

## NORTH LODGE PARISH

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held at Arizona Chemical, Vigo Lane, Chester-le-Street on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2014.

PRESENT: Parish Council Cllr. Mrs. E. Forrester.  
Chairman:  
Parish Councillors: Mrs. M. Caygill, Mrs. L. LeDune, Mrs. M. May,  
Mrs. C. Walton, Mr. N. Alderson,  
Mr. C. Noble-Nesbitt, Mr. D. Snaith.

Two Residents

Parish Council Clerk: Mr. D. Murrell.

The meeting commenced at 6.15pm with Cllr. Mrs. E. Forrester in the Chair and welcoming everyone, in particular the two residents. A period of silence was observed in memory of recently deceased Parish Councillor Ditte Prest.

### **1) Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for Absence were received from Parish Councillor Dr. D. Hartley and County Councillor P. May.

### **2) Adoption of Minutes**

The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2013, 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.

### **3) Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising from the Minutes.

### **4) Council Tax Precept**

The Clerk reported that the Parish Council had set a Council Tax Precept of £17,414.90 (seventeen thousand four hundred and fourteen pounds 90p) for the financial year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015.

### **5) Parish Council Report**

The Clerk, on behalf of North Lodge Parish Council, gave a report of the work carried out by the Parish Council during the previous year. Councillors thanked the Clerk for his excellent report.

### **6) Any Other Business**

There were no other matters submitted for consideration.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 6.30pm.

## North Lodge Parish Council

### Annual Report 2013-2014

I begin this report on the saddest of notes as it was just a few days ago that we learned of the death of Councillor Ditte Prest. Ditte had been a Parish Councillor for seven years and in that time had gained respect for the calm and thoughtful opinions she expressed, particularly on horticultural aspects which she greatly enjoyed. Ditte's funeral was attended by many Parish residents including members of the Residents' Association, five Councillors and the Clerk. Ditte's death brings a great loss to the Parish Council and to the community of North Lodge.

Coming in to the Parish Council by co-option in July 2013, we welcomed Councillor Dr. Dawn Hartley who very quickly showed a keen interest in the general well-being of the community.

There are at present two seats available on the Council and we would welcome any expressions of interest for co-option as a Parish Councillor.

#### Finance

Financial matters continue to be carefully planned, budgeted for and controlled by the Council and once again we have received a "clean" report from our auditors. Financial donations were made to the Great North Air Ambulance, the Royal British Legion, the Army Benevolent Fund (in recognition of the generous gesture of Arizona Chemical which provides the Council's meeting room free of charge) and to St. Cuthbert's Hospice in recognition of the work done by Councillor Ditte Prest. For the first time in many years, the precept was increased, but only by 2% from £17,092 to £17,414 supplemented by a grant of £630 from the County Council under the Localising Council Tax Support Scheme which was introduced following the Local Government Finance Act 2012. Other grants received included a substantial £4,900 from County Councillor Peter May for the provision of seats and flower tubs, £500 from the "It's Your Neighbourhood" project for horticulture and £100 from the County Council for replacement planting at Northlands bus shelter. We are also working towards agreement for a grant from County Councillor Peter May for a replacement seesaw at Merlin Drive play area and we are in partnership with the Residents' Association for a grant from Councillor May for further flower tubs and planting throughout the Parish. The Plymouth Brethren have also made a generous offer to supply 2 seats for public use as have Cestria Housing. Finally, the Parish Council always welcomes suggestions from Councillors and residents for project ideas which might provide lasting benefit to the Parish.

#### Highways and Transport

The most noticeable event in the Parish is the on-going improvements to Northlands roundabout to include the installation of traffic lights. It is expected that the work will

be completed within the next 2 months by which time the Parish Council's bus shelter just off the roundabout on North Road will have been re-built at its new position set back a few feet from the original site. To the credit of the County Council, this major junction project is not causing many long delays to road users. On other matters, the Parish Council worked with Network Rail to ensure that track work on the main railway line on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day created as little disturbance as possible for residents. Councillors Margaret Caygill and Colin Noble-Nesbitt attended a public meeting regarding improvements to the town by-pass. In Picktree Village, Councillors and the Police carried out a community speed watch which resulted in the Police issuing 8 warning letters to speeding motorists. A site meeting was held at Barley Mow with 2 officers of the County Council to make progress with a "gateway" project. At present, a raised flower bed is under consideration for the site although the proliferation of utilities there needs careful examination.

The Highways Portfolio is always a busy one and the Parish Council is grateful to the Portfolio Holder Councillor Colin Noble-Nesbitt, with help from Councillor Linda LeDune, for their hard work.

### Horticulture

As already noted, the Parish Council places great importance on horticulture which is important in maintaining the area as a desirable place to live and work. Portfolio Holder Councillor Carole Walton has had valuable assistance from Ditte Prest and they both devoted many hours to the horticultural challenge. We continue to receive many positive comments from residents. Credit is also due to the skill of our Gardener, Frank Leighton through his business, Pot-It-On. This year's work included the refurbishment of the bed at the entrance to Lambton Park, cutting back of the hedge along the bridle path at Low Flatts play area (work carried out on the Parish Council's behalf by the County Council), creation of a new bed at the Picktree Lodge plinth and the planting of 25 newly-installed flower tubs around the Parish. The tree guard had been nicely refurbished by the County Council and was re-installed at the entrance to Lombard Drive. A replacement strimmer was bought, the original having burned out. It is intended that all bedding planting this year will be predominantly red in commemoration of the 100 year anniversary of World War One. This year's Big Spring Clean event, organised by Councillor Mrs. Caygill, was successful in removing large amounts of litter and debris from hot-spot areas. The Parish Council expressed thanks to the 5 residents who gave up their time to take part. Park View Academy also held a very successful Spring Clean.

We are grateful to Councillor Carole Walton as Portfolio Holder for all her hard work in this important aspect of Parish life.

### Planning and Development

After representations including from the Parish Council, the proposal in the County Plan for 200 houses at Picktree Village was removed. Councillor Margaret Caygill

attended a site meeting with the Land Agent for Drum Industrial Estate to discuss the improvement of the pond area there following which progress is being made, hopefully to include the 2 Cestria Housing seats previously mentioned. Councillors attended several Neighbourhood Plan meetings with a view to giving consideration to a Plan for North Lodge. Over the last few months we have seen the demolition of the long established BOC depot at Vigo Lane. From grants, five new seats for the public have been installed around the Parish. Our thanks go to Portfolio Holder Councillor David Snaith who, with the Clerk, keeps under review the planning applications submitted within the Parish, reporting as necessary to the Council.

### Play Areas

The 2 play areas in the Parish have been generally problem-free this year with the few minor defects which have appeared being reported to the County Council for attention. A seesaw at Merlin Drive was removed following damage and as previously mentioned finance for a replacement is in progress. At Low Flatts, the goal posts were repainted. However, there has been dissatisfaction with the lack of attention given to Low Flatts by the Neighbourhood Wardens, particularly regarding dog fouling. Councillors Elsie Forrester and Margaret Caygill attended a County Council consultation meeting regarding fixed play provision and from this it appears that the Parish is comparatively well provided for. Play Areas Portfolio Holder Councillor Margaret Caygill continues to devote many hours for the benefit of residents and this is widely appreciated.

### Publicity

Parish Council Chairman Councillor Elsie Forrester continues to attend many Area Action Partnership meetings and events and this link, together with the many external meetings attended by Councillors, ensures a good flow of information in both directions. Two of the Council's noticeboards have been refurbished. The Parish Council's annual Newsletter was again well received. The Newsletter, which was collated by Councillor Colin Noble-Nesbitt and his wife (with our warm thanks), is delivered by Councillors to each household in the Parish and the Parish Council is grateful to all who contribute to its production and distribution. Portfolio Holder Councillor Maureen May is again liaising in the production of the Newsletter and our thanks go to her for her work on this Portfolio.

### Website

The website continues to be up-dated at regular intervals by Councillor Colin Noble-Nesbitt and the Clerk. Rare minor problems have been quickly rectified and otherwise the website runs well.

### Police Matters

Although North Lodge is a relatively trouble-free area, there appears to have been an increase in crime in the Parish. These include low level incidents such as graffiti, fly-tipping, theft of plants and other anti-social behaviour. Damage to daffodils by a pupil of Park View Academy was efficiently dealt with by the Academy. At South

Pelaw Wood, it is hoped to engage the Probation Service to tackle the anti-social behaviour there. Inconsiderate parking at school leaving time continues to be an issue for residents. Of most concern has been the spate of burglaries, particularly in Longdean Park from where 2 residents attended a Council meeting to discuss the matter. The Police provided additional patrols throughout the Parish and an arrest was made. The Parish's PCSO, Lesley Hunter, moved to a new job within the Police and we expressed to her our thanks for all she had done for the area. At present, there is a little disquiet regarding the possible reduction in contact between the Police and the Council as time pressures may mean that Police attendance at Council meetings is cut back.

### Visitors to Council Meetings

As well as welcoming regular visitor County Councillor Peter May who contributes a great amount to the well-being of the Parish, during the year the Parish Council welcomed Jodie Graham, Business Development Officer for Park View Academy who gave an overview of her work including ideas of community interest. Representatives of North Lodge Residents' Association have also been welcome regular visitors and this contact has proved beneficial to improving the Parish for the benefit of everyone.

### Meetings Attended

Throughout the year, Councillors have represented the Council at many external meetings and workshops. These include meetings of the CDALC Chester-le-Street and District Sub-Committee, CDALC Smaller Councils Forum, the Area Action Partnership, Neighbourhood Plan Working Group, North Lodge Residents' Association and training events. In November at the Remembrance Day Service attended by several Councillors, the Chairman laid a wreath on behalf of the Council. The Parish Council thanks all those Councillors who have represented the Council in these many and various matters throughout the year. This is a function that is of great importance in establishing and presenting the views of our residents.

### Acknowledgements

Following another busy year, thanks are due to the Chairman (Councillor Elsie Forrester), Vice-Chairman (Councillor Norman Alderson) and Councillors who have contributed so much time and effort to the achievements of the Council. Grateful thanks are also due to County Councillor Peter May for his close involvement and interest in the Parish. The Parish Council values its relationships with the Residents' Association, the County Council, our MP, the Police and Park View School, all of whom show that they share our aim of improving North Lodge for the benefit of our residents and for the benefit of those who work here. The Parish Council also thanks Arizona Chemical which continues to make available free of charge its training rooms for Council meetings.

Finally, we always welcome the involvement of residents and local businesses in Parish matters and we will continue to strive for the improvement of North Lodge Parish.

David Murrell  
Clerk, North Lodge Parish Council

12<sup>th</sup> May 2014