

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 19th September 2023.

PRESENT: Chairman: Councillor Patrick Driscoll.

Councillors: Sue Brown, Margaret Caygill, Elsie Forrester,
Jackie Gregory, Maureen May, Dennis Hall.

Clerk: David Murrell.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting which commenced at 6.40pm having been preceded by a very informative briefing from Graeme Carr of County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service.

Item 1. 23/83 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors Craig Martin and Chris Veitch.

Item 2. 23/84 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

Item 3. 23/85 Report of the County Councillor

In his absence from the meeting, the County Councillor had provided the written report below -

Tree Planting Public Meeting Picktree Lodge

Following a large number of queries and concerns about the tree planting along Picktree Lodge's baffle bank I arranged a public meeting. This allowed residents to raise issues with Durham County Council's Woodland Creation Officer, who is running this project. I chaired the meeting and it was very well attended by residents.

The meeting mainly had residents raising concerns about the untidiness of the baffle bank now that the trees prevent the bank from being cut. While also raising issues with the way Durham County Council run consultations.

There were some residents in attendance who spoke in support of the tree planting. Promoting the need to combat climate change and the ecological benefits of allowing grassed areas to grow. The officer generally responded that as the trees mature they will prevent a lot of the unsightly plants from growing. Along with documenting that it was a resident from Picktree Lodge that called for the tree planting along the baffle bank. That although the consultation was smaller in scope than many wanted it to be, residents did respond and they responded positively to planting trees in this location.

Overall I felt the meeting was a positive experience allowing both sides of the argument to express their views. Along with receiving a commitment to tidy up some of the more unsightly areas.

In addition, a) Cllr Gregory advised that she had presented the position of the Parish Council at the above meeting, b) Cllr Brown advised that she had discussed with the County Cllr the untidy areas mentioned in the report.

The Chairman thanked the County Councillor for providing his report.

Item 4. 23/86 Adoption of Minutes of Meeting

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 18th July 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. 23/87 Chairman's Report

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

Welcome back councillors, hopefully refreshed after the Summer recess. The annual newsletters have been distributed to all residents, with some very favourable feedback on the quality of publication. Thanks go again to Councillor May for her efforts in composition.

Also, during this time Councillor John Waugh tendered his resignation from the Parish Council on Sunday the 23rd of July 2023. On behalf of the Parish Council an appropriate response was given by placing on record the valuable years of service he has given as a Parish Councillor, particularly in terms of the knowledge and expertise he utilised in his portfolio briefs for finance and planning. Everyone at North Lodge Parish Council wishes you all the best for the future. There are now therefore 2 vacancies for parish councillors, and 2 portfolios available for any councillor who wishes to undertake them.

On another topic, it is time to flag up the Remembrance Day events due in November, both in Chester-Le-Street market place, and in North Lodge itself. The council therefore needs to confirm that 2 wreaths will be required for these events, and the amount of a donation which should be given to the Poppy Appeal.

In addition, a) Councillors agreed to make a donation of £400 to the Poppy Appeal, b) the Clerk is to contact the Remembrance Group for confirmation that a Remembrance Day ceremony will be held this year.

Councillors thanked the Chairman for his report.

Regarding outstanding matters -

a) Re Minute 23/77 section a). Cllr Gregory kindly agreed to advise the County Cllr that a replacement waste bin was required near the Wheatsheaf pub.

b) Re Minute 23/77 section b). Re a tree for the Queen's Green Canopy, Cllr Brown advised that she and the County Cllr had discussed a site for up to three trees.

c) Re Minute 23/77 section c). Cllr Gregory advised that there was still a large advertising board at the motorway roundabout and she would chase up with the County Cllr its removal.

d) Re Minute 23/78 section g). The Clerk confirmed that he had submitted a report to the Planning Department based on the verbal report made by the former Planning Portfolio Holder at the last meeting.

Item 6. 23/88 Portfolio Holders' Reports

a) Communications and Media Development

In his absence from the meeting, Cllr Veitch had provided the written report below -

Social Media

Since the last parish council meeting several posts have been placed on our Twitter and Facebook. These have covered the litter pick, the local fire station open day, illegal off road biking and issues with trees for residents.

These have all received a differing amount of views from as low as 10 to 200.

I have requested that I gain joint administrative access to the Facebook this allowing me to place posts on this platform at the same time as Twitter rather than having to email or text David with relevant text and photos. This will allow both media apps to highlight the same information.

Recently a resident contacted me with regards to issues with our website and this was passed to David. It appears the issue arose from website management and online security certification. DCC has contacted the council to inform us that they will be withdrawing their services of the website management and David is now dealing with this and has more information regarding getting a new provider.

