

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 March 2022.

PRESENT: Chairman: Councillor Dennis Hall.

Councillors: Sue Brown, Margaret Caygill, Elsie Forrester, 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. 22/24 Apologies for Absence

There were no Apologies for Absence.

Item 2. 22/25 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. 22/26 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 -

Budget 22-23

Durham County Council's funding from Government increased. But the budget was dominated by cost pressures needing to deal with the after effects of COVID, inflation, significant increases in energy prices, and national living wage increase. While household waste tonnages have not returned to before COVID levels.

Council Tax

Basic Council Tax has been frozen, first time Durham County Council have done this without government support since it was created. This decision was made considering the financial difficulties all residents will be facing in the coming year.

Adult Social Care Precept will be increased by 3%, care providers continue to need support dealing with COVID along with our ageing population pressures. It will be written into future contracts that a proportion of this additional funding needs to go directly to employee wages. Also worth noting the controversy surrounding the policing precept increase by 4.34%. Concern comes from the Police and Crime Commissioner has considerably increased their own personal staff. Who all happen to be personally linked to the PCC as opposed to being experts in role of policing.

Additional Investments

Despite freezing basic council tax and the cost pressures, we were able to put extra funding into front line services. £3.2 million has been invested in total mainly directed at Neighbourhoods and Climate Change.

Funding will improve services around bin replacement, street scene services, community protection, neighbourhood wardens, public rights of way, nature reserves, woodland protection, allotments and dealing with climate change. Pest control services will be improved including providing a scheme for those in financial hardship to access this service for free. Regeneration, Economy, and Growth have also received some of this funding for continuing free parking after 2pm in town centre council car parks. Along with resources to bid for more government grants such as levelling up funding.

£10 million of council reserves are being used to backup the council's largest ever capital investment program. Funding to repair roads and bring them up to national standards and building new schools.

Opposition

The opposition opposed the budget wanting no forms of tax rises at all. But they did not provide an alternative budget or any amendments demonstrating how this would be done. An additional £7.5 million of cuts would need to be made to achieve this.

In addition, a) Re Caxton Way, the re-wilding consultation with residents had shown that there was an insufficient number in favour for the project to go ahead. b) Re the wood alongside the A693, County Council officers had advised that the wood would regenerate better if left to nature rather than replacement trees being planted. c) Re Council Tax, Councillors discussed how appointments were made to the office of Police and Crime Commissioner. The Chairman thanked the County Councillor for his report.

Item 4. 22/27 Adoption of Minutes of Meeting

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 15th February 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. 22/28 Chairman's Report

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

A Business Items: Forward Plan:

Community Engagement:

April: The Community Fund scheme begins in April : David has drafted publicity text and a revised application form in readiness for the initiative going live

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.?

Platinum Jubilee in the Parish

This item is on the Agenda

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>

Item: 7 g Website Portfolio

No report

Councillors thanked the Chairman for his report.

Regarding outstanding matters -

Re Minute 22/18 section 1). Re contact with Gateshead authorities following the fire at Barley Mow, the County Cllr advised that he would be following this up.

Item 6. 22/29 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 reported for North Lodge.

Community Safety

County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue service have been awarded the UK Fire and Rescue Service of the year.

Police in conjunction with County Durham and Darlington Fire Service have trained 6 personnel as Fire Crime Scene Investigators who, will work along side the Police Scenes of Crime Investigators to combat arson.

Cleveland and Durham Police Specialist Operations Unit held a traffic mobile phone campaign resulting in 26 drivers being issued with a fine and licence penalty points.

In March 2022, new legislation allows for drivers to use mobile phones to call emergency services only.

Fake text messages have been received from what appears to be the NHS. The NHS will never ask for payment or financial details.

Spring crime prevention information - details on the Parish Council website and Facebook account.

On 5th March, The Ron Hogg Memorial Cup 5 a side football was hosted by Durham Pride UK.

Teams from police, fire service and other agencies took part with Durham Police winning the competition.

