

## **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 17<sup>th</sup> October 2023.

PRESENT: Chairman: Councillor Patrick Driscoll.

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

County Councillor: Craig Martin.

Clerk: David Murrell.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

### **Item 1. 23/93 Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

### **Item 2. 23/94 Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Craig Martin declared interests as a County Councillor and as a Trustee of Park View Academy.

### **Item 3. 23/95 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 -

#### **Durham County Council's Plans for their New Headquarters**

Durham County Council are buying The Rivergreen Centre, in Aykley Heads, currently occupied by Atom bank, to be its new headquarters. The building will require some modifications, such as an extension so that a council chamber can be created. It is expected that Durham County Council will move into this building at some point in the middle of 2025.

County Hall will still be knocked down, once empty, with the land sold to be part of the wider Aykley Heads development. The upper floors of County Hall have already been closed off and decommissioned as staff are distributed to other sites.

The overall project in reversing the decision to have the council's HQ as a new build on the Sands has saved the tax payer around £22 million. I will be fighting as hard as possible to get as much of that funding spent in our community. But fear the money will go to plugging the financial holes the Council has.

In addition, a) The County Cllr had held a site meeting at Barley Gate with a representative of the social housing provider to discuss the standard of some of the social housing there, b) The County Cllr was still chasing up with the County Council the replacement of waste bins in the Parish. The Chairman thanked the County Councillor for his report.

#### **Item 4. 23/96 Adoption of Minutes of Meeting**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> September 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. 23/97 Chairman's Report**

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

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The 2<sup>nd</sup> community volunteer litter pick was undertaken on Tuesday the 10<sup>th</sup> of October. Helping out on this occasion was a real pleasure, and although the group taking part was lower than previously, the endeavour and end result was well worth the effort.

Litter was recovered from the Wheatsheaf pub surrounds, along North Road, to the turn into the Drum industrial estate. Efforts were then concentrated on the C2C cycle and walking track from the bridge over North Road, to the Picktree Lodge turn off. Particularly noteworthy was the recovery of two traffic bollards, and a large assortment of glass beer and spirit bottles, from the embankment leading down to the railings at the end of Park View school sports pitches. Further long- term rubbish was in the shrubbery, and behind it, on the walk up to Picktree Lodge. The result of this was to make a real dent in some of the less accessible, and more long- term caches of discarded items, improving the parish environment. It is intended to continue these group litter picks on a quarterly basis over the coming year, and all residents are encouraged to participate in a very worthwhile venture. Any further self- help schemes for North Lodge would be welcomed by the Parish Council for consideration and possible endorsement, alongside the current scheme. In terms of this current scheme, Councillor Veitch should be given all the plaudits for his leadership.

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In addition, the Chairman thanked all those who taken part in the litter pick.

Councillors thanked the Chairman for his report.

Regarding outstanding matters -

a) Re Minute 23/87 section c). Cllr Gregory advised that there was now a "For Sale" board at the junction of North Road and Low Flatts Road. The Clerk will ask the County Council to inspect this and seek removal of the sign should it be in an unauthorised place.

b) Re Minute 23/88 section g). Cllr Gregory advised that an email from the Parish Council to the County Council Planning Department re planning application DM/23/00567/FPA had not been recorded in the online comments section of the application. The County Cllr will follow this up.

c) Re Minute 23/89 section 1). Re speeding traffic in Picktree Village, Cllr Brown provided an update including possible speed checks and the deteriorating condition of the road surface.

#### **Item 6. 23/98 Portfolio Holders' Reports**

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

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

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Social Media

Very little activity this month other than the posts regarding the latest litter pick. The posts have received numerous views and likes with comments from residents thanking volunteers for their work.

Litter pick

Another successful litter pick was carried out on 10th October 2023. Only 5 volunteers attended but 10 bags of rubbish were collected. As previously discussed and agreed the litter picks will be quarterly and it is the intention that the next one will take place in January (date to be confirmed).

The Chairman thanked Cllr Veitch for 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**

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**Crime**

Please refer to Police.uk website

**Community Safety**

**Police**

Blind Lane Speed Monitoring. The council received data for period, 18/09/23- 24/09/23.

