

## NORTH LODGE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Virtual Meeting of North Lodge Parish Council held on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> June 2020.

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

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm with the Chairman welcoming everyone back after three month's absence due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

### **Item 1. 20/30 Apologies for Absence**

There were no Apologies for Absence.

### **Item 2. 20/31 Ratification of the re-appointment for 2020 / 2021 of the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Portfolio Holders under the terms of Part 2.4.2 of The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.**

The Chairman reminded Councillors of the terms of the Regulations.

(**Resolved** – to confirm the re-appointment of the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Portfolio Holders for the year 2020 / 2021).

### **Item 3. 20/32 Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Margaret Caygill declared an interest as a Governor of Park View School.

### **Item 4. 20/33 Report of the County Councillor**

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

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**Budget**

Since the beginning of austerity this is the first budget where we've had an increase in Government funding. A series of one off spending commitments meant the Council had around an additional £17 million to use. Particularly aimed at dealing with the funding issues around care of the elderly, higher needs funding, and looked after children. The challenge being what do you spend this money on when you have no certainty that you'll have it next year.

The governing political group proposed one off commitments on improving highways, leisure centre redevelopment, climate emergency proposals, and town and village regeneration. They also provided long term funding commitments for an additional 11 neighbourhood wardens and the setting up of a youth parliament.

The general theme of opposition group amendments centred around the towns and villages regeneration reserve. An original £10 million pot of money that has been topped up to a total of £20 million in this budget,

where only £1.25 million has been allocated for spending. I put forward proposal to allocate £10,000 per County Councillor to ensure some of it is equally shared out to every community for regeneration projects. While also trying to get it spent, which is something that isn't happening. While other groups attempted to get this money given directly to AAPs, which I equally supported but were all voted down.

Also during the debate I spoke on the poor management of finances by the lead political group that has been demonstrated in this budget. Despite the massive increase in funding the budget was not balanced. Reserves were used to top spending up in an unplanned manner. I have been campaigning for years that the Council should be using them and welcome it. But key criticism is there isn't a real need to use them this year but there was in previous years.

I was unable to support the budget with the extra government funding while around 4% increase in council tax and without any guarantee that the community I represent would reap any direct benefits.

### **Council Finances during Covid Crisis**

Durham County Council has worked to maintain its statutory functions during this pandemic, but there is an added financial cost to all of this. There have been approximately £25 million increase in expenses, for example in having to buy excess personal protection equipment, additional costs in maintaining refuse collections while being socially distant (needing more wagons) etc. While there has been a loss of income approximately £25 million, from not being able to collect any fees for those using leisure centres, parking fees etc.

This means that total cost pressures on the Council stand at around £50 million. Central government has provide an additional £33 million of emergency funding. Thus the Council expects to have a £17 million deficit at the end of this financial year compared to where we would be if Covid had not had been a factor. I've been questioning whether there is a need for an emergency budget to reassess what we're intending to spend money on. Durham County Council does not feel that is necessary and believe that the projected £17 million can be absorbed without the need to cut back on projects we're already committed to. While there is also the hope that additional funding will come from the government.

### **Garden Waste Collections During Lockdown**

Due to the difficulties during the lockdown, the Council have suspended garden waste collections. Staff sickness and their need to self-isolate has meant that general waste and recycling collections are being prioritised. The missed collections are to be added on at the end of the year.

Following requests from residents, I've requested that the additional collections are added onto March 2021. There will be a much greater need for this service in spring rather than winter months and residents are not going to store this waste waiting for those final collections.

The community understand the difficulties Durham County Council are going through, like all statutory services. But as an additional paid service, garden waste collections need to deliver as per the terms and conditions agreed at the sale. Or provide the buyer with a suitable alternative that they will find useful, with collections in March 2021 rather than winter.

### **County Plan**

The independent planning inspector has concluded their review. There are two big changes that have been recommended.

That the two relief roads around Durham City should be scrapped. On the basis that any benefits from them would not out way harm done to the countryside around Durham. It is predicted that these multi million pound projects would only shave a few minutes off travel times.

All future developments should have a 66% allocation of homes aimed towards the older generation. I expect that means bungalows or managed flats.

### **Cutting financial support**

The governing political group have allowed a cut to a key welfare benefit from £1,000 to £500, on the basis that too much of the funding is being used. We've called for this decision to be reversed and the additional funding to be found. Especially considering the current crisis we're currently in concerning Covid.

It is shameful that a benefit the needy access in some of their most vulnerable situations has been cut. The grant assists those in financial need when deemed homeless, from damage to their property such as fire,

fleeing domestic abuse/violence, and leaving prison. To buy essential items that they would need in these situations that they couldn't afford through their regular benefit payments.

The decision was delegated to Council Officers and reported to County Councillors almost a month after it had been made. So the relevant portfolio holder failed to take responsibility for making this important political decision and made it behind closed doors. Ensuring that no scrutiny could be performed and resident's views raised through the process.

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In addition, 1) The County Cllr commented on the high number of deaths in care homes in the County during the pandemic. Cllr Hall asked that the County Cllr continue to raise this with the County Council as the number of deaths was appalling and asked if the County Council had a policy document on the management of coronavirus in care homes.

2) Re the development of the former Arizona Chemical site, the County Cllr advised that Planning Officers were in final discussions with the developers following which a report would be issued, including to the Parish Council, for consideration and comment. 3) The Chairman reminded Councillors that some departments of the County Council would be likely to have backlogs due to the pandemic and, therefore, might not be able to offer as much in assistance as usual.

The Chairman thanked the County Councillor for his report.

#### **Item 5. 20/34 Adoption of Minutes of Meeting**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> February 2020, draft copies of which had been previously circulated, were adopted as a true and accurate record of the Meeting and were later signed by the Chairman.

#### **Item 6. 20/35 Adoption of Minutes Produced Following Cancellation of Meeting**

The Minutes produced by the Clerk subsequent to the cancellation of the Meeting of the Parish Council due to be held on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2020, draft copies of which had been previously circulated, were adopted and were later signed by the Chairman.

#### **Item 7. 20/36 Chairman's Report**

The Chairman's report included the matters contained in her written report below –

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Welcome to the first meeting held using the Zoom format.

Just after February's council meeting, special measures were introduced nationally by the Government regarding the Covid 19 pandemic. In order to keep the Council functioning, Councillors agreed for more powers to be allocated to the council clerk David. Thank you David for all your work in these strange times.

Now legislation has been introduced to allow Council meetings to be conducted other than in person, with new protocols .

Catching up with outstanding council issues:

- 1) Notice boards. Permission to erect notice boards in Picktree Village, Picktree Lodge and at North Lands bus shelter has been received from Durham County Council (DCC). Permission has been refused for a board next to the North Road bus shelter however, new locations have been suggested by DCC. These will be checked out and Parish Councillors will be informed. A search of land registry will be made to check ownership of the land in question. Three notice boards will be ordered and arrangements to fix them in place will be made.

- 2) Seat at Low Flatts Play area: A seat was delivered to my property for storage. Unfortunately, this was of substandard design and was returned to the company. A new one is scheduled for delivery this week. If this one is ok, arrangements will be made to fix it in place at the play area.
- 3) E-mail addresses. Enquiries have been made to DCC for information regarding Parish Councillors having a council business e-mail address: await reply.
- 4) Lap-tops/I Pads. Information has been received from CDALC and DCC on this matter. This information will be forwarded onto Councillors May and Caygill for them to present a paper to the Parish Council. A decision will be made on whether to purchase a computer for each individual Councillor.

Again, I thank the Clerk and Councillors for the work undertaken whilst the Country has been in lock down. Take care and be safe.

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Councillors thanked the Chairman for her report.

Regarding outstanding matters –

- a) Re Minute 20/15. Re the pre-pandemic reduction in bus services, the County Cllr will re-commence his opposition to the changes.
- b) Re Minute 20/18 section b). Re the provision and planting of flower barrels, Cllr May is to produce a report for discussion in early 2021.
- c) Re Minute 20/18 section f). Re the Lyndhurst Avenue/North Road footpath, the Chairman advised that this has still not been attended to by the County Council, almost certainly due to the pandemic.

**Item 8. 20/37 Portfolio Holders' Reports**

The Chairman invited Cllr Waugh to give his reports which included the following matters –

**a) Planning**

1) Cllr Waugh advised that he had still not yet received any planning lists from the County Council. The Clerk will chase this up. 2) The Arizona Chemical development had been discussed earlier in the meeting.

**b) Finance**

Cllr Waugh advised that he had received the most recent financial information and was satisfied that the Council's finances were in order.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Waugh for his reports and invited Cllr Hall to give his report which included the following matter –

**c) Policy and Governance**

Cllr Hall advised that he would review the Council's draft virtual meeting protocol for presentation and agreement at the next Council meeting. Councillors were invited to have input on the review.

