

NORTH LODGE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Virtual Meeting of North Lodge Parish Council held at Park View School, Lombard Drive, Chester-le-Street on Tuesday 17th November 2020.

PRESENT: Chairman: Councillor Jackie Gregory.
Councillors: Margaret Caygill, Elsie Forrester, Maureen May, Patrick Driscoll, Dennis Hall, John Waugh.
County Councillor: Craig Martin.
Clerk: David Murrell.

The Chairman commenced the meeting by welcoming everyone. Councillor John Waugh was not present at the start of the meeting.

Item 1. 20/77 Apologies for Absence

Councillor John Waugh had sent his Apologies for his expected late arrival at the meeting.

Item 2. 20/78 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Elsie Forrester declared an interest in a donation request from Durham Cathedral, part of Agenda Item 8(b).

Item 3. 20/79 Report of the County Councillor

The Chairman invited County Councillor Craig Martin to give his report which included the matters contained in his written report below -

Care Homes Update

I continue to request a review into the large number of Covid related deaths in County Durham so that we can find ways to protect the elderly with the onset of future waves. This has been refused by the portfolio holder and the Council's scrutiny function stalls on pushing the matter further. While Durham County Council yet again asks care homes to take on Covid positive patients, in the same buildings as our most vulnerable.

Multiple avenues have now been approached to get Durham County Council to review how it handled putting Covid positive patients into our care home system. I've directly challenged the chief executive and director of service after pulling together an emergency meeting on the subject. They object to a review, not wanting to use any staff for such a process, taking them away from their already current extremely busy schedule.

It is appreciated the countless hours of hard work the Council's adult services team are putting in right now. But it would be neglect to have no consideration on what we could have done better to save more lives and protect the lives of many more in the future. All we want is some basic statistical analysis to discover if the introduction of Covid positive patients, despite care homes best efforts to prevent the spread, has been a major factor in deaths. Something Durham County Council maintain has not been a significant factor. Durham County Council have recently put out the request to block book beds again for Covid positive patients. Although previously, the Council have stated this is something they would not continue to do. They point to government guidance on the reason care homes are being asked again. When I've reviewed the source documentation, the government is asking for local authorities to prepare beds for elderly that are Covid positive over winter. Not to put them in care homes that also house residents that are not infected.

This is all being done without even notifying the portfolio holder that this is occurring. I have concerns that the Council's political leadership is not directly overseeing and keeping an eye on what is happening in this crucial sector at this crucial moment in time.

I believe that there are much more safer options to prepare for a winter Covid wave. Better use of community hospitals to quarantine Covid positive individuals. While care homes have signaled the idea of 'dirty care homes' to house those that are infected. Care homes that are block booked for the sole use of residents that are Covid positive to ensure true segregation for those that need protecting.

Double taxation

We proposed a review into the unfair situation tax payers face in parished areas. That many town and parish councils run services that Durham County Council would normally provide in unparished areas. This results in residents paying a precept on top of their council tax not just to receive additional services but for the same services.

The motion called to investigate the cost for the significant double taxation situations that parish and town councils have. This was rejected by the Council. Where parish and town councils feel that a service should not be run by themselves Durham County Council will happily take control of it. But they warn that Durham County Council may run it to a lower level of service than what the town/parish council currently offer.

There are multiple solutions to ending this unfairness tax payers face. With the simplest being grants paid to town and parish councils based on their double taxation scenario. Allowing them to reduce their precept and end the unfairness. An opportunity was missed to parish the whole of County Durham when the unitary authority was created.

In addition, 1) Re double taxation, Cllr Caygill considered that the provision of facilities by the Parish Council for play areas, horticulture, bus shelters and the environment was an enhancement to the work done in the Parish by the County Council. 2) Re Section 106 money and the School, the County Cllr advised that the School had still not received funding from the County Council for the refurbishment of the toilets. The Chairman asked the County Cllr to keep the Parish Council updated regularly on this and any other local matters. 3) Re Section 106 money and Drum artwork, the County Cllr advised that the School had agreed to produce designs but this had been delayed due to the pandemic. 4) Re Section 106 money and Sustrans, Councillors agreed that there could be an opportunity to contribute towards possible new Sustrans projects for a new access ramp at Low Flatts and to re-paint the North Road bridge. The Chairman asked for a volunteer to represent the Parish Council, along with the County Cllr, in approaching Sustrans. Cllr Caygill kindly offered to take on the role and this was accepted with thanks. 5) The Clerk is to contact the County Council Planning Development Manager to ascertain why none of the Section 106 money has yet been released.

The Chairman thanked the County Councillor for his report.

Item 4. 20/80 Adoption of Minutes of Meeting

The Minutes of the Virtual Meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 20th October 2020, draft copies of which had been previously circulated, were adopted as a true and accurate record of the Meeting and would be duly signed by the Chairman.

Item 5. 20/81 Chairman's Report

Regarding outstanding matters -

Re Minute 20/71 section d). Re the proposal for a new seat on North Road in the vicinity of Kingsmere, Cllr Caygill gave an update on possible sites and asked Councillors to view these.

The Chairman's report included the matters contained in her written report below -

Outstanding matters

Council e-mail addresses to be decided at tonight's meeting.

The four new notice boards have been erected. Contact details of the local MP (these will be removed 6 months before a general election) and Post Office Christmas posting dates for December will be displayed. I will continue to source other relevant community information. If any of the Councillors have any leaflets for display, please contact David.

The faulty notice board has been collected and returned to the company.

Outstanding cheque for the County Durham Benevolent fund: Mrs Overfield contacted me and stated that she would forward her home address so that a new cheque can be forwarded to her. As of yet, no details have been received. I will continue to pursue this matter and update in due course.

On Sunday, 8th November, I attended the Chester-le-Street Remembrance Service and placed a wreath on behalf of the Parish Council. Although there were restrictions due to the Covid 19 situation, the whole process was well organised.

With regard to the Car Crime in the North Lodge area, a full report will submitted under the Crime and Community Safety section.

I intend to submit a proposal to the Council to consider replacing the bus shelter to the north of Picktree Village. This shelter is in a poor state of repair and needs replacing.

This Council year has been very different. Due to the epidemic and associated restrictions it has also been a very difficult time for of us all. I hope that 2021 may be a more successful year.

Be safe and take care.

Re the Remembrance Service, Cllr Caygill asked if other Councillors could be invited in future years in addition to the Chairman, and this request was noted.

Councillors thanked the Chairman for her report.

Item 6. 20/82 Portfolio Holders' Reports

The Chairman invited Cllr Caygill to give her report which included the matters contained in her written report below -

a) Play Areas

MERLIN DRIVE

All equipment appears to be in good order.

The prickly perimeter weeds appear to have been cut.

LOW FLATTS

All equipment appears to be in good order. A new Covid notice has been put in place by DCC as requested. The dangerous Blackthorn bushes growing through the play area fence have been removed and I have asked for the weeds etc to be strimmed on the whole fence to prevent further dangerous growth.

The hedge at edge of the field appears to have been cut again by DCC.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Caygill for her report and invited Cllr Hall to give his report.

b) Policy and Governance

Cllr Hall advised that there were no matters to report.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Hall and invited Cllr Forrester to give her report.

c) Publicity

Cllr Forrester advised that there were no matters to report except that she would be attending AAP and CDALC meetings within the next week.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Forrester for her report and invited Cllrs May and Driscoll to give their report which included the matters contained in the written report below -

d) Horticulture

NORTH LODGE PARISH COUNCIL

Report to Council 17 November 2020
Portfolio: HORTICULTURE
Prepared by: Councillor Maureen May
Sent to Clerk on: 17 November 2020

Winter Bedding

Summary

The planting of winter bedding in the Parish has now been completed by Durham County Council.

Raised Shrub Beds (2) North Road

Summary

These two shrub beds have still not been attended to. DCC assures me that they will be done within the next two weeks.

Leaf Clearing, North Lodge

Summary

Trebor Ltd have quoted £180 per visit. As it is late in the year now, two visits will be acceptable - November and December.

Recommendations

Parish Councillors to agree that the two visits should take place.

Christmas tree, Picktree Village.

Summary

Durham County Council have agreed that we can go ahead with the above, based upon last year's assessment. The quotes that the Parish Clerk has received are as follows.

- Down to Earth £100 plus vat to erect the tree, hang the lights and dispose of the tree.
- Twizell farm to supply tree itself £100. Twizell trees are locally grown at their own wood.

Recommendations

Parish Councillors to agree to above costs.

New brighter lights (white) are bought as replacements for old ones.

North Lodge Entrance.

