

West Rainton and Leamside Parish Council
Minutes of Parish Council meeting held on
Thursday 21 May 2015

Present: Councillors E Bulmer, I Clifford, M Gilbank, S Patterson (left the meeting after item 14), A Wallage (Chair).

7 x member of the public (MoP)

In attendance: Parish Clerk - Graeme Keedy

NOTE: The meeting was not filmed or audio recorded.

1) Apologies for absence

Written apologies received from Cllr A Swinburn (due to work commitments) were approved by the Parish Council.

No apologies had been received from Cllr A Sowerby and this was noted as unapproved.

Apologies had also been received from County Councillors Hall and Kellett.

2) Declarations of interest

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

3) Public participation

MoP queried expenditure on a possible £3000.00 ring-fenced cemetery maintenance budget she was aware of. Parish Clerk undertook to look at historical records to determine if the budget existed and how this amount had been spent.

A MoP expressed concern at the open cast appeal and sought support from West Rainton Parish Council. Cllr Wallage advised this matter would be raised in the following agenda item.

A MoP referred to Pitlington Parish Council's request for a boundary change. The Parish Clerk advised that he was aware of a potential Community Governance Review and that Durham County Council (DCC) would keep West Rainton and Leamside Parish Council up to date and involved with any developments.

A MoP queried if the Parish Council were acting as trustees for the Jubilee Hall. MoP was advised that this was not the case.

Signed

Date

4) Opencast appeal Preliminary inquiry meeting

Cllr Wallage advised that she had attended a meeting on 29 April at County Hall.

This outlined the planning inspectorate process which would lead to a Hearing on 29 September 2015. She explained that third party representations were welcomed from individuals, groups and organisations.

Cllr Wallage added that the Parish Council was committed to working with the group 'Stop the Opencast in Pitlington and West Rainton' (STOPWR) who were coordinating the campaign against proposal. She added that it was a priority to raise awareness of the proposals and for STOPWR to also liaise with Hetton Town Council and Sunderland City Council.

5) Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 April 2015 were approved as a correct record by the Parish Council.

6) Matters Arising

The Parish Clerk provided an update on the following topics:

Citizen's advice – Parish Clerk had contacted Citizens Advice Durham to explore options in view of the increased annual fee requested. These included the cessation of the service, and reductions to the provision of the outreach service to once or twice a month. Parish Council noted that the provision of the service twice per month would incur only a slightly higher fee to that charged in 2014-15. Parish Council resolved that this would be the preferred option and agreed that soundings would be taken at the Annual Parish meeting.

Noble's Funfairs – contact awaited.

Street furniture – Bill Kitching at DCC had undertaken to liaise with colleagues in Neighbourhood Services to try and identify DCC owned street furniture.

Speed checks Pit House Lane – Clerk had received notification from Durham Constabulary that checks would be carried out in June.

Fly Tipping Cameras – D. Riseley had advised that County Cllr Hall had secured a camera for Sherburn. It was agreed that the Parish Clerk would contact Cllr Hall for more information.

7) Police Report

Parish Council resolved to note the report.

8) Neighbourhood Warden report

Parish Council resolved to note the Durham Monthly performance report for April 2015.

Signed

Date

9) Community Association Trustees meeting

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

Cllr Gilbank expressed concern at an editorial item from the Community Association published in the Summer edition of West Rainton and Leamside Village News.

Cllr Gilbank requested that Parish Council consider action or representation in response to the article.

As some elected members had not seen the item, it was agreed that the Parish Clerk would copy and circulate to all members and to bring the matter back to the June meeting.

10) Heritage Garden

Parish Council resolved to approve the report and expenditure requested. This included expenditure of £183.00 to be funded from mainstream council funding as this aspect of work fell outside of the scope of the grant funded project.

It was noted that Houghall College had offered plants at trade prices and should be considered as a supplier.

11) Village Green

Parish Clerk reported that he had received some information and historic documentation from DCC about registration of Village Green, however this did not provide a comprehensive picture.

Parish Council resolved that Parish Clerk make enquiries with the Land Registry over three small pockets of Village Green and incur any necessary expenses in line with delegated authority.

12) Environmental and Neighbourhood issues

Cllr Gilbank gave an update on a variety on environmental issues that he had identified and was following up. This included the sourcing of new benches, notice boards and flower tubs. This could potentially form a bid from the second phase of Community Chest grant funding.

Parish Council resolved that cost details be identified and that these be considered along with other possible projects.

He added that the County Council were considering enforcement action relating to the condition of the Mason's Arms.

Cllr Gilbank suggested that memorial plaques be purchased for Heritage Garden seating for former Cllr Kathleen Carr and former Clerk Elizabeth Briggs. He undertook to research potential costs and notify the Clerk.

Signed

Date

13) West Rainton Cemetery

Cllr Gilbank raised issues around maintenance and longer term cemetery capacity. Parish Council resolved that the Clerk should research the availability of external expertise to provide advice and guidance on these matters.

Parish Clerk advised that he had received an enquiry from Durham Stonemasonry on behalf of a customer who, after a period of several years wished to install a surround on a relative's grave in addition to an existing headstone.

Parish Council resolved there would be no additional costs as the customer had previously paid the appropriate prevailing rate at the time of the initial work.

Following a query from the Clerk in response to a public enquiry, Parish Council confirmed that it was not policy to reserve burial plots in advance.

14) Budget 2015/2016

Parish Council resolved to note and approve the budget for 2015/16.

An updated budget position statement showing the balance brought forward from 2014 / 2015 and spend to date would be presented to a future meeting of the Parish Council.

15) Parish Clerk Working Arrangements

Parish Clerk introduced this agenda item but left the room to enable open discussion. In his temporary absence, Parish Council agreed that Cllr Clifford would minute this item.