Litter Pick

As the litter pick in August was successful I have started to arrange another for Tuesday 10th October at 10am. It will be advertised on social media and The Lambton Worm will support us again. Cllr Gregory will be happy to answer questions in my absence at the September meeting.

Remembrance Period 2023

Myself and the volunteers of The North Lodge Remembrance Group will be siting the poppies and displays on the weekend of 28th/29th October. I will liaise with Cllr Martin regarding any form of gathering in November and update the council with any plans.

I have held another meeting with the artist Graeme Hopper about the artwork piece and have asked Cllr Martin to liaise with him regarding finance and permission relating to DCC.

In addition, the Clerk provided an update re selecting a replacement website host.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Veitch for providing 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

CRIME

Please refer to Police.uk website

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Durham County Council (DCC).

The parish council is in talks with DCC regarding road markings in the North Lodge Parish area. An on-site visit to is to be arranged with the results being published at a later date.

Police

Police Commissioner Joy Allen has announced her preferred candidate for the position of Chief Constable of Durham Constabulary. Rachel Bacon will be subject to a confirmation hearing by the Police and Crime panel.

The Activity Week 7th - 11th August held on Burns Green Chester-le-Street, was a great success with around 10,000 visitors. Official thanks will be given in due course to the many sponsors, which included the North Lodge Parish Council.

Off road bikes - Information on illegal use of these bikes to be passed on to Crimestoppers using telephone number 0800511111.

More information on this subject is available on website crimestoppers-uk.org

August 2023, 40 new police officers for Durham Constabulary were sworn in by the Deputy Chief Constable. They will be undertaking various roles in the constabulary.

For non emergency incidents, use telephone number 101

For all emergency incidents, use telephone number 999

Co Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS)

1st October 2023, fire safety legislation is changing. Will your business be effected ?

Refer to ddfire.gov.uk/fire-safety-responsibilities.

Make sure your chimney is safe before the winter sets in. Get the chimney swept.

Check smoke and carbon monoxide alarms are in good working order. To arrange a free home visit safety check, telephone 0345-225-4221

e-bikes are becoming more popular. Please check on the correct safe way to store these bikes and charge the batteries belonging to these bikes.

CDDFRS has recruited 11 new apprentice fire fighters. It is a three year apprenticeship.

CDDFRS is recruiting 'on call' fire fighters and fire cadets aged 13-17 years old. For more information go to website ddfire.gov.uk

CDDFRS has been ranked 26th best apprenticeship employer (out of 100 other employers) in the country.

For all emergency incidents, telephone 999

The Chairman thanked Cllr Gregory for her report.

c) Finance

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

Cllr Driscoll then gave his report which included the matters contained in his written report below -

d) Highways and Community Assets

The monthly bus shelters inspection was done on Tuesday the 5th of September 2023. General work required was on leaf removal from the floor of the Lambton Worm shelter, cleaning of seats in the Lombard Drive road entrance, and trimming foliage on the Ambleside Court shelter, plus ivy overgrowing the roof.

The serious issue found was that over the August Bank Holiday weekend, the entire glass cabinet was ripped off the wall, and removed from the shelter opposite the Lambton Worm, southbound on North Road. In addition, at the shelter northbound on North Road, beside Queensmere / Kingsmere, there were 2 separate incidents. Just days prior to the inspection the bottom of the cabinet had been covered in black heart drawings, which had been noted, and then on inspection day the lock had been forced open on the door itself. This took cleaning materials and some effort to remove the drawings, and the manipulation of the un-aligned door to get it back in place to re-engage the lock and secure it.

The context for these incidents is that it is almost a year ago to the day since the glass cabinet was replaced due to damage at the shelter near the Barley Mow roundabout, on North Road southbound, and in the interim, there have now been three episodes of lock damage to various cabinets. Possible replacement of the cabinet in the shelter opposite the Lambton Worm will only be considered at a future Parish Council meeting when any further damage can be added to this trend, to gain a more balanced view.

In addition, a) Cllr Gregory reported on a damaged street sign at North Road and damaged barriers at Northlands roundabout, b) Cllr Brown advised that road markings at Picktree Village required renewal. Cllr Gregory kindly agreed to include this in the discussions mentioned in her report above, c) Cllr Caygill had received a complaint from a resident re overgrown shrubs obstructing the view of approaching buses from the stone built bus shelter at Picktree Village. The Clerk had reported this to the County Council.

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

e) Horticulture

SUMMER BEDDING

All summer bedding still seems to be flourishing. Winter bedding has been ordered.

