

West Rainton and Leamside Parish Council

Draft minutes of Parish Council meeting held at

St. Mary's Church Meeting room, West Rainton

Thursday 17 September 2015

Present: Councillors E Bulmer, I Clifford, M Gilbank, S Graham, I Haddick, P Lowrie, P Morson, S Patterson, A Wallage (Chair).

8 x members of the public (MoP)

In attendance: County Councillor Kellett

Parish Clerk - Graeme Keedy

NOTE: Cllr Gilbank audio recorded the meeting for personal use.

Cllr Wallage audio recorded the meeting for official purposes.

1) Acceptance of Office

Newly co-opted Councillors S Graham, I Haddick, P Lowrie and P Morson each signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and Undertaking to observe the Code of Conduct. These were witnessed, signed and dated by Graeme Keedy, Parish Clerk.

2) Apologies for absence

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

An apology was received from County Cllr D Hall.

3) Declarations of interest

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

4) New Members of the Parish Council

Cllr Wallage introduced new councillors and welcomed them to their first meeting of the Parish Council.

5) Public participation

Members of the public raised concerns about cemetery maintenance including grass cutting, alleged damage to headstones and potentially dangerous potholes. A MoP queried the amount of expenditure on cemetery maintenance in 13/14 and 14/15.

The Parish Clerk advised MoP's that he would provide more information on the cemetery under item 18 of the agenda.

Signed

Date

6) Minutes

Parish Council resolved that the minutes of 16 July 2015 Parish Council meeting be approved as a correct record.

Parish Council resolved that the minutes of the Extraordinary meeting held on 10 September 2015 be approved as a correct record.

7) Opencast Appeal:

Cllr Wallage thanked Cllrs Clifford and Gilbank for their assistance with recent leaflet distribution. Cllr Wallage reported that the Parish Council hosted a meeting at Jubilee Hall on 2 September on behalf of STOPWR campaign group. Prominent speakers at the event included Roberta Blackman-Woods MP who had attended to provide her support to the opposition to the opencast plan and Steve Leary, Co-ordinator of the Anti-Opencast Network. There had been no supporters of the plan at the meeting.

Cllr Wallage emphasised the importance of the Planning Inspector being able to see the strength of opposition to the plan. She added that it remained the policy of the Parish Council to oppose the plan following community opinion expressed at earlier meetings on the subject.

8) Parish Clerk update

Parish Clerk advised that updates would be covered under substantive agenda items.

9) Finance

Money in since 16 July 2015 meeting:

Co-operative Funeral Care (burial – J McCabe)	£100.00
Derek Moss Funerals (burial - PJ Lawson)	£100.00
Wades Memorials (re Matthews)	£50.00
Co-operative Funeral Care (burial – J E Harle)	£300.00
HJM Memorials, Spalding (re Arries)	£50.00
Co-op current account balance as at 16 September 2015:	£24,262.10

Expenditure requiring approval since 16 July 2015 meeting:

Parish Clerk net salary - Sept 2015 (new rate of £10.26/hour - incremental progression)	£533.50
Post Office (HMRC liabilities)	£133.40
Parish Clerk reimbursement:	
Postage costs – Documents to a Councillor	£0.74
Documents to Durham Constabulary	£2.61
First Class stamps x 6	£3.78
Second Class stamps x 12	£6.48
Sub-total postage costs:	£13.61
Stationery – Tesco: 2 x A4 HP paper offer	£6.00
50 x DL envelopes	£1.50

Sub-total other costs: £7.50

Total Parish Clerk reimbursement: £21.11

Other costs:

Leamside Nurseries: Grass cutting 10 September 2015	£156.00
Supply of plants for Heritage Garden	£85.00
David Lewins (September payment)	£80.00
West Rainton and Leamside CA (Hire of Jubilee Hall for STOPWR meeting)	£45.00
Northumbrian Water (Cemetery water charges for June – Aug 2015)	£13.96

Signed

Date

9) Finance cont

The Sign Maker (plaque for Heritage Garden) £304.62

Jones Boyd Accountants (payroll service Jul - Sept) £84.00

Total other costs: £768.58

Total cheques: 9 Total combined expenditure: £1456.59

Anticipated current account balance after above approved expenditure: £22805.51

Co-op deposit account balance @ 15 September 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.

