

## 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 21<sup>st</sup> June 2022.

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

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting which commenced at 6.55pm following a very informative presentation by Joy Allen, the Durham Police and Crime Commissioner.

### **Item 1. 22/59 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillor Chris Veitch.

### **Item 2. 22/60 Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Dennis Hall declared an interest in Agenda Item 11 and Councillor Craig Martin declared an interest in Agenda Item 8a.

Councillors agreed to take Agenda Items 9, 10, 11 and 12 next.

### **Item 9. 22/61 Approval of the Annual Governance Statement for 2021 / 2022**

Councillors discussed the Annual Governance Statement for 2021 / 2022, copies of which had been previously circulated, and agreed to approve the statement.

**(Resolved** - to approve the Annual Governance Statement for 2021 / 2022).

### **Item 10. 22/62 Approval of the Accounting Statements**

Councillors discussed the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022, copies of which had been previously circulated, and agreed to approve the statements.

**(Resolved** - to approve the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022).

### **Item 11. 22/63 Review of the Chairman's Allowance**

The Chairman answered questions from Councillors regarding the Allowance and then left the meeting, with the Vice-Chair taking the Chair. Councillors discussed the Allowance and agreed that the amount of payment should be increased by £60 per annum with immediate effect.

**(Resolved** - to increase the Chairman's Allowance by sixty pounds per annum with immediate effect).

The Chairman then returned to the meeting and thanked Councillors for their deliberations.

**Item 12. 22/64 Review of the Clerk’s Salary and Expenses**

At this point, the Clerk left the meeting.

Councillors discussed a) the Clerk’s salary and agreed that it should remained linked to the national agreement and b) the Clerk’s expenses and agreed that the amount of payment should be increased by £10 per month with immediate effect.

(**Resolved** - that the Clerk’s salary is to remain linked to the national agreement and that the amount of the Clerk’s expenses is to be increased by ten pounds per month with immediate effect). The Clerk then returned to the meeting and thanked Councillors for their deliberations.

**Item 3. 22/65 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 -

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**Additional Street Lighting for Longdean Park**

I've funded the installation of a new street light in a cut on Longdean Park, linking house numbers 66 and 67 to 72. Residents raised their concerns that this widely used cut within estate felt unsafe, particularly during the darker months.

There had never been a street light in this location previously. But the cabling for street lighting ran through this cut so it made installing a new one relatively easy.

Durham County Council will be funding the electricity and maintenance of this new street light going forward. Where the Council identify an area that could benefit from additional street lighting as part of their policy, if funding can be found to install one they will fund the ongoing costs.

**Artwork for Entrance to Chester-le-Street**

I've helped to fund a new piece of artwork at the roundabout by the BP garage, along with Cllr Beaty Bainbridge. The piece is a series of arches that each depict something important to Chester-le-Street's history or culture.

The artwork is the idea of those that sit on the Action Area Partnership. There have been numerous calls to provide something at the entrance to our town to make it more appealing to visit. The area around the artwork is also in need of a spruce up. I'm working with Durham County Council to fund improvements. This will include doing some planting around it and replacing the rusty seat. A board will also be put up to explain the meaning of the artwork.

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The Chairman thanked the County Councillor for his report.

**Item 4. 22/66 Adoption of Minutes of Meeting**

The Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> May 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. 22/67 Chairman’s Report**

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

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**A Business Items: Forward Plan:**

The Forthcoming Year:

I am keen for the Council to develop new projects and initiatives

In May 2021 I asked all members to come forward to discuss informally with me what projects that might involve spending they would like to take forward within their portfolio

The Minutes of the Meeting of 15 June 2021 record those other suggestions were put forward in the feedback from Members...:

Youth activity, horticultural schemes

Parish Surgeries

Park View Youth activities  
Tree planting  
Police Community Trust Schemes  
Environmental Schemes

### **Commentary for June Meeting:**

I ask the Council to consider the need to have a Forward Plan for initiatives and projects, and to look ahead to next year: we raise a precept annually from Parish residents at a time of a huge and damaging cost of living crisis and the money received may remain largely unallocated for any specific public or Parish purpose. [ I shall ask the Clerk to update us at the meeting on the current level of uncommitted precepted receipts in the current year]

In the role of Chairman, I have an overview of the Council, and have gained insights into the direction of travel that the Council might need to take.... whether on representation, community engagement or communications within the Parish...those insights have led me to invite dialogue with all Councillors and to bring forward proposals for decision on all of those matters. We must explore opportunities to spend the money we receive from Parish residents ...