As a result of this 7 day data, a representative from the Durham Constabulary Traffic and Armed Policing Dept, decided to withdraw the safety camera enforcement unit from Blind Lane.

I have therefore, asked the parish council's clerk, Mr Murrell to request a more detailed data/report covering not only this time, but over the past year including September 2022.

I shall keep the Council updated. If necessary, I shall request that this subject is placed on an agenda for full discussion at a later council meeting.

The Constabulary has been awarded Police Force of the Year 2023 by the National Black Police Association.

Operation Zata. With an increase in Burglary and Theft from Motor Vehicle in the Stanley and Chester-le-Street areas, police have increased patrols.

Two males have been charged. Several vehicles were stopped and searched. Investigations are still on going.

As the winter approaches, information is on the council's social media accounts advising steps to take to protect your property/vehicle.

For more in-depth information regarding community issues involving Durham Constabulary, please visit the social media accounts for this organisation.

For all non emergencies use telephone number 101

For all emergencies use telephone number 999

**Co Durham and Darlington Fire and Safety Rescue (CDDFRS).**

**Halloween.**

Use battery lights as opposed to real flame candles in your Halloween lanterns.

Keep fancy dress costumes away from naked flames.

Trick and Treat; If it is decided to visit residential properties, then keep everyone safe by using reflective bright clothing and have access to touches.

Smoke alarms: Contact CDDFRS by telephone 03452234221, to arrange a free alarm check.

From the 1<sup>st</sup> October, fire safety legislation for businesses was introduced. For further information refer to [dd.fire.gov.uk/fire-safety-responsibilities](https://dd.fire.gov.uk/fire-safety-responsibilities)

For more information regarding community issues involving CDDFRS please refer to the social media accounts for this organisation.

For all emergencies use telephone number 999.

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In addition, Cllr Brown suggested the upgrading of speed warning signs in Picktree Village. The County Cllr suggested that the Parish Council should undertake a speed watch campaign in the Village.

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

**c) Finance**

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I have inspected the financial information supplied to me by the clerk and can confirm that everything appears correct.

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The Chairman thanked Cllr Veitch for his report. Cllr Driscoll then gave his report which included the matters contained in his written report below -

**d) Highways and Community Assets**

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The monthly bus shelters inspection was completed on Monday the 9<sup>th</sup> of October 2023. All the shelters appeared to be in good order. General duties required, included leaf clearance from several shelters, plus seat cleaning, and cleaning of cabinets. Alongside this, some further branch cutting was used behind the glass bus shelter in Picktree Village, to help ensure there would be no glass scratched among the rear glass panels during Autumn/Winter.

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In addition, Cllr Caygill considered that the cabinet displays required new artwork. She would take this up firstly with the School.

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**

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**WINTER BEDDING**

Winter bedding has now been planted up in the eighteen flower beds, plus the Millennium Bed, Picktree Village shrub bed, around Jubilee Tree and the two flower beds in front of Lambton Park. Extra top soil has been added.

**NORTH ROAD -TWO RAISED SHRUB BEDS**

One apple tree is overhanging one of the raised beds and Robbie Aberdeen (Durham County Council) has been contacted to rectify this issue.

**SHRUBS AND BUSHES AT NORTHLANDS SHRUB BED**

The above have all been trimmed back.

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In addition, Councillors considered that winter bedding planting in some flower beds 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 on the Area Action Partnership Holiday Activities With Healthy Food project. The Chairman thanked Cllr Forrester for her report.

**g) Planning**

In the absence of a Portfolio Holder, no report was made. The Clerk confirmed that he circulated all notices of planning applications in the Parish whenever they were received from the County Council.

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

**h) Play Areas**

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The equipment at both Merlin Drive and Low Flatts appears to be in good order.

The Clerk and I met with the contractor and agreed on the positioning of the new seats and the moving of an existing seat to a new position. These seats will all have a hard standing surround to prevent ground erosion.

The funds have been applied for through the County Councillor.

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In addition, a) Cllr Caygill and the Clerk had inspected the proposed site for the coronation bench and had considered that the site was not ideal. More thought needed to be given to this or alternative sites, b) the hedges at Low Flatts play area required cutting back. The Clerk will contact the County Council.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Caygill for her report and invited Cllr Hall to give his report.