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

**d) Play Areas**

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Both of our Play Areas are still closed and the gates secured against entry. All seems to be in good order from the outside. I understand the new seat for Low Flatts was delivered but was not exactly what was ordered and a replacement is awaited.  
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The Chairman thanked Cllr Caygill for her report and invited Cllrs May and Driscoll to give their reports which included the matters contained in the written report below –

## e) Horticulture

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NORTH LODGE PARISH COUNCIL

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Report to Council 16 June 2020

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**Subject:** Parish Gardener

**Portfolio:** HORTICULTURE -

**Prepared by:** Maureen May

**Sent to Clerk on:** 15 June 2020

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- **SUMMARY**

- No Parish Gardener yet appointed

- **DETAIL**

- *Background:* Because of Covid 19 restrictions, Parish Council unable to appoint a replacement gardener.
- *Key Issues.* No planting of summer bedding has been possible.
- *Conclusions:* Parish Council has contacted Durham County Council to ascertain as to whether they are able to provide an interim Horticulture service for the parish. Awaiting costings

- **RECOMMENDATIONS** (*Select as appropriate*)

- To agree above proposed documents
- For decision and to consider the following recommended actions:

*(Specify below)*

**4.0. IMPLICATIONS** (*Select as appropriate & give details*)

- 4.1 Financial, Precept or Procurement implications:
  - 4.2 Staff or Other Resource implications:
  - 4.3 Consultations with others:
  - 4.4 Risk Assessment:
  - 4.5 Other Identified Implications:
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Cllr Driscoll advised that, as the gardener had resigned in February and it had not yet been possible to employ a replacement, there was no Audit report to make. Re the planting of flower beds, Councillors agreed that, as the County Council might be under additional time pressures at present, the Parish Council should look for volunteers to carry out the work.

The Chairman thanked Cllrs May and Driscoll for their reports.

**f) Publicity**

Cllr Forrester had previously advised the Clerk that there were no matters to report. The Chairman thanked Cllr Forrester.

**g) Highways and Website**

As there is not a Portfolio Holder at present, no report was given.

**h) Crime and Community Safety**

Cllr Gregory gave her report which included the matters contained in her written report below -

NORTH LODGE PARISH COUNCIL

Report to Council on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2020

**Subject:** Crime figures and community issues

**Portfolio:** Crime and Community Safety

**Prepared by:** Jackie Gregory

**Sent to Clerk on:** 18<sup>th</sup> June 2020

**1.0 SUMMARY** (Type brief details in 2/3 lines here)

Monthly crime figure and community issues.

**2.0 DETAIL** (Type fullest relevant information here)

2.1. *Background:* Inform Councillors and residents monthly, of crime incidents/trends for North Lodge. Crime prevention initiatives.

Detail: New National Police web-site. Crime prevention leaflets delivered to some area of North Lodge.

2.2. *Key Issues:* Insufficient details included on the Police web-site

Parish Council not informed of the crime prevention initiative by police

Not all areas of the Parish were included in the leaflet drop.

2.3. *Conclusions:* Parish Council in future to contact local police for more details on crime incidents ( Parish Council acknowledges the need for confidentially and subjudice )

Contacted Police about lack of communication, apologies received.

Parish to monitor future leaflets drops.

**3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS** (Select as appropriate)

To note or

For decision and to consider the following recommended actions:

(Specify below)

**4.0 IMPLICATIONS** (Select as appropriate & give details)

4.1 Financial, Precept or Procurement implications:

4.2 Staff or Other Resource implications:

4.3 Consultations with others:

4.4 Risk Assessment:

4.5 Other Identified Implications:

**LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS OR APPENDICES:**

In addition, Cllr Gregory advised that the Activity Week had been cancelled for this year and the Police had asked if they could retain the Council's £50 donation towards next year's event. Councillors discussed this request and agreed to it.

Councillors thanked Cllr Gregory for her report.

### **Item 9. 20/38 Correspondence**

1) From Colin Noble-Nesbitt

Email confirmation of resignation as a Parish Councillor.

Cllr Caygill proposed that a gift in recognition of long service should be awarded to the former Councillor.

The Chairman will take this forward.

2) From a Resident

Decline of offer to become a Parish Councillor.

3) From a Resident

Request for advice re neighbours.

4) From a Resident

Request for help to remove shrub cuttings from Ambleside Court.

5) From a Resident

Request for help to remove shrub cuttings from Kingsmere.

6) From Kevan Jones MP

Updated surgery advice posters.

7) From Durham Constabulary

Circular advice to residents re incident DHM-22032020-0087.

8) From Lloyds Bank plc

Confirmation of change of bank account signatories.

9) From County Durham Association of Local Councils

a) Notification of consultation on road safety strategy.

10) From Durham County Council

a) Press release re consultation on County Durham Plan changes.

b) Notification of amendments to planning application at site of former Arizona Chemical.

11) Various planning applications, approvals and refusals from Durham County Council, of which the following were within North Lodge Parish:-

a) Application for works to significantly repair and conserve wrought iron gates, post and railings, at Lambton Castle.

b) Application for conversion of existing garage and new pitched roof over, at 54 Lombard Drive.

c) Application for erection of 1 no. residential three bedroom detached bungalow with detached garage, at land at 27 Blind Lane.

- d) Application for demolition of existing single storey extensions (2 No.) and construction of two storey extension to provide additional living area and first floor bedroom over. Increase size of smaller bedroom at front. Erection of fence along edge of drive. Resubmission of DM/19/03862/FPA, at 24 Leander Avenue.
- e) Application for tree works, at 12 North Lodge.
- f) Application for 10 metre squared extension along side of house where there is a path. To include a utility/porch room, at 27 Pelaw Grange Court.

**Item 10. 20/39 Items Requested by Councillors**

**a) Leaf clearing at the entrance to Lambton Park**

Councillors endorsed the previous decision of the Council that the Gardener's rota needs to include sufficient time for this work to be carried out.

**b) Review of the provision of Christmas trees and lights**

Cllr May advised that the County Council would shortly produce a policy document on tree lights. The Clerk advised that revised terms for the power for the tree lights in North Road were awaited from npower. This item is to be included in the Agenda for the next Parish Council meeting.

**c) The annual newsletter**

Councillors agreed that, due to the pandemic, the newsletter should not be produced this year.

**d) Conditions for the appointment of a Gardener and Environment Caretaker**

Cllr May advised that a job description had been drawn up. However, the proposed hourly rate and expenses needed to be discussed and agreed by Councillors. This item is to be included in the Agenda for the next Parish Council meeting.

**Item 11. 20/40 Approval of the Annual Governance Statement**

Councillors discussed the Annual Governance Statement for 2019 – 2020, copies of which had been previously circulated, and agreed to approve the Statement.

**(Resolved** – to approve the Annual Governance Statement for 2019 – 2020).

**Item 12. 20/41 Approval of the Accounting Statements**

Councillors discussed the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31st March 2020, 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 2020).

**Item 13. 20/42 An Overall Amount for Donations**

In consideration of these exceptional times, a limit of £3000 was agreed.

**(Resolved** – to set an overall limit for donations in 2020 - 2021 of three thousand pounds).

**Item 14. 20/43 Review of Chairman's Allowance, Salaries, Wages and Expenses**

Councillors discussed these various matters and agreed that all amounts should remain unchanged except for the Clerk's salary which is to remain subject to the national agreement.



**Item 15. 20/44 Payment of Accounts**

<b>TO</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>	<b>REASON</b>	<b>VAT</b>
Salaries	£ 451.05	Salaries April 2020	
Expenses	£ 90.00	Expenses April 2020	
D. Murrell (via Cartridge Shop uk)	£ 45.49	Printer Cartridges	
CDALC	£ 366.02	Annual Subscription	
Npower Northern Ltd	£ 157.60	Power for Tree Lights	£ 7.50
Salaries	£ 451.05	Salaries May 2020	
Expenses	£ 90.00	Expenses May 2020	
I Herberson	£ 50.00	Internal Audit Fee	
Zurich Municipal	£ 692.72	Annual Insurance Premium	
Salaries	£ 451.05	Salaries June 2020	
Expenses	£ 90.00	Expenses June 2020	
D. Murrell (via Amazon.co.uk)	£ 17.99	Computer Mouse	£ 3.00
D. Murrell (via Zoom inc)	£ 14.39	Monthly Fee	£ 2.40
HM Revenue & Customs	£ 405.60	P.A.Y.E.	
J. Gregory	£ 165.00	Chair's Quarterly Allowance	
Marmax Products Ltd	£ 502.80	Seat for Low Flatts Play Area	£83.80

**Total Payments £4040.76**

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

**Item 16. 20/45 Other Matters for Information**

There were no other matters raised.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.40pm with thanks to the Clerk for hosting the first virtual meeting of the Council.

**North Lodge Parish Council**

**Accounts for the month as submitted to the Meeting of North Lodge Parish Council held on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> July 2020.**

<b>TO</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>	<b>REASON</b>	<b>VAT</b>
Salaries	£	Salaries July 2020	
Expenses	£ 90.00	Expenses July 2020	
DSJ Property Services	£ 220.00	Install Seat at Play Area	
J. Gregory (via M B Plant Nursery)	£ 308.15	Bedding Plants and Compost	
Durham County Council	£ 736.51	Hosting of Website	£122.75
D. Murrell (via HM Land Registry)	£ 3.00	Property Search	
D. Murrell (via Zoom inc)	£ 14.39	Monthly Fee	£ 2.40
<b>Total Payments</b>	<b>£</b>		

**Balance to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020**

Balance b/f	£29310.62	Balances at Bank:-	
Deduct Payments – June 2020	<u>£ 4040.76</u>	Current	£ 1742.18
	£25269.86	30 Day	<u>£58541.72</u>
		Total	£60283.90
Add Bank Interest Received	<u>£ 6.58</u>		
	£25276.44	Deduct cheques not yet presented	<u>£ 717.80</u>
Add Precept Received	<u>£32359.24</u>		
	£57635.68		
Add VAT Refund Received	<u>£ 1930.42</u>		
Balance c/f	£59566.10		£59566.10