

Middridge Parish Council

Minutes of Council Meeting

**Village Hall,
Middridge**

**Monday
7th November 2005**

Time:6.45pm

Present: Councillors W.J. Clarke (Chairman), Mrs A. Clarke, H. Howe ,
J.Morland and W.Mellors

Official: N.Hart (Clerk);

33/05 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 5th September 2005 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record subject to:-

- the deletion of 'auction' referred to at Min 28/05; and the insertion of 'tender';
- the deletion of 'two wreaths on behalf of both the Village and the Parish'; and replacement with ' a wreath' (Min 31/05 refers).

34/05 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

Millenium Oak (Min 26/05 refers)

It was noted that Cllr Clarke would undertake the planting of the Millenium Oak adjacent to the site of the previous tree. It was suggested that some form of watering mechanism be devised to assist the tree's growth; eg corrugated piping or improvised water bottle.

Conservation Area Status (Minute 26/05 refers)

Concern was expressed regarding the condition of some of the trees within the Conservation Area; some of which were overhanging the pathways. A particular recent complaint had recently been received from Mrs Dent.

It was suggested that the problems experienced regarding tree maintenance be pointed out to the Council's Conservation Officer; and that arrangements be made with the tree contractors (referred at Min 29/05) to inspect the trees as soon as possible. Councillor Mrs Clarke would also advise Mrs Dent to voice her own concern to Sedgfield Borough Council in the hope that the matter would be addressed.

Refuse Collection Arrangements (Minute 23/05 refers)

Sedgefield Borough Council had advised that a leaflet detailing all 'Recycling Collection' dates had been issued in January this year; and they were happy to provide a further copy of that leaflet. Members of the Parish could not recall any such leaflet being issued; and so would be grateful to receive a copy in due course.

Additional Works to Footpaths (Minute 29/05 refers)

It was noted that Durham County Council had advised that they were not in a position during this financial year to be able to carry out the additional footpath works referred. They were however prepared to take details of the required works with a view to their possible inclusion within next years programme of works. Alternatively, the Parish Council could itself carry out the works; or refer the matter to the responsible landowners.

'Finger Signage-Restoration (Minute 29/05 refers)

It was noted that the Clerk had not been able to obtain any information regarding the availability of grant funding from the ODPM for such work. It was suggested that Durham County Council's Highways Department may be able to assist with this information.

A689/C35 Rushyford 'Middridge' Road Signing (Minute 30/05 refers)

Councillor Mrs Clarke advised that the promised inclusion of directional signage for Middridge had still not appeared on the above signposting; as Durham County Council had cited problems with the contractor. Their inclusion in the near future was however again promised and it was suggested that Councillor Mrs Clarke monitor the situation and pursue as necessary.

Millenium Hedge

The work of the Councillors who carried out maintenance and cleaning work to the various hedgerow was commended. Consideration of the future needs of maintenance to the Millenium Hedge would be considered at the January meeting.

Councillor J.Morland (Minute 31/05 refers)

Reference was made to Councillor Morland's intended departure from both the Village and the Parish Council some time next year. It was requested that the Clerk make preliminary enquiries as to the required statutory timescale for declaring a vacancy on the Parish Council.

35/05

ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2005- REPORT OF EXTERNAL AUDITOR

Consideration was given to the results of the findings of the audit carried out by Mr Colin Gray on behalf of the Parish Council regarding the accounts for the year ending 31st March 2005; which had now been passed on to BDO Stoy Hayward Chartered Accountants for consideration as part of the statutory requirements.

RESOLVED that the report be noted and Mr Gray be thanked for his involvement with the audit.

36/05

ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT

Members considered a schedule of Accounts for Payment.

RESOLVED that the following accounts be approved for payment:-

C.E.Walker	Grasscutting-August	£345.45
C.E.Walker	Grasscutting-Sept	£230.30
C.E.Walker	Grasscutting-Oct	£115.15
Nat Assoc of Cllrs	Membership	£76.38
Mr C.Gray	Auditor Fees, inc expenses	£60.00
N.Hart	Salary	£141.67
N.Hart	Postage	£3.90
JWS Power Wash	Bus Shelter Cleaning-Oct	£27.00

37/05

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL-PROPOSED SALE OF ALLOTMENTS, MIDDRIDGE

Consideration was given to the latest position regarding Durham County Council's (DCC) proposed disposal of the allotment site at Middridge. Verbal notification had been received from the Estates Division of DCC of their willingness to consider offering, as part of a number of proposals that would be submitted to their Cabinet, the opportunity for Middridge Parish Council to lease the allotment site from DCC, for a nominal fee, over a ten year period. If the Parish were agreeable to this going forward as a possible option, it would be referred to their Cabinet some time in December/January.

The Clerk however advised that advice had been received from the National Association of Allotments and Gardeners indicating that whilst the 1972 Act, in its strictest terms, did not remove the involvement of County Councils in allotment management, the effects of that legislation was that from that date the allotment authorities were to be regarded as parish/town councils where they exist, or where they don't, the district council. It was therefore reasonable to argue that if a site was purchased, or

acquired by a County Council for allotment purposes prior to the 1972 Act (as was the case with DCC) then the land becomes statutory and should have been passed over to the successor allotment authority on reorganisation. This obligation was reaffirmed by Statutory Instrument 1999 No 545, which requires land used, or acquired for allotment purposes to be transferred to the successor authority.

Concern was therefore expressed that DCC did not adhere to this legal obligation provided by the 1972 Act by transferring responsibility to either Middridge Parish or Sedgfield Borough Councils; and therefore the relevant officers of DCC should again meet with this Parish to discuss these concerns.

RESOLVED that the Clerk write to Mr Hutchinson of Durham County Council's Estates Division, enclosing the advice received from the National Association of Allotments and Gardeners, and requesting that DCC's views be invited based on this enclosed information and, if necessary, a further meeting with officers and the Parish Council be arranged to discuss the matter further.

38/05

CHRISTMAS 2005

It was noted that a quotation had been received from Durham County Council (DCC) for the 'dressing and undressing' of a Christmas tree; at a cost of £247 plus VAT. It was suggested that an order be therefore placed for a 25ft tree with Lyndhurst Nurseries and that arrangements be confirmed with DCC and Lyndhurst Nurseries for its subsequent planting, dressing and undressing.

The numbers of families participating in any planned Christmas activities had been seen to have declined in recent years, with even the 'take up' of selection boxes offered by the Parish reducing. It was suggested that the Village Hall Association's support for future celebrations be sought early in the New Year and that residents be informed that, if they wished, the Village Hall could be made available to them for any celebrations this year. The Parish Council would, for this year, donate an appropriate number of selection boxes at an estimated cost of £2 per head.

RESOLVED that the proposed arrangements for the Christmas celebrations for 2005, referred to above, be approved.

39/05

GROUNDS MAINTENANCE AND GENERAL REPAIRS

Consideration was given to the following Grounds Maintenance issues:-

-(a) Grass-cutting

The contract for the Parish's grass-cutting works had now been completed for the year, with the contract for next year nearing review. It was suggested that quotations be again invited from the following, and consideration be given to the award of the contract thereafter:-

- C.E.Walker
- T.Walton
- Sedgefield Borough Council

-(b) Parish Paths-Map

Consideration was given to the suggested text put forward by Durham County Council's Paths Officer for accompanying the Parish Paths Map of Middridge. It was suggested that Councillors Mrs Clarke and Mellors consider the suggested wording and report back as appropriate.

40/05 GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE

Consideration was given to the following correspondence received:-

- i) Sedgefield Borough Local Strategic Partnership-Development Day-15th November 2005
- ii) Darlington Borough Council-Local Development Framework-Core Strategy Preferred Options
- iii) Sedgefield Borough Council-Inform Newspaper
- iv) DCC-Planning Application-Extraction of Ash and Restoration to Woodland, Simpasture Junction, Newton Aycliffe
- v) Zurich Insurance-Report on Inspection of Play Equipment

RESOLVED that the content of the above correspondence be noted.

41/05 ADDITIONAL ITEMS

Members referred to the dates of the forthcoming Christmas Carol Concerts to be staged by Sedgefield, Shildon and Great Aycliffe Town Councils.

42/05 NEXT MEETING

Monday 9th January 2006 at 6.45pm.

