

West Rainton and Leamside Parish Council

Minutes of Parish Council Meeting Held on

Thursday 15 January 2015

Present: Councillors M Gilbank (Chairman), E Bulmer, I Clifford, R Swinney, A Wallage

Apologies: G Keedy, Parish Clerk

In attendance: County Councillor Guy and 4 x members of the public (MoP)

Note: As the Clerk was unable to attend the meeting due to ill health, Parish Council agreed that the minutes would be taken by Cllr Wallage. Cllr Wallage audio recorded the meeting to assist with the minute taking. Cllr Gilbank also audio recorded the meeting.

1) Apologies

No apologies, written or otherwise, had been received from Councillors Patterson, Swinburn, Gibson, Sowerby. Their absences were noted as unapproved.

2) Declaration of interest

It was agreed that declarations of interest would be dealt with as and when they arose.

3) Public Participation

A MoP enquired about any progress regarding the issue of lighting on the A690 following an accident, reported at the last meeting. Cllr Gilbank advised that the matter had been reported to the County Council.

A MoP enquired if the item on the agenda relating to a donation request related to the deferred Green Group request. This was confirmed.

County Councillor Guy provided an update on Community Chest Grant Funding Applications. He advised that the inaugural meeting had been held that morning to consider applications. He advised the application from the Parish Council had been deferred pending confirmation over the Parish Council's ability to sustain the maintenance of the project in future years. A request for further information would be issued by DCC shortly.

It was noted that provision for on going future maintenance had been made in a draft budget prepared in consideration of the 2015-2016 precept. (See paragraph 6 below)

Signed

Date

A MoP asked about the nature of the bid and how much had been applied for.

A discussion followed on how much had already been spent on the project to date, any outstanding issues re work already carried out and usage. Cllr Guy sought assurance that the bid submission did not include any request for funding for work that should have been completed under contract from work previously awarded. It was confirmed that the bid submission was for additional work and improvements. Any outstanding issues regarding work already carried out would be dealt with separately.

4) Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held 18 December 2014 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

(It should be noted that the agenda item referred to the approval of minutes held 20 November 2014. This was a typo error. These minutes had been approved at the meeting on the 18 December 2014.)

5) Matter arising

Cllr Bulmer tabled a note summarising the Community Chest grant submission, prepared and submitted by herself and Cllr Wallage, under delegated authority agreed by council at its meeting 18 December 2014. The closing date for the grant was 31 December 2014. The amount bid for was £3,400. £1800 was in respect of improvements to the village Heritage Garden and £1,600 in respect of improvements to parish land immediately adjacent to the Heritage Garden. Estimated on going annual maintenance costs for the Parish Council of £720 and refilling of planters for the sum of £500, if the planned improvements are made, were also noted. This financial commitment can be met from existing annual funding.

6) Precept 2015/16

It was noted that the Parish Clerk had received a letter from Durham County Council (DCC) requesting that the Parish Council determine its precept requirements for 2015-2016 in time for a return to be made to the County Council by 31 January 2015.

At the meeting held 18 December 2014 it was agreed that Cllr Gilbank, Cllr Wallage and the Parish Clerk would meet to discuss draft budget requirements to help inform this determination.

The resultant recommendation to maintain the precept at the same band D level of £37.92 as in 2014/15 was approved by the Parish Council.

Signed

Date

It was noted that this decision will generate annual income of £25,160. This compares to £25,000 in 2014/15, the difference being due to a slight increase in the tax base.

The 2015/16 Local Council Tax Reduction scheme (LCTRS) grant allocation to the Parish Council of £3030 was also noted. This is reduction of £440 from the 2014/15 allocation of £3470.

The net effect on funding due to the Parish Council from DCC for 2015/16 is a reduction of £280. (£28,190 in 2015/16, £28,470 in 2014/15).

It was noted that a proposed draft budget for 2015/16 will be brought to a future meeting of the Parish Council for approval once the expected outturn position for 2014/15 is known.

7) Police Report

No written report had been received. Cllr Gilbank advised that he had spoken to the local PC officer who had informed him that there had been no serious crime in the village since the last report. There had been one car broken into and a couple of ASPO's.

8) Neighbourhood Warden Report

No report written or otherwise had been received from the Neighbourhood Warden.

9) Finance

The Parish Council considered a written financial report of the Parish Clerk.

The following items of expenditure were reported:

a. Expenditure agreed 18 December under item 1.3 Donation Requests:

- Mid Durham Youth Project (West Rainton and Leamside Partnership) £1000

b. Cheque payments for approval:

- Parish Clerk salary - January 2015 £343.17
- Post Office (HMRC liabilities) - £85.79
- Parish Clerk reimbursement for postage £6.36
- Durham County Council - £484.25 (Pothole)
- County Durham Association of Local Councils – Village Green training Spring 2014 - £135.00
- D Lewins – January payment £80.00

Signed

Date

- West Rainton & Leamside CA – Room Hire

18/12/2014 - £10.00

10/01/2015 - £20.00

15/01/2015 - £10.00

In total 10 cheques to the sum of £2174.57 were approved for payment.

