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Midridge Parish Council

Minutes of Council Meeting

**Village Hall,
Midridge**

**Thursday
31st May 2018**

Time: 6.45 pm

Present: Cllrs H Howe (retiring Chair), W Mellors (new Chair), H Howe, S Smith, H Alexander & P Makinson

In Attendance: Cllr J Clare (DCC)
Mrs Avril Haynes
Mrs H Campbell and Mr I Prescott (Keepmoat Homes)

Official: A Jordan (Clerk)

39/18 NOTICE OF MEETING

The Notice convening the Meeting was taken as read.

40/18 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for Absence were received from DCC Cllrs P Howell and S. Durham.

41/18 ELECTION OF CHAIR OF THE COUNCIL 2018/19

Cllr W Mellors was proposed by Cllr H Howe, seconded by Cllr P Makinson.

RESOLVED that Cllr W Mellors be appointed Chair of the Council for the 2018/19 Municipal Year.

42/18 DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE OF CHAIR

Cllr W Mellors signed a Declaration of Acceptance of the Office of Chair in the presence of the Clerk, and then took the Chair for the remainder of the Meeting.

41/18 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR OF THE COUNCIL 2018/19

Cllr S Smith was proposed by Cllr H Howe, seconded by Cllr H Alexander.

RESOLVED that Cllr S Smith be appointed Vice-Chair of the Council for the 2018/19 Municipal Year.

42/18 DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE OF VICE-CHAIR

Cllr S Smith signed a Declaration of Acceptance of the Office of Vice-Chair in the presence of the Clerk.

43/18 THANKS TO OUTGOING CHAIR

Cllr W Mellors thanked Cllr H Howe for his work as Chair during the previous year, saying that he had put the Village before his Personal Interests.

44/18 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllrs W Mellors and P Makinson declared an Interest in Agenda Item 19 “Accounts”, due to their Membership of the Middridge Village Association (MVA) Management Committee. Councillors expressed concern that because of these Interests, and the fact that Cllr P Makinson is also a Member of the Middridge Allotment Association Management Committee, and that unfortunately Councillors are often unable to attend Council Meetings due to their Business and other commitments, there is a danger of the Council become inquorate in future when any matters relating to these Organisations are to be discussed.

RESOLVED that Dispensations be granted to Cllrs W Mellors and P Makinson to speak and vote on matters relating to their respective Interests in the above Organisations, at any future Parish Council Meeting, until the end of the current Council.

Action: Clerk

DCC Cllr J Clare declared an Interest in Agenda Item 13 “Developments”, due to his Membership of the DCC Planning Committee.

45/18 MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Due to the fact that Mrs Avril Haynes, and Mrs H Campbell and Mr I Prescott of Keepmoat Homes were only available to attend the early part of the Meeting, it was agreed that the matters in which they were interested should be discussed first.

50/18 (b) Walkers Lane Parking

A number of Residents have complained about the dangers resulting from Vehicles regularly parking along Walkers Lane opposite the Village Hall, and consequently the Parish Council are seeking to make the Roads around the Triangle of Village Green in front of the Village Hall “No Parking”. Due to her previous experience working for DCC, Mrs Avril Haynes had kindly agreed to investigate this matter.

She has discussed this with Leigh Mowbray of the DCC Highways Department. Apparently Parking Orders are now dealt with in Groups relating to specific areas (Middridge would be included with Newton Aycliffe), which means it is much easier for DCC to handle them. Leigh Mowbray has indicated that the Council’s Proposal is worthy of consideration, but is concerned that this could create a Parking Problem elsewhere in the Village, and has suggested that a Meeting in the Village should be organised to discuss this Proposal “later in the year”. Councillors suggested that it might be possible for the Public to use the Village Hall Car-park, although there is a potential Issue due to the lack of Lighting.

Mrs Avril Haynes said that she felt this matter ought to be handled by the Parish Council, although she was still willing to provide assistance.

RESOLVED that take responsibility for this Issue, and that the proposed Meeting be organised as soon as possible.

Action: Clerk

49/18 “ELDON WHINS” DEVELOPMENTS

Following consultation with the DCC Planning Department, Keepmoat Homes plan to submit a Full Planning Application for their “Eldon Whins” Site shortly. They gave an informal Presentation on their Proposals, concentrating on the changes (mostly in details), which have been made since the Public Consultations last year. They also stated that they are keen to work closely with the Parish Council on this Development.