Cllr Wallage had reviewed the Parish Clerk's monthly working hours and these were averaging a minimum 63 hours/month. She reported that budget provision existed for up to 25 hours/week.

Parish Council resolved:

To increase the Parish Clerk's contractual hours from 10 to 15 hours/week with effect from 1 June up to 31 March 2016.

To request the Clerk to continue keeping a record of monthly working hours and to report back to Parish Council at the end of Q1 (April – June) when payment for any additional hours would be considered.

To authorise payment of an additional 21.00 hours worked by the Clerk during Q4 (2015).

Signed

Date

15) Parish Clerk Working Arrangements cont ...

It was noted that BACS would be an appropriate method of payment of Clerk's salary if this was possible.

Parish Council agreed to look at the potential for additional support for specific projects and sourcing external expertise. Consideration would also be given to appoint 'lead' members for specific projects.

16) Audit Arrangements

Parish Clerk advised that internal audit was expected to take place week commencing 8 June and that draft annual return for financial year ending 31 March 2015 would require approval by 30 June.

17) Finance

Income and expenditure since 16 April 2015 meeting

Money in:

Dignity Funerals £100.00

Co-op current account balance @ 20 May 2015: £35154.70

Cheque payments for expenditure for Parish Council approval:

Parish Clerk net salary May 2015 £343.17

Post Office (HMRC liability on Clerk's salary) £85.80

Parish Clerk reimbursement:

Currys PC World Black toner £58.48

Travel costs to collect toner £3.80

HP Printer paper offer (2 x 500) £6.50

Punch pockets (2 x 25 @ £2.00 / pack) £4.00

Postage costs -

FoI request 1 £2.78

FoI request 2 £4.40

FoI request 3 £3.90

Co-op Bank £1.84

Sub-total Parish Clerk re-imburement: £85.70

West Rainton & Leamside CA (room hire cost for Jubilee Hall – 16 April 15) £30.00

D Lewins May 2015 payment £80.00

SLCC Enterprises Ltd (inv.117296) - for Regional Conference (June) attendance by Clerk £41.40

County Durham Association of Local Councils (inv. 26/16) - annual subscription 15/16 £445.37

Leamside Nurseries ("emergency" grass cutting - Cemetery) £300.00

Cheques: 8 Sub-total: £1411.44

Signed

Date

17) Finance cont ...

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

Mr A Baker (labour costs – 38 hrs)	£570.00
Mr A Baker (materials – fixings)	£30.82
Durham Timber Products (40 x fencing panels)	£91.00
Wilf Husband (2 tonnes x topsoil)	£48.00
Total cheques Heritage Garden: 4	Sub-total: £739.82
Combined total cheques: 12	Total: £2151.26
Anticipated current account balance after above approved expenditure:	£33003.44
Co-op deposit account balance @ 20 May 2015:	£15014.25

The Parish Clerk sought approval to pay all itemised expenditure.

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

18) Parish council surgery

Cllr Gilbank suggested that Parish Councillors consider holding joint occasional surgeries with County Councillors.

Parish Council resolved that this suggestion be introduced at the Annual Parish meeting to gauge public interest.

19) Grant application policy and process

Cllr Wallage introduced the draft process and explained that this had an emphasis on fairness and transparency.

Parish Council resolved to approve the policy and procedure subject to a minor adjustment to indicate that grant awards would typically be up to £250.00. It was noted that the previously agreed application form would require some changes to ensure consistency with the approved policy.

20) Councillor Vacancies

Parish Clerk advised that he had received an expression of interest (EoI) after the informal deadline date published in Village News.

Clerk recommended that as this was an arbitrary date set by himself to meet newsletter distribution deadlines, the EoI should be accepted.

Cllr Gilbank objected on the grounds that this approach flouted the Equalities Act 2010. Parish Clerk advised that he was unaware of any aspect of this legislation which would negate his recommendation.

Signed

Date

20) Councillor Vacancies cont ...

It was proposed by Cllr Wallage and seconded by Cllr Clifford that a vote be taken on the resolution: 'that the application be accepted and no further applications be accepted after the Parish Council meeting of 21 May'.

There were three votes in support, one against. The vote was carried.

Parish Council resolved that the Clerk contact members of the previously agreed panel to agree a date to interview candidates.

21) General Correspondence

Due to the lateness of the hour, Parish Council resolved to delegate to the Clerk decisions relating to items of correspondence.

Durham County Council: Commercial Trade Waste Service; C Durham Plan News

County Durham Association of Local Councils:

Vacancies for Veterans Advisory and Pensions Cmtee members. **Circulated**

Council Tax Base and Localisation of Council Tax Support Grant Explained:
Training course at County Hall, 24 June 2015

Delivering Differently Initiative – 17 June deadline. **Clerk to circulate**

Crowdfunding **Clerk to circulate**

Chairmanship Training – Darlington 10 June **Clerk to liaise with Chairman**

Z Dewdney Parsons re Play Scheme **No action required**

Information Commissioner's Office – investigation **Clerk addressing**

Durham Community Action: Carers Week; Volunteering Awards **Circulated**

Local resident 1 - various emails re Parish Council procedural issues:

Clerk addressing on an ongoing basis

Local resident 2 - re tree in South Street **Previously circulated - for info only**

Local resident 3 - re condition of cemetery grounds:

Clerk responded –previously circulated

22) To agree date and time of next meeting

Thursday 18 June, 7.00pm at St. Mary's Church meeting room.

Signed

Date

23) 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 12 A of the said Act.

24) Award of West Rainton Cemetery grass cutting contract

The Parish Clerk tabled a sealed bid.

There had only been one bid received. Parish Council resolved to accept the bid submitted by Leamside Nurseries.

The meeting closed at 22.15hrs.

Signed

Date