As a Councillor, I am entitled to contribute to the Agenda of the Council in this way, indeed just as others are...that is why I am highlighting these issues during my Chairmanship..

So when we come to **ITEM 8 (e)**, I am asking all Councillors to engage in identifying how we should use our resources to benefit the Parish....

How we do that, and who is to be involved and on what, is up to you....

But recent discussions demonstrate the need to 'prepare the ground', to plan a timetable and deal with detail in subgroups to avoid using Council meeting time for that purpose...

### **Community Engagement:**

A presentation took place at **Park View School, Chester le Street on Wednesday 25 May**, when I presented students with the Platinum Jubilee Commemorative Badge....(474 to be precise)  
Over 250 students were in attendance to hear me speak, as the Head requested, about the importance of the Platinum Jubilee and its significance to local communities...I spoke also about the role of Parish Councils and the work that they do in Parish areas...

I said that said, ' At the heart of all of this Celebration, is the opportunity to commemorate the life of a monarch who represents certain values: commitment to public service, and the importance of doing things to support people where we live in our community'

I went on to say that "My Council and your School share the same commitment to community values, so it is right today that we both support the Platinum Jubilee with the presentation of a commemorative badge....."

School Head, Mrs Pam Hall, said that she was thrilled that the Council had supported the School with the badges, and explained that these badges will prove memorable for the students, who will all receive one as part of the Council's Jubilee initiatives...

### **Item: 6 Reports: Policy and Governance Portfolio**

#### **Changes to Audit Arrangements for Local Councils:**

Press release: Greater transparency and value for money for council finance system: (31 May).

A new regulator, the Audit Reporting and Governance Authority (ARGA), to be established as the system leader for local audit within a new, simplified local audit framework.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/greater-transparency-and-value-for-money-for-council-finance-system>

and see...

<https://www.localgovernmentlawyer.co.uk/governance/396-governance-news/50675-government-to-set-up-new-regulator-for-local-audit-make-audit-committees-compulsory-for-all-local-councils>

### **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>

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The Chairman thanked the Clerk and all those who had been involved in the procurement and distribution of the Jubilee badges.

Councillors thanked the Chairman for his report.

Regarding outstanding matters -

1) Re Minute 22/54 section d). Re parked vans in Blind Lane, Cllr Gregory confirmed that she had contacted the Police.

2) Re Minute 22/56 section a). The Clerk gave an update on progress with a defibrillator for Picktree Village.

3) Re Minute 22/56 section b). Re the Sustrans bridge, Cllr Gregory, as a resident, had received a letter from the MP advising that he had not yet had a reply from Sustrans.

### **Item 6. 22/68 Portfolio Holders' Reports**

#### **a) Communications and Media Development**

In the absence of the Portfolio Holder, no report was made.

#### **b) Crime and Community Safety**

The Chairman invited Cllr Gregory to give her report which included the matters contained in her written report below --

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**Crime**

Reports on social media, state that vehicles in various areas of North Lodge have been broken into, ransacked and small items have been removed.

It is important for residents to check that vehicle doors are locked when stationary and unattended. They should also remove any items from view.

It is also very important that any victims of this crime should report it to the police.

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#### **Community Safety.**

Durham Constabulary has been awarded a top accreditation as part of its on going work as an inclusive employer.

The Department of Works and Pension has presented the force with the highest level available.

#### **Co Durham and Darlington Fire Service.**

The service is supporting the Child Safety week. For further information refer to

<http://childsafetyweek.org.uk>

Now that the summer has arrived, please refer to the Co Durham and Darlington Fire service website for information on water safety near rivers, lakes and reservoirs. There is also information on the prevention of wild fires.

The service is also supporting Boat Safety week. For further information refer to

<http://boatsafetyscheme.org/CO>

The service have recruited Twix, a springer spaniel. He is undergoing training as a fire investigation dog. He will eventually work along side Woody.

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For any emergency, use telephone number 999

For non emergencies, use telephone number 101

The Parish Council wishes to send condolences to the family and friends of Mr Derek Briggs.

Mr Briggs was a very well-respected volunteer from Chester-Le-Street. Included within his many roles was that of a community speed watch volunteer with the local police.

He helped to keep the roads safe not only in Chester-Le-Street but also the roads in the North Lodge parish. He will be sadly missed.

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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 -

**c) Finance**

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

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

**d) Highways and Community Assets**

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On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of May the winning pictures in the Park View Platinum Jubilee Art Competition were posted up in the newly installed glass display cabinets in the North Lodge Parish bus shelters. The commended pictures were included in the notice boards. The new assets of the display cabinets are a result of this school and parish council initiative. The monthly bus shelters inspection was completed on the 9<sup>th</sup> of June, and everything appeared in good order. Remedial work was required in clipping bushes around the Northlands shelter, Ambleside Court, and the glass shelter in Picktree Village. In addition, it was necessary to remove a name scrawled on the bus shelter wall on the North Road shelter next to Lombard Drive, and to the glass cabinet at Ambleside Court. This graffiti was of a nuisance value only. Seat cleaning was done as another regular feature of this inspection, to all seats in the bus shelters vicinity. Other seats in the Parish were cleaned and checked in late May.

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The Chairman thanked all those who had been involved in the procurement and installation of the bus shelter display cabinets and posters.

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**

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**Flower Barrels**

The Barrels have now been planted up with Red, White and Blue flowers in honour of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

**Horticulture Sub Group**

We have still been unable to find a suitable Parish Gardener.

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In addition, Cllr May gave an update on the production of the Newsletter which had now reached first proof stage.

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

**f) Meetings of Partnership Organisations**

Cllr Forrester reported on 1) the recent AAP meeting where new public representatives had been elected, 2) AAP priorities for the next two years, 3) Cllr Forrester had been elected as the Forum Chair for the CDALC Smaller Councils group. Councillors congratulated Cllr Forrester on her election. 4) Cllr Forrester had attended the funeral of Derek Briggs, also attended by many people including Kevan Jones MP, County Councillors, Police officers and Fire Service officers.

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

**g) Planning**

Cllr Waugh outlined planning application DM/22/01124/FPA. Councillors discussed this application and raised concerns re travel to the site, car parking, the lack of street lighting on roads approaching the site, air quality from increased traffic and the provision of bus services in the area. Councillors agreed that Cllr Waugh should draft a response to the County Council, to be submitted by the Clerk. Cllr Martin advised that, in his role as a County Councillor on the Planning Committee, he maintained an open mind on the application. 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**

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MERLIN DRIVE

All equipment appears to be in good order.  
It is hoped to start the refurbishment soon.

LOW FLATTS

All equipment appears to be in good order.  
Some reinforcements have been made to the fence protecting the new hedging. This seems to be effective so far.  
Further discussion on the possible refurbishment of this area will take place at the meeting.

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The Chairman thanked Cllr Caygill for her report.

**i) Policy and Governance**

Cllr Hall's report was contained in his Chairman's Report (Minute 22/67, above).  
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 at this stage there were no matters to report.  
The Chairman thanked Cllr Martin.

**Item 7. 22/69 Correspondence**

- 1) From Kevan Jones MP  
Copy of letter to Go North East re closure of bus garage.
- 2) Various planning applications, approvals and refusals from Durham County Council, of which the following were within North Lodge Parish:-
  - a) Application for conversion of garage into habitable rooms with an extension to the front of the garage and raising of the roof height, insertion of bi-fold doors within the rear elevation of the property, at 18 North Road.
  - b) Application for raised patio to the rear of extension in Indian Black Limestone paving. Patio incorporates access steps to rear garden. 1.8m high privacy screen mounted on north facing side of patio. (Retrospective application), at Izing Lore, Picktree Lane.
  - c) Application for construction of employment uses industrial/warehouse development of 6 no. detached units totalling 14,354sqm, at land to the west of Drum Industrial Estate, Drum Road.
  - d) Application for ground floor rear extension and internal renovation works. Replacement doors, windows and retrofitted insulation, installation of solar panels with new roof tiles. Replacement flat roof to porch and garage and widened kerb with dropped kerb, at 52 Longdean Park.

## Item 8. 22/70 Proposals, Reports and Requests for Consideration

### a) Community Fund Application - Park View School

The Clerk advised that the application, for a grant of £6,000 towards the cost of employing a mental health counsellor, conformed to the criteria of the Council's Community Fund. Councillors discussed the application, copies of which had been previously circulated, and agreed to approve the request.