NORTH ROAD -TWO RAISED SHRUB BEDS

These two shrub beds have now been planted up, but will take some time to mature. Makepeace Landscapes will be asked to ensure adequate weed control etc. on the beds. It is my intension to seek the costings of wood chippings to be spread on both beds to help with the weed control, if agreed by Council.

One apple tree is overhanging one of the raised beds and Durham County Council will be contacted to rectify this issue.

In addition, a) Cllr Gregory advised that the tree at the entrance to Longdean Park required cutting back. Cllr May kindly agreed to take this up with the County Council, b) Cllr Gregory considered that planting in the flower beds at Blind Lane was sparse. Cllr May kindly agreed to take this up with Makepeace Landscapes.

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

f) Meetings of Partnership Organisations

Cllr Forrester advised that there had been no other meetings to report on since the last Council meeting although these would start up again shortly.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Forrester for her report.

g) Planning

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

The Chairman 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.

As a number of prickly weeds are growing around the perimeter fence, DCC need to be asked to remove them.

LOW FLATTS

All equipment appears to be in good order.

The notice within the fenced play area reminds parents/carers of their responsibility when children are using the area. This should answer a recent query regarding the positioning of equipment.

In addition, a) the Clerk will contact the County Council re the weeds at Merlin Drive, b) the Clerk advised Councillors of the reply received from the County Council Outdoor Facilities Co-ordinator re the positioning of the slide at Low Flatts.

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

i) Policy and Governance

General:

The Guardian: Council in Somerset forced to close parks and tennis courts after insurance blunder: (15 August):

Clevedon town council chairman says he cannot reveal why insurance policies were revoked.

https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2023/aug/15/somerset-council-forced-to-close-parks-allotments-and-tennis-courts-after-insurance-blunder?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other

LGA News:

Collaboration with police and political parties to embed safety in daily activities: (24 July):

Kirklees Council took a practical approach to dealing with abuse and intimidation of candidates and councillors focusing on engaging more with the police on these issues.

<https://www.local.gov.uk/case-studies/collaboration-police-and-political-parties-embed-safety-daily-activities>

Supporting councillors through closer working with the police: (24 July):

North Lincolnshire Council has established a robust and effective relationship with the police. The police have nominated a senior officer to help the Monitoring Officer deal with incidents of abuse, harassment, and intimidation.

<https://www.local.gov.uk/case-studies/supporting-councillors-through-closer-working-police>

The Chairman thanked Cllr Hall for his report.

j) Project Development, Business and External Relations

In the absence of Cllr Martin from the meeting, no report was made.

Item 7. 23/89 Correspondence

1) From a Resident

email re speeding in Picktree Village.

Cllr Brown advised that she had discussed this matter with the County Cllr and would take it up with the Police and Crime Commissioner.

2) From npower Business Solutions

Letters re electricity price changes.

3) From Zurich Insurance

email re claim for compensation.

4) Mazars

Letter re completion of limited assurance review.

5) from CDALC

a) email re ASB Action Plan.

b) email re AGM to be held on Saturday 7th October 2023.

Councillors confirmed that Cllrs Forrester and May are to represent the Council at the AGM.

6) From Durham County Council

a) email re overgrown hedge.

b) email re website SLA withdrawal.

c) email re health and safety risk at Low Flatts Play Area.

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

a) Application for two storey side extension, single storey rear extension and pitched roof canopy to front, at 18 Lyndhurst Avenue.

b) Application for lean-to front canopy and two storey side extension, at 11 Wear Lodge.

c) Application for installation of 2 gas powered generators and 2 concrete plinths to rear, at Unit 5, Angel Park, Drum Industrial Estate.

d) Application for pitched roof to garage, canopy to front, solar panels to main roof, replacement fenestration, widened driveway with dropped kerb and internal alterations (Revised and Resubmitted), at 52 Longdean Park.

Item 8. 23/90 Proposals, Reports and Requests for Consideration

a) A Parish Council Litter Pick

Cllr Gregory reminded Councillors that in his Communications and Media Development report above, Cllr Veitch had advised that he had begun making arrangements for another litter pick. Cllr Gregory asked if the Council would be prepared to publicise this, and a further four or so litter picks per year, on social media. Councillors were happy to agree to this.

b) A Location for a Coronation Bench

Councillors discussed a possible site and agreed that the space between the two shrub beds on North Road was the preferred site. The Clerk is to approach the County Council to seek their agreement.

c) Provision and Siting of Seats at the Play Areas

Councillors discussed the seating provision at both play areas and agreed positions for a new seat at each play area. In addition, one of the existing seats at Low Flatts, outside the fenced area, is to be re-sited.

d) Portfolio Holder for Finance

Cllr Veitch had advised the Clerk that he was willing to take on the position of Finance Portfolio Holder. Councillors discussed this and agreed to appoint Cllr Veitch to the position. Councillors offered their thanks to Cllr Veitch.