On 25th March, Police have arranged a charity football event at Maiden Law. This is to increase trust between young people and police and bring communities together. Details of this event are on the Durham Police Facebook account.

The Police Memorial Trust has erected a memorial plaque in Woodhouses Co. Durham to DC Porter. This officer was fatally shot when he attended a robbery in the area, 40 years ago.

To contact the Police

Non emergency calls used telephone number 101

Emergency calls use telephone number 999

In addition, Cllr Waugh asked if there was any information re the recent closure of Blind Lane for a short time by the Police. Cllr Gregory advised that no report had been received and she would therefore make enquiries with the Police.

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.

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 no planning applications 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

Horticulture Bedding

Councillor May has spoken with Graham Cozens regarding future costings for Horticulture Bedding. Graham is looking at all bedding prices for year beginning April 2023 - March 2024. He will then inform all Parish Councils of his findings by December 2022 in order that Parish Councils can consider the cost against their budgets.

Frank Leighton

Clerk. David Murrell has spoken to Frank's family whom have chosen special wording to be placed on the memorial plaque in memory of Frank.

The Clerk will arrange for the plaque to be fixed to the appropriate seat.

Newsletter

Councillors are requested to start preparing items to be placed in Parish Council Newsletter.

In addition, 1) Re planting of daffodils, Councillors were asked to consider suitable sites, to include sites appropriate for participation by children, for discussion at the April meeting of the Council. 2) Cllr Driscoll advised on the recent installation of replacement seats.

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 working order.

No news yet on the refurbishment date.

LOW FLATTS

The equipment appears to be in good working order.

The new seat has been fixed outside the fenced area.

Mesh fencing has been fitted around the new whips on the perimeter hedge. Unfortunately, this has already been damaged. I feel a stronger mesh may be required.

No details yet of refurbishment suggestions.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Caygill for her report.

f) Policy and Governance

Cllr Hall's report was contained in his Chairman's Report (Minute 22/28, above).
Councillors thanked Cllr Hall for his report.

g) Website

Cllr Hall's report was contained in his Chairman's Report (Minute 22/28, above).
Councillors discussed messages of support, to be added to the Website and Facebook page, for Ukraine in the current conflict.
Councillors thanked Cllr Hall for his report.

h) Highways

In the absence of a Portfolio Holder, no report was presented. Cllr Gregory advised that 1) the speedvisor on the eastbound side of Blind Land appeared not to be working. The County Cllr kindly agreed to report this to the County Council. 2) The road surface at the entrance to Lombard Drive from North Road was breaking up. The Clerk will advise this to the County Council.
The Chairman invited Cllr Forrester to give her report which included the following matters -

i) Publicity

Cllr Forrester reported on several matters from the AAP including the ASB Interventions Team, the Safer Communities Team, Neighbourhood Wardens, the Older People's Social Isolation Fund and a County Council consultation on the provision of libraries.
The Chairman thanked Cllr Forrester for her report.

Item 7. 22/30 Correspondence

- 1) From Rt. Hon. Kevan Jones MP
Letter re Advice surgeries.
- 2) From CDALC
email re Ukraine.
- 3) From Durham County Council
email re error in Council Tax, Picktree Village.

Item 8. 22/31 Proposals, Reports and Requests for Consideration

a) The Queen's Platinum Jubilee

Councillors discussed various ideas for the celebration of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Cllr Caygill kindly agreed to approach the School to ascertain if a proposal for the Council to provide each child at Lower School with a commemorative gift would be acceptable. Cllr May advised that unfortunately the County Council would not be stocking the flower beds with a red, white and blue colour scheme. Cllr Gregory therefore suggested that the Parish Council's flower barrels should be planted with that colour scheme. Cllr Martin proposed that silhouette figures be installed in the flower beds and Cllr Veitch kindly offered to produce the figures. Councillors agreed that the Council would finance the purchase of wood for the project. All these proposals are to be further discussed and voted on at the next meeting of the Council

b) A Defibrillator for Picktree Village

Cllr Veitch and the Clerk gave an update on progress with this project. A suitable site had been ascertained although permissions, and eventually a power connection, would need to be obtained. Councillors agreed that a consultation with local residents would be appropriate. Councillors thanked Cllr Veitch and the Clerk for their work to date on this project.

