

# **West Rainton and Leamside Parish Council**

**Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on**

**23 October 2014 at Jubilee Hall, West Rainton at 7.00pm**

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

**In attendance:** 7 members of the public (MoP)

**Clerk to the Council:** Graeme Keedy

The meeting was not recorded.

## **1) Apologies for absence**

Apologies had been received from Councillor A Swinburn; County Councillors S Guy and D Hall, PCSO C Gilley.

## **2) Declarations of interest**

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

## **3) Public participation**

A member of the public (MoP) queried the attendance record of an absent councillor and asked if the member would now be disqualified from office.

It was agreed that the Parish Clerk would investigate.

Members of the public raised queries around:

The costs of elections to the Parish Council and the need for the electorate to be aware of these; the reasons for elected members resigning from the Parish Council; the tenure of Councillors who had been elected outside of the full elections held in 2013; and the process for considering co-options should further vacancies arise.

Councillor Gilbank outlined the costs of elections and added that he was keen to make these widely known due to the strain this was putting on the Parish Council's budget.

Signed:

Date:

### **3) Public participation continued ...**

He added that some members had resigned as they were uncomfortable with recent changes to legislation which allowed the routine filming or recording of Parish Council proceedings.

The Parish Clerk explained his understanding that co-options to Council could only be considered if there were no nominations notified to the Returning Officer at the end of the statutory notice period. The Parish Clerk explained that the term of recently elected councillors would be to 2017 when full elections would next be held.

### **4) Minutes**

The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 18 September 2014 were agreed as a true record and were signed by the Chairman.

### **5) Matters arising**

The Parish Clerk reported that since the 18 September meeting, he had established that a Durham based accountancy practice had an established arrangement with the Parish Council to calculate the cost of HMRC issues associated with salary. The Clerk suggested that the Parish Council would not therefore at this stage need to engage Durham County Council to fulfil this role as previously agreed. This was agreed by the Parish Council.

### **6) Resignations**

The Chairman reported that he had received written, formal resignations from Councillor Kay Graham and Councillor Fiona Duckworth.

### **7) Police report**

PCSO Gilley was unable to attend but she had submitted a written update.

There was uncertainty around the geographical area covered by the report. It was agreed that the Parish Clerk seek clarification from PCSO Gilley.

### **8) Neighbourhood Warden report**

No report had been received. It was agreed that the Parish Clerk would contact the Neighbourhood Team to find out the reasons the reports were no longer being provided.

Signed:

Date:

## 9) Finance

The Parish Clerk circulated details of income and expenditure he had identified since the 18 September meeting.

### Money in:

Stuart Wright Funeral Service	£300.00
Durham Stonemasonry and Restoration	£50.00

### Cheque payments for expenditure for Parish Council approval:

Jones Boyd Accountants – 2 @ £84.00	£168.00
Durham County Council	£120.00
North East Regional Employers Organisation	£2160.42
West Rainton & Leamside CA – 3 @ £10.00; 1 @ £37.50	£67.50
Durham County Council	£3139.24
Ferndale Services – 1 @ £190.00; 1 @£95.00	£285.00
BDO LLP (external auditors)	£240.00
Smith of Derby – 1 @£218.40; 1@£66.00	£284.40
Tristan Brown (Ogemo1 Bespoke Culture)	£600.00
County Durham Association of Local Councils	£27.00
Parish Clerk salary (1/09/14 -10/10/14)	£464.80
Post Office (for HMRC)	£116-00
Parish Clerk travel expenses - 1@£7.30; 1@ £7.00	£14.30
Parish Clerk - for postage stamps	£12.72
Parish Clerk - for FoI response postage	£4.30
Total cheques - 22	<b>Total costs £7703.68</b>

The Parish Clerk sought approval to pay all itemised expenditure which included some accounts outstanding since Spring 2014. This was agreed by the Parish Council.

Signed:

Date:

## **9) Finance continued ...**

The Parish Clerk reported that he was unable to provide a full and accurate financial statement as the most recent bank statement available to him was May 2014. Co-op Bank had advised the Parish Clerk that the four digit access code provided to him was invalid and they were at this stage only able to deal with the previous clerk as she remained their registered contact. The Parish Clerk added that there were also issues around authorised signatories due to changes in the composition of the Parish Council.

Following telephone discussions with Co-op Bank and their subsequent instructions, the Parish Clerk had written to them on 16 October outlining the Parish Council's circumstances and requesting early access.

The Parish Council acknowledged the position and agreed that the Parish Clerk should continue dialogue with Co-op Bank to gain account access as soon as practicable in line with the bank's security and other procedural requirements.

## **10) External Audit by BDO**

The audited Annual return for the financial year ended 31 March 2014 was presented to the Parish Council together with the Issues Arising report.

It was proposed by Councillor I Clifford and seconded by Councillor R Swinney that the Annual Return and Issues Arising report both be approved and accepted by the Parish Council. This was agreed.

It was further agreed by the Parish Council that the Parish Clerk produce an action plan to address the issues identified in the Issues Arising report.

Councillor A Wallage raised a query around the value of fixed assets. It was agreed that the Parish Clerk would examine the asset register for 2011/ 2012 for comparison purposes and ensure the asset register was reviewed and brought up to date.

## **11) Post Office consultation**

A discussion took place around the proposals to relocate West Rainton Post Office.

Main concerns identified were around potential intimidation by youths congregating in the vicinity, and restricted access caused by indiscriminately parked bicycles and scooters.

It was agreed that the Parish Clerk respond formally to the Post Office in response to their consultation with details of the Parish Council's concerns.

Signed:

Date:

## **12) Heritage Gardens**

Councillor E Bulmer introduced a briefing note which outlined options to address some of the long standing maintenance and aesthetic issues at this site.

A discussion took place around the historic issues at this location including a view that the original contractors should be pursued. Councillor I Clifford suggested that course of action should not be a priority at this time and this was agreed. Councillor M Gilbank undertook to review the file of correspondence on this matter in due course.

The Parish Council agreed that options 1 and 5 from the range of options tabled by Councillor E Bulmer would be initial priorities for possible commencement in January 2015; but that a decision on progressing and engaging the contractor be deferred to the November meeting when the Parish Council's financial position was expected to be clearer.

## **13) Donation request**

The Parish Council agreed to defer to the November meeting a request from West Rainton and Leamside Green Group for a donation of £250.

## **14) Planning update - The Stables**

It was reported by Councillor M Gilbank that a Judicial Review to be heard by the Secretary of State was scheduled for February 2015 and would be held in Bristol.

## **15) Environmental issues**

Councillor M Gilbank provided an update on various environmental works carried out in the area. A MoP commented positively on work undertaken in Leamside.

Councillor A Wallage asked that consideration be given to allocating a future budget amount for tree maintenance.

**Parish Clerk's note:** At its' meeting held on 20 November 2014, Parish Council agreed that the reference to "Leamside" in paragraph 1 of agenda item 15 be corrected to read "West Rainton".

## **16) Remembrance Sunday**

The Parish Council agreed that Councillor M Gilbank liaise directly with the Royal British Legion for the purchase of a wreath to the value of £30-00.

## **17) Christmas Tree**

A suggestion from Councillor M Gilbank to purchase a Christmas Tree for display at a site within West Rainton was agreed in principle but a decision to proceed was deferred to the November meeting; and would be subject to cost implications and the Parish Council's financial position.

Signed:

Date:

## **18) Governance review**

Councillor R Swinney advised that he had been in contact with officers at DCC about formally changing the Parish Council name to incorporate "Leamside". He explained that the initial advice he received was that a formal request and payment of a nominal fee were required.

The Parish Council agreed that the Parish Clerk should make a formal enquiry about the necessary process.

## **19) Notification of County Durham Association of Local Councils AGM**

The Parish Council agreed that Councillors M Gilbank and A Wallage would represent the Parish Council at the CDALC AGM to be held on 8 November.

## **20) Correspondence**

C Cochrane, West Rainton and Leamside Green Group: request for grant of £250.00

**Refer to agenda item 13**

K Fingleton, Area Youth Worker (for Youth Club): request for grant of £1000.00

**Parish Clerk to contact requestor to advise deferral to November meeting.**

Durham County Council:

Garden Waste Service posters - request to display

**Noted and held for later display**

Winter salting routes leaflet **Noted**

Durham City Homes update **Noted**

Information Commissioner's Office: various re FoI complaint **Noted**

Freedom of Information request: request for Parish Council minutes and Planning Appeal correspondence. **Parish Clerk to action**

Complaint: 2013/2014 Accounts

**Parish Clerk to advise complainant to refer to Durham Constabulary**

Durham Area Action Partnership: "It's Up to You" Community Chest

**Counc M Gilbank to produce and circulate grant submission.**

County Durham Association of Local Councils:

LGS pay proposals **Noted**

Durham Association News **Parish Clerk to circulate to members**

Signed:

Date:

## **21) Exempt business**

Resolved: That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the said Act:

## **22 ) Consideration of feedback**

Members considered written details and comments made at a recent meeting during which the views of a parish council member, acting in their private capacity were discussed. It was not possible to resolve opposing viewpoints with some members disassociating themselves from these actions with one indicating they may resign.

The meeting closed at 9.50 pm

**Date and time of next meeting:** Thursday 20 November 2014 at 7.00 pm

Signed:

Date: