

West Rainton Parish Council

Draft minutes of Parish Council meeting held at

St. Mary's Church meeting room on

Thursday 21 July 2016

Present:

Councillors I Clifford (Vice Chairman), M Boettcher, C Cochrane, I Haddick, P Lowrie and P Morson.

3 x Members of the Public (MoP)

In attendance: Parish Clerk - Graeme Keedy

NOTE: The meeting was not filmed or audio recorded.

1) Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs M Gilbank (hospital visiting outside of area), S Patterson (holiday commitment) and A Wallage (holiday commitment). Parish Council resolved to approve these absences.

No apology had been received from Cllr A Swinburn.

His absence was noted as unapproved.

An apology for absence had also been received from County Councillor Bill 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

A MoP advised that she had come along specifically to offer her positive comments about the improved condition of the cemetery grounds. The Chairman thanked the resident on behalf of the Parish Council for taking the time to attend and provide feedback.

4) Minutes

Parish Council resolved that the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 16 June 2016 be approved as a correct record.

5) Key Councillor contacts

Parish Clerk explained that it would be helpful for a Member to act as a key, locally available contact for matters affecting the cemetery and Heritage Garden.

Signed:

Date:

5) Key Councillor contacts cont ...

The former prompted by recent issues relating to the unexpected cessation of grass cutting, and the latter to fill the role previously fulfilled by former Cllr E Bulmer.

Parish Council resolved that Cllr I Haddick act as the key contact for Cemetery and Cllr A Wallage for Heritage Garden.

6) Village Partnership representation

Parish Clerk explained that former Cllr E Bulmer had been the Parish Council's representative, but following her resignation, a replacement was now required.

Parish Council resolved that Cllr M Boettcher represent the Parish Council at the Village Partnership.

7) Village Partnership update

Parish Council resolved to receive and note the report submitted by Cllr Wallage.

8) Cemetery update

Parish Clerk reported that grass cutting had resumed following the June meeting and was again being cut on an approximately fortnightly cycle. He advised that a call for volunteers to assist with collection of grass cutting as agreed at June meeting had led to only very limited public participation.

Cllr Boettcher asked that thanks be offered to Cllr Wallage for co-ordinating the clear up and attending each session; to Cllrs Gilbank and Morson for their assistance; and to those residents who had kindly taken part. This was agreed.

Parish Clerk added that Cemetery Development Services (CDS) had now concluded utility searches in the cemetery grounds and had provided an initial plan identifying in the region of 400 plus new burial plots.

Parish Clerk undertook to examine this in more detail and provide details of his observations to CDS.

To conclude his update, Parish Clerk advised that he had raised a query with Head of Technical Services at Durham County Council relating to the location of A690 drains and their knowledge of any drainage issues affecting the cemetery. When a response was received, this would complete the picture and enable plans to proceed with confidence.

9) Budget monitoring report - Q1 2016 - 2017

Parish Council resolved to receive the report and note the current budget position.

Signed:

Date:

10) Finance

Part A: For information:

Income since 16 June 2016 meeting:

Co-op Funeralcare: Burial Fee - late R Kelly - £200.00

Co-op Funeralcare: Burial Fee - late H M Huntley - £300.00

Scott Memorials: Memorial fee - late H M Huntley - £50.00

Expenditure

Expenditure previously approved by Parish Council due this month

	Payee	Purpose	Amount
1	G Keedy	Clerk / Project Officer net salary - July 16	£840.88
2	Post Office	HMRC combined liabilities (Tax/NI) on empl. salary.	£338.12
3	D Lewins	Cemetery Gatekeeper Fee – July 16	£80.00
4	Cemetery Development Services	Utility searches- West Rainton Cemetery	£300.00
5	WA Churches Action Stn.	Office Rental:22/6 - 29/7	£120.00
6	Leamside Nurseries	Cemetery Grass cutting – 23 June 2016 28 June 2016 29 June 2016 11 July 2016	£156.00 £239.20 £239.20 £239.20

Part B: Expenditure requiring approval

	Payee	Purpose	Amount	Budget Provision
7	Parish Clerk reimbursement	HP LaserJet printer repair: MEGA PC's, South Shields Stationery (plastic wallets, printer paper, notepad), USB cable: ASDA Postage costs (signed for) - Audit papers to BDO. Envelopes x 50: ASDA Stamps: 12 x 1 st Class Total:	£35.00 £18.00 £2.37 £0.75 £7.68 £63.80	Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes
8	A Simpson Accounting and Financial Services	Internal Audit for 15-16	£190.00	Yes
	TOTAL: A and B		£2806.40	

Part C: Bank Balances – For Information

Total Expenditure included above	£2806.40
Anticipated current a/c bank balance if all paid	£29578.19
Reserve Account Balance	£15023.74

Parish Council resolved to:

- Note income, expenditure and bank balances reported for information
- Approve expenditure listed in Part B

Signed:

Date:

10) Finance cont ...

Following a request from the Parish Clerk that additional signatories be sought for the authorisation of Co-op Bank cheques, Parish Council resolved that Cllrs P Lowrie and P Morson be added to the list of approved signatories.

Parish Clerk undertook to provide the necessary paperwork to them and requested that it be completed, signed and returned to him as soon as possible.

11) August recess

Parish Council resolved to receive and note the report which was tabled to support this item and agree payment of the known expenditure identified below:

Parish Clerk / Project Officer net salary (August)	£691.10
Post Office (HMRC liabilities on Clerk salary)	£91.61
D Lewins (August payment)	£80.00
Leamside Nurseries (3 x anticipated cuts @£239.20 pre 18 August)	£717.60

12) Police report

Parish Council resolved to receive and note the report submitted by PCSO Robin Raymond.

