

West Rainton and Leamside Parish Council

DRAFT Minutes of Parish Council meeting held at

St. Mary's Church Meeting Room, West Rainton

Thursday 15 October 2015

Present:

Councillors I Clifford, M Gilbank, I Haddick, P Lowrie, P Morson, A Wallage (Chair).

3 x members of the public (MoP)

In attendance:

County Councillor Kellett

Parish Clerk - Graeme Keedy

Zoe Dewdney-Parsons (up to and including agenda item 7)

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

Cllr Wallage audio recorded the meeting for official purposes.

1) Apologies for absence

Apologies had been received from Cllrs E Bulmer (due to illness); Cllr S Graham (no reason provided) and S Patterson (recent bereavement).

The apologies from Cllrs Bulmer and Patterson were approved. The apology from Cllr Graham was not approved.

No apology had been received from Cllr A Swinburn and this was noted as an unapproved absence.

Clr Wallage reported that she had received a letter of resignation that day from Cllr A Sowerby.

2) Declarations of interest

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

3) Public participation

There were no issues raised by the members of the public present.

4) Minutes

Parish Council resolved that the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 17 September 2015 be approved as a correct record.

5) Legislative issues governing the Parish Council

The Parish Clerk introduced the item and provided background to dialogue with the elector on these matters.

The Parish Clerk advised that he was unable to provide definitive answers to the points being raised due to their detailed legal nature, but that it was essential that Parish Council gained a proper understanding of the legal position and sought advice to rectify any proven shortfalls.

Parish Clerk highlighted that in relation to the recent co-option process, strenuous efforts had been made to ensure that the procedure was robust, transparent and legally compliant; and that a challenge made to the originally proposed approach had been acted upon to overcome any suggestion of poor practice. He reminded Parish Council that these aspects had previously been brought to the Council's attention and discussed.

Parish Clerk outlined to Parish Council possible scenarios if it was resolved to suspend business; and additionally suggested a way forward to seek independent advice.

Following discussion among members, Cllr I Clifford proposed, seconded by Cllr P Lowrie that:

"Parish Council noted the issues highlighted by the elector and its' commitment to resolve these.

The Parish Clerk request County Durham Association of Local Councils to refer the issues raised to the National Association of Local Councils for opinion and advice.

Parish Council conduct business as normal."

Parish Council resolved unanimously to adopt the above proposal.

6) Cemetery update

Parish Clerk advised that a range of one-off environmental works had been started by Leamside Nurseries; he had attended the training course "Cemetery Legal Compliance" on 8 October; and that Cemetery Development Services were to visit the cemetery in early November.

The Parish Clerk was asked to determine where responsibility lay for the "topping up" of graves.

7) West Rainton Play Area

Zoe Dewdney-Parsons from the Play Scheme Group provided an update on developments with the School Avenue play area. Zoe reported that a social media petition supporting a need for improvements had reached more than 270 signatories.

7) West Rainton Play Area cont ...

Zoe added that recent correspondence she had received from Durham County Council confirmed that they had taken ownership of the land in Spring this year. The Parish Clerk advised that he had received similar confirmation in recent email dialogue from the County Council on the topic of the play area.

Zoe outlined the intention of the group to submit an application for grant funding and explained how inspection and maintenance arrangements may be delivered.

Parish Council expressed its' support for the scheme but expressed the view that it had no role as the site was not owned or funded by the Parish Council and therefore was not in a position to take responsibility for the play area, it's inspection or maintenance.

Following a specific request from Zoe, Parish Council resolved to provide a letter of support to the Play Scheme.

8) Budget position

Parish Council resolved to note the Q2 2015-16 budget position which remained on target.

Parish Clerk was requested to seek clarification on any individual charges for members relating to Data Protection registration.

9) Finance

Money in since 17 September 2015 meeting:

Derek Moss Funerals (memorial fee - A Robson)	£50.00
Andrew Grey Funeral Directors (burial - K Brown)	£100.00
Co-op current account balance as at 14 October 2015:	£22,392.69

Expenditure requiring approval since 17 September 2015 meeting:

Parish Clerk net salary - Oct 2015	£533.50
Post Office (HMRC liabilities)	£133.40
Parish Clerk reimbursement: Stationery – Tesco: 2 x A4 HP paper offer	£6.00
2 x 25 packs punch pockets	£4.00
Total Parish Clerk reimbursement:	£10.00

Other costs:

BDO (external auditor) Standard fee for review of Annual Return 14/15	£240.00
Smith of Derby (Service visit – St. Mary's Church Parish Clock)	£224.40
Society of Local Council Clerks (Clerk attendance at Cemetery Mngt. course)	£150.00
Jones Boyd Accountants (payroll service Oct - Dec)	£84.00
Leamside Nurseries: Grass cutting 1 October 2015	£156.00
Cemetery: Tree pruning and de-mossing	£260.00
Cemetery: Path edging, grave top ups and mound flattening	£296.40
David Lewins (October payment)	£80.00
Communicorp (Clerks & Councils Direct - subscription renewal for 11 members @ £12.00)	£132.00
Mr A Baker (maint. work - Heritage Garden 17 Aug - 10 Oct - 21hrs @ £15/hr)	£315.00
Total other costs:	£1937.80

Total cheques: 13 Total combined expenditure: £2614.70

Anticipated current account balance after above approved expenditure: £19777.99

Co-op deposit account balance @ 14 October 2015: £15019.03

The Parish Clerk sought approval to pay all itemised expenditure.

