

## NORTH LODGE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Virtual Meeting of North Lodge Parish Council held on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

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

The Chairman commenced the meeting by welcoming everyone.

### **Item 1. 21/13 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillor John Waugh.

### **Item 2. 21/14 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **Item 3. 21/15 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 -

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**Chester-le-Street Market at Risk of Failing**

COVID restrictions and competition are putting the current lease holders of the market place at risk of failing. Currently two organisations run the market place. If one has to withdraw from the agreement, the whole contract is cancelled and new contracts will have to be drawn up.

Whatever happens, Durham County Council have committed to letting one of the organisations run the market on an ad hock basis. While a new contract is drawn up and new specification for running the market is created, in consultation with the community.

The Town Centre task group, a part of the AAP, were heavily involved in setting the terms of new lease agreement. From August 2019 the new specifications were designed to attract artisan and speciality goods. Banning trading from the ground, having uniform stalls, and increasing pitch fees to do this.

The former market holders did not wish to sign up to these new arrangements, who operated a different style of market. They have now taken to holding a regular market on the car park of the former Inn Shops, that is proving to be popular. Directly competing with the market place operators, adding to the pressures they already face.

The community may have a vision for what kind of market they want. But where people want to spend their money is what truly shows what shoppers want. We can't control the way the local economy works, just help to enable it to succeed. It took three attempts to advertise and find businesses willing to sign up to the new market arrangements in 2019.

My personal preference for the market is for it to become an events style market. Where farmers markets, food festivals, etc is arranged and heavily promoted. Giving a bit of a buzz around the town centre but without the need for organisations to commit to lengthy contracts they cannot fulfill. But this will ultimately be decided by the town through consultation.

## **End the Secrecy at County Hall**

I backed an attempt, by County Councillors, to create a process that brings council papers, hidden from public view, into the public domain. So that when the need to keep them secret no longer exists, they can be accessed. This proposal was rejected by the County Council.

As it stands part B papers (documents not available to the general public) are kept secret forever. The motion asked for part B papers to be listed and regularly reviewed. So that Durham County Council can be open and transparent about all the decisions it makes.

There is a need for reports on contractual arrangements to be concealed. There are some documents that can never be disclosed, such as those that contain personal information. But when the need to keep them secret expires, there is no reason why they shouldn't be released.

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The Chairman thanked the County Councillor for his report.

## **Item 4. 21/16 Adoption of Minutes of Meeting**

The Minutes of the Virtual Meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2021, 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. 21/17 Chairman's Report**

Regarding outstanding matters -

a) Re Minute 21/05 section c). Re leaf clearing at the entrance to Lambton Park, the Clerk advised that the contractor had now carried out the agreed second collection.

b) Re Minute 21/05 section d). Re setting up Council email addresses for Councillors, now that the project had been completed the Chairman thanked the Clerk for all his work in what had been a long and involved process.

c) Re Minute 21/08 section b). Re dog waste left on pavements, the Clerk had been advised by DCC Neighbourhood Wardens that they had put notices on lampposts in the Parish.

d) Re Minute 21/10. Re a replacement bus shelter at the north end of Picktree Village and a possible new one at the west end of Vigo Lane, updates were provided by the County Councillor and the Chairman. This matter is to be included in the Agenda for next month's Council meeting.

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

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## **Chairman's Report 16<sup>th</sup> February 2021**

We all continue with adhering to the rules for Covid-19.

Thanks go to Durham County Council and our County Councillor Craig Martin for delivering information to residents via postcards and leaflets on Covid-19. Both documents give telephone numbers for residents to obtain help, if needed.

You will also see, whilst on your daily exercise, information on Covid -19 prominently displayed in the Parish Council notice boards.

From 10<sup>th</sup> February lasting through until March, there will highway work in Vigo Lane and North Road. The traffic movement will be controlled by temporary traffic lights.

Finally, I am sure you will join me in sending the Council's condolences to the family of Captain Sir Tom Moore ( Hon. Colonel ). He was an inspiration.

Take care and be safe.

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Councillors thanked the Chairman for her report.

**Item 6. 21/18 Portfolio Holders' Reports**

**a) Highways and Website**

Cllr Gregory advised that all matters had been included in her Chairman's Report. The Chairman invited Cllrs May and Driscoll to give their report which included the matters contained in the written report below -

**b) Horticulture**

**Report to Council 16 February 2021**

**Portfolio: HORTICULTURE**

**Prepared by: Councillor Maureen May**

**Sent to Clerk on: 15 February 2021**

**Raised Shrub Beds (2) North Road**

I have contacted Graham Cozens, Durham County Council. He has replied, stating he has not forgotten about the shrub beds. Unfortunately his team is approximately four weeks behind with their schedule due to winter weather. The work will be done as soon as possible.

**Parish Council Horticulture**

As we still have no Gardener presently, I have written to Martin Biscoe asking if Durham County Council would be able to take over the Parish horticultural requirements for this year between April 2021 and March 2022. This being extra to their current Parish work, and how much extra it will cost.

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

**c) Play Areas**

Both play areas have been inspected and appear to be in good working order.

In addition, re cleaning of play equipment during the pandemic, advice will be sought from the DCC Leisure Services Technician.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Caygill for her report and invited Cllr Hall to give his report which included the following matters -

**d) Policy and Governance**

Cllr Hall advised that an updated version of the Governance Toolkit for Parish and Town Councils was expected to be issued soon. The Local Government Association has published a revised Model Councillor Code of Conduct.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Hall for his report and invited Cllr Forrester to give her report which included the following matters -

**e) Publicity**

Cllr Forrester advised of matters arising from the recent AAP meeting.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Forrester for her report.

**f) Finance**

In his absence from the meeting, Cllr Waugh had provided the written report below -

I have studied the financial information supplied by the clerk and confirm everything appears in order. We still have a substantial balance for what is close to the end of the financial year with no significant spending anticipated.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Waugh for his report.

**g) Crime and Community Safety**

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

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**Police and Community Safety Report 16<sup>th</sup> February 2021**

**Operation Hawk Eye.**

PCSO's attended Barley Gate and carried out security checks on vehicles. They were pleased with the results and the few cars that were unlocked, the residents were immediately informed.

The crime figures relating to vehicles for that area, have dropped .

**Information only, no action required from Council.**

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Councillors thanked Cllr Gregory for her report.

**h) Planning**

In his absence, Cllr Waugh had provided comments for consideration in Agenda Item 8a.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Waugh for his report.

**Item 7. 21/19 Correspondence**

1) From St Cuthbert's Hospice

Thank you for donation.

2) From Chester-le-Street Police

email re parked vehicles at Ambleside Court.

The County Cllr advised that he was pursuing this matter with the County Council and he advised Councillors of the usual action taken by the County Council in response to complaints received from the Police.

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

a) Retrospective Application for the construction of a shed for use as a rest area, at land to the north of Low Flatts Road and west of 92 Kingsmere.

b) Application for alterations to detached double garage to increase the height by 2m to provide an additional floor, installation of an external stairway and installation of photovoltaic panels & removal/replacement of a single tree, at Garden House, Picktree Lane.

c) Application for small extension to office building located on large secure compound, at Unit 34, Third Avenue, Drum Industrial Estate.

**Item 8. 21/20 Items Requested by Councillors**

**a) Retrospective Planning Application DM/20/03804/FPA**

Councillors discussed this Application and agreed by a unanimous show of hands to oppose the Application. The Clerk is to advise the Planning Officer accordingly.

**b) Proposal for a new seat on North Road near to Kingsmere**

Councillors discussed this request received from a resident and resolved on a majority of 5 to 1 on a show of hands not to proceed with the project. The resident is to be advised.

**c) The use of a template for Portfolio Holders' reports**

Use of the template had been previously trialled by Councillors. Cllr Hall, as the author of the template, considered that reports should always set out if a decision is required, should provide supporting information and should be circulated to Councillors in advance of the meeting. On a unanimous show of hands, Councillors decided to retain the use of the template as a choice of individual Councillors and to adopt the reporting principles set out by Cllr Hall.

**d) Re-painting the North Road bridge**

The Chairman outlined reasons for establishing this project as a Parish Council objective and suggested ways forward including a public meeting when circumstances allowed one. Cllr Caygill advised that Sustrans, the bridge owner, hoped to make some progress next month. The County Cllr suggested that funding would be required from multiple sources. Cllr Forrester kindly agreed to approach the AAP to enquire what help might be available there. This matter is to be included in the Agenda for the April Council meeting.

**Item 9. 21/21 Payment of Accounts**

<b>TO</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>	<b>REASON</b>	<b>VAT</b>
Salaries	£ 464.04	Salaries February 2021	
Expenses	£ 90.00	Expenses February 2021	
D. Murrell (via Zoom inc)	£ 14.39	Monthly Subscription	£2.40
UKFast	£ 28.99	Monthly Subscription	£4.83
Cty Dhm Assn of Local Councils	£ 20.00	Training Fees	
Trebor Landscapes	£ 180.00	Leaf Clearing	

**Total Payments     £ 797.42**

**(Resolved - the payments be approved as submitted).**

**Item 10. 21/22 Other Matters for Information**

- 1) Cllr Driscoll asked if there was any known change to the estimated completion date of March 2021 for the Highways England work at Picktree Lodge. The Clerk advised that March 2021 was still the quoted date on the Highways England website.
- 2) Re thinning of woodland by the County Council alongside the A693, Cllr Caygill advised that it appeared that warning signage that should have been in place was missing. The County Cllr will follow this up.
- 3) Cllr Caygill suggested that a new noticeboard should be installed at the new housing developments in Vigo Lane. The Clerk will enquire with the County Council as to whether or not the estate roads there are now adopted.
- 4) Cllr Forrester advised that a letter had been received from a resident re external lighting at a house on North Road. The letter is to be circulated to Councillors and the matter included in the Agenda for next month's meeting.
- 5) Cllr May reminded Councillors that the Council had four seats available. Councillors were encouraged to send to the Clerk any recruitment ideas.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 7.37pm.

**North Lodge Parish Council**

**Accounts for the month as submitted to the Meeting of North Lodge Parish Council held on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2021.**

<b>TO</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>	<b>REASON</b>	<b>VAT</b>
Salaries	£	Salaries March 2021	
Expenses	£ 90.00	Expenses March 2021	
D. Murrell (via Zoom inc)	£ 14.39	Monthly Subscription	£2.40
UKFast	£ 28.99	Monthly Subscription	£4.83
HM Revenue & Customs	£	P.A.Y.E.	
J. Martin	£ 165.00	Chair's Quarterly Allowance	
<b>Total Payments</b>	<b>£</b>		

**Balance to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2021**

Balance b/f	£43138.86	Balances at Bank:-	
Deduct Payments - Feb 2021	<u>£ 797.42</u>	Treasurers Account	£ 863.11
	£42341.44	Instant Account	<u>£41548.67</u>
		Total	£42411.78
Add Bank Interest Received	<u>£ .34</u>	Deduct cheques not yet presented	<u>£ 70.00</u>
	£42341.78		£42341.78
Balance c/f	£42341.78		£42341.78

Three cheques not yet presented -

1) £50.00 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) Two cheques for £10.00 each, cheque numbers 1428 and 1430 dated 16/02/21 payable to County Durham Association of Local Councils for on-line training fees.