13) Councillor vacancy

Parish Clerk reminded Parish Council of the vacancy arising from the resignation of Cllr E Bulmer.

Due process had been followed and the Parish Clerk had been advised by Electoral Services at Durham County Council that the vacancy could now be filled through co-option.

Parish Clerk outlined the previously approved process. Parish Council resolved to advertise the vacancy with a closing date for expressions of interest of Friday 2 September.

At this stage, Parish Clerk would assess the volume and this would inform his view if it was practicable to include the co-option as an agenda item for the 15 September 2016 meeting or if an Extraordinary meeting would need to be convened.

Parish Clerk reported that former Cllr Bulmer had asked for her resignation letter to be read out at the meeting. Parish Clerk advised that this was not usual practice and there was no legal obligation to do so. He advised that if it was the wish of Parish Council, the content could be read out, but with the identity of any third party referenced withheld.

Cllr I Haddick proposed that the content of the letter be read out. This was seconded by Cllr P Lowrie.

Following a vote by show of hands, there were three votes in favour and three abstentions. The proposal was carried.

Signed:

Date:

13) Councillor vacancy cont ...

Cllr Clifford read out former Cllr Bulmer's resignation letter, withholding the name of any third party in line with the advice given by the Parish Clerk.

A councillor commented on the requirement for all members to act in an appropriate manner.

Parish Council resolved to note the content of the resignation letter.

14) Appointment of Parish Clerk

Cllr Clifford advised that in line with the decision made by Parish Council at the 16 June meeting, the Appointment Panel had met following receipt of applications.

Cllr Clifford reported that after interview and 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 Mark Ramshaw. The appointment would take effect from 1 September 2016.

Parish Council resolved to approve the decision of the Appointment Panel.

15) Parish Plan

Parish Clerk reported that the first formal meeting of the Steering Group had taken place on 13 July.

Key elements discussed at that meeting had included the timeline leading to finalisation of the plan in March 2017 and the need to identify and engage stakeholders.

During general discussion, the following points were made:

The need to ensure value for money; the importance of engaging young people; looking at innovations in other areas; timescale considered ambitious.

Parish Council formed the view that rapid progress was required with the identification of community priorities.

Parish Council resolved to note progress to date.

16) Christmas 2016 celebrations

Parish Clerk introduced the previously circulated report provided by Cllr Wallage.

Discussion took place around the practicalities of using battery operated lights for a larger Christmas tree. Parish Clerk was requested to contact Durham County Council Technical Services for advice on possible installation of a power supply. It was suggested that a grant application be considered to meet costs involved.

Signed:

Date:

16) Christmas 2016 celebrations cont ...

Parish Council resolved to:

Book Pittington Brass Band for Monday 19 December;
Book Jubilee Hall for Monday 19 Dec - provisional 6.30pm to 9.30pm subject to confirmation of availability of band;
and
Place an order for a 16ft Christmas tree with Lake Lane Farm.

17) Parish Clerk update

Parish Clerk reminded Members that under item 15 of the June 2016 meeting, a letter about the display of the English flag purporting to have been sent by Cllr Gilbank had been discussed. Parish Council had resolved that this be referred to Durham Constabulary.

Parish Clerk reported that he had received a response from PC I Madsen advising that the matter would not be progressed and that they had informed Cllr Gilbank of their position and reasons for this.

Parish Clerk further advised that following initial Police advice, a statement had been published on the Parish Council website disassociating the Council and Cllr Gilbank from the letter.

Parish Clerk referred to a comment made by a member of the public at the June meeting inferring that staff resources at West Rainton Parish Council were disproportionate in comparison with Great Aycliffe Town Council. For clarification, the Parish Clerk had subsequently emailed all Members with an organisation chart for Great Aycliffe showing a staff establishment of around 80.

He advised that a Member had responded to receipt of this information by suggesting that a neighbouring parish council would be a better comparison. Parish Clerk advised Council that he was aware that staff resources at other Parish Councils were experiencing similar pressures to that of West Rainton.

18) General correspondence

Letter from MoP re actions of a Parish councillor:

Parish Clerk advised that following circulation of this agenda item, Cllr Gilbank had been in touch with him to request that this item be deferred to the September meeting.

Parish Council resolved unanimously not to defer this item of correspondence.

Parish Clerk reported that he was in ongoing dialogue with the resident over the issues raised.

Signed:

Date:

18) General correspondence cont ...

After discussion, Parish Council were clear that individual councillors were not in a position to act independently and expressed continued dismay at the reported actions of Councillor Gilbank.

In so doing, Cllr Gilbank was in clear breach of the Parish Council's Standing Orders which were supported by the National Association of Local Councils Legal Topic Note 1 - "Council's Powers to Discharge their Functions."

Parish Council resolved to:

Censure Cllr Gilbank for his actions on this occasion as described in the resident's letter;

and

Re-inforce the requirement for collective responsibility whilst serving as Members of the Parish Council.

Email from West Rainton CA - funding position. **Received and noted.**

County Durham Association of Local Councils (all items previously circulated):

June newsletter **Noted.**

NALC STAR Councils Awards 2016 – deadline 31 July **Noted.**

NALC weekly bulletins – 1, 8 and 15 July **Noted.**

Parish Council agreed to a request from the Parish Clerk for permission to table the following item of correspondence which he had inadvertently omitted from the report:

Email from MoP seeking support from Parish Council to an objection made to plans for a Community Hub in new housing development.

(Parish Clerk had responded and advised the MoP of Parish Council position.) **Noted.**

19) Change of meeting venue

Parish Council resolved to change the meeting venue to Arden House (subject to availability) to accommodate greater numbers attending Parish Council meetings.

20) Date and time of next meeting

Thursday 15 September 2016 at 7.00 pm, venue TBC.

GK 11 08 2016

Signed:

Date: