

NORTH LODGE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of North Lodge Parish Council held at Park View School, Lombard Drive, Chester-le-Street on Tuesday 15th June 2021.

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

The Chairman commenced the meeting by welcoming everyone, particularly the resident and the County Councillor following his re-election. Councillor Forrester was not present at the start of the meeting.

Item 1. 21/57 Apologies for Absence

Councillor Elsie Forrester had given apologies for her expected late arrival at the meeting.

Item 2. 21/58 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Item 3. 21/59 Report of the County Councillor

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

Joint Administration Running Durham County Council

An alliance of Liberal Democrats, Independents, Conservatives, The North East Party and a Green Councillor are now running the Council. At the last local elections Labour lost their majority. Most of the other political groupings came together to form a cabinet.

The agreement made, treats each political group as an equal partner, no matter the number of County Councillors the group has. Cabinet will be made up of 3 Lib Dems, 3 Conservatives, and 4 Independents (recognising that they are made up of different groups). The leader of the Council will rotate each year between the political groups.

I am part of this joint administration and will use my position to get as much as I possibly can for our community. But there are many different individuals with different priorities in this alliance. I may not always get what I want from it. But I believe we will be much fairer than some of the decisions the previous administration made.

The Council have elected me as Chair of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board. My job is to have strategic oversight on the Council's scrutiny function. Leading the constructive criticism of the executive, to ensure they learn from their mistakes.

In addition, a) Following his re-election, the County Cllr thanked residents and the other candidates for taking part in the democratic process. He hoped and expected that Parish Councillors would approach him with any matters to be addressed, b) The County Cllr and Cllr Caygill are to hold a site meeting to inspect the condition of the A693 woods, c) Re the Drum pond, Councillors

disagreed with the recent findings of the Neighbourhood Wardens. The County Cllr will pursue the concerns with the County Council Environmental Protection Department, d) Re bridge painting and access points, a meeting with Sustrans would be sought once Sustrans had fully returned to work, e) Re artwork designs for Drum, the County Cllr would be progressing this with Park View School in September, f) In reply to Cllr Gregory, the County Cllr advised that there had been no change to the County Council's policy on outdoor smoking, the word "executive" in the report above referred to the County Council Cabinet not employees, the Cabinet would be reviewing the development of the new County Hall and the County Cllr outlined the funds available in his Neighbourhood Budget.

The Chairman thanked the County Councillor for his report.

Item 4. 21/60 Adoption of Minutes of Meeting

The Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 18th May 2021, draft copies of which had been previously circulated, were adopted as a true and accurate record of the Meeting and were duly signed by the Chairman.

Item 5. 21/61 Chairman's Report

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

A Future Business Items From Chairman:

Following on from the last meeting, the Reports below are in preparation for the meeting in July-
July Meeting Reports :-

Co options Report: *Policy: Improving Representation*

Improving Communications Report: *Policy: Enhancing Communications With Residents*

B Items for Discussion: (*Policy: Improving Community Engagement*)

I set as a goal the ambition of developing one or more community engagement projects. To that end I circulated after the last meeting the NALC 'Point of Light' Report which surveys the initiatives taken by other local councils across England. I have asked for feedback and ideas from members and this is set out below:

Member Feedback Received:

Youth Activity Schemes e.g horticulture projects

Parish Surgeries, Resident Outreach

Park View Youth Activities

Developing A Youth Horticulture Team

Civic Art - perhaps link to Bus Stops or Notice Boards?

Treeplanting Initiative

School Debating Society

Youth Civic Awards

PACT Scheme (Police & Community Trust)

Various Environmental Schemes

School Litter Picking Teams

Defibrillator Installation

Next steps (to announce following discussion/comment)

C Planned Activities:

Item(s): (to discuss):

Suggestions for Possible Invitations For Speakers:

- Planning and Environmental Enforcement

- How are s106 monies spent in the Parish?
- Re-establish the Parish Boundary Walk

Councillors discussed the development of community engagement projects.
At this point, Cllr Forrester arrived at the meeting.

Re section B Items for Discussion, re opening communications with the school, Cllr Caygill kindly agreed to assist the Chairman, Cllr May kindly agreed to assist on horticultural matters and the County Cllr kindly agreed to give his support wherever it was wanted. Re section C) Planned Activities, the County Cllr will ask if an officer from the Environmental Enforcement team would be available to address a future meeting of the Council. The Clerk is to contact Lambton Estates to seek permission for that section of a Parish Boundary Walk.

Item 6. 21/62 Portfolio Holders' Reports

a) Crime and Community Safety

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

Crime

Please refer to the Police UK website.

Community Safety

C2C Cycle Track, Picktree Lodge, North Lodge

Recent reports from social media indicate that youths are congregating on the C2C track under the newly furbished A1m bridge. They are allegedly drinking alcohol and verbally abusive to people using the cycle track.

On another occasion witnesses alleged that youths in the same area were seen to throw articles at vehicles using the A1motorway.

The dog waste bin has been destroyed.

C2C Cycle Track, Wheatsheaf Bridge, North Lodge

A separate report on social media, claimed that youths were allegedly throwing articles from the bridge on to vehicles using the A167. Police were informed at time of the incident.

Police and local street wardens have been informed of these incidents by the Parish Council. Both agencies have assured the Parish Council that they will regularly patrol both areas.

An update on the situation will follow in due course.

Graffiti in Bus Shelter, (no 13002200E) North Road North Lodge

There has been graffiti written on the inner wall of this bus shelter. Enquiries are in hand to find the culprit responsible. The writing will be removed.

Thanks to David for circulating 'In the Know'.

It is important that residents who witness any incidents must contact the police at the time instead of using social media. If they believe the incident is **serious** then use telephone number 999 otherwise use telephone number 101

In addition, Cllr Gregory thanked Cllr Driscoll for attending to the removal of the graffiti.
The Chairman thanked Cllr Gregory for her report and invited Cllr Waugh to give his Finance report which included the following matters -

b) Finance

Cllr Waugh advised that he had studied the financial information supplied by the Clerk and he confirmed that everything appeared to be in order. Councillors were encouraged to come forward with new projects requiring funding.

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

c) Horticulture

Summary

I have met face to face with Graeme Cozens, Durham County Council, for the first schedule meeting since the pandemic lockdown.

Items of priority discussed:

1. Jubilee Tree in Lombard Drive

Graeme will price for a circle of bedding plants (approx.60cm) diameter.

2. Broken Shrub Bed Wall at North Road

Price for repair will be sent to Parish Council

3. Picktree Lodge Entrance - Flower Beds

Durham County Council will be inspecting the condition and re-instating of the land.

Parish Council needs to agree on type of Horticulture design for the site.

A site meeting should be arranged and attended by all Parish Councillors, if possible, along with the County Council in order to facilitate an agreed outcome.

Recommendations

Site visit for item 3

Re a possible clearance of the North Road shrub beds, Cllrs May and Caygill are to consult with local residents to inform the Council's decision. Re the Picktree Lodge flower beds, a reply is awaited from the Highways England site manager regarding HE's intentions. Cllr Forrester advised that an overgrown tree was causing sight line problems for drivers at the North Road / Queensmere junction. The Clerk will contact the County Council to request that the tree be cut back.

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

d) Planning

Cllr Waugh advised that he continued to inform Councillors on a weekly basis of any new planning applications in the Parish and also to highlight any concerns. The County Council's investigation into the unauthorised development at a site north of Low Flatts Road had now been concluded.

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

e) Play Areas

I have inspected both Play Areas today and all equipment appears to be in good order.

The goal posts have been painted at Low Flatts and the grass has been cut.

At Merlin Drive the grass has been cut.

I am concerned that the safety surface is shrinking in several places and is standing proud of the path and making a trip hazard. Whilst I am aware that this play area is likely to be refurbished in the future, I feel the DDC should be informed.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Caygill for her report.

f) Policy and Governance

Cllr Hall updated Councillors re virtual meetings and a recent training event. The Clerk is to circularise a new draft Members Code of Conduct and a guide to Declaration of Interests. Councillors thanked the Chairman for his report and he invited Cllr Forrester to give her report which included the following matters -

g) Publicity

Cllr Forrester advised there had been no recent AAP meetings to report on although she would bring information once the meetings had recommenced. Cllr Forrester advised that at the recent meeting of CDALC Smaller Councils the new draft Code of Conduct had been discussed. The Chairman thanked Cllr Forrester for her report and invited Cllr Gregory to give her Website report which included the following matters -

h) Website

Cllr Gregory advised that the website was being kept up-to-date. Councillors were asked to put forward further policies for approval and then to be added to the website. The Chairman thanked Cllr Gregory for her Website report and invited her to give her Highways report which included the following matter -

i) Highways

Re parking at school leaving times, Cllr Gregory reminded Councillors that there were no parking restrictions on North Road. Councillors agreed that it would be helpful to review this with the County Council. The County Cllr kindly agreed to first discuss this with PCSO Taylor. The Chairman thanked Cllr Gregory for her report.

Item 7. 21/63 Correspondence

1) From Park View School

Email re damage to plants and re car parking at school leaving times.

2) From Durham County Council

Acknowledgement of donation to County of Durham School Benevolent Fund.

Item 8. 21/64 Items Requested by Councillors

a) The surrounds of the Jubilee Tree, Lombard Drive

Cllr May had discussed this with the County Council. Councillors agreed with the design proposal. A quote for the work will be obtained and circularised to Councillors for a prompt decision so that approved work can be carried out during the planting season.

b) Cleaning or re-painting of seats

The County Council will provide a quote for the cleaning of seats. Cllr Driscoll kindly agreed to review the condition of each seat.

c) Storage or disposal of horticulture tools

Councillors agreed that the tools should be donated. Cllr Caygill is to ask the school if the tools would be accepted for use by students in horticulture projects.

d) The Annual Newsletter

Cllr May gave an update on progress to date. Councillors thanked Cllr May for all her work so far.

Item 9. 21/65 Approval of the Annual Governance Statement

Councillors discussed the Annual Governance Statement for 2020 - 2021, copies of which had been previously circulated, and agreed to approve the Statement.

(Resolved - to approve the Annual Governance Statement for 2020 - 2021).

Item 10. 21/66 Approval of the Accounting Statements

Councillors discussed the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31st March 2021, copies of which had been previously circulated, and agreed to approve the Statements.

(**Resolved** - to approve the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31st March 2021).

Item 11. 21/67 Review of the Chairman's Allowance

At this point, the Chairman left the meeting and the Vice-Chair took the Chair.

Councillors discussed the Allowance and agreed that it should remain at the existing amount for the next year subject to any information being supplied by the Chairman to support a request for a change in the amount.

At this point, the Chairman returned to the meeting.

Item 12. 21/68 Review of the Clerk's salary and expenses

At this point, the Clerk left the meeting.

Councillors discussed a) the Clerk's salary and agreed that it should remain linked to the national agreement and b) the Clerk's expenses and agreed that the amount of payment should remain unchanged for the next year although the Clerk is to report to the Council should any concerns develop.

At this point, the Clerk returned to the meeting.

Item 13. 21/69 Payment of Accounts

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
Salaries	£ 463.84	Salaries June 2021	
Expenses	£ 90.00	Expenses June 2021	
D. Murrell (via Zoom inc)	£ 14.39	Monthly Subscription	£2.40
D. Hall	£ 165.00	Chair's Quarterly Allowance	
HM Revenue & Customs	£ 415.40	P.A.Y.E.	
UKFast	£ 28.99	Monthly Subscription	£4.83
DSJ Property Services	£ 200.00	Painting Goal Posts	
DSJ Property Services	£ 60.00	Repositioning Noticeboard	
Total Payments	£ 1437.62		

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

Item 14. 21/70 Other Matters for Information

Cllr Waugh enquired about future meeting room facilities at the school. The County Cllr, as a Governor of the school, updated Councillors re plans for new facilities.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.38pm.

North Lodge Parish Council

Accounts for the month as submitted to the Meeting of North Lodge Parish Council held on Tuesday 20th July 2021.

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
Salaries	£	Salaries July 2021	
Expenses	£ 90.00	Expenses July 2021	
D. Murrell (via Zoom inc)	£ 14.39	Monthly Subscription	£2.40
UKFast	£ 28.99	Monthly Subscription	£4.83
Total Payments	£		

Balance to 30th June 2021

Balance b/f	£74192.01	Balances at Bank:-	
Deduct Payments - June 2021	<u>£ 1437.62</u>	Treasurers Account	£ 636.23
	£72754.39	Instant Account	<u>£72118.77</u>
		Total	£72755.00
Add Bank Interest Received	<u>£ .61</u>	Deduct cheques not yet presented	<u>£ Nil</u>
Balance c/f	£72755.00		£72755.00