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They now plan to build 256 Houses, of which 26 (10%) will be “Affordable”. They again confirmed that the SUDS Drainage System, two Play areas, Green Spaces and Trees will be maintained by a new Maintenance Company, paid for by Annual Charges on Householders; so that the Parish Council will not have to take on this responsibility. Their Site will be subject to “Accelerated Construction”, which will occur in three Phases. Until the new Roundabout and Access is built, access for the First Phase would be via an existing Gate. They were hoping to begin construction in September, but a Great Crested Newt has just been discovered in Cobblers Hall Plantation, and this may mean a delay. Section 106 Monies – there will be £15,000 for Bio-diversity (“The Paddock” Wild-flower. Grassland), and £146,000 for Allotments & Recreational Facilities; payments will be made towards the end of each Construction Phase. Keepmoat Homes said that they were willing to deal directly with the Parish Council on how the latter might be used; Councillors agreed that this was highly desirable

Cllr W Mellors asked whether Keepmoat Homes had held any discussions with Persimmon Homes regarding connecting the two Sites, so that Persimmon would not need to provide a separate Access Road and Roundabout for their Site. Mr I Prescott said that no such discussions had been held to date, but Keepmoat Homes’ Proposal did include a Road that could be easily extended to provide such a connection.

46/18 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting of 5th March 2018 were accepted, and signed by the Chair as a true record.

47/18 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

(a) Defibrillator (25/18 (a) refers)

The Training Session for the “Bay Horse” Staff has been held. A Document on Maintenance, including the Supply of Spares, is still awaited.

(b) Skill Mill (25/18 (b) refers)

The Skill Mill have agreed that the clearing of the Footpath by the “Bay Horse” is their responsibility, but are still awaiting Training on the use of Weedkiller. It was suggested that Ian Hayman might be prepared to do this, which will be investigated.

Action: Clerk

48/18 POLICING ISSUES

Note – this is a new Agenda Item following the Police decision not to hold PACT Meetings in the Village in future. No Issues were raised.

Cllr J Clare mentioned that on recent data, Woodham and Middridge have the lowest Crime Rate in County Durham, and agreed to pass on the Parish Council’s thanks to the Police. It was noted that the Police consider the Parish Council vital in generating the Community Spirit so important in ensuring that any Crimes are promptly reported to them.

49/18 “ELDON WHINS” DEVELOPMENTS & THE COUNTY PLAN

Some Details of the Persimmon “Eldon Whins Extension” Planning Application have been modified in consultation with the DCC Planning Department, and this Planning Application is now to go before the DCC Planning Committee for a decision (date yet to be advised) Councillors noted that the Parish Council’s and Residents’ Objections to this Planning Application remain valid, so there will be an opportunity for these Interested Parties to speak at the Planning Committee Meeting if desired.

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RESOLVED that the Clerk will present a Statement of the Parish Council's Objections to this Planning Application at the Planning Committee Meeting. He will produce a List of the points he considers should be made, which will be discussed by Parish Councillors, and used to produce the Statement, which will be subject to Councillor's approval.

Action: Clerk

A new Draft version of the County Plan is due to be released on 5th June, and goes for DCC Cabinet Ratification on 13th June.

Cllr J Clare pointed out that Policy E4 ("Green Wedges") of the existing Local Plan, a saved version of the old Sedgefield Borough Plan, provides powerful Protection against unwanted Development in the Countryside in the Parish. This was confirmed recently when a Government Inspector rejected an Appeal against DCC's decision to refuse Planning Permission for a Development at "Woodham Bridge" in Newton Aycliffe. However, he says that the Draft County Plan contains no such Protection, and suggested that the Parish Council and Residents should express their concern about this when there is an opportunity to comment on the Draft County Plan; this was agreed.

He also urged that the Middridge Neighbourhood Plan should be progressed as fast as possible, as this can provide additional Protection; this was noted.

50/18 GROUNDS MAINTENANCE & GENERAL REPAIRS

(a) Street Light Removal

Cllr S Smith has objected to DCC's Proposals on two grounds:-

1. Walkers Lane is not a Road between a Town and a Village, but part of the Village. However DCC consider "Ten Houses" a Settlement.
2. Contrary to the DCC Report, there have been Accidents on Walkers Lane and Middridge Road; it is probable these have not been recorded by the Police.

It was suggested that the Council should seek to publicise their concerns in the Newton News.

Cllr J Clare commented that the Cost of the proposed SLA seems excessive, and should be queried. Great Aycliffe Town Council were quoted ~£100 per Light in their SLA to retain the Lights on the A167.

It was agreed that Cllr S Smith would continue to deal with this matter, and respond to the recent DCC Email requesting that we agree to their SLA Proposal, or they will immediately schedule these Lights for removal.

(b) Walkers Lane Road & Parking

DCC plan to fill in the Potholes, and resurface Walkers Lane, this year.

(c) Parish Paths

Path 7 – Tommy Walton has repaired the fallen Stone Stile; but now the Cover Stone on the Stone Stile nearest to the Quarry has apparently come off.

Tommy Walton is concerned about his damaged Fence in the middle section of this Path, and would like to discuss with the Parish Path Partnership (PPP) where the Boundaries are with regard to Ownership, and the PPP's responsibility for keeping the Path open. It is proposed to try and organise a Meeting of the Interested Parties; Cllrs S Smith, H Howe and J Clare indicated that they would like to attend.

Action: Clerk

Path 6 – filling in the ruts at the Walkers Lane end of this Path is still awaited.

Action: Clerk

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(d) **Tree Maintenance**

Last year the Parish Council dealt with their Trees on the Village Green, but the DCC Tree Officer (Simon McGinney) also identified 5 Trees out of the 31 on the "Dock" which require some Maintenance, and which would require Planning Permission. He also recommended some Maintenance to some of the Trees on the Play Area; these would **NOT** require Planning Permission.

It was agreed that Oliver's Trees should be asked to provide a Quotation for this work, which dependant on the Cost, may have to be spread over two years.

Action: Clerk

(e) **Village Green Maintenance**

Ian Hayman is concerned about Earth and Stones from Mole Holes causing damage to his Equipment, primarily on "the Dock" and the Play Area. Cllr W Mellors said that eliminating the Moles would be very expensive, but flattening the Moles' Spoil Heaps before Cutting should deal with Problem. Ian Hayman is to be contacted to see if he would do this, and what Cost might be involved.

Action: Clerk

Cllr W Mellors noticed a Lorry driving across the Edges of the Village Green near his House, causing significant damage. He contacted the Lorry's Owners about this, and suggested they should pay £50 – 100 for repairs; their response is awaited.

Action: Cllr W Mellors

Cllr H Alexander will continue to organise payments for the Village Green Tubs. Unfortunately we now have one Tub without anyone to look after it; a Volunteer is to be sought in the next Edition of the "Middridge Mercury".

Action: Cllr W Mellors

The Millennium Hedge (on "the Dock") again needs attention. In the past, someone has organised Traditional Hedge Laying Courses using this Hedge. It was agreed that this person should be contacted, to see whether he would be prepared to work on this Hedge again, on the same basis as previously.

Action: Clerk

51/18 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

A Planning Application was received regarding the small piece of "Community Open Space" adjacent to 28 Eden Grove, ownership of which has been transferred by the Land Registry to 28 Eden Grove. This sought to alter the Planning Use to Domestic Curtilage, and allow the Hedge to be replaced by a Fence. Details were circulated to Parish Councillors, who made no comments. This Planning Application has now been approved.

52/18 CHILDREN'S PLAY AREA

The Clerk's Monthly Inspection Report was approved. It was agreed that John the Handyman should be asked to provide a Quote for revarnishing the Bench Seat, and the Circular Table/Bench.

Action: Clerk

53/18 ROAD-TRAFFIC

The DCC Speed Matrix was deployed in the Village recently, although Councillors expressed their concern at the long intervals between deployments, and the short amount of time the Speed Matrix is deployed for. It may be possible for the Parish Council to purchase its own Speed Matrix(s) using Section 106 money from "Eldon Whins".

54/18 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN (NP)

The Community Engagement Exercise was successfully completed, and the Results have been analysed.

A Notice was circulated to all Households thanking them for their participation in the Survey, informing them of the Results, and also of the **EXISTING** Protection for Green Spaces and Village Assets. The planned improvements to the Walker's Lane Road, and Parking in front of the Village Hall, were also mentioned.

The NPWG have considered the Survey Results, and discussed the next steps to produce a Vision Statement, and the Objectives of the NP, which then inform the Policies needed to meet these Objectives.

Shaun Hanson has discussed the NP with Stuart Carter of the DCC Planning Department, who suggested that further progress on the NP should await consideration of the new Draft County Plan, which is to be released shortly. However, Cllr W Mellors pointed out that in the light of Cllr J Clare's earlier comments regarding the likely future loss of Protection against unwanted Development (see **49/18** above), it is now **URGENT** that the NP should be progressed as fast as possible, and the NPWG cannot afford to wait on the County Plan; this was **AGREED**. Accordingly, the NPWG Meeting organised for the 15th June will now consider how this is to be done.

Groundwork UK require that the Parish Council repay the £55 of their NP Grant which has not been spent.

55/18 ACCOUNTS

The Parish Council considered their 2017/18 Accounts.

RESOLVED that the following be formally approved, and (where appropriate) signed by the Chair and the Clerk:-

- (a) The Parish Council's 2017/18 Accounts, as approved by the Internal Auditor (who has completed the usual Annual Internal Audit Report).
- (b) The usual Annual Governance Statement.
- (c) The usual Accounting Statements.
- (d) The Certificate of Exemption, which means the Accounts will not be externally audited.

Councillors considered a Schedule of Accounts for Payment. It was noted that:-

- (a) Owing to the postponement of this Meeting from the date originally planned, it was necessary to pay the Cost of Insurance Cover from Zurich Mutual, which would otherwise have lapsed. Consequently the Approval sought is retrospective.
- (b) The MVA have requested the usual permission to use the Village Green for the Annual Village Fête.

RESOLVED that the MVA be given permission to use the Village Green for the Fête.

RESOLVED that the following Accounts be approved for payment:-

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Payee	Purpose	Amount
Zurich Municipal	Annual Insurance Cover	£925.37
H. Alexander	Village Green Tubs	£80.00
Middridge Village Association	Fête Raffle Prize	£50.00
Groundwork UK	NP Grant Refund	£55.00
Colin Gray	Internal Auditor Honorarium	£70.00
CDALC	Annual Subscriptions	£55.00
	TOTAL	£1239.86

Councillors considered the Clerk's Annual Salary.

RESOLVED that the Clerk's Annual Salary be increased by £50 to £1600 per annum.

Action: Clerk

56/18 GAMP & CDALC

GAMP – 28 Project Applications worth £237,031 have been submitted for a Budget of £100,000. The next stage will be for the Applications to be vetted by the appropriate Task Group (Older People; Children; Young People & Families; and Employment), and once the Applicants have responded to any Questions raised, the Projects will be ranked according to how well they fit the Criteria. There have been no Project Applications from Middridge. CDALC – Cllr W Mellors is due to attend an Executive Meeting shortly.

57/18 GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE

The Parish Council agree to Note that a Letter had been received from the County of Durham School Benevolent Fund, a Registered Charity, requesting a Donation; no further Action required.

58/18 OTHER MATTERS

(a) **Data Protection**

The GDPR are now in force. Thanks to a late Government Amendment to this Legislation; the Parish Council do **NOT** have to appoint a Data Protection Officer. It was agreed by Email that the Parish Council should be registered with the ICO as a "Data Controller", and this has been done, at a Cost of £35

(b) **Litter Picking**

Middridge participated in the Annual County Durham Big Spring Clean Event. A Set of satisfactory new Litter-picking Equipment has been purchased.

RESOLVED that 5 additional Sets of Equipment be purchased, at a Cost of ~ £105.

Action: Clerk

(c) **Film Request**

It is believed that ACT 2 CAM filmed in the Play Area; a CD of the resultant Film is awaited.

Action: Clerk

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59/18 ADDITIONAL ITEMS

The retiring Chair's Dinner will be held on a Friday, at the 'Hammer and Pincers'.

Action: Cllr H Howe

60/18 NEXT MEETING

The next Meeting of the Parish Council will be held on Monday, 9th July 2018 (a week later than usual due to Councillors being away). The Chair closed the Meeting at 9.20 pm.