

West Rainton and Leamside Parish Council

Minutes of Parish Council meeting held at St. Mary's Church Meeting Room, West Rainton

Thursday 18 June 2015

Present: Councillors E Bulmer, I Clifford, M Gilbank, S Patterson, A Wallage (Chair).

19 x members of the public (MoP)

In attendance: County Councillor Kellett, PC I Madsen.

Parish Clerk - Graeme Keedy

NOTE: The meeting was audio recorded throughout.

1) Apologies for absence

No apologies had been received from Cllr A Sowerby or Cllr A Swinburn and these were noted as unapproved absences.

2) Declarations of interest

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

3) Public participation

Various MoP's raised a range of issues around the condition of West Rainton Cemetery. These focussed on environmental maintenance and specifically a need to collect grass arisings after cutting and improvements to trees and borders. There was a generally held view that the cemetery had been neglected over a period of several years.

The Parish Clerk advised that cemetery issues were included as an agenda item.

A MoP raised the issue of the Open Cast appeal and sought assistance from the Parish Council with distribution when these became available. It was noted that the action group would liaise with Hetton Town Council and engage the cycling group.

A comment made by a MOP regarding residents parking on land next to the church, which they stated was a public right of way, was noted.

Signed:

Date:

4) Minutes

The minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 21 May 2015 were approved as a correct record by the Parish Council.

Following a dissenting view from Cllr Gilbank, it was proposed by Cllr Clifford and seconded by Cllr Patterson that the following resolution proceed to a vote:

"The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 21 May 2015 be approved as a correct record."

This was carried and Parish Council resolved that the minutes of the 21 May 2015 Parish Council meeting be approved as a correct record.

5) Matters Arising

The Parish Clerk reported that he had made contact with Noble's Funfairs and they had agreed the financial conditions required by the Parish Council.

However, details of a revised date were awaited. Parish Clerk would follow up.

6) Finance

Income and expenditure since 21 May 2015 meeting

Money in:	Nil
Co-op current account balance @ 18 June 2015:	£33095.38
Cheque payments for expenditure for Parish Council approval:	
Parish Clerk net salary June 15 (incl. Q4 approved additional hrs and new contracted hrs @15/week)	£659.47
Post Office:	
HMRC tax on Clerk's salary	£170.40
Employee NI	£21.53
Employer NI	£24.20
Sub-total Post Office:	£216.13
Parish Clerk reimbursement:	
6 x First class stamps	£3.78
12 x Second class stamps	£6.48
Sub-total Parish Clerk re-imburement:	£10.26
Jones Boyd Accountants (charges for payroll service April - June 2015)	£84.00
Northumbrian Water (Cemetery water charges March – May 2015)	£11.52
Max Recycle (waste collection from West Rainton Cemetery)	£1345.30
Max Recycle (waste collection from West Rainton Cemetery)	£131.40
D Lewins June 2015 payment	£80.00
Leamside Nurseries (Cemetery grass cutting - 10 June)	£156.00
Citizens Advice County Durham (Advice services provision 2015-2016)	£1560.00
Cheques: 10	Sub-total: £4254.08

Signed:

Date:

6) Finance cont ...

Heritage Garden project expenditure (incurred or advance from ring-fenced award):

Mr A Baker (labour costs - 29hrs @£15.00/hr)	£435.00
Mr A Baker (materials – fixings)	£6.79
Wilf Husband (2 tonnes x topsoil)	£48.00
Leamside Nurseries (bedding plants)	£125.70
Parish Clerk reimbursement:	
Argos (Water Butt)	£20.99
Travis Perkins (Wooden batten)	£6.79
Parish clerk sub-total	£27.78

Total cheques Heritage Garden: 5 **Sub-total: £643.27**

Combined total cheques: 15 **Total: £4897.35**

Anticipated current account balance after above approved expenditure: £28198.03

Co-op deposit account balance @ 18 June 2015: £15014.25

The Parish Clerk sought approval to pay all itemised expenditure.

The Parish Council resolved to agree payment of all expenditure and approve the financial report.

