

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 21st November 2023.

PRESENT: Chairman: Councillor Patrick Driscoll.

Councillors: Sue Brown, Margaret Caygill, Jackie Gregory, Maureen May, Craig Martin.

County Councillor: Craig Martin.

Clerk: David Murrell.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Item 1. 23/103 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors Elsie Forrester, Dennis Hall and Chris Veitch.

Item 2. 23/104 Declarations of Interest

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

Item 3. 23/105 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 -

Refurbished North Lodge library

I've funded a project to completely refurbish the library within Park View Academy North Lodge site. I provided £17,000 to ensure the facility better serves the expanded extracurricular activities the school is now offering. The refurbishment allowed the layout of the room to be altered along purchasing new carpet and furniture.

Virgin Media Complaints

Met with Virgin Media to relay complaints that residents have about the most recent installation of broadband. Particularly relating to no notice given that the work was going to occur.

Virgin have apologised, stating that they got it wrong and their contractors failed to provide any information. They have been out to do spot checks themselves with residents and discovered the contractors have not fulfilled the expectations they should be working to. It is a requirement that Durham County Council sets out to anyone that does work to highway needs to inform residents before it begins.

Their network for most of North Lodge is expected to go live at the start of 2024 and there should be no more work needed from Virgin. Except Longdean Park where they're having some difficulties and Picktree Lodge where they're investigating why some sections have been missed off.

In addition, a) In reply to Cllr May, the County Cllr advised that the reinstatement of the beds at the entrance to Picktree Lodge was programmed to be completed before the start of the grass-cutting season next year. The County Cllr had written accordingly to advise local residents, b) In reply to Cllr Brown, the County Cllr provided an update, from information that he was aware, on the

redevelopment of the Red Lion pub in the town centre, c) There was no progress with the “Santa Bus” which was probably due to the present bus drivers’ strike, d) Councillors discussed the bus drivers’ strike and commented on the hardship this was causing to many residents. The Chairman thanked the County Councillor for his report.

Item 4. 23/106 Adoption of Minutes of Meeting

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 17th October 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. 23/107 Chairman’s Report

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

It was an honour and a privilege for me to participate in the informal Remembrance Day ceremony in North Road on Armistice Day, the 11th of November, and the formal ceremony in Chester-Le-Street marketplace on the 12th.

There was a real feeling of togetherness and common reflection for all those present, sustained by the good weather on the days in question. Particular thanks go to Councillor Veitch, and the North Lodge Remembrance Group volunteers, who put on the usual eye-catching display in North Road, and spent time and effort in organising that ceremony, with Councillor Martin's close support. Standards have been set for both ceremonies, and it is up to the custodians of these events to maintain them. The glowing comments from the public, on the display at North Road, gives a real sense of value and appreciation for the parish as a whole.

Councillors thanked the Chairman for his report.

Regarding outstanding matters -

- a) Re Minute 23/95 section b). Cllr Gregory advised that the replacement waste bins were required in the Ward, not the Parish as recorded in the Minutes.
- b) Re Minute 23/97 section a). Cllr Gregory advised that the “For Sale” board at the junction of North Road and Low Flatts Road had now been removed.
- c) Re Minute 23/101. The Chairman advised that the Zoom subscription had now been cancelled and the account closed.

Item 6. 23/108 Portfolio Holders' Reports

a) Communications and Media Development

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

Social Media

This month we have had another couple of people begin following our social media and we have had numerous likes with regards to the informal Remembrance Service held at the display next to the Lambton Worm. From feedback received the residents appreciate the efforts of the North Lodge Remembrance Group with the siting of poppies and displays. Residents expressed their thanks for the service held on 11th November 2023.

We also posted advice from Durham Constabulary with regards to shopping online in the run up to Christmas.

If any councillor has anything they wish to have posted on our social media please let me know.

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

Crime.

Please refer to the Police UK website.

Community Safety.

Durham County Council

Speed monitoring equipment was installed in Picktree Village. The parish council will request a copy of the data obtained.

On the 9th November, Councillors Driscoll and Gregory accompanied Owen Brown from the county council traffic department to discuss painting new road markings in North Lodge. This walkabout was undertaken after residents and Councillors had previously raised concerns with parking at junctions, especially at the end of the school day.

The following areas were identified:

Park View School, road markings to be refreshed at the entrance to the school, Lombard Drive.

Zig Zag lines to be painted on the approach to the pedestrian crossing in North Road.

Double yellow lines to be painted at the entrance to Longdean Park and Low Flatts Road (nearby residents will be canvassed).

These requests will be placed on the council road marking rota for the 2024 financial year.

Police

The parish council has sought further information from the police regarding the decision by the authorities, to remove the need for the speed monitoring van to attend Blind Lane

Funding from the Durham Police and Crime Commissioner has enabled Durham Police to purchase of 32 hand held metal detectors. These detectors won't replace physical searches but will function as a screening device during lawful and justified searches following an arrest..

Durham Constabulary's work to protect the people of County Durham and Darlington from organised crime, has been rated outstanding by government inspectors.

23 new police officers have been recognised by the force for successfully completing their Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship (PCDA).

18 Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) have been recruited.

For further information please refer to Durham Constabulary's social media accounts.

For non emergency calls, use telephone number 101

For all emergency calls, use telephone number 999

Co Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS).

If your Christmas decorations are going up soon or are already up, please take care **NOT** to overload your sockets.

New body worn cameras have been rolled out across the service.

Upgraded cameras have been supplied to fire stations as well as Business and Community teams,

All cameras are equipped with recording technology,

Cameras with technology to support 360 degree CCTV systems are already installed in every fire engine.

Smoke Alarms- contact CDDFRS using telephone 03452234221, to arrange a free alarm check.

For further information please refer to the Co Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue social media accounts.

For all emergency call, use telephone number 999

The Chairman thanked Cllr Gregory for her report.

c) Finance

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

I have inspected the financial information supplied to me by the clerk and can confirm that everything appears correct. I have also checked the calculations for the Clerk's (David) salary pay award for 2023/24.

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

The monthly bus shelters inspection was undertaken on Wednesday the 8th of November 2023. All the bus shelters appeared to be in a satisfactory condition.
The main duty was for extensive leaf clearing in all shelters, particularly in the case of the shelter in front of the Lambton Worm public house. The glass cabinets needed a further clean, and food materials were washed off a glass panel in the glass shelter in Picktree Village.

In addition, Cllr Caygill advised that a reply from the School was awaited regarding new artwork for the display cabinets.

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

WINTER BEDDING

Stephen Makepeace will add extra plants to deficient beds. Fertiliser has been added to all flower beds. Leaves have been removed from flower beds and grassed area at entrance to Lambton Park

NORTH ROAD -TWO RAISED SHRUB BEDS - Overhanging Apple trees.

Durham County Council has promised to inspect this area this week.

Horticulture sub Group (meeting 20th November) Councillors decided to ask Makepeace

Landscapes to plant daffodils and tulips in both North Road shrub beds ASAP.

In addition, a) Makepeace Landscapes had been asked to cut back the roses at the Northlands bed, b) Makepeace Landscapes had been instructed in writing regarding the density of planting in the flower beds.

The Chairman thanked Cllr May for her report.

f) Meetings of Partnership Organisations

In her absence from the meeting, Cllr Forrester had advised the Clerk that there were no matters to report.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Forrester.

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

MERLIN DRIVE

All equipment appears to be in good order.

On my latest inspection a young family were enjoying the area and expressed appreciation for the children's play areas in North Lodge Parish which they use frequently.

LOW FLATTS

All equipment appears to be in good order.

A goal post was pulled up from the ground (suspected vandalism)

As I was on holiday, David contacted DCC and it has been removed and the ground repaired. We need to discuss replacement etc. at the next meeting.

It is disappointing that we still have not had the extra seats fitted in the play areas. I understand the funding will be available soon.

In addition, a) Approval had now been received from the County Council for the funding for the seats, b) Replacement of the goal posts is to be an Agenda item for the next meeting of the Council. In the meantime, the Clerk will contact the County Council for advice and guideline costs. The Chairman thanked Cllr Caygill for her report.

i) Policy and Governance

In his absence from the meeting, Cllr Hall had advised the Clerk 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 he continued to push forward on various projects.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Martin.

Item 7. 23/109 Correspondence

1) From the National Association of Local Councils
Tables of new pay rates.

2) from CDALC

Agenda for the Smaller Councils Forum meeting to be held on Thursday 23rd November 2023.

3) From Durham County Council

a) Quotation for Condition Survey of bus shelters.

Councillors discussed the quote and agreed that it should be accepted.

b) email re transfer of domain names.

The Clerk provided an update on progress in finding a replacement hosting service for the website. There could be a timescale factor which might require a recommendation to be circulated to Councillors for approval before the next Council meeting. Councillors agreed to this.

c) Notification of Tax Base for 2024/2025.

d) Letter re consultations on further proposals to balance the County Council budget.

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

Application for demolition of existing conservatory and construction of new single storey garden room extension to the rear, at 6 Wear Lodge.

Item 8. 23/110 Proposals, Reports and Requests for Consideration

a) A Location for a Coronation Bench

Cllrs Caygill and May presented their proposals which were discussed by Councillors. The site selected was between the two raised shrub beds on North Road although this would entail removal of the existing flower bed there and the agreement of the County Council to include the pruning or removal of the apple tree there.

(Resolved on a show of hands with five for and one against - in principle to provide a seat at the site of the North Road shrub beds, this subject to the agreement of the County Council).

Councillors also confirmed that they were satisfied with the proposed Coronation Bench for this project.

b) Responses from Durham County Council to Matters Raised

Cllr Gregory outlined the delays being experienced in obtaining some replies from Durham County Council and some other organisations although it was acknowledged that the County Council had staffing levels and budget issues. Councillors discussed this and considered that a policy by the Parish Council to request that organisations should respond within a certain time limit might help. The Clerk is to consult on this proposal with the Portfolio Holder for Policy and Governance.

c) Budget: Forward Planning

The Clerk reminded Councillors that they should now be giving thought to any projects requiring funding in the next financial year. Portfolio Holders should submit budget proposals to the Clerk by 31st December 2023. As a preliminary to a potential project to re-paint the North Road bridge owned by Sustrans, the Clerk is to contact the County Council Planning Department to ask what S106 monies might currently be available for this type of usage.

Item 9. 23/111 Payment of Accounts

| TO | AMOUNT | REASON | VAT |
|---------------------------------|------------------|------------------------------------|----------|
| Salaries | £ 616.12 | Salaries November 2023 | |
| Salaries | £ 324.82 | Back-dated Salary Rise Apr-Oct inc | |
| Expenses | £ 105.00 | Expenses November 2023 | |
| Makepeace Landscapes | £ 1882.39 | Horticulture November 2023 | £ 313.73 |
| Society of Local Council Clerks | £ 148.00 | Annual Subscription | |
| Assn of Local Council Clerks | £ 50.00 | Annual Subscription | |
| Total of Above Payments | £ 3126.33 | | |

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 |

Total Card and D/D Payments £ 111.97

(Resolved - the payments be approved as submitted).

Item 10. 23/112 Other Matters for Information

a) The Clerk advised that the Picktree Village Christmas tree and lights would be erected within the next two weeks. Councillors considered that the lights on the North Road tree were looking very good.

b) In reply to Cllr Brown, the County Cllr advised that installation of the new footpath at Vigo Lane was awaiting some work to be done by a utility company.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.24pm wishing everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

North Lodge Parish Council

Accounts for the month as submitted to the Meeting of North Lodge Parish Council held on Tuesday 16th January 2024.

| TO | AMOUNT | REASON | VAT |
|--------------------------------|-----------|-----------------------------------|----------|
| Salaries | £ 615.94 | Salaries December 2023 | |
| Salaries | £ | Salaries January 2024 | |
| Expenses | £ 105.00 | Expenses December 2023 | |
| Expenses | £ 105.00 | Expenses January 2024 | |
| HM Revenue & Customs | £ 610.40 | P.A.Y.E. | |
| HM Revenue & Customs | £ 107.37 | Employer's N.I.C. | |
| P. Driscoll | £ 190.00 | Chair's Quarterly Allowance | |
| Makepeace Landscapes | £ 1882.39 | Horticulture December 2023 | £ 313.73 |
| Makepeace Landscapes | £ | Horticulture January 2024 | £ |
| S. E. Harrison & Sons | £ 156.00 | Christmas Tree - Picktree Village | £ 26.00 |
| Down to Earth Landscapes | £ | Erect Tree at Picktree Village | |
| DSJ Property Services | £ | Installation of Seats | |
| Durham County Council | £ 1542.00 | Survey of Bus shelters | £ 257.00 |
| Madhouse Media Ltd | £ | Website Hosting | £ |
| Total of Above Payments | £ | | |

Payments Made by Debit Card and Direct Debit

| TO | AMOUNT | REASON | VAT |
|------------------------------------|----------|---------------------------------|----------|
| ANS Group Ltd | £ 46.25 | Monthly Subscription - Dec 2023 | £ 7.71 |
| Marmax Products Ltd | £ 844.80 | Seats for Play Areas | £ 140.80 |
| ANS Group Ltd | £ 46.25 | Monthly Subscription - Jan 2024 | £ 7.71 |
| Total Card and D/D Payments | £ | | |

Balance to 30th November 2023

| | | | |
|------------------------------|------------------|----------------------------------|------------------|
| Balance b/f | £50593.29 | Balances at Bank:- | |
| Deduct Payments - Nov 2023 | <u>£ 3126.33</u> | Treasurers Account | £ 2925.71 |
| | £47466.96 | Instant Account | <u>£46673.68</u> |
| Deduct Card and D/D Payments | <u>£ 111.97</u> | Total | £49599.39 |
| | £47354.99 | | |
| Add Bank Interest Received | <u>£ 56.40</u> | Deduct cheques not yet presented | <u>£ 198.00</u> |
| | £47411.39 | | |
| Add Grant Received | <u>£ 1990.00</u> | | |
| Balance c/f | £49401.39 | | £49401.39 |

Two cheques not yet presented -

£148.00 cheque number 1589 dated 21/11/23 for annual subscription payable to Society of Local Council Clerks. £50 cheque number 1590 dated 21/11/23 for annual subscription payable to Association of Local Council Clerks.