**i) Policy and Governance**

Cllr Hall advised that there were no matters to report.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Hall and invited Cllr Martin to give his report.

**j) Project Development, Business and External Relations**

Cllr Martin advised that there were no matters to report.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Martin.

**Item 7. 23/99 Correspondence**

**1) From a Resident**

email re dog fouling.

The Clerk will contact the Neighbourhood Wardens for help and advice on this matter.

**2) from CDALC**

email re appointment of CDALC President.

**3) From Durham County Council**

Letter re Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2024.

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

Application for installation of velux cabrio balcony system to the front elevation roof, at 7 Ambleside Court.

**Item 8. 23/100 Proposals, Reports and Requests for Consideration**

**a) Picktree Village Christmas Tree and Lights**

Councillors considered that the display of lights last Christmas was less impressive than previously, perhaps because of the greater size of the tree. The Clerk is to purchase a further two sets of tree lights.

**b) A Commitment on Responsibility for new Sustainably Planted Beds at Picktree Lodge**

The County Cllr outlined a proposal for the reinstatement of beds at the entrance to Picktree Lodge, to be planted with sustainable planting and to be financed from his Neighbourhood Budget. However, the project would require the Parish Council to take responsibility for the beds after the first year.

**(Resolved on a show of hands - to commit to take responsibility for new beds at the entrance to Picktree Lodge one year after the installation of the beds).**

**c) Budget:Forward Planning**

The Clerk advised Councillors that they should now be giving thought to any projects requiring funding in the next financial year, ready for inclusion in budget forecasting in December.

**Item 9. 23/101 Payment of Accounts**

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
Salaries	£ 569.74	Salaries October 2023	
Expenses	£ 105.00	Expenses October 2023	
Makepeace Landscapes	£ 1882.39	Horticulture October2023	£ 313.73
Makepeace Landscapes	£ 1420.80	Soil for Flower Beds	£ 236.80
Durham County Council	£ 583.82	Festive Lighting, North Road	£ 97.30
Poppy Appeal	£ 400.00	Donation	
<b>Total of Above Payments</b>	<b>£ 4961.75</b>		

**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 £ 61.84**

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

In addition, Cllr Gregory enquired if the Council was receiving value for money from the monthly Zoom subscription. The Clerk will investigate possible alternatives.

**Item 10. 23/102 Other Matters for Information**

- a) The County Cllr advised that he had funds available from his Neighbourhood Budget and he would welcome applications from community groups within the town.
- b) The County Cllr will enquire if the Santa Bus will be running again this year and, if so, will request that it visits North Lodge.
- c) Cllr Veitch gave an update re the forthcoming Remembrance Day Service in North Lodge.
- d) The County Cllr advised that he had no further information re the proposed new leisure centre in the town.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.20pm.

## 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> November 2023.

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
Salaries	£	Salaries November 2023	
Salaries	£	Back-dated Salary Rise Apr-Oct inc	
Expenses	£ 105.00	Expenses November 2023	
Makepeace Landscapes	£ 1882.39	Horticulture November 2023	£ 313.73
<b>Total of Above Payments</b>	<b>£</b>		

### Payments Made by Debit Card and Direct Debit

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
ANS Group Ltd	£ 46.25	Monthly Subscription - Nov 2023	£ 7.71
Dobbies Garden Centre	£ 44.97	Tree Lights	£ 7.50
Morrisons Supermarkets	£ 20.75	Batteries	£ 3.46
<b>Total Card and D/D Payments</b>	<b>£ 111.97</b>		

### Balance to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023

Balance b/f	£55565.38	Balances at Bank:-	
Deduct Payments - Oct 2023	<u>£ 4961.75</u>	Treasurers Account	£ 876.01
	£50603.63	Instant Account	<u>£50117.28</u>
Deduct Card and D/D Payments	<u>£ 61.84</u>	Total	£50993.29
	£50541.79		
Add Bank Interest Received	<u>£ 51.50</u>	Deduct cheques not yet presented	<u>£ 400.00</u>
Balance c/f	£50593.29		£50593.29

One cheque not yet presented -  
£400.00 cheque number 1586 dated 17/10/23 for a donation payable to Poppy Appeal.