

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 20th September 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. Councillor Craig Martin was not in attendance at the start of the meeting.

As this was the first Council meeting since the recent death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, a minute's silence was held followed by a call for "God save the King".

Item 1. 22/83 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillor Chris Veitch. Councillor Craig Martin had sent apologies for his expected late arrival at the meeting.

Item 2. 22/84 Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were made.

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

Item 4. 22/85 Adoption of Minutes of Meeting

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 19th July 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. 22/86 Chairman's Report

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

As members will be aware, I made the Proclamation of Accession of King Charles III on Sunday 11 September at 4pm in accordance with the recommended procedures. I have circulated a copy of the speech and proclamation for Member's information

Business Items: Forward Plan:

Environmental and Biodiversity Plan:

This item is on the Agenda.

Arrangements for Remembrance Sunday: 13 November 2022:

Remembrance Sunday is due to take place on Sunday 13 November this year

Arrangements: Similar to the arrangements last year, (Minute 21/85 refers), I propose the following:

- a) That Councillor Forrester accompanies the Chairman to the Chester Le Street Ceremony
- b) That the Charman attend the ceremony of the North Lodge Remembrance Group and present a wreath for the Council
- c) That Councillor Forrester obtains the wreaths for these ceremonies and is reimbursed by the Clerk
- d) That this year's donation to the Royal British Legion be raised from £250 to £400

Policy and Governance Portfolio

Recent Items in the News:

General News:

LGL: Local council groups launch "Civility and Respect Pledge" amid bullying and harassment concerns: (15 August):

<https://www.localgovernmentlawyer.co.uk/governance/396-governance-news/51367-local-council-groups-launch-civility-and-respect-pledge-amid-bullying-and-harassment-concerns>

LGA News:

30 June:

Councillors ask to keep details private following abuse

Local councillors have called on the Government to allow them to keep their addresses and phone numbers private after revealing that 88 per cent had experienced abuse. In a report published today ahead of a session at its annual conference, entitled Debate Not Hate, the LGA said seven in 10 councillors had received abuse in the past 12 months, and one in 10 reported experiencing it on a regular basis. The LGA said some had been targeted because of their gender, race or sexuality, while some were suffering depression and anxiety due to safety fears, and feeling unable to go out unaccompanied. LGA Chairman Cllr James Jamieson said: "Councillors are as much a part of the community as those they represent and should not be subjected to abuse because of their position." The LGA is also calling for social media companies to provide better and faster routes for councillors to report abuse and misinformation online.

Debate Not Hate: (27 June):

Debating and disagreeing with one another is a healthy part of democracy, but abuse and intimidation crosses the line into dangerous territory. The right engagement matters.

<https://www.local.gov.uk/about/campaigns/debate-not-hate>

Planning reforms: (22 June):

This briefing summarises the housing and planning proposals of most relevance and significance to local government. It also provides the LGA's initial reaction to the proposals along with our policy messages, which may necessarily evolve as discussions on the proposals continue.

<https://www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses/planning-reforms>

Re the Remembrance Sunday arrangements, Councillors approved each of items a), b), c) and d). Cllr Gregory and the Clerk clarified that acquisition of the wreaths was in return for a donation, not by purchase against invoice. The North Lodge Remembrance Group ceremony is to be included as an item on the next Agenda of the Council. The Chairman, in addition, asked that the Council's representatives on the Community Arts Awards Programme discuss with the School themes and ideas for the coming year.

Councillors thanked the Chairman for his report.

At this point, Councillor Craig Martin arrived at the meeting.

Regarding outstanding matters -

a) Re Minute 22/78 section e3). Re grass cutting, Councillors were aware that the County Council was reviewing this throughout the county and a decision was awaited.

b) Re Minute 22/82 section c). Re horticultural assistance for Park View School, Cllr Caygill advised that she had asked the School for details.

Item 3. 22/87 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 -

Resurfacing Entrance Lombard Drive

Section of North Road around the entrance to Lombard Drive has been resurfaced. I've pushing for this to happen following complaints from residents about the very poor quality road surface.

This section of North Road had been in a very poor condition for some time. Durham County Council resurfaced this area while upgrading the lights at the crossing.

Damaged road surfaces aren't just a nuisance to motorists and cyclists they can cause a lot of distress to those living around it. With large vehicles causing noise and vibrations. It is important we hold the Council to account in providing decent road surfaces.

Council's Financial Outturn Scrutinised for the First Time

The financial results of the council have been brought to scrutiny for the first time. I've brought this to scrutiny as I thought it was unusual we don't do this.

Scrutiny spend a lot of time discussing the proposals to be put forward to the Council's budget. But this is the first time councillors got the chance to discuss how the council delivered the budget.

Elected representatives will now have more power to hold the council's finances to account. This includes further discussion on how the council uses and accumulates its reserves.

Council Children's Services Improvements

Recent Ofsted inspection of Durham County Council's children's services has rated them as good, with its leadership as being outstanding. This is an improvement following the previous inspection coming in as requires improvement.

The inspectors particularly noted the impact that scrutiny is having on driving forward service improvements. That those running the Council are now providing effective challenge of staff and how they run the service.

Re the road resurfacing work, Councillors considered that this had been done in a speedy and high quality manner. The Clerk will convey those thoughts to the County Council. In addition, Councillors discussed with the County Councillor various matters regarding the condition of the town centre. The County Councillor assured Councillors that he was in regular talks aimed at bringing improvements to the town.

The Chairman thanked the County Councillor for his report.

Item 6. 22/88 Portfolio Holders' Reports

a) Communications and Media Development

In his absence, Cllr Veitch had provided a written report, below -

With regards to our social media sites, for the last month we have added a number of posts including posts regarding the death of the Queen and the Kings Proclamation. There has been a small to moderate engagement by the public with "likes" and "retweets".

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

b) Crime and Community Safety

Crime

Theft and Criminal Damage at the Barley Mow bus shelter, Durham Road.

Jubilee poster and bus time table removed along with the perspex front from the two cabinets.

Date and time unknown- report made to police.

An appeal for information was made via the Council's social media accounts.

Theft from Motor Vehicle

Lyndhurst Avenue x 1

Wimbledon Walk x1

North Road x1

Off road bikes in the area. Residents to call police at time of incidents.

Community Safety

Crimestoppers

Fearless -This is a national charity through Crimestoppers youth service. It helps empower young people to make positive, informed decisions about reporting crime.

For further information, contact Crimestoppers, telephone number 0800555111

Chester-le-Street Activity Week, August 2022, was a great success.

Reminder to residents

Make sure unattended stationary vehicles are securely locked and remove all valuables from sight.

Use telephone number 101 for non-emergency calls to Police.

Use telephone number 999 for all emergency calls to 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 -

c) Finance

The financial information supplied to me by the clerk appears satisfactory.

Our 2021/22 accounts have been externally audited and no significant matters arise. No minor scope for improvements for the 2022/23 accounts have been suggested.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Waugh for his Finance report and 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 carried out on Thursday 8th of September. All appeared to be in good order, just requiring some leaf clearance, removal of small amounts of broken glass, and seat cleaning where applicable.

Prior to this, in the latter part of August there were two instances worth recording. Councillor Gregory noticed theft and damage to the bus shelter in North Road, south bound, past the Barley Mow roundabout. The councillor communicated the details to the police, to raise a crime report.

The specific damage was the removal of the plastic frontage and timetable from the Nexus stand inside the shelter, plus a retaining bolt on the side panel. The glass cabinet belonging to the parish, also inside, had the glass frontage removed, plus the Jubilee school art poster, and retaining pins.

The second instance was the replacement of the glass bus shelter in Picktree Village, on the right side when approached southbound past the Spire Hospital. This has a much improved standard of plexi glass, and has a new hard paved standing area extending one metre beyond the shelter on either side. The hedging and shrubbery has been cut back at these sides, and behind the shelter itself. This provides a more user friendly amenity, which is also a great improvement on the previously deteriorating structure.

In addition, Cllr Gregory advised of damage to the pedestrian refuge on North Road near to the Low Flatts Road junction. The Clerk will advise the County Council accordingly.

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

1. Appointment of Parish Gardener + Report

The new Parish Gardening Company - Makepeace Landscapes - commenced work on the 1st September 2002

REPORT

Please find report for work been carried out so far North lodge Parish council

Report as follows 12 September 2022

Bus shelters

All bus shelters listed have been swept internally by our operative each visit

Shrubbery has been shaped and tidied to neaten and create a sharper look.