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

Parish Council also resolved to approve the addition of Cllr I Haddick as a bank account signatory

10) Annual Return 2014 - 2015

The audited Annual Return 2014-2015 was presented to Council.

Parish Council resolved to approve and accept the Annual Return.

Parish Council received the Issues Arising report and resolved to produce an action plan to address the issues raised.

11) 2016 -2017 Budget

Cllr Wallage outlined the need to consult with stakeholders over spending priorities and sought the views of Parish Council on how this could be approached.

Suggestions included liaison with the Village Partnership and the use of electronic surveys via the soon to be live website. It was acknowledged that there was a requirement to work with partners to develop a longer term vision.

As a starting point, it was agreed that the Chairman raise the topic at a future Village Partnership meeting.

12) Appointment of Parish Clerk

Cllr Wallage advised that in line with the decision made by Parish Council at the 17 September meeting, the 3 member panel met on 13 October to interview candidates.

Cllr Wallage reported that subject to the receipt of satisfactory references and completion of essential employment checks, the post of Parish Clerk had been offered to and accepted by Kate Cuthbert. The appointment would take effect from 1 November 2015. Cllr Wallage added that Kate was also a Parish Clerk at another Council in the county.

13) Opencast Appeal

Cllr Wallage reminded members that she had previously circulated details of the Parish Council's submission. Cllr Wallage added that she had attended the hearing on a daily basis during the first week along with County Cllr Kellett.

It was noted that no date had been announced for a decision.

14) Donation / grant requests

The following applications were considered by Parish Council in line with agreed policy:

St. Mary's Parochial Church Council – request for £200.00 for hire of 2 x portable toilets for Big Lunch event – 5 June 2016.

Parish Council resolved to defer a decision to after the November 2015 deadline for 16-17 funding applications - the September deadline relating to funding requests for 15-16 financial year only.

1st Rainton Gate Rainbows and Brownies – request for £250.00 as a contribution towards December 2015 pantomime trip. Parish Council resolved to approve this request in full.

Mayor's Office, City of Durham – unspecified amount for unspecified purpose.

Parish Council resolved to reject this application as insufficient information provided.

Parish Clerk to contact each applicant to notify of the Parish Council's decision.

15) West Rainton War Memorial

Parish Clerk gave details of a request he had received for an additional inscription. Parish Council resolved to agree to the request in principle and requested that the Clerk seek details of costs from a stonemason(s).

Parish Clerk advised that Heritage England were continuing with their efforts to obtain "listed" status for the war memorial.

16) Community Chest Funding

Cllr Wallage sought the views of Parish Council on potential projects for capital bidding.

Cllr Gilbank suggested a bid be submitted for the replacement of 17 benches within the Parish Council boundary. After discussion, scope widened to incorporate installation of dog waste bins, litter bins and "gateway" planters. Parish Council agreed that Cllrs Gilbank and Morson would seek quotations and work up a bid application in conjunction with the Parish Clerk.

A further suggestion came from Cllr Wallage and related to seeking a capital investment fund amounting to £20,000 for the Parish Council to administer for minor projects. Parish Council agreed that Cllr Wallage develop a bid application for this aspect.

17) Community Association Trustees meeting

Due to the absence of Cllr Swinburn, this item was unable to be considered. In view of the timescale which had elapsed since this topic was first included, Parish Council resolved not to carry this item forward again.

18) Village News

Cllr Wallage requested Parish Council views on items for inclusion in the Winter edition.

Suggestions included: appointment of new clerk, co-option of new councillors; grant application deadline for 16/17.

The Parish Clerk agreed to circulate details of Village News editorial deadlines to members.

19) Heritage Garden

Cllr Wallage advised that the project was now in the maintenance phase. Costs remained on budget, but there had been an increase in labour costs due to the milder weather during September. Cllr Wallage reported that the Parish Council would not receive the £500.00 match funding grant associated with the Mining Sculpture due its' withdrawal of support for that project. However a £500.00 budget underspend would be used for solar and Christmas lighting.

20) General correspondence

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

Local resident – re maintenance of path and steps

Clerk to seek quotation for repair

Durham Community Action – Young People's Events October 15 half term

Clerk to circulate

Durham City Homes – Neighbourhood Pride project **Clerk to circulate**

Durham County Council- Winter vehicle health checks and MoT's **Clerk to circulate**

County Durham Association of Local Councils:

AGM – 24 October – appointment of 2 x reps **Cllrs Gilbank and Wallage to attend**

20) General correspondence cont.

Possible funding opportunities **Clerk to circulate**

Elections for NALC Smaller Councils Committee **Noted**

Safe Durham Partnership – Bonfire Strategy **Clerk to circulate**

Durham PCC - Family Fun Day -31 October **Clerk to circulate**

21) Police report

No report had been received.

22) Neighbourhood Warden report

Parish Council resolved to no longer include this as a routine item.

23) To agree date and time of next meeting

Thursday 19 November 2015, 7.00pm at St. Mary's Church meeting room.

The meeting closed at 22.00 hrs.