

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 16th January 2024.

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

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. In particular, the Chairman welcomed eleven residents and outlined for their benefit what would be the course of the meeting.

Item 1. 24/01 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillor Elsie Forrester.

Item 2. 24/02 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Craig Martin declared interests as a County Councillor and as a Trustee of Park View Academy. Councillor Chris Veitch declared an interest as a member of the North Lodge Remembrance Group. Councillor Dennis Hall advised that he had considered, in consultation with the Clerk, whether he had an interest to declare regarding Agenda Item 9a and had concluded that he did not.

Councillors agreed to take Agenda Item 9a next

Item 9a. 24/03 Residents' Objections to Virgin Media Cabinets at Longdean Park

Cllr Hall had previously circulated a report to Councillors. The Chairman invited Cllr Hall to give a presentation on the issues causing concern. Councillors then discussed these and there was unanimous agreement, by a show of hands, that the Parish Council should support the residents by taking forward these concerns to Virgin Media, Durham County Council and Gateshead Council, and by seeking a solution to the concerns.

At this point, the Chairman adjourned the meeting to allow those residents wishing to speak to do so.

The Chairman then re-opened the meeting and noted that residents had expressed satisfaction at the decision of the Council to support them.

At this point, all the residents left the meeting.

Item 3. 24/04 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 -

Trim Trail Camperdown Pocket Park

I'm delighted to announce the successful replacement of the trim trail at Camperdown Pocket Park, made possible through my Neighbourhood Budget and Towns and Villages funding from the AAP. This project also included the refreshing of footpath artwork to address fading elements.

The decision to replace the previous trim trail was driven by safety concerns, as wear and tear had compromised its integrity. To ensure the longevity and safety of the new trim trail, the Council will conduct regular inspections.

This accomplishment marks the completion in refurbishing all play facilities within the North Lodge Ward. The comprehensive upgrades aim to create a safer, more enjoyable environment for everyone. Looking ahead, we are actively exploring further improvements to Camperdown Pocket Park in collaboration with the community. Your feedback and support are vital as we continue to enhance this cherished space for all.

In addition, a) the County Cllr advised that he was fighting against the recently announced removal by the County Council of free parking in the town, b) Cllr Gregory advised that it would be essential to adhere to the terms of the contract with the original funders for any further developments at the Pocket Park, c) Cllr Gregory requested up-to-date air quality data for the Blind Lane and Northlands roundabout area. The County Cllr will arrange for this to be supplied, d) Cllr Gregory raised concerns re planning application DM/23/03799/TPO. The County Cllr kindly agreed to take these up with the County Council.

The Chairman thanked the County Councillor for his report.

Item 4. 24/05 Adoption of Minutes of Meeting

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 21st November 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.

Councillors agreed to take Agenda Item 6 next.

Item 6. 24/06 Chairman's Report

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

A happy new year to everyone, with 2024 looking to be significant at a national level in terms of politics, which will inevitably filter down to the Parish Council level.

As far as North Lodge Parish Council goes there should be an unfolding programme of events throughout the year. The first organised litter pick was completed on the 11th of January, and the children's play areas at Merlin Drive and Low Flatts have just had new seats installed to give a further amenity for parents to supervise younger children at different equipment sites. The relationship with our horticulture providers Makepeace Landscapes goes into a 2nd year, closely monitored by our Parish Council Horticulture sub-committee. Another possible community/school art project will be appraised, and longer term projects will be discussed and developed throughout the year. These are Just some highlights of what we hope will be a productive year for the parish.

Councillors thanked the Chairman for his report.

Regarding outstanding matters -

a) Re Minute 23/107 section a). Cllr Veitch advised that a request had been received from a resident for a new waste bin on the east side of North Road at the entrance to the Sustrans cycleway. Councillors discussed this and agreed that the request should be forwarded to the County Council.

b) Re Minute 23/108 section b). Cllr Hall thanked those Councillors who had been involved in recent road safety matters. Cllr Gregory advised that she continued to liaise with the County Council re the installation of road markings at various agreed sites. The Clerk will ask the Police if the speed data for Picktree Village is yet available.

c) Re Minute 23/108 section e). Cllr May confirmed that she had discussed with the Gardener increasing the number of plants in the flower beds and would have further discussions including the beds in Blind Lane which are on a busy road and are, therefore, seen by many residents of, and visitors to, the Parish.

d) Re Minute 23/112 section b). Re a new footpath in Vigo Lane, the County Cllr advised that the prior work by the utility company was still awaited.