10) VAT reclaim process

The Parish Clerk reported that he had been unable to trace any documentation relating to a VAT reclaim for 2013- 2014 made by the Parish Council nor anything to indicate if any such payment had been made to the Parish Council.

He had however been able to research the process for claiming back VAT and this was something he would act upon at the earliest opportunity.

11) Annual Return 2014 - 2015

The Parish Clerk advised that the documentation expected from BDO (External Auditors) had not been received in time for the meeting. It was resolved that this item be included on the agenda for the October 2015 meeting.

12) Donation/Grant requests

Cllr Wallage outlined the position with the request from West Rainton Football Club (WRFC) for a donation to cover the cost of pitch fees.

Due to the cut off date of 30 September for the Parish Council to consider all grant applications received, the timing of the WRFC application was out of synchronisation.

It was noted that any delay in considering their application would risk late payment to Durham County Council and exclusion from the league.

Parish Council resolved to agree a donation of £513.00 to WRFC for pitch fees, subject to the return of the formal, signed declaration confirming the use of the amount for the intended purpose.

Cllr Graham offered to liaise with WRFC about other possible funding sources which may be beneficial.

Signed

Date

13) Staffing and Resource issues

The Parish Clerk introduced the report accompanying this agenda item. As there were implications for him the Parish Clerk then left the room to enable open discussion. In his temporary absence, it was agreed that Cllr Clifford would minute this item.

The Chairman reported that the Parish Clerk had indicated his intention to step down from the role. The Chairman expressed regret at his decision: Mr Keedy had been a significant asset to the Council in what had been a difficult year due to the gap between the departure of the previous Clerk and his appointment.

The Chairman summarised the report and that Parish Council should note that budget provision had previously been agreed for 2015-16 of payments for staffing of up to 25.00hrs / week.

The Council was advised that Pittington Parish Council had a Clerk on a 12 hours per week contract and Coxhoe (a much larger council) had a full time Clerk. It was noted that the previous Parish Clerk had a contract for 8 hours per week, however, since that time increasingly complex issues needed to be resolved and the Council is determined to achieve Foundation Level of the Local Council Awards Scheme as soon as possible.

Parish Council resolved that:

*The vacancy for a new Clerk for 10 hours per week be advertised as soon as possible.

*An interview panel of 3 Councillors with full delegated authority from the Council to appoint a Clerk be formed. The Panel to report the outcome of the appointment process to Council at the meeting to be held on 15 October 2015.

The Panel would comprise:

Cllr Wallage - as Chairman with a need to have a good working relationship with the Clerk.

Cllr Clifford - as Vice Chairman, with a personnel and recruitment background.
Cllr Bulmer or Cllr Lowrie subject to their availability.

The current Clerk be part of the process to assist the panel but would play no part in decision making.

*A Project Officer role be created to resolve the developmental issues outlined in the report on a Fixed Term contract to 31 Mar 2016 for 10 hours per week, and that this post be offered to Mr Keedy (the current Clerk).

NOTE: This was acceptable under employment law in that new posts could be offered to existing members of staff before external recruitment was explored. This arrangement would have the additional benefit of an extended period of expert advice for the new Clerk.

14) Learning and Development for Councillors

Cllr Wallage expressed her keenness for new members to receive adequate training to support them in their roles.

Signed

Date

14) Learning and Development for Councillors cont..

The Parish Clerk advised that he had supplied new councillors with a range of reference materials as a "starting point". He asked new members to get in touch with him in the event of any queries relating to the workings of the Parish Council and to notify him of any specific subject areas which they considered required more formal training.

The Clerk would be looking at a developing a structured training programme to assist. He drew attention to a recently notified Standards and Conduct training session to be delivered in November by the County Training Partnership and recommended their attendance.

Cllr Wallage outlined her wish to organise an "all Member" briefing event to consider the direction and aspirations of the Parish Council.

15) Parish Council website

Cllr Clifford reported that he had been working on getting the site up and running. He advised that developmental aspects of the DCC model site had presented some difficulties and he was working to resolve these. Details of Councillors preferred contact details were awaited via the Parish Clerk. The site would at that stage be ready to launch in its' basic format.

Cllr Wallage thanked Cllr Clifford for his work to date.

