
- (iii) Durham County Council be advised that the Parish Councils precept request for 2023/2024 was £117.166 in addition to a grant of £9,321 giving a total of £126,487.

(3) Youth Worker

The Clerk reported that a meeting was scheduled to be held on 13 December 2022 to discuss with neighbouring Parish Councils and Durham City Youth Project the possibility of funding a permanent youth worker to be based in the village.

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

(4) Emergency Plan

The Clerk reported that an application was made to the County Councillors for a grant of £392 to cover the cost of printing an emergency plan leaflet which would be delivered to every household in the division. The grant had been received and the order had been placed for 5,600 leaflets.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(5) A181 – Speeding

The Clerk reported that Councillor Goyns had asked that speeding on the A181 be placed on the agenda for discussion.

Councillor Goyns was concerned that the 60mph speed limit on the A181 was too high and should be reduced to 40mph. The situation was made worse by the business' located along the A181 between Wheatley Hill and the A19, including a caravan park. Vehicles were regularly moving in and out of the park at a slow speed creating a road safety issue. Councillor Goyns felt that a discussion about the speed on this stretch of road was needed with Durham County Council.

The Chair advised that he had contacted Durham County Councils highways section but to date had not had a response. The Chair had previously met with the highways section, and they had advised that they were not responsible for the speed limits on roads and were unable to alter them. It was suggested that traffic calming measures, on this stretch of road, may be an option.

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

(6) Christmas Trees

The Clerk reported that Christmas trees had been erected at the Cemetery, Workingmen's Club, Community Centre and Wheatley House.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(7) Ex Gratia Christmas Payments

The Chair suggested that an ex-gratia Christmas payment of £500 be made to J Davies, E Leigh and J Thompson.

RESOLVED that approval be granted for an ex-gratia payment of £500 to J Davies, E Leigh and J Thompson from the Chair's Account.

11 PAYMENTS

The following schedule of payments was circulated together with figures for all income and expenditure at 30 November 2022.

**Wheatley Hill Parish Council – 12 December 2022**

<b>PAYMENT</b>	<b>PAYABLE TO</b>	<b>DETAIL</b>	<b>COST</b>	<b>VAT</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	
Direct Debit	British Gas	Gas - Heritage Centre	151.54	7.98	159.52	
Direct Debit	e-on Next	Electric - Heritage Centre	64.56	3.23	67.79	
Internet Banking	Horns Garden Centre	Christmas Trees	262.50	52.50	315.00	
Internet Banking	MKM	Cemetery Supplies	60.00	12.00	72.00	
Internet Banking	J Davies	Reimbursements	359.25	50.87	410.12	
Internet Banking	Durham County Council	Machine Repairs	209.22	41.85	251.07	
Internet Banking	J Thompson	Reimbursements	29.21	3.67	32.88	
Internet Banking	J Davies	Ex Gratia Christmas Payment	500.00		500.00	
Internet Banking	E Leigh	Ex Gratia Christmas Payment	500.00		500.00	
Internet Banking	J Thompson	Ex Gratia Christmas Payment	500.00		500.00	
Internet Banking	Wheatley Hill Community Nursery	Section 137 Donation	100.00		100.00	
Internet Banking	Society of Local Council Clerks	Membership Fee	168.50		168.50	
Internet Banking	J Thompson	Telephone Allowance	25.00		25.00	
Internet Banking	Payroll	Wages - December 2022	5,011.05		5,011.05	
Internet Banking	HMRC/DCC	PAYE/Pension - December 2022	3,170.37		3,170.37	
Internet Banking	JAC's Accountancy Limited	Payroll Services - December 2022	40.00	8.00	48.00	
Direct Debit	British Telecom	Telephone/Internet	29.47	5.90	35.37	
Invoice 67	Co-Op Bank	Service and Commission Charges	17.10		17.10	
			<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11,197.77</b>	<b>186.00</b>	<b>11,383.77</b>

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

**12 RISK MANAGEMENT**

The Clerk advised that there was nothing to report.

**The Chair wished everyone a Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.**

..... Signed

.....Dated