Item 5. 24/07 Setting the Precept for the Financial Year 2024/2025

Copies of financial forecasts prepared by the Clerk for the financial year 2024/2025 had been previously circulated. These formed the basis for extensive discussions by Councillors. It was agreed that, in the continuing challenging financial circumstances being experienced throughout the country, it would be desirable to again set a Precept of £31.53 Band D equivalent property (no increase since 2018/2019) provided that service levels could be maintained and Councillors were satisfied that this would be the case. Re the Community Fund, Councillors agreed that this would be re-introduced but without setting a budget amount. Each application would be considered on its own merits and depending on previously unallocated Council funds still being available. Re the Remembrance Artwork project, Councillors agreed to meet the artist prior to the next meeting of the Council and to include this project on the Agenda for the next meeting.

(Resolved - to set a Precept of £31.53 per Band D equivalent property for 2024/2025).

Item 7. 24/08 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 -

Social Media

The end of November, December and start of January there have been numerous posts including Christmas Lights Switch On, Santa Bus, Mental Health contact numbers at Christmas, Fire Safety during the Festive Period, Dog Fouling, Wishing Our Residents Merry Christmas & Happy New Year and the latest Litter pick. We have had a few likes and shares, plus comments thanking the volunteers for litter pick which is very positive to see.

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

Litter pick

Another successful litter pick was carried out on 11th January 2024. We had 9 volunteers including Chairman Patrick Driscoll and Councillors Veitch and Gregory. The group successfully collected 17 bags of rubbish. Another few areas which have a build of rubbish have been noted for the next litter pick which I will arrange and announce soon.

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 website: Police.uk

Community Safety

Police

Rachel Bacon has taken up her post as Durham Constabulary's new Chief Constable.
Constable Nat Homer has been awarded the Kings Police Medal in the New Years Honour list, for her lifesaving work to reduce deaths and serious injuries on our roads.

Operation Limit

A total of 1735 vehicle were stopped by officers from Durham Roads & Armed Policing unit, supported by Neighbourhood teams throughout December.

The majority of drivers who were stopped, tested negative and continued on their way.

However, 44 drivers were arrested for drink driving, 53 arrested for drug driving, 20 arrested as being unfit drivers and 7 arrested for failing to provide a sample.

The police mobile speed monitoring vehicle has visited the North Lodge area.

CAKE

Vehicle crime can increase during this time of year, especially with the darker nights. Remember the mnemonic 'CAKE'.

Contents-keep these out of site. If there are any high value items, such as specialist/trade tools, then remove them from the vehicle overnight.

Alarm. If the vehicle is fitted with an alarm, use it. Make sure all doors are deadlocked.

Keys- If you are not in the vehicle, do not leave the vehicle keys on view or while the vehicle windows are defrosting and the heating system is switched on. Make use of Faraday bags if a Bluetooth vehicle.

Extras- Consider using a vehicle tracker unit, steering wheel locks, reinforced door locks, CCTV, security lighting attached to a property and wheel locks.

Application for new Police Constable Entry Route (PCEP) has opened on Monday, January 15th.

Two year training programme

No degree required (or completed)

Visit, www.durham.police.uk/.../Police-Constable-Entry...

Police are recruiting for 999 and 101 call handles. For more information and to apply, visit www.durham.police.uk/.../999101-Police-Call...

Closing date March 1st.

Durham Police are currently recruiting apprentices in customer service
visit www.durham.police.uk/.../Customer-Service...

Closing date January 19th.

Say something- If you see a crime taking place or you are not comfortable with someone present around a vehicle or property, contact police, using telephone number 999.

For further information on Durham Constabulary, visit the constabulary's social media accounts.