No alternative design yet received from Martin Briscoe.

Bill Board Site North Road

Martin Briscoe will visit site again, but because of such a small project for Durham County Council to attend to, they may be unable to clear out and plant wild flowers.

1) Re leaf clearing, Councillors agreed to the quote from Trebor Landscapes. 2) Re a Christmas Tree for Picktree Village, Councillors agreed to the quotes from Down To Earth Landscapes and Twizell Farm, and agreed to the purchase of new lights from the current horticulture budget. The Chairman asked if it would be possible to plant a living tree for future years. However, Cllrs May and Driscoll considered that the existing tree canopy would be a problem. 3) Re the billboard site, Councillors discussed options and agreed that, as the ownership of the land was not known and therefore permission could not be obtained, the Parish Council should not take any action to clear the land and/or sow wild flowers.

The Chairman thanked Cllrs May and Driscoll for the report

At this point, Cllr Waugh arrived at the meeting and he was invited to give his Finance report which included the following matters -.

e) Finance

Cllr Waugh advised that he had received the most recent financial information and was satisfied that the Council's finances were in order. He remarked that due to the pandemic there remained for the time of year a substantial sum in the bank accounts.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Waugh for his Finance report and invited him to give his Planning report which included the following matters -

f) Planning

Cllr Waugh confirmed that there had been very few new planning applications this month. He had been requested to ask the DCC Planning Enforcement Officer to investigate a potential unauthorised development at Low Flatts and he gave an update on this. Councillors agreed that Cllr Waugh should continue the enquiry with the Enforcement Officer.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Waugh for his report.

g) Highways and Website

Cllr Gregory advised that there were no matters to report.

h) Crime and Community Safety

Cllr Gregory gave her report which included the matters contained in her written report below -

NORTH LODGE PARISH COUNCIL

Report to Council on 17th November 2020

Portfolio: Crime and Community Safety

Prepared by: Jackie Gregory
Sent to Clerk on: 18th November 2020

1.0 **SUMMARY** (*Type brief details in 2/3 lines here*)

Monthly crime figures and community issues.

2.0 **DETAIL** (*Type fullest relevant information here*)

2.1. *Background:*

Inform Councillors and residents of crime incidents/trends for North Lodge. Crime prevention initiatives.

National Police web-site.

2.2. *Key Issues:*

Insufficient details included on the Police web-site

Car Crime on the Barley Gate Estate spilling over into the North Lodge Estate.

Council obtaining Information via social media and not directly from police.

Offensive Graffiti on stone wall next to C2C bridge North Road (west). Police and Durham County Council contacted.

Informing residents of traffic statics

Conclusions:

2.3 One male arrested for interfering with vehicles in the Barley Gate Estate area.

Bailed from court with conditions, until January 2021.

Graffiti now covered. Police will log incident as criminal damage, no further action at present, due to insufficient forensic evidence or any CCTV available.

Have contacted the police and to arrange a zoom meeting, with councillors in

the New Year to discuss communications issues.

Councillors to observe parish area for any further incidents of offensive graffiti

and report to the Parish Clerk . Police and Durham County Council will in turn be informed by the Clerk

Councillors agreed that the traffic statics when received should be placed on the Council web site.

RECOMMENDATIONS *(Select as appropriate)*

3.0 *See above*

IMPLICATIONS

4.0

Graffiti could cause a person distress and make them vulnerable. Unpleasant reading for residents and visitors. Need to vigilant and report any offensive words to Police. This may develop into a serious issue and all logged incidents may help to trace the culprit/s

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS OR APPENDICES:

N.A.

(Select as appropriate & give details)

Item 7. 20/83 Correspondence

1) From Durham County Council

- a) Letter re tax base 2021 / 2022.
- b) Letter re outstanding invoice.

2) Various planning applications, approvals and refusals from Durham County Council, of which the following was within North Lodge Parish:-

Application for proposed rear single storey extension & replacement render, at 15 North Lodge.

