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## Middridge Parish Council

Minutes of Council Meeting

Village Hall,  
Middridge

Monday  
1<sup>st</sup> September, 2014

Time: 6.45 pm

**Present:** Cllrs A Clarke (Chairwoman), W Mellors, H Howe, P Makinson.

**In attendance:** Cllrs J Gray & W Dixon (DCC)

**Official:** A D Jordan (Clerk)

### 85/14 NOTICE OF MEETING

The Notice convening the Meeting was taken as read.

### 86/14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for Absence were received from Cllr W J Clarke.

### 87/14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

### 88/14 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2014 were signed by the Chairwoman as a true record.

### 89/14 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

#### (i) New Path to Shildon (69/14 ii refers)

Cllr A Clarke has established that the Land in question is owned by London and Economic Properties Ltd (LEP), and is covered by a Section 106 Agreement which specifies it will remain Community Land in perpetuity. She is currently trying to contact LEP to establish who is now responsible for Maintenance since Northern Community Forest went bankrupt.

#### (ii) Village Green (69/14 iii refers)

Durham County Council (DCC) have confirmed that the Village Green is definitely registered, and they are now aware that it does not appear in the online Village Greens Register. A useful Electronic Map showing the extent of the Middridge Conservation Area has been obtained.

#### (iii) Proposed East Thickley Wind Turbine (73/14 refers)

Shildon Town Council are aware of this potential Planning Application.

### 90/14 GROUNDS MAINTENANCE & GENERAL REPAIRS

#### (i) War Memorial

The Council's Grant Application to the War Memorials Trust (WMT) for work on the War Memorial was unsuccessful. However, our DCC Councillors have kindly arranged for a £500 Grant to cover this work via GAMP. "John the Handyman" has completed the necessary work.

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Cllr A Clarke was unable to obtain an electronic version of the "Middridge Men" from the producers of the original picture. However, Cllr P Makinson was able to produce a suitable replacement, which has now been framed.

### **(ii) Parish Paths Maintenance**

Ian Hayman has completed the 2<sup>nd</sup> (and final) authorised Cut of the Parish Paths, and a Claim for the costs has been submitted to DCC. Ian now plans to complete the agreed modifications to the Stiles on Path 7 (Tramway) by October.

### **(iii) Village Green Maintenance**

Ian Hayman has completed 14 of the 16 authorised Cuts of the Village Green, and thinks that 1 or 2 additional Cuts may well be necessary, at a cost of £100 per Cut.

**RESOLVED** that additional Cuts are authorised if necessary. Ian Hayman to contact the Clerk before undertaking each additional Cut; the Clerk will then contact Councillors to obtain their approval before giving Ian authority to proceed.

**Action:** Clerk

Terry Collins of DCC has arranged for some Litter-picking Equipment to be supplied to Cllr A Clarke on long-term loan; this will be available for use by any volunteers who wish to assist in keeping the Village clean.

### **(v) Tree Management**

Cllr H Howe & the Clerk have completed over 50% of a Draft Tree Management Policy. This is being developed as a general reference for Tree Management in the Parish, and thus covers DCC owned Trees, and restrictions on Tree Maintenance imposed by the Middridge Conservation Area, as well as the Parish Council's own Tree Management Policy. Once complete, the Draft Policy will be circulated to all Councillors for comment, with a view to its being adopted at the next Meeting.

Attempts to contact Rodger Lowe from DCC regarding the Cherry Tree on the Village Green at the bottom of The Close, and the Tree which Eileen Hunting from 4, Northside has complained about, have so far failed.

**RESOLVED** that further efforts be made to contact Rodger Lowe.

**Action:** Clerk

It was always understood that there were no Trees in the Parish subject to Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs), but recent information suggests that there may be a Tree in Eden Grove subject to such an Order.

**RESOLVED** that DCC be contacted to establish the situation with regard to ALL Trees subject to TPOs in the Parish.

**Action:** Clerk

### **(vi) Tubs**

**RESOLVED** that the usual payment of £10 per Tub to the 8 Tub suppliers is authorised.

**Action:** Cllr A Clarke

Additional Tables and Flower Tubs have recently been put out on the area of Village Green in front of the Bay Horse. Whilst the Council are not opposed to this action in principle, it was considered that the fact that the Publican needs the Council's permission should be emphasised. However, this raises the legal question as to whether the Council can give this permission, because the area in question is part of a Registered Village Green.

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**RESOLVED** that DCC be contacted with regard to this legal question. If permissible, a Letter to be sent to the Publican of the Bay Horse stressing that his use of the area of land in question continues to be subject to the Parish Council's permission.  
**Action:** Clerk

**91/14 PROPOSED DISPOSAL OF ALLOTMENTS BY DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL, MIDDRIDGE**

Cllr J Gray has recently supplied the Council with a copy of an Email from DCC clarifying the Council's options with regard to the Allotments and "The Paddock" (the original Email was lost as a result of the failure of the previous Clerk's PC). A Meeting is currently in the process of being organised between the DCC Officer concerned (Keith Batey) and all interested parties.