Any soil / bed areas have been cleared of weeds and hoe'd /tilled the soil to leave a clean planting media.

Any litter has been picked and processed

And any ivy has been trimmed back and controlled.

Northlands round about bed

There was a lot of leaves on this one but our operative has cleaned them all out and declutter the area. We have pruned and shaped the bushes giving back form and de weeded the area.

A edge has been put on the bed and any soil been hoe'd/tilled to leave a clean planting media.

Entrance to north lodge

We have removed the leaves and tidied either side to the entrance removing any unwanted weeds and intruders from the beds. Grass has been maintained and we will be putting a generous amount of grass seed over the grass area which can only help to improve and strengthen the grass there

Millennium bed

We have cleaned of paving stones and put a edge on them to stop the grass creeping over this will be maintained and will gave more profile to the are and keep it neat. The yew tree in the centre has been trimmed and any weeds and intruders removed from the bedding media.

Jubilee tree

The soil round the base has been weeded and hoed'/tilled

A edge has been put in which instantly gives it a nice sharp look.

3 shrub beds at pick tree have been cleared of clutter and leaves

Our operative has weeded and hoe'd / tilled the soil then put a nice edge on to separate the bd from the grass.

1 shrub bed at long dean park

This has all been trimmed and tidied and any soil been hoe'd

The very long weeds and clutter at the back of the bed has been cleared and tidied and any litter removed and processed.

Trough planter

This has been weeded and checked any litter in front or at the side has been removed and processed.

2. Horticulture Sub Group

a. Tree Planting in Honour of Queen's Canopy

Suggested area for planting a tree (or more) was on grass in front of Baffle Bank at entrance to Picktree Lodge, Perhaps the Parish Council should consult with the residence of Picktree Lodge on their preference of flower beds or tree/s.

b. Daffodils

Planting suggestions are in front of wall east side of North Road leading from Longdean Park northward. Ian Harland agreed providing it does not restrict the County Council grounds maintenance squads. Parish Gardener to be asked for quote to supply and plant.

c. Daffodil planting

Suggested areas for planting were: Play Areas, Ambleside, 'Old' new Avant area, Linfort to Norwood

d. Barrels

Leave until 2023.

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 recent AAP matters, including grant funding applications, mental health issues in the town and a consultation on the Leisure Transformation Programme,

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 inform Councillors on a weekly basis of any new planning applications in the Parish and also to highlight any concerns.

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

LOW FLATTS

All equipment appears to be in good order.

David and I met with Paul Taylor from Komplan to discuss a number of issues regarding upgrading this area. He promised to get back to us within the week to address our queries but has not yet done so.

MERLIN DRIVE

The upgrading of this area by Komplan commenced over two months ago and is still ongoing. On visiting the site I find it very difficult to speak to anyone in charge to get an update.

In addition, Cllr Driscoll advised that the barriers at Merlin Drive play area had now been removed but there was still much clearance and tidying work to be done by the County Council. Cllr Caygill advised that approval of the funding application for Low Flatts play area had just been received from the County Council.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Caygill for her report.

i) Policy and Governance

Cllr Hall's report was contained in his Chairman's Report (Minute 22/86, 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 Vice-Chairman thanked Cllr Martin.

Item 7. 22/89 Correspondence

- 1) From Zurich Municipal Insurance
email re claim for compensation.
- 2) From a Resident
email re new swimming pool for Chester-le-Street
- 3) From County Durham Association of Local Councils
Notice of the 76th AGM to be held on Saturday 8th October 2022.
Councillors agreed that Cllr Forrester and Cllr May are to represent the Council at the AGM.
- 4) From Mazars LLP
Notice of completion of audit for the year ended 31st March 2022.
- 5) Durham County Council
Letter re 2023/24 budget planning
- 6) Various planning applications, approvals and refusals from Durham County Council, of which the following were within North Lodge Parish:-
 - a) Application for tree works (TPO/0057/2017), at 5 North Lodge.
 - b) Application to construct a single storey extension to provide a dining and siting area, at 43 Kingsmere.

