

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 21st March 2023.

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.

Clerk: David Murrell.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. Councillor Craig Martin was not in attendance at the start of the meeting.

Item 1. 23/23 Apologies for Absence

Councillor Craig Martin had given Apologies for his expected late arrival to the meeting.

Item 2. 23/24 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Jackie Gregory declared an interest in a planning application for 23 Blind Lane.

In the absence of the County Councillor, Councillors agreed to take Agenda Item 4 next.

Item 4. 23/25 Adoption of Minutes of Meeting

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 21st February 2023, 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. 23/26 Chairman's Report

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

At the time writing this report, and following consultations with the Clerk, I shall be attending the funeral of County Councillor Beaty Bainbridge at the Church of St. Mary and St Cuthbert Chester le Street, on the morning of the 21st March 2023 in an official capacity on behalf of the Parish Council

In addition, a) regarding the funeral of the County Council Chairman Councillor Beaty Bainbridge, the Chairman provided a report including that it had been a well-attended and very moving service, b) the Chairman reminded Councillors that nominations for the office of Vice-Chairman would be welcome at the Annual Meeting of the Council in May.

Councillors thanked the Chairman for his report.

Regarding outstanding matters -

a) Re Minute 23/17 section a). Re the "Santa Bus", Cllr Gregory advised that a reply had now been received and a diary note made for later this year.

b) Re Minute 23/17 section g). Re the Civic Arts Awards partnership with Park View School, Cllr Caygill advised that she was pursuing progress with the School.

c) Re Minute 23/20 section c). Re the Remembrance Group memorial project, Cllr Veitch advised that designs were still awaited from the artist and he was pursuing this.

Item 6. 23/27 Portfolio Holders' Reports

The Chairman invited Cllr Veitch to give his report which included the following matters -

a) Communications and Media Development

Cllr Veitch advised that the Council's Facebook and Twitter pages continued to be kept up-to-date including posts regarding the recent death of County Councillor Beaty Bainbridge. Cllr Veitch agreed with Cllr Gregory that the Council's Facebook and Twitter pages should be available to promote local activities of social and religious groups.

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

b) Crime and Community Safety

Police

No reported crimes for North Lodge 22nd February- 20th March 2023

Community Safety

Police

Operation Trident- Force wide operation to arrest persons for various neighbourhood crimes. Police mobile speed monitoring vehicle has visited North Lodge.

For non emergencies use telephone number 101

All emergencies use telephone number 999

Co Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS)

CDDFRS has been awarded the UK Fire and Rescue Service of the year for the second year running, at the IESE Public Sector Transformation Awards.

The fire service would like obtain the views from members of the public on how the fire service responds to emergencies in the future.

For further information: www.ddfire.gov.uk or telephone number 03453058383.

For all fire emergencies use telephone number 999

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

c) Finance

I have studied 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 then invited Cllr Driscoll to give his Highways and Community Assets report which included the matters contained in his written report below -

d) Highways and Community Assets

The monthly bus shelters inspection was undertaken on Monday the 6th of March 2023. All appeared to be satisfactory, with seat cleaning where necessary, and branch trimming done at the rear of the west side new glass bus shelter in Picktree Village. This particular action was to help prevent scraping damage on the plexiglass back of the shelter, when new hedge growth occurs. In conclusion from last month, the fly tipping on the north grass verge of the A693 at Blind Lane, has now been removed by the County Council.

Councillors expressed concern re many instances of litter and dog waste. This is to be an Agenda item for the next meeting of the Council.

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

e) Horticulture

SUMMARY

Plinth at Picktree Lodge

Cleaned - awaiting letters to be painted

Large Shrub Beds (2) North Road

The County Council has now completed their work on these beds (removal of all trees and debris, rotovating for tree planting). Stephen Makepeace has been asked to design these beds and quote the price for replanting.

Jubilee Tree

Circumference outside of the tree guard has been widened In order to plant more flowers

Wheatsheaf Area Project

No further advance. As a last ditch attempt, Councillor Brown will contact Lambton Estates to look on their maps for ownership.

Picktree Lodge Entrance

The Clerk to be asked to contact Highways England to give authority to plant two flower beds in this area.

Raised Flower Beds throughout Parish

Proposal to ask Stephen Makepeace (Parish Gardener) to take over the planting and maintenance of these flower beds.

At this point, Cllr Martin arrived at the meeting.