Note – the Clerk mentioned that because the Parish Council's Email is now handled by Web-mail, any such loss of Emails in the future is extremely unlikely. Moreover, procedures to regularly backup the Parish Council's Email, and all other Parish Council electronic documents, have been instituted.

**92/14 COMMUNITY RIGHT TO BID**

An Application to register "The Paddock" as an Asset of Community Value under the Localism Act's Community Right to Bid Scheme has been submitted to DCC. Unfortunately the data entry fields of the supplied electronic Application Form are not accessible, so the Form had to be completed by hand. Consequently the Clerk had decided to withhold Applications for the Allotments, the Bay Horse and the Village Hall, until it was seen if DCC were able to supply an accessible Form. However, Cllr P Makinson said that he has software which should be able to fix this problem; the Clerk will supply him with this (and other) problem Forms. If this is successful, the outstanding Applications will be submitted to DCC.

**93/14 PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

No new Planning Applications have been submitted since the last Council Meeting.

Following concern expressed by a resident, the situation regarding a new building being erected in the back garden of 38, Southside has been investigated. One of the Owners (Mrs Scott) stated that she is well aware that their property lies within the Middridge Conservation Area. The original Plans for the new building, which is to be used as a Store for Gardening Equipment, and Materials used in her husband's Decorating Business, were submitted to DCC, who advised that if the Plans were modified to make the building smaller, Planning Permission would not be required. The Plans were modified as suggested, and Mrs Scott states that she has a Letter from DCC confirming that Planning Permission is thus not necessary.

The situation with regard to the access from the Bay Horse Car Park into the back garden of 38, Southside was also investigated. Mrs Scott stated that she has agreement to use this access until work on the new building, and the extension to her house, is complete; this is confirmed by the Publican of the Bay House. Mrs Scott further stated that, whilst they have no plans to regularly use this access in future themselves, they do not plan to close it off, but are happy for Pub Patrons to park in front of the gates.

The Council would ideally like to see this access closed off, and the Stone Wall between the Bay Horse Car Park and the back garden of 38, Southside, restored as it was before the previous Owner of 38, Southside, illegally took down part of the Wall to make the access. However, the Council recognise that they have no power

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to act in this matter, which is the responsibility of DCC. Cllr Mike Dixon agreed to investigate whether DCC are prepared to take any action.

**94/14 CHILDREN'S' PLAY AREA**

The repairs to the Play Area Equipment were completed, and the Invoice paid. However, complaints were subsequently received that young children were unable to use the Cabin/Slide because one of the Grip Logs was missing, and that the ends of the Grips Logs were rough, and could cause injury to children or their clothing. Doug Wallace of Active Playground Maintenance Ltd. stated that the missing Grip Log was deliberate, as in his opinion this equipment was not suitable for such young children. However, it was pointed out that the Log Cabin in the current Playdale Playgrounds Catalogue (the manufacturers of this equipment) is virtually identical to the Cabin/Slide (although without the Slide), and is stated to be suitable for children aged 3 – 12 years. Doug Wallace has accepted this argument, and will replace the missing Grip Log, and sand down the ends, on a visit planned for 17<sup>th</sup> September.

Whilst the Council are happy with the work carried out on the Climbing Frame and Swings, they are concerned about the quality of the work done on the Cabin/Slide. The Clerk explained that he had proposed using Active Playground Maintenance Ltd. for the repairs because they were recommended by Kompan, the manufacturers of the Climbing Frame, and he was under the (false) impression at the time that ALL the Playground Equipment had been supplied by Kompan.

**RESOLVED** that:-

- (a) Extensive Photographs of the current state of the Cabin/Slide be taken.
- (b) The quality of the Cabin/Slide repairs be discussed with Doug Wallace during his planned visit.
- (c) Playdale Playgrounds Ltd be contacted with a view to them, or their recommended repairers, inspecting the Cabin/Slide to report on its final repaired state.

**Action:** Cllr A Clarke & Clerk

The proposed voluntary County Durham Smoke-free Play Parks Scheme was discussed.

**RESOLVED** that the Council opposes this Scheme, on the basis that it is considered inappropriate for the Play Area, and would be costly and difficult to implement; the Consultation document to be completed accordingly.

**Action:** Clerk

**95/14 C35 NEWTON AYCLIFFE TO SHILDON ROAD-TRAFFIC CALMING**

A further Application has been made for a Grant from the Durham Police and Crime Commissioner's Community Safety Fund for two Driver Feedback Signs. This Application is based on:-

- (a) Information resulting from the installation of a DCC "Speed Matrix" in the Village for a few days.
- (b) A Quotation for Driver Feedback Signs, from a Supplier recommended by the DCC Highways Department.
- (c) A Letter of recommendation from our PC Support Officer (Mike Hutchinson) – the Parish Council expressed their particular thanks for this Letter.

**96/14 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

The Council's Application for the whole of Middridge Parish to be designated as a Neighbourhood Area has been approved.