For non-emergency incidents, contact the police using telephone number 101

For all emergency incidents, contact the police using telephone number 999

County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS)

A new Deputy Chief Fire Officer has been appointed, Keith Carruthers.

A new Director of Emergency Response has been appointed, Rob Cherrie.

E-BIKES OR E-SCOOTERS

Please follow the safety advice from the Officer for Product Safety and Standards:

Always **read** and **follow** the manufacturer's instructions for charging and use.

Only **use** the manufacturer's recommended battery or charger

Always charge the battery in a safe place, without blocking exits and always **unplug** your charger when finished charging.

Never attempt to modify or tamper with the battery.

If your smoke alarm is not working or you need to have new smoke alarms fitted, please give the community safety team a telephone call on number 0345 2234 21

Recruitment for full time fighters will take place in **March 2024**. Watch out for further information in due course from CDDFRS social media accounts, on how to apply.

There are currently vacancies for posts within the fire service. For further information check out Co Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue service social media accounts.

For all emergencies use telephone number 999

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

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

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

Before the bus shelters inspection for this month, it is worth noting that the clerk has now received a survey of bus shelters report from Durham County Council which will cost £1285 plus VAT. This points out a need for some minor work to do (mostly re-pointing) and the cost of this work will be in addition to the cost of the report. This commitment to the report and work, to maintain the integrity and structure of the shelters, was agreed at the November 2023 Parish Council Meeting.

The monthly bus shelters inspection was done on Monday the 8th of January 2024. All the bus shelters appeared to be in good order, with just a leaf clearance in the " Lambton Worm" public house shelter, and a wipe round of all the glass cabinets.

In addition, a) Cllr Caygill advised that a reply from the School was still awaited regarding new artwork for the display cabinets. Cllr Veitch suggested a topic of D-Day 80 for the posters, b) the Clerk is to contact the County Council re the deteriorating condition of the road surface in Low Flatts Road.

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

FLOWER BEDS etc.

The above are in-active presently due to time of year. Stephen Makepeace Landscapes continue to monitor the area and tidies up where required.

Christmas Tree - Picktree Village

As you will be aware the tree fell down due to high winds. Next year, if agreed by the Parish Council, I am suggesting that we should add the planting and the maintenance of this Christmas tree onto the Makepeace contract.

The Sub group continues to be active and decided this month, that there was no need for a formal meeting as there was very little to discuss.

In addition, a) Councillors agreed that a quote should be obtained from Makepeace Landscapes re the Christmas Tree in Picktree Village, b) Cllr May will compile a planting specification to guide Makepeace Landscapes.

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.

The new seat has finally been installed.

LOW FLATTS

All equipment appears to be in good order.

The new seat has finally been installed.

Our thanks to Councillor Martin for funding these seats.

We have received an estimate for the replacement of the vandalised goal posts. To be discussed at the next meeting.

In addition, the Clerk is to chase up with the County Council the cutting back of the hedges at Low Flatts play area.

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

Code of practice for wireless network development in England

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/code-of-practice-for-wireless-network-development-in-england/code-of-practice-for-wireless-network-development-in-england>

NALC launches new model employment contract incorporating 'Green Book' terms

<https://www.localgovernmentlawyer.co.uk/employment/395-employment-news/56010-nalc-launches-new-model-employment-contract-incorporating-green-book-terms>

Parking in the UK FAQs: House of Commons Report: 23 November 2023

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-8736/>

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 had nothing further to update.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Martin.

Item 8. 24/09 Correspondence

- 1) From npower Business Solutions
Letter re electricity prices.

The Clerk is to take advice from the County Council re the possible replacement of the existing North Road Christmas tree lights with LED ones.

- 2) from CDALC

- a) email re Royal Garden Parties.

The Clerk is to contact Cllr Forrester to ask if she would wish to have her name put forward.

- b) email re D-Day 80.

Councillors agreed to purchase two Lamp Lights of Peace.

- c) email re voting for CDALC President.

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

- a) Application for tree works, at Garden House, Picktree Lane.

- b) Application for tree works, at 3 Grange Cottage Close.

- c) Application for proposed demolition of garage to north elevation and re-instatement with 2 storey extension. New pitched roof to replace existing flat roof to south above cinema room and new fenestration and change of external material appearance, at 59 Longdean Park.

- d) Application for two storey extension to side, two storey front extension, single/two part storey extension to side, single storey rear extension pergola, detached outbuilding, two storey extension to garage, carport extension to garage and first floor extension to garage to form habitable space, at Garden House, Picktree Lane.

Item 9. 24/10 Proposals, Reports and Requests for Consideration

Item 9a had been considered earlier in the meeting. See Minute reference 24/03.

b) Replacement Goal Posts for Low Flatts Play Area

Cllr Caygill advised that a quote of £1229 + VAT had been received from the County Council re replacement of the damaged goal post. The Clerk advised that he was in contact with the insurers to ascertain if a claim could be made. The County Cllr kindly advised that, if necessary, he would provide funds from his Neighbourhood Budget for the cost of the purchase and installation. Councillors agreed to the quote but subject to the outcome of a possible insurance claim.

c) Bridge Painting - the Sustrans Bridge over North Road

Cllr Gregory advised that more enquiries needed to be made, particularly but not only with Sustrans, before this project was at a stage when it could be presented to Councillors for discussion.

d) Transfer of Website Hosting to Madhouse Media Ltd

Councillors had previously given their support by emails to this proposed transfer and website re-design, and now confirmed the decision.

(Resolved - to transfer the hosting and re-design of the website to Madhouse Media Ltd).

Item 10. 24/11 Requests for Donations

The Clerk had previously circulated to Councillors the outstanding requests for donations.

Councillors discussed these and agreed the following payments -

Great North Air Ambulance Service £125.00

St. Cuthbert's Hospice £125.00

Item 11. 24/12 Payment of Accounts

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
Salaries	£ 615.94	Salaries December 2023	
Salaries	£ 616.14	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	£ 1882.39	Horticulture January 2024	£ 313.73
S. E. Harrison & Sons	£ 156.00	Christmas Tree - Picktree Village	£ 26.00
Down to Earth Landscapes	£ 162.00	Erect Tree at Picktree Village	£ 27.00
DSJ Property Services	£ 1110.00	Installation of Seats	
Durham County Council	£ 1542.00	Survey of Bus shelters	£ 257.00
Madhouse Media Ltd	£ 1140.00	Website Hosting	£ 190.00
Total of Above Payments	£10224.63		

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
Post Office Ltd	£ 30.00	Postage Stamps	

Total Card and D/D Payments £ 967.30

(Resolved - the payments be approved as submitted).

Item 12. 24/13 Other Matters for Information

There were no other matters raised.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.35pm.

North Lodge Parish Council

Accounts for the month as submitted to the Meeting of North Lodge Parish Council held on Tuesday 20th February 2024.

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
Salaries	£	Salaries February 2024	
Expenses	£ 105.00	Expenses February 2024	
Makepeace Landscapes	£	Horticulture February 2024	£
Total of Above Payments	£		

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
ANS Group Ltd	£ 46.25	Monthly Subscription - Feb 2024	£ 7.71
Lamp Light of Peace	£ 110.00	D-Day Lamp Lights	
Total Card and D/D Payments	£ 156.25		

Balance to 31st January 2024

Balance b/f	£49401.39	Balances at Bank:-	
Deduct Payments - Jan 2024	<u>£10224.63</u>	Treasurers Account	£ 1825.78
	£39176.76	Instant Account	<u>£37673.08</u>
Deduct Card and D/D Payments	<u>£ 967.30</u>	Total	<u>£39498.86</u>
	£38209.46		
Add Bank Interest Received	<u>£ 99.40</u>	Deduct cheques not yet presented	<u>£ 1190.00</u>
Balance c/f	£38308.86		£38308.86

Two cheques not yet presented -
£50 cheque number 1590 dated 21/11/23 for annual subscription payable to Association of Local Council Clerks. £1140.00 cheque number 1602 dated 16/01/24 for website work payable to Madhouse Media Ltd.