The Parish Council noted that the Clerk had reported:

- An anticipated current account balance of £8032.33 after the above payments had been made.
- The Co-op Bank deposit account balance as at 14 January 2015 of £15009.60.

10) Donation Request

The Parish Council considered a donation request received from the Green Group for £250 for the planting of flower tubs. Consideration of this request had been deferred at previous meetings pending clarification of bank balances.

The Parish Council approved the donation.

11) Grant Application Policy

Cllr Gilbank made reference to a draft grant application policy and application process which he had previously circulated to Councillors. Councillors were asked to review the document and forward any comments to him no later than 12 February 2015 so as this item could be considered for approval at the next meeting.

12) General Correspondence

The Parish Council agreed the following action in relation to correspondence received.

- **Alcohol Strategy Event**

An invitation to attend an event to discuss the issue had been circulated from DCC via the County Durham Association of Local Councils. (CDALC)

It was noted that the Strategy aims to reduce the impact that alcohol has on individuals, families and communities in Durham while encouraging adults who chose to drink to do so responsibly.

Signed

Date

Action: Cllr Wallage to register 2 places by 26 January 2014 for Cllr Gilbank and Cllr Wallage who offered to attend. Cllr Gilbank undertook to contact the police to obtain details of alcohol related incidents in the village and report back.

- **Query re registration of ownership of Village Green**

The Parish Clerk had received a letter from DCC regarding the provision of information which the Parish Council had relied upon when it sought registration of a triangular area of land known as the recreation field/playground. DCC have advised that the County Council (the former Durham City Council) is listed in the Village Green Register as the registered owner of the playground.

Action: Cllr Gilbank undertook to enter into discussions with DCC to gain further information to try and clarify the position.

- **Open Space Needs Assessment**

The Parish Clerk had advised the Council of an advance notification of a review and further contact. In the absence of the Clerk and no further details this item could not be discussed.

Action: The Parish Clerk to provide an update at the next meeting.

- **Consultation on Police Precept 2015-2016**

An invitation had been received from Ron Hogg the Police and Crime Commissioner, via CDALC, to attend a consultation event specifically for Town and Parish Councils Friday 30 January 2015.

Action: Cllr Gilbank offered to attend. Cllr Wallage to register a place.

- **Notification letter re Planning Appeal Hearing**

A notification had been received from DCC regarding an appeal hearing by the Planning Inspectorate regarding the land at The Stables, East of Pit House Lane, Leamside.

Action: The Parish Council to note the nature of the appeal, the date of the hearing, 4 February 2015, and that members of the public may attend.

- **Letter received from MoP regarding path laid on village green**

Cllr Gilbank advised that Standing Orders require that any letters to be considered at a Parish Council meeting must be received at least 10 days before the meeting. The Chair also advised that all Councillors need to be familiar with the DEFRA publication, " Management and

Protection of Registered Town and Village Greens – Frequently Asked Questions”, in order to consider this matter.

Action: The Parish Council agreed to defer consideration of this letter. Cllr Gilbank undertook to circulate the DEFRA document to all councillors so that an informed discussion could be held at the next meeting.

13)Date and Time of next meeting

The date and time of the next meeting was agreed: Thursday 19 February 2015 at 7 pm.

14)Parish Clerk

The Parish Council considered a written note prepared by the Parish Clerk regarding extra hours worked since his appointment.

This item had initially been added to the agenda as an item to be exempt from the public. It was noted that the Clerk had no objections to this matter being discussed in the public domain and the Parish Council agreed at the meeting that this item need not be exempt.

It was noted that extra hours are necessary to fulfil duties and to deal with a backlog of issues from the period May to September 2014 when the parish clerk was with out the clerk and emerging issues.

The Parish Council resolved to:

- Remunerate the Parish Clerk for additional hours worked during the period October to December 2014
- Remunerate the Parish Clerk for additional hours worked during the period January to March 2014, providing that the Clerk continues to maintain a record of hours worked.
- Review the Clerk’s contractual hours beyond the current financial year.

It was noted that provision had been included in the draft 2015-2016 budget proposal for a maximum of 25 hours to be paid per week.

Following discussion, it was agreed that contractual hours should be reviewed after consideration of average contractual hours worked by other Clerks of similar sized councils.

It was agreed that a smaller increase in contractual hours to say 15 hours, with provision being made in the budget to pay planned overtime up to a maximum amount included in the budget would be more appropriate.

Signed

Date

Cllr Gilbank undertook to look into average contractual hours worked via the NALC so that this item could be reviewed and considered when budget proposals are being finalised for 2015/16.

The meeting closed at 9.30 pm

Signed

Date