(Resolved - to appoint Cllr Veitch as Finance Portfolio Holder)

e) An Additional Administrator for Facebook

Cllr Veitch had requested that he, as Communications and Media Development Portfolio Holder, be appointed as an additional administrator for the Council's Facebook account which would better co-ordinate the posting of messages on Facebook and X (formerly Twitter). The Clerk, the current sole administrator for Facebook, advised that he was in support of the proposal. Councillors discussed this proposal and agreed to appoint Cllr Veitch as an administrator. Councillors offered their thanks to Cllr Veitch.

(Resolved - to appoint Cllr Veitch as an administrator for the Council's Facebook account)

The Clerk will send to Cllr Veitch a copy of the Council's Social Media Policy.

Item 9. 23/91 Payment of Accounts

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
Salaries	£ 569.74	Salaries August 2023	
Expenses	£ 105.00	Expenses August 2023	
Salaries	£ 569.54	Salaries September 2023	
Expenses	£ 105.00	Expenses September 2023	
Makepeace Landscapes	£ 1882.39	Horticulture August 2023	£ 313.73
Makepeace Landscapes	£ 1882.39	Horticulture September 2023	£ 313.73
Makepeace Landscapes	£ 1920.00	Planting of Shrub Beds	£ 320.00
Mazars	£ 252.00	Audit Fee	£ 42.00
Cestrian Flower Club	£ 100.00	Donation	
HM Revenue & Customs	£ 506.00	P.A.Y.E.	
HM Revenue & Customs	£ 35.34	Employer's N.I.C.	
P. Driscoll	£ 190.00	Chair's Quarterly Allowance	

Total of Above Payments £ 8117.40

Payments Made by Debit Card and Direct Debit

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
Zoom inc	£ 15.59	Monthly Subscription - August 2023	£ 2.60
ANS Group Ltd	£ 46.25	Monthly Subscription - August 2023	£ 7.71
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ANS Group Ltd	£ 46.25	Monthly Subscription - Sept 2023	£ 7.71
Jak HQ Ltd	£ 394.00	Printing of Newsletters	£ 24.00
Post Office Ltd	£ 26.40	Postage Stamps	
Costco Wholesale Ltd	£ 17.98	Copy Paper	£ 2.99
Asda Stores Ltd	£ 5.00	Envelopes	£ .83
Valueshop.co.uk	£ 9.95	Ink Cartridge	£ 1.66

Total Card and D/D Payments £ 577.01

(Resolved - the payments be approved as submitted).

Item 10. 23/92 Other Matters for Information

There were no other matters submitted for consideration.
The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.05pm.

North Lodge Parish Council

Accounts for the month as submitted to the Meeting of North Lodge Parish Council held on Tuesday 17th October 2023.

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
Salaries	£	Salaries October 2023	
Expenses	£ 105.00	Expenses October 2023	
Makepeace Landscapes	£ 1882.39	Horticulture October 2023	£ 313.73
Durham County Council	£ 583.82	Festive Lighting, North Road	£ 97.30
Poppy Appeal	£ 400.00	Donation	
Total of Above Payments	£		

Payments Made by Debit Card and Direct Debit

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
Zoom inc	£ 15.59	Monthly Subscription - Oct 2023	£ 2.60
ANS Group Ltd	£ 46.25	Monthly Subscription - Oct 2023	£ 7.71
Total Card and D/D Payments	£		

Balance to 30th September 2023

Balance b/f	£59773.14	Balances at Bank:-	
Deduct Payments - Sept 2023	<u>£ 8117.40</u>	Treasurers Account	£ 599.60
	£51655.74	Instant Account	<u>£55065.78</u>
Deduct Card and D/D Payments	<u>£ 577.01</u>	Total	£55665.38
	£51078.73		
Add Bank Interest Received	<u>£ 100.33</u>	Deduct cheques not yet presented	<u>£ 100.00</u>
	£51179.06		
Add Grant Received - Play Area	<u>£ 2786.32</u>		
	£53965.38		
Add Grant Received - Shrub Beds	<u>£ 1600.00</u>		
	£55565.38		
Balance c/f	£55565.38		£55565.38

One cheque not yet presented -

£100.00 cheque number 1580 dated 19/09/23 for a donation payable to Cestrian Flower Club.