

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 February 2022.

PRESENT: Chairman: Councillor Dennis Hall.

Councillors: Sue Brown, Margaret Caygill, Jackie Gregory, Maureen May, Patrick Driscoll, Craig Martin, Chris Veitch, John Waugh.

County Councillor: Craig Martin (also in attendance as a Parish Councillor).

Clerk: David Murrell.

The Chairman commenced the meeting by welcoming everyone.

Item 1. 22/14 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillor Elsie Forrester.

Item 2. 22/15 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Craig Martin declared interests as a Governor of Park View School and as a County Councillor. Councillor Chris Veitch declared an interest as Chairman of the North Lodge Remembrance Group.

Item 3. 22/16 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 -

Towns and Villages Funding Report to AAP

Progress is being made on spending the £210,000 funding allocated to the Chester-le-Street Action Area Partnership (AAP) area. A report was delivered to the last AAP to demonstrate what the plans are for this funding.

The report indicates that a number of electoral divisions are not currently allocated any of this funding, including North Lodge. I have raised this issue and there are plans to make sure that some of this money is spent in every electoral division.

I have repeatably called for a fairer distribution of funding from Durham County Council. Really glad that my calls are being listened to. Now just need to make sure we find a scheme that this money can be used.

Taxi Licencing Changes Put on Hold

In line with Council procedures, an updated taxi licencing policy has been put forward for the Council to approve. This has been pulled by cabinet so that further work can be done listening to the taxi industry and issues they face following COVID.

Like many industries, taxi drivers are struggling due to the after effects of COVID on our economy. This is a sector that does important work but there is a shortage of people working as taxi drivers. Considering the original consultation on the policy was done two years ago, before COVID. Cabinet want to spend more time listening to those working in the taxi industry before a new policy is implemented.

Reforming Scrutiny of the Council's Budget

First time in memory, scrutiny were able to see most of the key decisions being made in the budget before it was finalised. Using my position as Chair of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board to open up the Council's budget setting process.

Usually County Councillors only get the chance to comment and critic budget proposals after cabinet have finalised their decisions. Instead we're giving the wider council the opportunity to have input into the most important decision Durham County Council has to make. This is in addition to scrutinising the finished article before being voted on by the County Council.

I will be continuing to look at ways we can open up the budget setting process even more to political scrutiny. Getting more involvement from elected members makes our decision making better. More opportunities to spot weaknesses in policy and ideas being brought forward by those from a wider range of backgrounds.

In addition, a) Re Caxton Way, the re-wilding consultation with residents was ongoing. b) Re the County Council Budget, Cllr Martin advised that it would be voted on next week and he expected to report on this at next month's meeting of the Parish Council.

The Chairman thanked the County Councillor for his report.

Item 4. 22/17 Adoption of Minutes of Meeting

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 18th January 2022, 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. 22/18 Chairman's Report

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

Visits

27 January 2022: Low Flatts Play Area: Review of Equipment with Durham County Council (Clerk, Cllrs Caygill and Veitch in attendance). Cllr Caygill will report further on this.

A Business Items: Forward Plan:

Community Engagement:

April: The Community Fund scheme begins in April and we need to consider giving publicity to the invitation of applications.

Council Representation: Co options:

Any more Applications?

B Planned Activities:

Portfolio Review: April:

We have new members. I think it is appropriate therefore that we review the current portfolios held by members. Are they 'fit for purpose'? Do we need to change or add to them? Do we need different councillors responsible for them? What might our new Councillors like to do?

I am recommending that first, I take informal soundings from Councillors as to what their views are with a view to a formal discussion at our **April Meeting**. Can I ask that members contact me with their opinions and views on what changes they would like to see.? Can I ask our new members let me know what particular areas of interest they might wish to take up as a portfolio responsibility.?

[NALC: Climate Change Report: on Agenda as Item 8 b

On the Agenda for discussion from January

Questions for Members:

What are Members views as to our role?

Should Climate Change be added to or part of Portfolio responsibilities?

LGA: Working in Partnership Report: on Agenda as Item 8 c

On the Agenda for discussion from January

Questions for Members:

What are Members views as to our role?

Should 'Working in Partnership' be added to or part of Portfolio responsibilities?]

Developing Cooperation with Local Businesses:

What businesses are in our Parish? Should we establish closer links with them? Are there matters where they may have a common interest with the Parish.

I raise these questions because there may be benefits in establishing a local business forum of some kind to encourage closer collaboration. Members views would be welcomed upon whether this should be pursued.

Items for Discussion/Agreement:

Parish Media: Website: Facebook Twitter:

To discuss new Portfolio ?

Platinum Jubilee in the Parish

The Platinum Jubilee Bank Holidays are 2/3 June, albeit this is a 'year long' celebratory event. We already have the Community Arts Programme which has a Platinum Jubilee theme...

Do Members consider there are any additional steps we should be taking? New initiatives or events or supporting others?

Note email, 9 February, concerning Jubilee Beacons Event.

D Other Matters:

None

Item: 7 f Policy and Governance Portfolio

Remote Meetings:

Over 10,000 signatures have been obtained.

Two local authority bodies, LLG, ADSO have begun a petition to support the necessary change in the law; here's the details:

<https://www.change.org/p/uk-government-and-parliament-for-councils-in-england-to-have-the-choice-to-meet-remotely>

NALC: Michael Gove MP supports remote meetings in House of Commons debate: (27 January):

<https://www.nalc.gov.uk/news/entry/1978-michael-gove-mp-supports-remote-meetings-in-house-of-commons-debate>

and see...

<https://www.localgovernmentlawyer.co.uk/governance/396-governance-news/49497-secretary-of-state-indicates-support-for-hybrid-meetings-on-efficiency-grounds>

Levelling Up Announcement on 2 February:

Devolution: County and Combined Authority devolution deals, a whole 'system change' on how government works, 12 "national missions" to be given status in law in a new Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill and all to be achieved by 2030.....these are the headlines from the announcement last week from Michael Gove as to what Levelling Up will mean for our sector and beyond for the next decade....

Durham will be in the first round of Councils to be invited to establish an Executive Mayoral system The 12 'national missions' or policy objectives include improved pay, employment and productivity, education, research, and public transport investment.....

The Government will legislate to create a statutory duty upon itself to publish an annual report, updating the public on the progress of these missions, with a new Levelling Up Advisory Council providing further support to the process.

NALC responds to Levelling Up white paper: (2 February):

<https://www.nalc.gov.uk/news/entry/1982-nalc-responds-to-levelling-up-white-paper>

Levelling Up and Neighbourhood Review:

The government is to hold a review of **neighbourhood governance** in England which could make it easier to set up a parish council under new plans revealed in the levelling up white paper.

Announced today, 2 February, the government's flagship policy includes the review which will look at **"how to make it easier for local people and community groups to come together."**

The review will specifically look at the **"role and functions of parish councils"** and how to **"make them quicker and easier to establish."**

For areas in England which currently do not have parish councils, the government will look at how the community infrastructure levy (CIL) can be used to support neighbourhood and community activity.

The CIL allows local authorities to charge new developments in their area as a way of raising funds which can be used to help councils deliver infrastructure needed to support development.

Justin Griggs, the head of communications at the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) told LGC that the neighbourhood governance review is "really welcome" as it shows recognition of the "important role of parish councils in local government."

He said that NALC hoped the review would look into opening up new avenues for funding parish councils, so they do not have to rely so heavily on council tax funding.

"Parish councils do not have access to government funding in the way that other tiers of local government have," Mr Griggs said, "they should be able to access funds to be able to deliver the range of things that parish councils are responsible for."

NALC Report: 2021 Local Elections

This was circulated on 27 January. To consider Report recommendations:

In summary, NALC makes several recommendations:

- Councillors should raise awareness of local elections and encourage others to become councillors by 'talent spotting'
- Local councils and county associations should make use of NALC's 'Make A Change' materials to encourage more people to stand for election
- Local councils should budget for the costs of local elections and by- elections
- County associations should engage with **regional media** to increase coverage of local elections and work with principal authorities to promote local elections and capture elections data
- NALC should provide county associations with access to media training and lobby the UK Government for the simplification and digitalisation of local council elections.
- LGA should encourage principal authorities to work with county associations and ensure the 'Be A Councillor' campaign links and provides support to NALC's 'Make A Change' campaign
- National media should increase coverage of local councils, including local elections
- The UK government should set up a National Democracy Fund, pilot digital voting in local council elections and work with NALC to ensure information about local councils is publicly available

Item: 7 g Website Portfolio

See earlier discussion above about Parish Media

In addition, 1) the Chairman reported on the recent warehouse fire at Barley Mow and the subsequent Environment Agency testing of air quality. The County Cllr was concerned that the Gateshead authorities appeared to have not considered communicating with the Durham authorities in this matter and he will write to the Gateshead and Durham fire authorities accordingly. 2) re the Platinum Jubilee, this is to be included on the Agenda for the March meeting of the Council.

Councillors thanked the Chairman for his report.

Regarding outstanding matters -

- a) Re Minute 22/05. Re restoring railways, the County Cllr advised that a bid was in for the funding of a feasibility study.
- b) Re Minute 22/07 section a). The Clerk advised that a debit card had now been received from the bank.

Item 6. 22/19 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

No crime information has been received from police regarding North Lodge.

Community Safety

The Police and Crime Plan for 2021-2024 was published on the 16th December 2021. You can read it on

[Our Plan | Durham Police & Crime Commissioner \(durham-pcc.gov.uk\)](https://www.durham-pcc.gov.uk)

Durham Constabulary have appointed a new Assistant Chief Constable. Tonya Antonis, currently serving as a Chief Superintendent with Suffolk Constabulary will take up her post at the end of February.

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PCs Russell and Seymour from Chester-le-Street police, have recently been awarded a Royal Humane Society Award for their part in saving a man's life and administering CPR.

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As far as burglary detection rate is concerned, Durham Constabulary is one of the best in the country. The force is in the top 3 of the 43 forces in England and Wales.

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Changes to The Highway Code regarding Pedestrians and Cyclist. Check this out :
[The Highway Code, road safety and vehicle rules - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)

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All emergency calls, use telephone number 999
Non-emergency calls, use telephone number 101

In addition, Councillors discussed the desirability for further defibrillators in the Parish. This is to be included on the Agenda for the March meeting of the Council.

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

b) Finance

I have studied the financial information supplied to me by the clerk and can confirm that everything appears to be in order.

We have over £50,000 in the bank.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Waugh for his Finance report and invited him to give his Planning report.

c) 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. There had been nothing contentious since the previous Council meeting.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Waugh for his report and invited Cllrs May and Driscoll to give the Horticulture report which included the matters contained in Cllr May's written report below -
d) Horticulture

Summary

Councillor May spoke on telephone to Ian Harland (Team Supervisor, Durham County Council), for Horticulture update.

Update

Due to the two recent storms, plus the expected storm arriving this week, the Clean and Green team are well behind with their work. The clearing up of debris, trees etc. has taken priority.

However Picktree Lodge entrance has now been completed and re-seeded.

Frank Leighton

I have recently spoken to Frank's daughter who said; the family thought it would be lovely to have a plaque placed on a seat in Frank's memory.

I would like to suggest to place the plaque on one of the seats facing the Millennium Bed in Lombard Drive, which he used to plant up seasonally.

In addition, 1) Re a plaque in memory of Frank Leighton, Councillors agreed that one should be installed on a seat facing the Millennium Bed, at the cost to the Parish Council. Cllr May is to liaise with the family for a suitable design and wording. 2) Cllr Driscoll advised that the County Council now had the new seats but were still awaiting the fixings.

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 -

e) Play Areas

MERLIN DRIVE

The equipment appears to be in good order, except for the multi gym where the repair has not yet been carried out.

James Young hopes the refurbishment of this area will commence soon.

The mole damage in and around this area is considerable.

LOW FLATTS

All equipment appears to be in good order.

On 27th January a site meeting was held with James Young and his assistant to discuss an application for 106 monies to replace dated items of equipment. James will supply details in due course. The Clerk, Chairman, Coun.Veitch and I attended.

Whips have been planted in the gap in the hedge and taped to prevent access.. This will be reviewed next month to consider if fencing is necessary.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Caygill for her report.

f) Policy and Governance

Cllr Hall's report was contained in his Chairman's Report (Minute 22/18, above).

Councillors thanked Cllr Hall for his report.

g) Website

Cllr Hall's report was contained in his Chairman's Report (Minute 22/18, above).
Councillors thanked Cllr Hall for his report.

h) Highways

In the absence of a Portfolio Holder, no report was presented. Cllr Gregory advised that it appeared that the County Council was aware of the temporary advertising signs at the motorway roundabout.

i) Publicity

Due to her absence from the meeting, Cllr Forrester had prepared a report and this was read out by the Clerk. The report covered several matters from the AAP and a discussion with a resident re felled trees at the entrance to the school.

Re fallen trees, the County Cllr kindly agreed to seek a site meeting with County Council officers to review the recent destruction by high winds of the trees at Low Flatts. Cllr Gregory suggested that the community and the school should be involved in planting replacement trees and also planting bulbs along North Road. The Horticulture Portfolio Holders are to bring forward a proposal, perhaps as part of the Platinum Jubilee celebrations.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Forrester for her report.

Item 7. 22/20 Correspondence

1) From Great North Ambulance Service
Thank you for donation.

- 2) Various planning applications, approvals and refusals from Durham County Council, of which the following were within North Lodge Parish:-
- a) Application for tree works, at Garden House, Picktree Village.
 - b) Application for tree works, at The Croft, North Road.
 - c) Application for detached 4 bay garage with storage space above, at Oaklea, North Road.
 - d) Application for variation of condition 3 of planning permission DM/21/02089/FPA with regards to the method of construction as set out in Arboricultural Method Statement - Rev A, at Pad Panache, Picktree Village.
 - e) Application for tree works, at 5 North Lodge.
 - f) Application for addition of front porch underneath existing pitched roof canopy, at 20 Pelaw Grange Court.
 - g) Approval for two bay windows to front elevation, at 11 Queensmere.
 - h) Approval for detached garage and garden room, at 1A Park View.
 - i) Refusal for retrospective application to install a 1.8m fence along the boundary of the garden of the property, at 24 Leander Avenue.

Item 8. 22/21 Proposals, Reports and Requests for Consideration

a) Request for Donation - North Lodge Remembrance Group

Cllr Veitch, in his role as Chairman of the Remembrance Group, answered questions from Councillors and then withdrew from the meeting.

Councillors discussed this request and agreed to make a donation of £750 to the Group, on production of invoices totalling a minimum of £750.

Cllr Veitch then returned to the meeting and thanked the Council for agreeing to the donation.

(Resolved on a unanimous show of hands - to make a donation of £750 to the North Lodge Remembrance Group subject to production of invoices totalling a minimum of £750).

b) NALC Climate Change Report

The County Cllr advised Councillors of the County Council's Climate Emergency Response Plan. Councillors discussed climate change and agreed that all Portfolio Holders are to consider the potential impact on climate change when proposing projects involving expenditure.

c) LGA Working in Partnership Report

The Chairman outlined the contents of the Report and proposed a new Portfolio to include the themes of the Report. This will be discussed at the April meeting of the Council as part of the review of Portfolios.

d) Painting of the Sustrans Bridge, North Road

The County Cllr advised that he had raised this matter with Sustrans who did not consider that the work needed to be done but would probably give permission to other organisations to fund and carry out the work. Councillors discussed ways forward on this matter and it is to be included in the Agenda for the March meeting of the Council.

Item 9. 22/22 Payment of Accounts

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
Salaries	£ 516.94	Salaries February 2022	
Expenses	£ 90.00	Expenses February 2022	
D. Murrell (via B & Q Ltd)	£ 9.00	Hawthorn Plants	£ 1.50
D. Murrell (via Zoom inc)	£ 14.39	Monthly Subscription - Feb 2022	£ 2.40
DSJ	£ 40.00	Planting Hawthorns	
UKFast	£ 36.24	Monthly Subscription - Feb 2022	£ 6.04
Information Commissioner	£ 40.00	Data Protection Annual Fee	
North Lodge Remembrance Group	£ 750.00	Donation	
Total Payments	£1496.57		

(Resolved - the payments be approved as submitted).

Item 10. 22/23 Other Matters for Information

a) Cllr Caygill gave an up-date on the Council's Civic Arts Awards project.

b) Cllr Brown advised of a letter she had received, as a resident of Picktree Village, from the County Council re an error in Council Tax charging. Councillors considered that this raised a potential issue over the amount of Precept received by the Parish Council. The Clerk is to contact the County Council for clarification.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.46pm.

North Lodge Parish Council

Accounts for the month as submitted to the Meeting of North Lodge Parish Council held on Tuesday 15th March 2022.

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
Salaries	£	Salaries March 2022	
Back-dated Salary Increase	£	Salaries Increase 2021 - 2022	
Expenses	£ 90.00	Expenses March 2022	
HM Revenue & Customs	£	P.A.Y.E.	
D. Hall	£ 165.00	Chair's Quarterly Allowance	
JAK HQ Ltd	£ 50.40	ID Badges	£ 8.40
Zoom inc	£ 14.39	Monthly Subscription - March 2022	£ 2.40
UKFast	£ 36.24	Monthly Subscription - March 2022	£ 6.04
Cartridge Discount	£ 10.77	Printer Cartridges	£ 1.79
DSJ Property Services	£ 45.00	Mesh for Low Flatts Hedge	
Total Payments	£		

Balance to 28th February 2022

Balance b/f	£54336.08	Balances at Bank:-	
Deduct Payments - February 2022	<u>£ 1496.57</u>	Treasurers Account	£ 1007.01
	£52839.51	Instant Account	<u>£52622.94</u>
		Total	<u>£53629.95</u>
Add Bank Interest Received	<u>£ .44</u>	Deduct cheques not yet presented	£ 790.00
Balance c/f	£52839.95		£52839.95

Two cheques not yet presented -

1) £40.00 cheque number 1485 dated 15/02/22 for Data Protection Act renewal fee payable to Information Commissioner.

2) £750.00 cheque number 1486 dated 15/02/22 for donation payable to North Lodge Remembrance Group. This cheque has not yet been issued.