7) Co-op Bank documentation

Parish Clerk explained that the Co-op Bank required up to date signatories. Parish Council resolved that the documentation be completed. Co-op Bank form 4b was circulated to those signatories present for completion. The Parish Clerk would contact the remaining signatory directly.

8) Draft Annual Return for the financial year ended 31 March 2015

Parish Clerk advised that as documentation currently remained with the Internal Auditor, it would not be possible to consider this item.

Parish Council resolved to convene an Extraordinary meeting of the Parish Council to be held on Thursday 25 June 2015 to consider approval of the Annual Return and Accounts for the financial year ended 31 March 2015.

9) General Correspondence

Durham County Council:

Small Business Rate Relief Application **Parish Clerk to progress**
Notification x 2 – Alleged Breach of Members Code of Conduct **Noted**

County Durham Association of Local Councils:
County Durham Volunteering Awards 2015 **Circulate to Green Group and Partnership**

NALC event **Circulate to members**
Nominations for County Association **Circulate to members**

Signed:

Date:

9) General correspondence cont ...

Rights of Way Plan **Circulate to members and 1 x MoP**

Taxi Licensing policy review **Circulate to members**

North East Combined Authority Consultation **Circulate to members**

Durham Community Action – Wellbeing for Life Circulate to **Green Group and Partnership**

Information Commissioner's Office – outstanding aspect of previous FoI request
Noted

Parish Councillor – FoI request x 2 **Noted**

Resident A - complaint about attitude and behaviour of a Parish Councillor **Noted**

Resident B - complaint about attitude and behaviour of a Parish Councillor **Noted**

Resident C - complaint about attitude and behaviour of a Parish Councillor **Noted**

Resident D - complaint about attitude and behaviour of a Parish Councillor **Noted**

Resident E - complaint about attitude and behaviour of a Parish Councillor **Noted**

10) Village Green

Cllr Wallage outlined Standing Orders in relation to the responsibilities of individual councillors acting as part of the corporate body. These were clear that a councillor acting on an individual basis was in direct contravention of Standing Orders unless delegated responsibility had been agreed by full council.

Parish Council confirmed that no individual councillor had been given powers to act independently, arbitrarily, or by delegation in relation to any Village Green issues and specifically in relation to the moving of boulders placed outside a number of properties on South Street next to the Heritage Garden which had led to a number of complaints being submitted by residents.

A discussion followed and MOP's were given the opportunity to contribute given that many in attendance were directly affected by recent events.

Due to his disruptive behaviour, Cllr Gilbank was at this point taken out of the meeting by PC Madsen.

Cllr Wallage referred to the DEFRA guidelines relating to Village Green and the need for consultation before taking any action. Cllr Clifford highlighted the need to protect the amenity but also to the need to adopt a compromise position as the statutes relating to village green do not reflect modern day living in terms of access and parking. This view was supported by Cllr Patterson who referred to a path over village green providing access to the Village Hall and access needed by residents to their homes.

Signed:

Date:

10) Village Green cont ...

Cllr Patterson proposed, seconded by Cllr Clifford that a named vote be taken on the following resolution:

“Parish Council agree that the boulders demarcating Village Green from South Street be left in situ in their well-established locations.”

In favour: Cllr’s Clifford, Patterson and Wallage.

Abstention: Cllr Bulmer.

Not Present: Cllr Gilbank.

The resolution was carried.

Parish Council resolved that the Parish Clerk seek a quotation for specialist legal advice in relation to Village Green.

11) Recording of Parish Council meetings

Parish Council resolved to audio record future meetings, and additionally for the Parish Clerk to purchase recording equipment to a value not exceeding £100.00.

12) Community Association Trustees meeting

Due to the absence of Cllr Swinburn, Parish Council resolved to defer this to the July meeting.

NOTE: Cllr Gilbank and PC Masden re-joined the meeting at this point.

13) Village News

Cllr Clifford proposed that Parish Council resolve that no action was required in response to the Community Association’s editorial item which was published in the Village newsletter. This was seconded by Cllr Wallage.

Following a vote on the proposal, the Council resolved no action was needed.