16) Community Association Trustees meeting

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

17) Heritage Garden

Cllr Wallage advised that the proprietor of the Italian Farm House has confirmed that he does not want a fence to be erected on the land adjacent to the garden, which they have advised is their land, as they wish to use this area for overflow parking.

Cllr Wallage provided an update on the response received from Keely Fingleton re the various queries around the Mining Heritage Sculpture. A photograph of the proposed sculpture was circulated and this generated discussion among members and members of the public.

Concerns were expressed about the poor aesthetic appearance of the sculpture, scale of the structure, durability of the materials to be used for construction, and the possibility of damage due to vandalism.

In view of the strong views expressed, Parish Council resolved not to support this project.

Accordingly, Parish Clerk was requested to notify Mid Durham Youth Project and John Murphy, AAP Co-ordinator of the Council's decision.

18) West Rainton Cemetery

The Parish Clerk introduced three aspects of business associated with the cemetery which required consideration:

Signed

Date

18) West Rainton Cemetery cont..

*A letter received from the specialist company Cemetery Development Services (CDS) outlining cost options associated with visits to discuss cemetery capacity, maintenance and records reviews.

Parish Council resolved that the Clerk contact CDS to engage them at a cost of £600.00 plus VAT. This amount to include a site visit, written report of options and budgets to address issues.

*Quotations received from two local contractors to provide "one off" maintenance works.

Parish Council resolved to engage Contractor "A" (Leamside Nursery) to carry out works. NOTE: Itemised costs to be reported under future Finance reports as and when invoices are submitted.

*Details of a training course run by the Society of Local Council Clerks – "Cemetery Legal Compliance" at a cost of £125.00 plus VAT.

Parish Council resolved that the Parish Clerk attend the course to be held at Spennymoor Town Hall on 8 October.

19) Village Partnership meeting - 16 September

Cllr Wallage advised that the next phase of DCC Community Investment Fund was to be launched at the Village Show on 19 September. £250k capital funding was available. Minimum £5000 application.

Councillors were asked to give some thought to potential projects that the Parish Council may wish to consider bidding for.

20) General correspondence

The Parish Council resolved to take the following actions in relation to correspondence received:

Resident – copy email corr. to DCC re complaint about attitude and behaviour of a Parish Councillor. **Noted**

Resident – email re traffic volume and speeding on old Sunderland Road.

Cllr Gilbank to provide Clerk with up to date information to enable response to resident.

Historic England: notification of recommendation to "list" WR war memorial.

Clerk to circulate to members for information.

Durham County Council:

Code of Conduct Complaints:

Decision Notice - formal investigation by Governance Solicitor **Noted**

Medium Term Financial Planning and 2016/17 Budget Setting

Clerk to copy to Chairman for information

Small Business Rate Relief credit **Noted**

PCC for Durham: re Community newsletter **Noted**

Signed

Date

20) General correspondence cont..

Durham County Carers Support:

Newsletter, AGM invite 16 Oct (Durham) and Patient Hospital Transport survey

Clerk to circulate

Durham Community Action: NHS North Durham Patient Congress -22/9 **Noted**

St. Benedict's Hospice – Donation request **Clerk has referred applicant to policy**

County Durham Association of Local Councils:

Register of interest forms – requirement to update

Previously circulated to members for attention

NALC - Parish Councils e Survey - 30 Sept **Copied to Chairman**

Durham Association and NALC newsletters – **previously circulated**

Code of Conduct and Standards training – 18 November 15

Members to respond to Clerk

Durham City Homes: Newsletter incl. inspection programme - 2 Oct

Previously notified to members

21) Village parking

Cllr Gilbank circulated photographs of incidences of indiscriminate parking at South Street / Hall Lane and sought Members views on action to be taken.

Discussion took place around legal implications, guidance provided in the Highway Code and the need for a common sense approach.

It was the generally held view that parking infringements were a matter for the Police. It was resolved that Parish Council take no action.

22) Police report

Parish Council resolved to receive the report submitted by PC Madsen.

23) Neighbourhood Warden report

This item deferred to October 2015 meeting.

24) To agree date and time of next meeting

Thursday 15 October 2015, 7.00pm at St. Mary's Church meeting room.

The meeting closed at 22.00 hrs.

Signed

Date