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It was recommended that an Open Meeting, similar to one recently organised by GATC, be organised to present information about Eldon Whins, the situation regarding the Allotments and "The Paddock", and other matters relevant to the Neighbourhood Plan, and to allow Voters to express their views. Concern was expressed about the likely costs of organising such a Meeting, and other activities relating to developing the Neighbourhood Plan. Government Grants are available for such work, but unfortunately this year's Budget has been used up, so no more Funds are available until next April.

**RESOLVED** that plans for an Open Meeting be produced, and the possibility of applying now for next year's Grants be investigated.

**Action:** Cllr W Mellors

97/14

### **GATC COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW**

It was established that Persimmon had contacted GATC in order to obtain permission to undertake a Newt Survey of Eldon Whins Plantation, which is owned by GATC. Persimmon are well aware that Eldon Whins is in Middridge Parish, and on this basis the Chairwoman agreed that it was not necessary for the Clerk to send Persimmon a Letter.

DCC have received our Letter stating that the Parish Council consider the current Great Aycliffe Town Council (GATC) Petition invalid; DCC's reply was discussed.

There is confusion as to whether there is a time limit on GATC producing a 'valid Petition'; DCC have indicated no limit, whilst several other reputable authorities indicate a limit of one year.

**RESOLVED** that this question regarding the GATC Petition time limit be clarified.

**Action:** Clerk

98/14

### **WEBSITE**

The Village Website is now up-to-date.

It was noted that when the Regulations of the Local Audit and Accountability Act (2014) come into force at some time in the not too distant future, the Parish Council will be required to publish their Annual Financial Accounts on the Village Website.

**RESOLVED** that the 2013/14 Parish Council Accounts be published on the Village Website.

**Action:** Cllr P Makinson & Clerk

99/14

### **STATUTORY POLICIES**

A Review of the Council's Statutory Policies has revealed that of the 10 possible required Statutory Policies, 1 does not apply, 5 of the Council's existing Policies are still relevant, but 4 Policies require updating. Draft new Financial Regulations, Risk Assessment Register and Publication Scheme, based on the latest Models from the National Association of Councils (NALC), have been prepared. Work on new Draft Standing Orders is about to start; it was noted that new Regulations which have just come into force with regard to the Public's Right to Video Council Meetings etc. will probably affect these new Standing Orders.

The Local Audit and Accountability Act (2014) will affect the Council's Financial Regulations, but since there is uncertainty as to when the Regulations

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implementing this Act will come into force, it was agreed that the Council's Financial Regulations should be updated on the basis of the current Legislation.

**RESOLVED** that the new Draft Policies be circulated to all Council Members for their comments as soon as possible. Comments to be collated, with a view to some at least of the new Statutory Policies being adopted at the next Council Meeting.

**Action:** Clerk

**100/14 ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT**

Councillors considered a Schedule of Accounts for Payment.

**RESOLVED** that the following Accounts be approved for payment:-

Anne Clarke	Annual Tubs Maintenance	£ 80.00
'John the Handyman'	War Memorial Maintenance	£ 414.00
Hayfields Contracting Ltd.	Parish Paths; 2 <sup>nd</sup> Cut	£ 492.00
Alan Jordan	Clerk's Salary (Jly - Sep)	£ 210.00
HMRC	Tax Liability (Jly – Sep)	£ 140.00
Royal British Legion	Remembrance Day Wreath	£ 25.00

**101/14 GAMP - AREA ACTION PARTNERSHIP – FEEDBACK**

The Clerk attended the last GAMP Board Meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> July, but there was nothing significant to report. The next Board Meeting is due to be held in the village Hall, on 23<sup>rd</sup> September.

**102/14 GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE**

**(i) MVA Letter**

A letter has been received from the Middridge Village Association thanking the Parish Council for providing a Raffle Prize for the Annual Village Fête.

**(ii) Locomotion Way**

There is to be a special event called the Locomotion Way along the new Multi-User Route between Aycliffe and Shildon, on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> September. The Clerk agreed to email the organisers with the names of those who wish to take part.

**103/14 REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY**

**RESOLVED** that the Parish Council purchase a £25.00 Wreath from the Royal British Legion.

**Action:** Cllr A Clarke

**104/14 2013/14 ACCOUNTS**

**RESOLVED** that the Parish Council formally accept the 2013/14 Accounts as approved by the External Auditor.

There was one minor Issue with these Accounts, in that the External Auditor reported that the Local Council Tax Support Scheme (LCTSS) Grant, paid by DCC, had been declared under the wrong Category on the Annual Return. The Clerk stated that in completing the 2013/14 Annual Return he had simply followed the practice used in previous year's Annual Returns, which had not been criticised. However, he has now modified the Council's Accounts Spreadsheet, so that the LCTSS Grant is now shown in the correct Category.

**RESOLVED** that minor Issue reported by the External Auditor has been satisfactorily addressed.

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**105/14      ADDITIONAL ITEMS**

None.

**106/14      NEXT MEETING**

Monday, 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2014 at 6.45pm.

**Chairwoman** \_\_\_\_\_