14) Heritage Garden

Cllr Wallage introduced the report and accompanying financial position. She reported that the site had recently been vandalised and this was reported to the Police. An ongoing query relating to land ownership was being discussed with the management of the Italian Farmhouse.

Cllr Gilbank referred to the continued assistance being given by Tom Mason with Heritage Garden works. Parish Council offered their thanks to Mr Mason.

Parish Council resolved to note the report and gave approval to the expenditure sought.

Signed:

Date:

15) Councillor Vacancies

Parish Clerk reported that he had been unable to agree a mutually convenient date among councillors for interviews and added that a member of the originally agreed panel had indicated that he was no longer able to take part due to work commitments.

It was explained that in response to two vacancies advertised, four expressions of interest had been received and there are now two further vacancies.

Some MoP's expressed an interest in seeking co-option and they highlighted that they had previously been unaware of the vacancies. Parish Clerk explained the process to date. Parish Clerk asked those residents interested in the vacancies to provide him with their contact details at close of business.

Following discussion of where and how vacancies are advertised, Council resolved to advertise the vacancies in the next edition of Village News, on the parish notice boards and to inform neighbouring parish clerks of the vacancies.

Parish Council resolved to form a new panel. This would comprise the Chairman and a combination of two from Cllr's Clifford, Gilbank and Patterson subject to availability. Parish Clerk would establish details of their availability to meet during July.

16) West Rainton Cemetery

Parish Clerk outlined a range of issues he had identified including future capacity, maintenance/ appearance and quality of records /plans.

Further comments from residents around about a lack of regular maintenance were acknowledged by the Parish Council.

Various improvements were noted for the Parish Council to consider addressing. These included tree pruning, edging and borders, the filling of sunken graves and potholes. Various options about how these improvements could be delivered were discussed.

Parish Clerk advised that additional, regular maintenance may need to go out to tender. Alternatively, the Council could look to employ someone direct or buy in services from another council who employ staff who may have capacity.

There was also some discussion about the respective responsibilities of the Parish Council and those of the families of the deceased. Some clarification was needed.

In response to a query about what provision the Parish Council is making for when the cemetery is full, Cllr Gilbank advised that Tees Valley Housing had given an undertaking to provide a piece of land for the new cemetery as part of their proposed development on Station Road and that he had supporting documentary evidence to confirm this which he agreed to provide.

Signed:

Date:

16) West Rainton Cemetery cont ...

County Councillor Kellett undertook to make enquiries with DCC officers involved with the planning application to establish if a commitment for a new cemetery site for West Rainton was included in the plan submitted by Tees Valley Housing.

Parish Council resolved that:

Parish Clerk make some exploratory approaches to specialist companies able to map out the current position of existing graves, review / upgrade records and establish remaining burial space capacity.

Parish Clerk contact Leamside Nurseries to seek a price for the routine collection and removal of grass cuttings.

Parish Clerk meet with Bereavement Services Manager at Durham County Council for generalist advice about identifying best practice to enable further improvements required to be comprehensively specified, costed and compared with funding available.

17) Police report

PC Madsen provided a verbal update which included details of damage to motor vehicles, damage to the Heritage Garden, theft of number plates, reported incidents of anti-social behaviour including numerous reports on the boulder issue on Village Green, Heritage Garden vandalism, children stone throwing on old railway lines, speeding in Leamside area and motor bikes. Cllr Gilbank advised of a bike issue re Footpath 70 between Moorsley Road to Hetton and vans on former railway track.

As PC Madsen and Cllr Gilbank were not present for Agenda item 10, when the Village Green boulder issue was discussed, the Chair advised that there had been a discussion and Council had made a resolution to leave the boulders in their existing position. The Chair advised that all Parish Council resolutions are corporate decisions and must be upheld by all councillors.

Parish Council resolved to note the report from PC Madsen.

18) Neighbourhood Warden report

The Parish Clerk reported that he had just received the monthly statistical performance report.

PC Madsen assured the Parish Council and residents that regular liaison took place with the Neighbourhood Warden Team to identify issues.

19) To agree date and time of next meeting

Thursday 16 July 2015, 7.00pm at St. Mary's Church meeting room.

The meeting closed at 21.15hrs

Signed:

Date: