

APOPVED

Middridge Parish Council

Minutes of Council Meeting

Monday
13th July 2020

Time: 6.45 pm

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

In Attendance: Cllr J Clare (DCC)

Official: A Jordan (Clerk)

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

41/20 NOTICE OF MEETING

The Notice convening the Meeting was taken as read.

42/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr P Makinson & Cllr S Durham (DCC)

43/20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

44/20 MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

(a) COVID-19

The possibility of formally thanking GAMP for its support during the COVID-19 Lock-down, particularly the provision of temporary funding to cover any necessary expenditure by the Middridge COVID Response Group, was discussed. However, since further support might be necessary, it was concluded this would be better done once the pandemic was finally over.

45/20 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting of 2nd March 2020 were accepted, and will be signed by the Chair as a true record.

46/20 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

None.

47/20 POLICING

Two Incidents have been reported to the Police:-

(a) Youths congregating in the Play Area during the COVID-19 Lock-down.

(b) Damage to the Quarry Safety Fencing This has also been reported to the Parish Paths Partnership, who are arranging for the Quarry Owners to make the necessary repairs.

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It was also noted that a number of Fires had again been lit in the Quarry Area.

Cllr H Alexander asked how Incidents and Concerns should be best raised with the Police. Cllr J Clare said that he would deal with any non-999 Incidents, and concerns should be raised at PACT Meetings.

The Chair mentioned that there was a lot of Rubbish in the bottom of the Quarry, which ought to be cleared, but how this could be arranged would need to be considered.

48/20 “ELDON WHINS” DEVELOPMENTS & THE COUNTY PLAN

The first Resident from the Keepmoat Homes “Elder Gardens” Development has appeared in the Electoral Register. Cllr J Clare was not clear as to when new Residents would begin to pay Council Tax, but stated that the Parish Council would not receive any increase in its Precept until the start of the 2021/22 Financial Year.

Cllr J Clare also mentioned that he had received a lot of complaints because Keepmoat Homes had yet to complete a number of necessary Infrastructure Works (due to the COVID-19 Lock-down).

Persimmon Homes have now begun work on their “Eldon Whins” Development. Construction of the new Roundabout should not require any Road Closures.

49/20 “THE PADDOCK” WILD-FLOWER GRASSLAND

No progress to report due to the COVID-19 Lock-down. Cllr J Clare kindly agreed to chase the expected report from Tammy Morris Hale.

Cllr J Clare again pointed out that the Section 106 money could be used for any Biodiversity Improvement Projects in the Parish, and was not restricted to the proposed Wild-flower Grassland Project. Cllr P Makinson has suggested that as an alternative an area of Wildflower Grassland could be established on “the Dock”, and Cllr J Clare suggested that additional work to the Millennium Hedge was a possibility. These ideas are to be considered.

50/20 GROUNDS MAINTENANCE & GENERAL REPAIRS

(a) Village Green Maintenance

At the start of the COVID-19 Lock-down, Ian Hayman voluntarily fenced off the Play Area equipment, and closed the Village Green Benches. He also personally cut all the Village Grass Areas throughout the Lock-down, including those which are normally DCC’s responsibility.

RESOLVED that the Parish Council’ express its thanks to Ian Hayman for his public-spirited work.

Action: Clerk

Cllr J Clare kindly agreed to investigate why DCC had apparently failed to restart Grass-cutting in the Village when this was resumed elsewhere, and whether they would be prepared to pay for the work undertaken on their behalf.

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51/20 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

None.

52/20 CHILDREN'S PLAY AREA

The Play Area equipment has been fenced off in conformance with the COVID-19 Lock-down Regulations. Following a Risk Assessment from Ian Hayman, the following work now needs to be undertaken:-

- (a) The rubberised Play Area surfaces first need to be cleaned to remove potentially dangerous moss and algae. Cllr H Howe stated that he knows of a Contractor who has the necessary equipment, and will investigate the cost.

Action: Cllr H Howe

- (b) Ian Hayman to remove some fallen branches, and his Safety Fencing, and then cut the Grass in the Play Area.

Action: Clerk

- (c) Suitable Notices to be displayed. The Clerk stated that he had received a possible Notice from DCC, which he will circulate to Councillors.

Action: Clerk

The need to remove one of the two Swing Seats was also considered, but it was agreed that this was unnecessary, subject to the provision of suitable Notices.

RESOLVED that the Play Area be re-opened subject to this work being completed. The Village Green Bench Seats will also be reopened.

Action: Clerk

53/20 ROAD-TRAFFIC

There have been a number of complaints from Residents regarding the marked increase in Speeding through the Village during and following the COVID-19 Lock-down. On past experience there is unfortunately no chance of extending the Shildon and Newton Aycliffe 40 mph Limits to the Village (although the latter will be moved closer to the Village because of the Persimmon "Eldon Whins" Development). However, Cllr J Clare said that he should be able to arrange for "Rumble Strips" to be installed at both ends of the Village. He will also contact the Police regarding Training for Village Volunteers in the use of Police Speed Guns. He also suggested that we try:-

- (a) Forming a Village Patrol using fake Police Speed Guns e.g. Hair Dryers, which in his experience would have a marked effect.
- (b) Asking our new Ward County Councillors in 2021 for permanent Speed Matrices.

Cllr S Smith raised the question of extending the 30 mph Speed Limit all the way down Walkers Lane, and adding a 'No Through Road' Sign.. Cllr J Clare said he would investigate these possibilities.

The Neighbourhood Budget Application for the proposed "Community Road Watch" Project has unfortunately had to be postponed until 2021 due to the COVID-19 Lock-down.

54/20 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN (NP)

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No progress to report due to the COVID-19 Lock-down.

55/20 ACCOUNTS

The Parish Council is now able to make payments by BACS Credit Transfer.

RESOLVED that the following Accounts be approved for payment:-

Payee	Purpose	Sum
Zurich Mutual *	Annual Insurance	£967.24
CDALC *	Annual Subscription	£62.06
Npower Northern Ltd. *	Christmas Electricity	£315.39
Aycliffe Property Services *	Bench seat Repairs	£105.00
A. D. Jordan *	Clerk's Jan -Mar Salary	£249.87
HMRC *	Clerk's Jan -Mar Tax	£166.80
Hayfields Contracting Ltd *	Parish Paths 1 st Cut	£504.00
DCC	Walkers Lane Street Lighting 2 nd Phase	£6,764.86
	TOTAL	£8,613.55

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

The normal arrangements for the Parish Council's 2019/20 Accounts Audit were postponed because of the COVID-19 Lock-down.

RESOLVED that the following are formally approved:-

- The 2019/20 Accounts
- AGAR Certificate of Exemption.
- AGAR Annual Governance Statement.
- AGAR Accounting Statements.

The Accounts and support documents are to be delivered to the Internal Auditor (Colin Gray) shortly, so everything should be completed before the new deadline of end-August.

Action: Clerk

56/20 GAMP & CDALC

GAMP – the Clerk was due to stand down as a Public Representative in September, but due to COVID-19, it is proposed to extend the normal period of office by one year. It is expected that this will be ratified at a forthcoming Board Meeting to be held by Video Conferencing (date yet to be announced).

CDALC – Cllr W Mellors continues to attend Executive Committee Meetings.

57/20 GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE

None

58/20 OTHER MATTERS

(a) Village Website

Thanks largely to Cllr P Makinson, the Village Website has been successfully transferred from BT to Zen Internet. All issues regarding the Parish Council having inadvertently paid for Cllr W Mellors BT services have been satisfactorily resolved.

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59/20 ADDITIONAL ITEMS

None.

60/20 NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the next Meeting of the Parish Council will be held on Monday, 7th September 2020, at 6.45 pm., using "Zoom" Video Conferencing.