Item 8. 22/90 Proposals, Reports and Requests for Consideration

a) The Civility and Respect Pledge

Councillors considered signing up to the Pledge and agreed that it was desirable to do so. The Clerk will make the necessary arrangements. Councillors also agreed that only their names and Council email addresses should appear in the noticeboards and the newsletter. The Clerk was asked to give similar consideration to his details which were available to the public.

b) An Environmental and Biodiversity Policy

Cllr Gregory had proposed the adoption of an Environmental and Biodiversity Policy. The Chairman had consulted with several Councillors and the Clerk in preparing a draft. Councillors considered the draft and agreed to adopt it as the Council's Policy.

(Resolved - to adopt the Environmental and Biodiversity Policy)

Cllr Gregory thanked the Chairman for taking forward her proposal.

c) A Defibrillator for Picktree Village

A quote had now been received from Northern Powergrid for the provision of an electricity connection from the mains. Councillors considered the quote and agreed to accept it.

Item 9. 22/91 Payment of Accounts

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
Salaries	£ 524.34	Salaries August 2022	
Salaries	£ 524.14	Salaries September 2022	
Expenses	£ 100.00	Expenses August 2022	
Expenses	£ 100.00	Expenses September 2022	
HM Revenue & Customs	£ 481.79	P.A.Y.E. and N.I.C.	
D. Hall	£ 180.00	Chair's Quarterly Allowance	
Zoom inc	£ 14.39	Monthly Subscription - August 2022	£ 2.40
ANS Group Ltd	£ 39.86	Monthly Subscription - August 2022	£ 6.64
Zoom inc	£ 14.39	Monthly Subscription - Sept 2022	£ 2.40
ANS Group Ltd	£ 39.86	Monthly Subscription - Sept 2022	£ 6.64
Durham County Council	£ 769.99	Website Hosting	£ 128.33
Mazars	£ 240.00	Audit Fee	£ 40.00
Makepeace Landscapes	£1022.40	Horticulture	£170.40
Total of Above Payments	£4051.16		

Payments Made by Debit Card

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
Tesco Stores Ltd	£ 15.20	Postage Stamps	
B & M Retail Ltd	£ 3.45	Cups and Bottled Water	
Total Card Payments	£ 18.65		

(Resolved - the payments be approved as submitted).

Item 10. 22/92 Other Matters for Information

a) Cllr Caygill advised that the manager of the Lambton Worm pub was still awaiting a design to present to the Council re proposed artwork on the rear wall of the Council's bus shelter outside the pub.

b) Cllr Caygill advised that it appeared that there were still some trees at the wood alongside the A693 that needed attention. The County Councillor will hold a site meeting to establish what work is being suggested.

c) Cllr Gregory, in her capacity as a Parish resident, advised that there had been no further progress with Sustrans issues but she would be pursuing this during the next few weeks.

d) Cllr Forrester thanked those Councillors who had delivered Council newsletters around Queensmere and Kingsmere.

e) The County Councillor gave a brief update on the financial issues being faced by the County Council.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.21pm.

North Lodge Parish Council

Accounts for the month as submitted to the Meeting of North Lodge Parish Council held on Tuesday 18th October 2022.

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
Salaries	£	Salaries October 2022	
Expenses	£ 100.00	Expenses October 2022	
Zoom inc	£ 14.39	Monthly Subscription - Oct 2022	£ 2.40
ANS Group Ltd	£ 39.86	Monthly Subscription - Oct 2022	£ 6.64
Poppy Appeal	£ 400.00	Donation	
Makepeace Landscapes	£	Horticulture	£
Total of Above Payments	£		

Payments Made by Debit Card

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
Post Office Ltd	£ 34.20	Postage Stamps	
XL Displays Ltd	£ 81 78	Display Cabinet	£ 13.63
Total Card Payments	£ 115.98		

Balance to 30th September 2022

Balance b/f	£67599.57	Balances at Bank:-	
Deduct Payments - Aug/Sept 2022	<u>£ 4051.16</u>	Treasurers Account	£ 2285.80
	£63548.41	Instant Account	<u>£61151.68</u>
Deduct Card Payments for month	<u>£ 115.98</u>	Total	£63437.48
	£63432.43		
Add Bank Interest Received	<u>£ 5.05</u>	Deduct cheques not yet presented	£ Nil
Balance c/f	£63437.48		£63437.48