In addition, a) re the Wheatsheaf Area project, this is to be an Agenda item for the next meeting of the Council, b) re the Picktree Lodge entrance, Councillors and the Clerk considered that it was not necessary to obtain the authority of National Highways (formerly Highways England). The County Councillor is to liaise with the County Council Clean & Green Department to make progress in the reinstatement of the flower beds, c) Re the North Road shrub beds, Councillors and the Clerk agreed that £4K be set aside from the current year's underspent Horticulture budgets to finance the replanting, d) Councillors discussed the quotes received from the County Council and Makepeace Landscapes for the provision and maintenance of flower beds throughout the Parish. Councillors agreed that the quote from Makepeace Landscapes represented best value and this quote was accepted.

The Chairman thanked Cllr May for her report and invited Cllr Forrester to give her report which included the matters below -

f) Meetings of Partnership Organisations

Cllr Forrester provided a report of the recent AAP meeting which had included a presentation of the consultation on the Fire and Rescue Authority Community Risk Management Plan 2023-2026, and reports from various AAP Task Groups. Cllr Forrester had also attended the funeral of County Councillor Beaty Bainbridge which had been a wonderful send-off.

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

g) Planning

Cllr Waugh advised that he continued to provided weekly updates and commentaries, where necessary, to Councillors on planning applications. Cllr Waugh had noted the Pelton, Urpeth and Ouston Application for Neighbourhood Area and wished them well on this.

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 -

h) Play Areas

MERLIN DRIVE

All equipment appears to be in good order.

A seat for the gate side of the play area is under consideration.

LOW FLATTS

All equipment appears to be in good order.

No news yet of the refurbishment.

New seating in this area needs to be discussed further.

Councillors discussed the current and requested provision of public seating at the play areas and also the proposed provision of a seat to commemorate the forthcoming coronation of King Charles III. This is to be an Agenda item for the next meeting of the Parish Council.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Caygill for her report.

i) Policy and Governance

Cllr Hall's report included the matters contained in his written report below -

The Sheffield Street Trees Inquiry: (6 March):

Sheffield city council behaved dishonestly in street trees row, inquiry finds...

Report says events surrounding felling of thousands of trees was a 'dark episode in Sheffield'.

https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-03/sheffield_street_trees_inquiry_report.pdf
and see...

https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/mar/06/sheffield-city-council-behaved-dishonestly-in-street-trees-row-inquiry-finds?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other
and...

<https://www.localgovernmentlawyer.co.uk/governance/396-governance-news/53215-inquiry-finds-city-council-legal-leadership-failed-to-question-what-it-was-right-or-proportionate-to-do-in-tree-protest-dispute>
yet see this...

https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/mar/15/a-disgrace-more-than-100-trees-cut-down-in-plymouth-despite-local-opposition?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other

Briefings for items discussed in Parliament: w/c 13 March: (all republ):

Parking on Pavements:

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-8736/>

The Guardian: Liverpool becomes first UK city to commit to **Paris climate agreement**: (28 February):

https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/feb/28/liverpool-eurovision-host-first-uk-city-commit-paris-climate-agreement?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other

LGL: **County councils raise concern for infrastructure funding under plans to replace section 106**: (28 February):

<https://www.localgovernmentlawyer.co.uk/planning/401-planning-news/53121-county-councils-raise-concern-for-infrastructure-funding-under-plans-to-replace-section-106>

NALC: NALC calls for change to the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill: (16 February):

<https://www.nalc.gov.uk/news/entry/2376-nalc-calls-for-change-to-the-levelling-up-and-regeneration-bill>

Cllr Gregory thanked the Chairman for providing the section 106 information and advised that Sustrans was now in early discussions re painting the North Road bridge.

Councillors thanked Cllr Hall for his report.

The Chairman invited Cllr Martin to give his report.

j) Project Development, Business and External Relations

Cllr Martin advised that he had no matters to report at present.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Martin.

Item 3. 23/28 Report of the County Councillor

The Chairman invited the County Councillor (who declared an interest as a Governor of Park View School) to give his report which included the matters contained in his written report below -

AAP review

Durham County Council have perform an independent review of Action Area Partnerships. Using independent consultants they conducted a major consultation, reported back their findings, and put forward a series of recommendations.

Main theme of the report is that AAPs get too bogged down in dealing with funding applications. Proposal is that boards are completely reformed so that each meeting takes a problem solving approach for a major issue the area has. There are also a string other recommendations that are designed to make them more effective.

Cabinet will be considering the report and the public opinion of it. Then put forward what changes they intend to make to AAPs.

Budget 23/24

Durham County is under incredibly difficult financial pressure. This is due to inflation particularly increasing costs in energy along with the increase in national living wage. Funding from government has not matched the need for the Council fund additional costs.

To balance the budget just over £12 million of back office savings were found, leaving £10 million to balance the budget. Reserves are being used to balance this years budget so that further savings can be worked out and consulted on across the next year.

Government gave local authorities additional tax raising powers. The Council's S151 officer instructed the Council to utilise the full council tax increases or they would not deem the budget to be sustainable. The opposition did not support the budget citing the need to protect residents from council tax increases. But they did not provide costed amendments to do this and also refused to take part in a number of scrutiny sessions on reviewing the budget. It is also noted the oppositions Police and Crime Commissioner increased their precept by 6.2%.

In addition, a) The County Cllr advised that the recent Ofsted report for Park View had rated the School as "Requires Improvement". The County Cllr expressed his disappointment at the outcome of the report and rating and advised that a plan was being put into place to address the issues raised, b) Cllr May commented on the unsatisfactory condition of roads, verges and paths in Vigo Lane following the housing developments there. The County Cllr advised that he was aware of this and was seeking improvements, c) Cllr Gregory expressed concern that £100K of section 106 money had been raised from an ecology issue at a development at Drum Industrial Estate but awarded to a County Council project at Sedgefield. The County Cllr advised that he shared the annoyance of Councillors. He had argued for the money to be used in the Chester-le-Street area and would now ask the County Council Ecology Team for an explanation and would also ask the

Planning Department to provide a briefing on the allocation of section 106 monies.
The Chairman thanked the County Councillor for his report.

Item 7. 23/29 Correspondence

- 1) From a Resident
email re Picktree Village flower beds.
- 2) From a Resident
email re ivy on boundary wall, Picktree Village.
- 3) From npower Business Solutions
Letter re changed electricity prices.
- 4) From County Durham Association of Local Councils
email re various Durham County Council consultations.
- 5) 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 2 North Lodge.
 Cllr Jackie Gregory had declared an interest in the next item -
 - b) Application for tree works, at 23 Blind Lane.
 - c) Application for tree works, at 25 Blind Lane.

Item 8. 23/30 Proposals, Reports and Requests for Consideration

Quotes for the Planting and Maintenance of Flower Beds

This matter had been considered earlier in the meeting (Minute 23/27 section e, above).

Item 9. 23/31 The Annual Risk Assessment

Councillors discussed the Annual Risk Assessment, draft copies of which had been previously distributed by the Clerk, and agreed to approve the Assessment in the form provided.
(**Resolved** - to approve the Annual Risk Assessment in the form provided).

Item 10. 23/32 Payment of Accounts

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
Salaries	£ 570.54	Salaries March 2023	
Expenses	£ 100.00	Expenses March 2023	
Zoom inc	£ 15.59	Monthly Subscription - March 2023	£ 2.60
ANS Group Ltd	£ 39.86	Monthly Subscription - March 2023	£ 6.64
Makepeace Landscapes	£1022.40	Horticulture	£ 170.40
D. Hall	£ 180.00	Chair's Quarterly Allowance	
HM Revenue & Customs	£ 536.27	P.A.Y.E. and N.I.C.	
Total of Above Payments	£2464.66		

Payments Made by Debit Card

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
Made by Cooper	£ 534.24	Coronation Badges	£ 89.04
Total Card Payments	£ 534.24		

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

Item 11. 23/33 Other Matters for Information

There were no other matters raised.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.17pm.

North Lodge Parish Council

Accounts for the month as submitted to the Meeting of North Lodge Parish Council held on Tuesday 18th April 2023.

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
Salaries	£	Salaries April 2023	
Expenses	£ 100.00	Expenses April 2023	
Zoom inc	£ 15.59	Monthly Subscription - April 2023	£ 2.60
ANS Group Ltd	£	Monthly Subscription - April 2023	£
Makepeace Landscapes	£	Horticulture	£
Cty Dhm Assn of Local Councils	£ 403.08	Annual Subscription	
Durham County Council	£3847.52	Clearing North Road Shrub Beds	£ 641.25
Total of Above Payments	£		
Payments Made by Debit Card	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
TO	Nil		£
Total Card Payments	£ NIL		
<u>Balance to 31st March 2023</u>			
Balance b/f	£50245.72	Balances at Bank:-	
Deduct Payments - March 2023	£ 2464.66	Treasurers Account	£ 324.33
	<u>£47781.06</u>	Instant Account	<u>£47244.62</u>
Deduct Card Payments for month	£ 534.24	Total	£47568.95
	<u>£47246.82</u>		
Add Bank Interest Received	£ 22.13	Deduct cheques not yet presented	£ NIL
	<u>£47268.95</u>		
Add Grant Received	£ 300.00		
Balance c/f	<u>£47568.95</u>		£47568.95