**(Resolved** - to award a grant of six thousand pounds to Park View School).

### b) Drum Business Park Artwork Proposal

Cllr Martin outlined this project for artwork at Drum and asked Councillors to consider agreeing in principle to take ownership of the completed artwork. Councillors discussed this and agreed that in principle the Council would take ownership of the artwork on completion of the project provided that the Council retained the final decision on this.

### c) Refurbishment of Low Flatts Play Area

Cllr Caygill and the Clerk gave an update on the financial aspects of this project following the change in position of the County Council. At present, it appeared that the project could not now go ahead. However, the Clerk will contact the Council's internal auditor for further advice.

### d) Distribution of Jubilee Badges

The Clerk advised that there were some Jubilee badges remaining after Park View School had taken their allocation. Councillors discussed how to distribute these badges to best promote the work of the Council and agreed that Councillors, their partners and their grandchildren should be involved in this.

### e) New Projects and Initiatives

The Chairman outlined the importance for the Council to consider and take forward new projects and initiatives. Working groups were agreed for two projects, near the Wheatsheaf pub (Cllrs May and Martin) and at the entrance to Lambton Park (Cllrs May and Waugh). Cllr Gregory explained that none of the Police Community Trust Schemes previously mentioned could guarantee that money would be spent in this Parish.

## Item 13. 22/71 Payment of Accounts

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
Salaries	£ 526.14	Salaries June 2022	
Expenses	£ 90.00	Expenses June 2022	
D. Hall	£ 180.00	Chair's Quarterly Allowance	
HM Revenue & Customs	£ 462.20	P.A.Y.E.	
HM Revenue & Customs	£ 5.58	Employer's N.I.C.	
Zoom inc	£ 14.39	Monthly Subscription - June 2022	£ 2.40
ANS Group Ltd	£ 39.86	Monthly Subscription - June 2022	£ 6.64
DSJ Property Services	£ 410.00	Various Works	
Durham County Council	£ 539.68	Christmas Tree Lights	£ 89.95
J. A. Martin (via Dobbies)	£ 40.00	Plants and Compost	£ 6.67
Park View School	£6000.00	Community Fund Grant	
<b>Total of Above Payments</b>	<b>£8307.85</b>		

### Payments Made by Debit Card

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
The Lambton Worm	£ 150.00	Catering for Memorial Event	£ 25.00
XL Displays Ltd	£ 594.60	Noticeboards	£ 99.10
Cash Withdrawal	£ 160.00	Prizes for Community Arts	
Durham Fuel Centre	£ 39.00	Compost	
Congburn Nurseries	£ 146.00	Bedding Plants	
<b>Total Card Payments</b>	<b>£1089.60</b>		

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

**Item 14. 22/72 Other Matters for Information**

There were no other matters for information.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.50pm.

**North Lodge Parish Council**

**Accounts for the month as submitted to the Meeting of North Lodge Parish Council held on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> July 2022.**

<b>TO</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>	<b>REASON</b>	<b>VAT</b>
Salaries	£	Salaries July 2022	
Expenses	£ 10.00	Increase in Expenses June 2022	
Expenses	£ 100.00	Expenses July 2022	
Zoom inc	£ 14.39	Monthly Subscription - July 2022	£ 2.40
ANS Group Ltd	£ 39.86	Monthly Subscription - July 2022	£ 6.64
Npower Commercial Gas	£ 393.75	Standing Charge - Tree Lights	£ 18.75
<b>Total of Above Payments</b>	<b>£</b>		

**Payments Made by Debit Card**

<b>TO</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>	<b>REASON</b>	<b>VAT</b>
Post Office Ltd	£ 15.20	Postage Stamps	
Sainsbury's Ltd	£ 4.75	Cups and Bottled Water	
<b>Total Card Payments</b>	<b>£ 19.95</b>		

**Balance to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022**

Balance b/f	£80379.54	Balances at Bank:-	
Deduct Payments - June 2022	<u>£ 8307.85</u>	Treasurers Account	£ 6906.43
	£72071.69	Instant Account	<u>£71145.98</u>
Deduct Card Payments for month	<u>£ 19.95</u>	Total	£78052.41
	£72051.74		
Add Bank Interest Received	<u>£ .67</u>	Deduct cheques not yet presented	£ 6000.00
	£72052.41		
Balance c/f	£72052.41		£72052.41

One cheque not yet presented -  
£6000.00 cheque number 1510 dated 21/06/22 for Community Fund Grant payable to Park View School.