

**THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE WHEATLEY HILL PARISH COUNCIL
HELD ON 11 DECEMBER 2023**

**Present: Councillor J Miller (Chair)
Councillors E Carr, J Collingwood, M Goyns,
J Huntington, B Miller, C Stogdale, L White**

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence was received from Councillor L Stewart.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor White declared an interest in item 9(2) in relation to budget decisions related to Wheatley Hill Community Association.

3 The Minutes of the last meeting held on 13 November 2023 a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were approved and signed by the Chair.

4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There was no public present at the meeting.

5 POLICE MATTERS

There was no Police report.

6 COUNTY COUNCILLORS REPORT

Councillor J Miller provided a report on the following parish and countywide issues.

- Issues from the last meeting were reported.
- The street sign at Rock Farm Mews was reported to Durham County Council.
- Durham County Council were determining their budgets for 2024/2025.
- Resurfacing works at the entrance to Wheatley Hill from the A181 were complete.
- Works at Quilstyle Road were complete.
- County Councillors attended various Christmas events throughout the division.
- Councillor Miller attended the Central East Planning Committee on 14 November to speak on the planning application for Wheatley Service Station, which was approved.
- County Councillors attended the official opening of the “new look” Wheatley Hill Fire Station on 18 November 2023 which was well attended.
- The Boundary Commission had published its final recommendations for future electoral arrangements for County Durham.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

7 CORRESPONDENCE

(1) Letters of Thanks

The Clerk reported the receipt of the following letters of thanks and Christmas cards.

Great North Air Ambulance Service

Wheatley Hill Community Nursery
Wheatley Hill Community Association
Wheatley Hill Mothers Club
All Saints Church

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(2) Royal Garden Party 2024

The Clerk reported the receipt of correspondence from the County Durham Association of Local Councils advising of the Royal Garden Party 2024.

RESOLVED that Councillor Stogdale be nominated to attend the Royal Garden Party on behalf of Wheatley Hill Parish Council.

8 PLANNING

(1) Application

DM/23/02737/FPA – Change of use from betting shop (sui generis) at ground floor to post office (Class E) and first floor to form part of flat and alterations to shop front at 26 – 27 Alexandra Terrace, Wheatley Hill

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(2) Approval

DM/23/01107/FPA - Demolition and removal of all existing structures on site and redevelopment of the site to provide an enhanced domestic forecourt and HGV refueling positions, provision of an EVC hub including a disabled EV charging bay, sales building including food to go offer, two jet wash bays, vacuum and air/water bay, new access, associated parking and landscaping at Wheatley Service Station

Members were advised that the application was approved at a meeting of the Central East Planning Committee on 14 November 2023.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

9 CLERKS REPORT

(1) Allotments

(i) Annual Rents

The Clerk reported that all annual rents had been paid.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(ii) Allocations

The Clerk reported that following the last meeting applicant 3/2021 had accepted the tenancy of plot 12. Applicant 7/2023 had declined the offer of plot 19.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(2) Precept and Budget Setting 2024/2025

The Clerk reported that at the last meeting Members were provided with details of the figures related to the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) grant and tax base for the forthcoming 2024/2025 financial year. Members were advised that the LCTRS grant for 2024/2025 had decreased from £9,321 to £5,598 and the tax base had increased from 779.6 to 788.2.

The Clerk had provided Members with various options and a range of figures for consideration. It was pointed out that Durham County Council would be reducing the LCTRS grant to the Parish Council by 50%, phased in over three financial years. In previous years, the Parish Council had used reserves to keep the precept as low as possible. Members suggested a budget based on 3% increase to the precept which equated to a 1.88% increase for a Band D property in Wheatley Hill.

The Clerk took Members through the detailed budget based on this and advised that the Parish Council required £133,062 for the 2024/2025 financial year. It was suggested that the Parish Council use £5,598 of reserves to provide a precept of £120,681 which together with the grant of £6,783 gave a figure of £127,464.

As part of the budget process Members considered the burial and allotment fees and agreed that they be retained at their current levels.

RESOLVED that: -

- (i) the Parish Council set a budget of £133,062 for the 2024/2025 financial year.
 - (ii) approval be granted to use £5,598 of reserves to give a precept request of £120,681.
 - (iii) Durham County Council be advised that the Parish Councils precept request for 2024/2025 was £120,681 in addition to a grant of £5,598 giving a total of £127,464.
- (3) Website – Service Level Agreement

The Clerk provided an update on progress to identify a new provider to host and support the Parish Council's website.

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

(4) Christmas Trees

The Clerk reported that Christmas trees had been erected at the Cemetery, the Workingmen's Club, Wheatley House and the Greenhills Centre.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(5) Ex Gratia Christmas Payments

The Chair suggested that an ex-gratia Christmas payment of £300 be made to J Davies, E Leigh and J Thompson.

RESOLVED that approval be granted for an ex-gratia payment of £300 to J Davies, E Leigh and J Thompson from the Chair's Account.

(6) Updates

- (i) Parking - Nicholls Close

The Clerk reported that at the last meeting Members advised that the parking at Nicholls

Close was no better and it was suggested that yellow lines or similar enforcement measures were needed.

Following the meeting the Clerk asked the Police to consider implementing parking restrictions, particularly around the entrance to the bungalows. Members were advised that to date there had been no response from the Police.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(ii) Street Sign – Rock Farm Mews

The Clerk reported that following the last meeting Durham County Council were advised that the street sign at Rock Farm Mews needed replacing. The new sign read Rock House Mews and not Rock Farm Mews which was causing confusion.

The County Council had advised that the sign would be replaced but it could take up to 3 months.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(iii) Overgrown Shrubs – Nicholls Close

Members were advised that the overgrown shrubs and bushes at Nicholls Close had been cut back.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

10 MEMBER ISSUES

(1) Off Road Biles

Members reported on-going problems associated with off road bikes in the village, particularly in the Shakespeare Street.

RESOLVED that the matter be reported to the Police.

(2) Potholes

Members reported potholes to the rear of 16 Gable Terrace.

RESOLVED that the potholes be reported to Durham County Council.

(3) Durham Road

Members queried who was responsible for Durham Road/Wingate Lane.

RESOLVED that the Chair refer the matter to Durham County Council.

(4) Woodlands Avenue

Members reported the condition of the footpath on the corner of Woodlands Avenue, heading towards the Community Centre.

RESOLVED that the matter be reported to Durham County Council.

(5) Drain Cover

Members reported a displaced drain cover at Wordsworth Avenue.

RESOLVED that the matter be reported to Durham County Council.

11 PAYMENTS

The following schedule of payments was circulated together with figures for all income and expenditure at 30 November 2023.

PAYMENT	PAYABLE TO	DETAIL	COST	VAT	TOTAL
Direct Debit	British Gas	Gas - Heritage Centre	252.49	12.62	265.11
Direct Debit	E-on Next	Electric - Heritage Centre	114.78	5.74	120.52
Internet Banking	MKM	Cemetery Supplies	8.06	1.61	9.67
Internet Banking	CDS Security & Fire	Engineer callout	130.00	26.00	156.00
Internet Banking	Horns Garden Centre	Christmas Trees	410.83	82.16	492.99
Internet Banking	J Davies	Ex Gratia Christmas Payment	300.00		300.00
Internet Banking	E Leigh	Ex Gratia Christmas Payment	300.00		300.00
Internet Banking	J Thompson	Ex Gratia Christmas Payment	300.00		300.00
Internet Banking	J Thompson	Telephone Allowance	25.00		25.00
Internet Banking	J Davies	Reimbursements	88.42	17.68	106.10
Internet Banking	J Thompson	Reimbursements	67.28	8.66	75.94
Internet Banking	Payroll	Wages - December 2023	5,392.64		5,392.64
Internet Banking	HMRC/DCC	PAYE/Pension - December 2023	3,504.54		3,504.54
Internet Banking	JAC's Accountancy Limited	Payroll Services - December 2023	30.00	6.00	36.00
Direct Debit	British Telecom	Telephone/Internet	32.78	6.55	39.33
Invoice 79	Co-Op Bank	Charges	17.55		17.55
TOTAL			10,974.37	167.02	11,141.39

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

12 RISK MANAGEMENT

The Clerk advised that there was nothing to report.

..... Signed

.....Dated