

APPROVED

Middridge Parish Council

Minutes of Council Meeting

Monday
2nd November 2020

Time: 6.45 pm

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

In Attendance: Cllrs J Clare & S Durham (DCC), Paul Howell MP, Stewart Smith

Official: A Jordan (Clerk)

NOTE – owing to the COVID-19 Pandemic, this Meeting was held using Video Conferencing.

81/20 NOTICE OF MEETING

The Notice convening the Meeting was taken as read.

82/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None

83/20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

84/20 MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

The Chair agreed that the report on the Neighbourhood Plan be made first, to permit Stewart Smith, who has kindly agreed to lead this at present, to then leave the Meeting.

Shaun Hanson is now in a position to progress the NP, which has been in effective abeyance for some time. In particular, much of the work he has done on other NPs will facilitate the writing of the necessary Middridge NP Policies. However, although a framework for the NP is available thanks to previous work led by the Clerk, this needs to be rewritten in appropriate language, and the detailed Policies added. Whilst Shaun has 4 days of “banked” time available from a previous Government Grant, it is estimated that a further 4 days, at a cost of £2,000, will be required in order to complete the NP. Our three DCC Ward Councillors kindly agreed to fund these days from their Neighbourhood Budgets, subject to clarification that this is permissible, and approval by the GAMP Board.

RESOLVED that work on the NP should continue on this basis.

85/20 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting of 7th September 2020 were accepted, and will be signed by the Chair as a true record.

86/20 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

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(a) Little Hare Farm Caravan (79/20 (a) refers)

Cllr J Clare reported that in order for the Caravan at the Equestrian facility to continue to be used as a residence, retrospective Planning Permission will be required, and it is understood that this is in hand.

87/20 POLICING

Nothing to report.

88/20 “ELDON WHINS” DEVELOPMENTS & THE COUNTY PLAN

There have been numerous complaints regarding excessive mud on the road from the Persimmon Homes “Acorn Gardens” development. Cllr J Clare said that a Road Sweeper was being used four times a day, and DCC Planning Enforcement are continually monitoring the situation. The new Roundabout is due to be completed by 30th November.

The planned Footpath to run alongside Middridge Road will require part of the existing hedgerow to be removed, which will require Planning Permission.

The Chair proposed a two tier montage for the “Acorn Gardens” Sculpture, which would include references to the Middridge Fairies, the Middridge Hoard, the “Byerley Turk”, and a Pithead Winding Gear. It was agreed that the practicality of this idea should be discussed with Persimmon Homes.

Action: Chair & Cllr H Alexander

The County Durham Plan (CDP) has now been formally adopted by DCC, and will thus form the basis for the evaluation of all future Planning Applications. It was noted that the CDP protects against any more Housing Development in Middridge Parish.

89/20 “THE PADDOCK” WILD-FLOWER GRASSLAND

Cllr H Alexander has been investigating possible ways to improve “the Paddock” as a “Nature Reserve”, and hopes to produce a report shortly. It is understood that the Middridge Allotment Association may wish to extend the Allotments, and take over part of “the Paddock”. In the light of this, and the potential availability of Section 106 money, it was agreed that it would be desirable if the Parish Council and the Allotment Association were to work in partnership on improving “the Paddock”, and this is to be investigated.

Action: Cllr H Alexander

It was suggested that “Community” Fruit Trees could be planted on “the Dock”. However, the Clerk pointed out that “the Dock” is part of the Registered Village Green, and thus Planning Permission would be required.

Discussions are to be held with Ian Hayman to see if he has any useful ideas.

Action: Chair & Cllr P Makinson

90/20 GROUNDS MAINTENANCE & GENERAL REPAIRS

The annual Village Green maintenance, and the second cut of the Parish Paths, are now complete, and Invoices are awaited.

91/20 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

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A Planning Application for a low level Extension to replace the existing Conservatory at 35 South Side has been received.

RESOLVED that the Parish Council will not oppose this Planning Application.

92/20 CHILDREN'S PLAY AREA

Following a Meeting with another Contractor regarding cleaning the rubberised Play Area surfaces, his Quotation was accepted, and the work has now been completed satisfactorily.

93/20 ROAD-TRAFFIC

(a) No further progress with regard to the Middridge Police Community Speedwatch Group, although it has been clarified that this will not involve the use of Police Speed Guns, but rather a Police Speed Matrix. Owing to the new national Lockdown, the Police are expected to be too busy in the near future for any progress to be likely.

Action: Clerk

(b) Following a meeting with the DCC Highways Department, they have agreed to fund reintroducing "Rumble Strips" in the Village. There is some confusion as to whether this work has already been done, and this is to be clarified. If possible, the Parish Council would like to be consulted as to their proposed location.

Action: Clerk

(c) No progress regarding the possibility of extending the 30 mph Speed Limit all the way down Walkers Lane, and adding a 'No Through Road' Sign.

Action: Cllr J Clare

94/20 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN (NP)

See 84/20

95/20 ACCOUNTS

A postal Claim for repayment of last year's VAT (£2,164.31) has been submitted to HMRC. It is now possible to make such Claims online, which should mean faster payment, and the necessary arrangements have been made to allow this to be done in future.

RESOLVED that the following Accounts be approved for payment:-

Payee	Purpose	Sum
Aycliffe Cleaning Services *	Play Area Maintenance	£150.00
A D Jordan	Clerk's July-Sept Salary	£247.30
HMRC	Clerk's July-Sept Tax	£165.20
Woodham Community Association	Replacement Defibrillator Pads	£53.40
	TOTAL	£618.90

* Payment already made, so formal approval granted is retrospective.

96/20 GAMP & CDALC

GAMP – a Board Meeting was held by Video Conferencing, and a further Meeting is planned on 24th November. There is also to be an online GAMP event on Thursday, 12th November at 6.00 pm. Project Applications on the theme of 'Covid-19 Recovery are being received and ranked in preparation for Board approval.

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Cllr J Clare mentioned that DCC have a £20 million fund for County Development, which could be of interest to the Parish Council.

CDALC – nothing to report.

97/20 GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE

(a) **Durham Cathedral**

A request was received from Durham Cathedral for support to enable them to cope with their difficult financial situation due to COVID-19.

RESOLVED that a one-off donation of £50 be made.

Action: Clerk

(b) **Standards Matter 2 Public Sector Survey**

Following discussion, it was agreed that any response to this Survey on Standards in Public Life should be left to individual Councillors.

98/20 OTHER MATTERS

(c) **Remembrance Sunday**

The proposed private commemoration has had to be cancelled due to the new COVID-19 national Lockdown. However, there is nothing to stop people making a private commemoration at the War Memorial, provided they obey Government Regulations.

Paul Howell MP will be laying a Wreath, and Cllr J Clare one on behalf of DCC.

Arrangements are in hand to collect the usual two Wreaths from Shildon Town Council, making the usual Donation of £30, and these will be laid on behalf of the Parish Council and the Village Association.

Action: Clerk

(d) **Village Website**

Cllr S Smith arranged for a Quotation from Pixel Media (who supplied her Business Website) of £1000 for a revamped Village Website to meet the Government's new Regulations; from investigations, this appears to be a competitive price. However, concerns were raised about the design and content of the new Website, whether the Software used will enable the Parish Council to maintain the Website themselves, and the necessity for Website Hosting to be provided by Pixel Media. It was agreed that more detail is required, and discussions should be held with Pixel Media to clarify these matters, before a decision whether to proceed is taken.

Action: Cllr P Makinson

(e) **Christmas Arrangements**

Lyndhurst Nurseries have been asked to provide a Quotation for a Christmas Tree, and their response is awaited. It is believed there should be no difficulties with Ian Hayman and the Chair installing and removing the Christmas Tree and Lights as usual.

Action: Clerk

Cllr J Clare has been unsuccessful to date in arranging for discussions with the DCC Street Lighting Department regarding the possibility of the Parish Council paying them directly (in some way) for the Electricity Supply for the Christmas Tree Lights (in order to avoid last year's excessive Administration Charges from nPower Business Solutions). A somewhat similar arrangement will be required for the Electricity Supply

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for the proposed future Defibrillator at “Eldon Whins”, and this will also be investigated, once discussions have been arranged.

Action: Cllr J Clare & Clerk

99/20 ADDITIONAL ITEMS

- (a) Byerley Park Infant School – the Chair is the Parish Council representative on the Board of Governors. He reported that the existing Deputy Head has now been appointed as the new Head, and arrangements are in hand to appoint a replacement Deputy Head.
- (b) Paul Howell indicated that, as far as his parliamentary duties permit, he plans to attend future Parish Council Meetings, and kindly offered to take up any appropriate matters which the Parish Council might wish to raise with him in his capacity as MP for the Sedgefield Constituency.

100/20 NEXT MEETING

The next Meeting of the Parish Council will be held on Monday, 4th January 2021, at 6.45 pm., using “Zoom” Video Conferencing.