Item 8. 20/84 Items Requested by Councillors

a) A draft donation policy

The Clerk had previously circulated this document to Councillors who discussed it and agreed to its adoption subject to certain changes.

b) Outstanding donation requests

Before discussion of these requests, Cllr Waugh declared an interest in the request from the Great North Air Ambulance Service. Councillors discussed the two outstanding requests and agreed to make donations of five hundred pounds to the Great North Air Ambulance Service and one hundred pounds to Durham Cathedral.

c) Email addresses for Councillors

The Clerk advised Councillors of a quote received to provide seven email addresses although in fact eight addresses would be required. Councillors discussed this and agreed to implement the quote but amended for eight addresses.

d) Laptops for Councillors

The Clerk had previously circulated documents to Councillors who discussed them and agreed that it was not in the best interests of residents, Councillors or the Council to purchase laptops or other devices for the use of Councillors.

Item 9. 20/85 Payment of Accounts

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
Salaries	£ 464.04	Salaries November 2020	
Expenses	£ 90.00	Expenses November 2020	
DSJ Property Services	£ 570.00	Installation of Noticeboards	
D. Murrell (via Zoom inc)	£ 14.39	Monthly Subscription	£ 2.40
D. Murrell (via Internet-Ink.com)	£ 17.99	Printer Ink Cartridges	£ 3.00
Cty Dhm Assn of Local Councils	£ 45.00	Training Fee	
DSJ Property Services	£ 240.00	Installation of Noticeboard	
DSJ Property Services	£ 130.00	Horticulture at Low Flatts Play Area	
Great North Air Ambulance Service	£ 500.00	Donation	
Durham Cathedral	£ 100.00	Donation	

Total Payments £2171.42

(Resolved - the payments be approved as submitted).

Item 10. 20/86 Other Matters for Information

Cllr Caygill considered that the horticulture work carried out this month by DSJ Property Services should be included in the job description for a Gardener. The Chairman advised that it was the intention of the Council to wait for more normal circumstances before advertising for a Gardener and Environment Caretaker.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.20pm wishing everyone a peaceful Christmas and hoping for a better year in 2021.

North Lodge Parish Council

Accounts for the month as submitted to the Meeting of North Lodge Parish Council held on Tuesday 19th January 2021.

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
Salaries	£ 463.84	Salaries December 2020	
Expenses	£ 90.00	Expenses December 2020	
Salaries	£	Salaries January 2021	
Expenses	£ 90.00	Expenses January 2021	
HM Revenue & Customs	£ 415.60	P.A.Y.E.	
Mazars LLP	£ 240.00	Audit Fee	£ 40.00
J. A. Martin	£ 165.00	Chair's Allowance	
Society of Local Council Clerks	£ 130.00	Annual Subscription	
D. Murrell (via A.L.C.C.)	£ 40.00	Annual Subscription	
Trebor Landscapes	£ 180.00	Leaf Clearing	
D. Murrell (via Zoom inc)	£ 14.39	Monthly Subscription Dec 2020	£ 2.40
D. Murrell (via Zoom inc)	£ 14.39	Monthly Subscription Jan 2021	£ 2.40
D. Murrell (via Dobbies)	£ 59.96	Tree Lights	£ 9.99
D. Murrell (via Morrisons)	£ 14.00	Batteries for Tree Lights	£ 2.33
D. Murrell (via UKFast)	£ 28.99	Monthly Fee	£ 4.83
D. Murrell (via UKFast)	£ 186.00	Setup Fee	£ 31.00
S.E. Harrison & Sons	£ 120.00	Supply of Christmas Tree	£ 20.00
Down To Earth Landscapes	£ 120.00	Erect Christmas Tree & Lights	£ 20.00
Total Payments	£		

Balance to 30th November 2020

Balance b/f	£51556.19	Balances at Bank:-	
Deduct Payments - Nov. 2020	<u>£ 2171.42</u>	Treasurers Account	£ 1532.71
	£49384.77	Instant Account	<u>£48547.51</u>
		Total	£50080.22
Add Bank Interest Received	<u>£ .45</u>	Deduct cheques not yet presented	<u>£ 695.00</u>
	£49385.22		£49385.22
Balance c/f	£49385.22		£49385.22

Four cheques not yet presented -

- 1) £50 cheque number 1401 dated 2/09/20 for a donation payable to County of Durham School Benevolent Fund. This cheque replaced cheque number 1375 dated 21/01/20 which is now out-of-date.
- 2) £45.00 cheque number 1412 dated 17/11/20 payable to CDALC for training fee.
- 3) £500.00 cheque number 1413 dated 17/11/20 payable to Great North Air Ambulance for a donation.
- 4) £100 cheque number 1414 dated 17/11/20 payable to Durham Cathedral for a donation.