c) County Council Consultation on an Economic Strategy for the County

County Cllr Martin outlined the proposed County Council strategy. Councillors discussed this and agreed a response to be submitted, including that the strategy must be fair to all areas of the County.

d) Painting of the Sustrans Bridge, North Road

Cllr Gregory, as a resident of the Parish, had contacted Sustrans and a reply was awaited. The Clerk was expecting contact from Sustrans on a different matter and this might provide an opportunity to raise the need for the re-painting of the bridge.

e) Artwork Installation Project - North Lodge Remembrance Group

Cllr Martin outlined this proposal which would include the Parish Council taking ownership of the completed installation. More details are to follow but the Council agreed in principle to support the project.

Item 9. 22/32 The Annual Risk Assessment

Councillors discussed the Annual Risk Assessment, copies of which had been previously distributed by the Clerk, and agreed to approve the Assessment in the form provided except that the section heading "Gardener's Safety Equipment" is to read "Gardener's Safety Equipment (when held)".

(Resolved - to approve the Risk Assessment subject to the amendment to the section heading "Gardener's Safety Equipment").

A structural inspection of each bus shelter is to be carried out during the year 2022/2023.

Item 10. 22/33 Payment of Accounts

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
Salaries	£ 529.04	Salaries March 2022	
Back-dated Salary Increase	£ 94.75	Salaries Increase 2021 - 2022	
Expenses	£ 90.00	Expenses March 2022	
HM Revenue & Customs	£ 527.37	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	£ 39.86	Monthly Subscription - March 2022	£ 6.64
Cartridge Discount	£ 10.77	Printer Cartridges	£ 1.79
DSJ Property Services	£ 45.00	Mesh for Low Flatts Hedge	
Durham County Council	£2846.22	Public Seating	£474.37
Total Payments	£4412.80		

(Resolved - the payments be approved as submitted).

Item 11. 22/34 Other Matters for Information

- a) The Chairman suggested that there should be each year, for record purposes, a formal group photo of Councillors. The Clerk will make enquiries regarding a professionally taken photograph.
- b) Cllr Gregory had been advised of broken glass on the Sustrans cycleway and was to inspect this to see what action was required.
- c) At the request of Cllr Brown, the County Cllr provided an update re the redevelopment of the former Civic Centre site, and he also advised that County Councillors were in talks with the County Council Regeneration Team re the town centre.
- d) Cllr Veitch had noticed an increased amount of graffiti in the Parish recently. The Clerk will make enquiries about this with the Neighbourhood Wardens.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.35pm.

North Lodge Parish Council

Accounts for the month as submitted to the Meeting of North Lodge Parish Council held on Tuesday 19th April 2022.

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
Salaries	£	Salaries April 2022	
Expenses	£ 90.00	Expenses April 2022	
Amazon	£ 32.04	Magnets for Noticeboards	£ 5.34
Zoom inc	£ 14.39	Monthly Subscription - April 2022	£ 2.40
UKFast	£ 39.86	Monthly Subscription - April 2022	£ 6.64
Total Payments	£		

Balance to 31st March 2022

Balance b/f	£52839.95	Balances at Bank:-	
Deduct Payments - March 2022	<u>£ 4412.80</u>	Treasurers Account	£ 4065.43
	£48427.15	Instant Account	<u>£48123.34</u>
		Total	£52188.77
Add Bank Interest Received	<u>£ .40</u>	Deduct cheques not yet presented	£ 3761.22
Balance c/f	£48427.55		£48427.55

Three cheques not yet presented -

1) £750.00 cheque number 1486 dated 15/02/22 for donation payable to North Lodge Remembrance Group. This cheque has not yet been issued.

2) £165.00 cheque number 1489 dated 15/03/22 for Chair's Allowance payable to D. Hall. A replacement cheque is to be issued.

3) £2846.22 cheque number 1491 dated 15/03/22 for public seating payable to Durham County Council.