

West Rainton and Leamside Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on

18 September 2014 at Jubilee Hall, West Rainton at 7.00pm

Present: Councillors R Swinney, M Gilbank (Chair), A Swinburn, I Clifford, E Bulmer, V Gibson and F Duckworth.

In Attendance: County Councillor S Guy; 10 members of the public (MoP)

Clerk to the Council: Graeme Keedy

The meeting was not recorded

1) Welcome to new parish clerk

Councillor Gilbank welcomed the new clerk, Graeme Keedy to his first meeting of the Parish Council.

2) Apologies for Absence

An apology had been received from Councillor K Graham.

3) Declarations of interest

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

4) Public participation

A MoP asked that she be provided with a copy of the Parish Council's certified audit of accounts. Councillor Gilbank advised that the annual return was currently with BDO (external auditors) and added that when returned these would require elements of redaction for legal reasons. An update would be provided at the October meeting.

5) Minutes

The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 21 August 2014 were agreed as a true record.

Amendment to this minute agreed at Parish Council of 20 November 2014 to correct wrong date on original.

Signed:

Date:

6) Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

NOTE: At this stage in proceedings, standing orders were temporarily suspended and there was an agreed change to the agenda order. This was to enable Councillor Guy to provide an update relevant to agenda item 10 as he was unable to attend the for the full duration of the meeting.

For continuity purposes, the minutes follow the original agenda order.

7) Police report

PCSO Cheryl Gilley had called into Jubilee Hall prior to commencement of the meeting and left a supply of written updates for the Parish Council. These were circulated to those in attendance and the contents noted by the Parish Council.

8) Neighbourhood Warden report

No report had been received.

9) Disruption at Funeral

The Chair outlined events he had witnessed on 2 September when a funeral cortege had experienced access difficulties to the cemetery due to vehicle obstructions. Discussions took place to identify possible resolutions to prevent a recurrence arising.

Suggestions and comments from elected members and MoP's included:

Exploration of possible alternative access routes; erection of temporary bollards or signs providing notification of funerals; acknowledgement of ongoing access issues and the need for resident parking solutions; practical difficulties in gaining access to cemetery for those with mobility impairment (especially the elderly); advance notification of funerals (and weddings) to nearby residents; improved communication between funeral directors and the church; consider notification of funerals via Parish Council website (when functional).

As a first step, it was agreed that from 22 September, the Parish Clerk would send advance email notification of funerals to those residents in the immediate vicinity of the cemetery. Parish Clerk to be notified by members of residents email contact details where known.

Signed:

Date:

10) Planning

County Councillor Guy advised the meeting that the retrospective planning application for the traveller's site had been rejected and an enforcement notice served requiring relocation.

Councillor Guy added this had subsequently been appealed by the applicant but he had not been notified of this by officers. He advised that there was deadline of 29 September for further representations to be made.

Councillor Gilbank informed the meeting that he and Councillor Swinney had met with Durham County Council officers on range of issues relating to the planning application, leading to a joint investigation by Environmental Health and the Environment Agency into land contamination issues.

Standing orders were suspended and a wide ranging discussion took place involving elected members and MoP's about a perceived lack of professionalism in the County Council's planning department.

It was proposed by Councillor Swinney and seconded by Councillor Swinburn that the views of all Parish and Town Clerks in County Durham be sought to gain knowledge of their experiences with the County Council Planning department and to use these as a platform for concerted complaint to the Chief Executive.

Further discussions and a suggestion from County Councillor Guy that the Council's formal complaints process may serve as a more effective approach was acknowledged.

It was agreed, that the Parish Clerk would, in due course write to the County Council outlining the Parish Council's concerns.

11) Finance

The financial report was received and payment of expenditure agreed.

12) Communications

Councillor Gilbank sought approval for the Parish Council to purchase a second laptop computer. The existing laptop would be transferred to the Parish Clerk for use on Parish Council business. A second laptop would assist the Chair in the fulfilment of his duties. This was agreed.

Authority was sought to purchase a mobile phone contract for the Parish Clerk for exclusive use on council business. It was agreed that the Clerk would research a suitable deal with provider EE (who would provide a discounted fee to the parish council) to a maximum cost ceiling of £20-00 /month.

Signed:

Date:

12) Communications cont

The Chair reported that he expected the Parish Council's web site to be operational during week commencing 22 September.

13) Cemetery

The quotation for grass cutting for £120-00 was agreed.

The agenda item to consider an increase in cemetery fees was deferred. The clerk would email details of current costs to members for information.

It was agreed that the purchase of a new seat would not be progressed.

It was reported that Durham County Council have rebuilt the memorial wall due to safety issues.

14) Donation requests

The following decisions were made:

Donation to West Rainton and Leamside School - in abeyance.

Payment of pitch fees to West Rainton and Leamside Football Club - agreed.

Amended invoice from West Rainton and Leamside CA - in abeyance.

15) Village Green issues

Councillor Duckworth declared a possible interest in this matter and did not take part in the discussion or decision making process.

The Chair reported that there were various tree related problems and he had arranged an inspection and obtained a quote for remedial works. It was agreed by the Parish Council that the work be authorised at a cost of £600-00. It was noted that this amount was below the £2000 threshold which would trigger a tender exercise.

16) Heritage Garden

Elected members and MoP's expressed a range of views and possible solutions associated with long running problems at this site.

These included: development of a long term improvement plan; ad hoc maintenance; and the need for a "whole" village plan. MoP's also expressed concern about the lack of money allocated to Leamside in contrast with this site.

Signed:

Date:

16) Heritage Garden cont

It was agreed that Councillor Bulmer seek an estimate of work and costs for repairs, improvement and maintenance to the Heritage Garden site.

17) Training

It was agreed that the Chair, Vice Chair and Parish Clerk attend 3 x Autumn training sessions organised by the County Durham Association of Local Councils at a cost of £243-00.

18) Correspondence

Correspondence was received.

It was agreed that Councillor E Bulmer would act as the Parish Council's representative at West Rainton and Leamside Village Partnership.

Following receipt of a recommendation from County Durham Association of Local Councils, it was agreed that standing orders be amended to waive the prohibition on photographing, recording or transmitting the proceedings of a meeting. This was in light of changes made through the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014.

Councillor Duckworth asked about protocols to be put in place around filming. It was agreed that the Parish Clerk would seek advice.

19) Other business

a) Following a query, the Chair reported that the costs for elections were:

£3500 without polling cards; £5500 with polling cards.

To date this year, the Parish Council had spent £7000 on elections.

b) It was agreed that the Parish Clerk explore arrangements with Durham County Council for the calculation of HMRC liabilities on clerk's salary.

Signed:

Date: