

THE MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE WHEATLEY HILL PARISH COUNCIL

HELD ON TUESDAY 11 MAY 2021

Present: Councillors E Carr, M Goyns, J Huntington,
B Miller, J Miller, L Stewart, C Stogdale, Mrs L White

1 ELECTION OF CHAIR

RESOLVED that Councillor J Miller be elected Chair of Wheatley Hill Parish Council for the ensuing year.

Councillor Miller accepted the office of Chair and thanked Members for their confidence in him and continued support.

The Chair reported that during the previous year the Parish Council had continued to work closely with the Police, Neighbourhood Wardens, Durham County Council, County Councillors and community groups on matters which affected the parish area.

The Chair paid tribute to the late Councillor E Goyns who sadly passed away in 2020 and welcomed Councillor Huntington to the Parish Council.

2 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

RESOLVED that Councillor E Carr be appointed Vice-Chair of Wheatley Hill Parish Council for the ensuing year.

3 APPOINTMENT OF INTERNAL AUDITOR

RESOLVED that Mr G Fletcher be appointed Internal Auditor to Wheatley Hill Parish Council for the ensuing year.

4 APPOINTMENT OF SCHOOL GOVERNORS

RESOLVED that Councillor J Miller be appointed to serve as School Governor to St Godric's Primary School.

5 APPOINTMENT TO SUB-COMMITTEES

RESOLVED that the following appointments be made:-

Cemetery Sub-Committee
Councillors E Carr, M Goyns, C Stogdale

Allotment Sub-Committee
Councillors J Huntington, B Miller, L White

6 REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

RESOLVED that the following Members be appointed to serve as representatives of the Parish Council on the external bodies listed for the forthcoming year:-

Area Action Partnership
Councillor J Miller

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Citizens Advice County Durham
Councillor L Stewart

County Durham Association of Local Councils
Councillors J Miller and L Stewart

Durham Rural Community Council
Councillor L Stewart

East Durham Association of Town and Parish Councils
Councillors E Carr, B Miller and J Miller

Patient Participation Group
Councillor M Goyns

Wheatley Hill Community Association
Councillors J Miller and L White

Wheatley Hill Steering Group
Councillors B Miller and J Miller

7 DATE AND TIME OF ORDINARY MEETINGS OF WHEATLEY HILL PARISH COUNCIL

RESOLVED that meetings of Wheatley Hill Parish Council be held on the second Monday of each month commencing at 6pm, except for August where no council meeting will be held due to recess. Meeting dates were subject to change with the consent of the Chair of the Parish Council.

It was pointed out that due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic meeting dates, times and venues may be subject to change.

8 THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING held on 12 April 2021, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were approved and signed by the Chair.

9 POLICE

The Police provided details of incidents reported between 2 April and 1 May 2021.

Members were advised that since the last meeting incidents reported included 18 anti-social behaviour, 3 vehicle thefts, 1 theft from a vehicle, 3 criminal damage to vehicles and 2 criminal damage.

The Police reported that 1 stolen motorbike had been recovered. They continued to engage with local schools in relation to anti-social behaviour and a property in the village that had attracted a lot of anti-social behaviour had been boarded up.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

10 COUNTY COUNCILLORS REPORT

The Chair reported that he was 1 of 3 County Councillors elected to the Trimdon and Thornley Division and thanked everyone who had supported and voted for him.

Members were advised that the Trimdon and Thornley Division was the biggest in the county and covered 3 MP constituencies, 3 police stations and 6 Parish Councils. All 3 County Councillors would be attending Parish Council meetings within the Division. Each County Councillor had a neighbourhood budget of £20,000 which they would be using to support local projects.

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To ensure each village had a primary contact Councillor Miller would be the contact for Wheatley Hill and Thornley. Councillor Hovvels would cover Ludworth, Trimdon Grange, Station and Colliery and Councillor Varty would cover Trimdon Village and Haswell Plough.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

11 CORRESPONDENCE

(1) Co-Option

The Clerk reported that following the local elections in May 2021 there was a vacancy on the Parish Council which would be filled by co-option.

The Clerk reported that the Local Government Act 1972 required the council to give public notice of casual vacancies. However, there was no statutory requirement to give public notice of vacancies which remained unfilled after an ordinary election.

The Clerk reported that the Parish Council had received 3 expressions of interest to be co-opted onto the Parish Council. It was therefore considered that there was no need to advertise further considering the vacancy remained unfilled following an election.

RESOLVED that the 3 residents interested in joining the Parish Council be invited to attend the next meeting.

(2) Temporary Road Closure

The Clerk reported the receipt of correspondence from Durham County Council which gave details of a road closure on 24 May 2021 at 7-12 Wordsworth Avenue to allow for the replacement of a manhole frame and lid.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(3) Heritage Society

The Clerk reported that the Heritage Society would be re-opening the Heritage Centre on 18 May 2021.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(4) Training

The Clerk reported the receipt of correspondence from the County Durham Association of Local Councils which gave details of training courses for Councillors, details of which were outlined to Members.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

12 PLANNING

There were no planning matters.

13 HEAD GROUNDPERSONS REPORT

The Clerk reported that routine work had been undertaken in the Cemetery and around the village since the last meeting, details of which were outlined to Members.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

14 CLERK'S REPORT

(1) Internal Audit Report for the Year ending 31 March 2021

The Clerk reported the receipt of the internal audit report for 2020/2021 undertaken by Mr G Fletcher.

Members were advised that every smaller authority in England that received either gross income or expenditure exceeding £25,000 must complete Part 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) at the end of each financial year. The AGAR was made up of 3 sections along with an annual internal audit report which was to be completed by the Parish Council's independent internal auditor, who gave an opinion of the Parish Council's internal controls, details of which were outlined to Members.

The internal audit concluded that all the key controls contained within the internal audit section of the AGAR were examined and found to be working satisfactory.

RESOLVED that the internal audit report for 2020/2021 be accepted.

(2) Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the Year Ending 31 March 2021

Consideration was given to a report prepared by the Clerk which reviewed the effectiveness of the council's internal controls and supported the Annual Governance Statement, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

The Clerk proceeded to take Members through Section 1, Annual Governance Statement, which was approved and then Section 2, Statement of Accounts which was also approved.

RESOLVED that Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the year ended 31 March 2021, be approved and signed by the Chair.

(3) Allotment 8

The Clerk reported that allotment 8 was vacant and suggested that the next applicant on the waiting list be offered the plot.

RESOLVED that applicant 8/2020 be allocated allotment 8.

(4) Dodds Close

The Clerk reported that the Section 106 funding application submitted by Durham County Councils Clean and Green section to install hooped perimeter fencing at Dodds Close had been approved.

The cost of the project was £33,932.04 plus VAT. The funding application submitted was for £30,000 and the full amount had been awarded. Believe Housing were contributing £4,000 to the project.

Members were advised that it was hoped work would start on site by the end of June 2021.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(5) Anti-Social Behaviour

The Clerk reported that at the last meeting Members discussed the on-going problems related to anti-social behaviour and suggested that the Parish Council write to the Chief Constable, requesting a meeting. The letter was also copied to P Howell MP, L Hovvels, Chair of the Police and Crime Panel and S White, Acting Police and Crime Commissioner.

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As the problem was not confined to Wheatley Hill the neighbouring parishes of Wingate, Ludworth and Thornley were asked to consider writing a similar letter to the Chief Constable.

Members were advised that to date there had been no response from the Chief Constable. It was suggested that the letter be forwarded to J Allen the newly elected Police and Crime Commissioner for Durham.

The Chair reported that he had met with the Police on 5 May 2021 to discuss how the Parish Council and Police could work together to tackle the anti-social behaviour in the village, details of which were outlined to Members.

It was pointed out that CCTV installed on the Front Street would deter anti-social behaviour. Members suggested that Durham County Council be asked to consider installing external CCTV at the former clinic as part of the refurbishment works, they were undertaking to the building.

The Chair agreed to ask Durham County Council to consider installing external CCTV at the former clinic as part of the refurbishment works.

RESOLVED that a copy of the letter to the Chief Constable be forwarded to J Allen the Police and Crime Commissioner for Durham and the Chair ask Durham County Council to consider installing external CCTV at the former clinic.

Prior to consideration of the following item of business Councillors J Miller and L White declared an interest as members of the board for Wheatley Hill Community Association.

(6) CCTV - Greenhills Centre

The Clerk reported the receipt of a request from Wheatley Hill Community Association for financial assistance to upgrade the CCTV at the Centre.

Members were advised that the CCTV system at the Greenhills Centre was old and in need of upgrading. This was particularly relevant given the problems related to anti-social behaviour taking place in the vicinity of the Centre.

Following discussion, it was agreed in principle, to contribute towards the cost of upgrading the CCTV at the Centre.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted and further developments be awaited.

Prior to consideration of the following item of business Councillors J Miller and L White declared an interest as members of the board for Wheatley Hill Community Association.

(7) Community Activities and Events

The Clerk reported the receipt of a request from Wheatley Hill Community Association for financial assistance towards the provision of community activities and events.

The Clerk reported that the Greenhills Centre had re-opened on 12 April 2021 and were offering limited activities. As restrictions were eased the Centre would be providing more activities and events and had requested funding to assist with these activities and events for all age groups using the Centre.

The Clerk reported that £15,000 was allocated in the 2021/2022 budget for recreational activities and events to be delivered by Wheatley Hill Community Association at the Greenhills Centre on behalf of the Parish Council.

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RESOLVED that £15,000 be paid to Wheatley Hill Community Association for activities and events to be delivered at the Greenhills Centre on behalf of the Parish Council. The funding was to be utilised for all age groups.

(8) Pit Pony – A181 Roundabout

The Clerk reported that following the last meeting Thornley and Trimdon Foundry Parish Councils were asked to consider contributing towards the cost of the restoration and re-siting of the pit pony on the A181 roundabout. Both councils had agreed to consider the matter at their May meetings.

The Clerk reported that issues related to the siting of the horse were raised with The Peoples Project who were undertaking the work. They had advised that the pit pony would be secured to the roundabout but if someone was determined to steal or vandalise it there was little that would stop them.

The Clerk had also discussed the re-siting of the horse on the roundabout with Durham County Council who had offered no objection.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted and further developments be awaited.

(9) Pit Wheel

The Clerk reported that work to restore the Pit Wheel had being undertaken by St Astier Limited on behalf of Durham County Council.

Members were advised that Durham County Council had apologised for not consulting with the Parish Council prior to the start of the work. They had mistakenly believed that the Pit Wheel was owned by Durham County Council.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(10) Parish Council Noticeboard

The Clerk reported that the Parish Council noticeboard, originally located on the Heritage Centre, was removed to make space for a community defibrillator.

The Parish Council had been using the Heritage Society's noticeboard as a temporary measure since the introduction of Coronavirus restrictions in March 2020.

Members were advised of the options for a new noticeboard which included erecting a new noticeboard at the current location or a free-standing noticeboard in the Cemetery.

RESOLVED that the Clerk investigate the options for a free-standing noticeboard to be located in the Cemetery.

(11) Trees

The Clerk reported that 2 trees located in the Cemetery were dead and needed to be removed. The trees were originally planted by the Mothers Club and the Wheatley Hill Regeneration Partnership.

Members were advised that the cost to replace the trees was £60.

RESOLVED that the dead trees be removed and approval be granted to purchase 2 replacement trees.

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(12) Dog Bags

The Clerk reported that 10,000 economy dog bags had been purchased at a cost of £137.28 inclusive of VAT and delivery.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

15 PAYMENTS

The following schedule of payments was circulated together with figures for all income and expenditure as at 30 April 2021.

CHQ NO	PAYMENT TO	DETAIL	COST	VAT	TOTAL	
Internet Banking	Horns Garden Centre	Grow Bags	65.76	13.15	78.91	
Internet Banking	British Gas	Gas - Heritage Centre	87.12	4.35	91.47	
Internet Banking	e-on Next	Electric - Heritage Centre	51.50	2.58	54.08	
Internet Banking	MKM	Cemetery Supplies	109.98	22.00	131.98	
Internet Banking	J Davies	Reimbursements	128.13	24.63	152.76	
Internet Banking	JRB Enterprise Ltd	Dog Bags	114.40	22.88	137.28	
Internet Banking	J Thompson	Reimbursement	37.81	7.57	45.38	
Internet Banking	Mr G Fletcher	Internal Audit	260.00		260.00	
Internet Banking	J Thompson	Telephone Allowance	25.00		25.00	
Internet Banking	County Durham Association of Local Councils	Annual Subscription	419.30		419.30	
Internet Banking	Wheatley Hill Community Association	Recreational activities and Events	15,000.00		15,000.00	
Internet Banking	HMRC	P11D Payment	288.04		288.04	
Internet Banking	Payroll	Wages - May 2021	4,628.61		4,628.61	
Internet Banking	HMRC/DCC	PAYE/Pension - May 2021	2,854.69		2,854.69	
Internet Banking	JAC's Accountancy Limited	Payroll Services - May 2021	22.00	4.40	26.40	
Direct Debit	British Telecom	Telephone/Internet	26.97	5.40	32.37	
Direct Debit	O2	Chairs Mobile Telephone	27.87	5.57	33.44	
Invoice 48	Co-Op Bank	Service and Commission Charges	15.15		15.15	
			TOTAL	24,162.33	112.53	24,274.86

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted and the payments be approved.

16 RISK MANAGEMENT

The Clerk advised that there was nothing to report.

17 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(1) Marley Fields

Councillor B Miller reported that residents from Marley Fields had advised that the developer on site had erected boundary garden fencing directly over the top of manhole covers located in their gardens.

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Residents were concerned that if there was a problem with the drainage and access was required to the manhole the entire boundary fence would need to be removed for the work to be undertaken.

RESOLVED that the Chair raise the matter with Durham County Council.

..... Signed

..... Dated