

Middridge Parish Council

Minutes of Council Meeting

Village Hall,
Middridge

Monday
7th July, 2014

Time: 6.45 pm

Present: Cllrs A Clarke (Chairwoman), W Mellors, W J Clarke, H Howe

In attendance: Cllr J Gray (DCC)

Official: A D Jordan (Clerk)

65/14 NOTICE OF MEETING

The Notice convening the Meeting was taken as read.

66/14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for Absence were received from Cllr P Makinson.

67/14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

68/14 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 19th May 2014 were signed by the Chairwoman as a true record.

69/14 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

(i) Dog Litter Bin (49/14 i refers)

The new Dog Litter Bin has been installed; there will almost certainly be no charge.

(ii) New Path to Shildon (49/14 iv refers)

The Clerk has contacted the Clerk to Shildon Parish Council regarding the Ownership of the Land in question, but without response. Recent information indicates that the Land used to belong to Northern Forest, but was sold to an unknown Scottish Company when Northern Forest went bankrupt.

RESOLVED that the Deputy Clerk to Shildon Parish Council (Tracy Bellas) be contacted to determine whether they know the identity of this Scottish Company.

Action: Cllr A Clarke

If this proves unsuccessful, Cllr J Gray will assist.

(iii) Village Green (51/14 iii refers)

The question as to why, if the Village Green is registered, it does not appear on the DCC Village Greens Register, is still unresolved; Collette Longbottom may be able to help.

RESOLVED that DCC be contacted to establish what the situation is.

Action: Clerk

70/14 GROUNDS MAINTENANCE & GENERAL REPAIRS

APPROVED

(i) War Memorial

There has been no further communication from the War Memorials Trust (WMT) regarding the Council's Grant Application for work on the War Memorial.

RESOLVED that WMT be contacted to establish what is happening.

Action: Clerk

RESOLVED that the Quote of £414 from "John the Handyman" for Cleaning and Painting the War Memorial, and repainting the Fence, be accepted, and he be asked to proceed as soon as possible.

Action: Clerk

The Picture of the War Memorial in the Village Hall Meeting Room was discussed. This is now in poor condition, and needs replacing; a larger version would be desirable.

RESOLVED that one of the Picture's Producers (John Davison) be contacted to establish whether this Picture is available in Electronic Format.

Action: Cllr A Clarke

(ii) Parish Paths Maintenance

Ian Hayman has completed the 1st authorised Cut of the Parish Paths, and the Costs have been reclaimed from DCC. He has also informed the Clerk that he plans to start the Modifications to the Stiles on Path 7 (Tramway) shortly.

The Damage to part of the East-West Section of Parish Path 2 has now been verified, and reported to Elaine Crow (the DCC Parish Paths Chief Ranger).

Ian Hayman has also reported that owing to the weather conditions this year, the Village Greens have now been given 9 Cuts, and it may be necessary to exceed the 16 authorised Cuts in order to maintain them in an acceptable condition.

RESOLVED that Ian Hayman be contacted and asked to inform the Council when he undertakes the 15th Cut, and to provide an estimate of how many additional Cuts may be required. If necessary, additional Cuts before the September Council Meeting are authorised.

Action: Clerk

(iii) Tree Management

The GATC Tree Management Policy was discussed at the GAMP Local Council's Meeting; this is still to be ratified. The Parish Council were advised that in formulating their own Policy, care should be taken to ensure that this would only commit them to work which they are prepared to pay for.

RESOLVED that work on the Parish Council's Tree Management Policy continue, but that in the meantime, Complaints would be dealt with on the basis of the Draft DCC Tree Management Policy.

Action: Cllr H Howe & Clerk

The Cherry Tree on the Village Green at the bottom of The Close is looking very sickly. This first had problems in 2012, and was inspected by Rodger Lowe from DCC, who advised that the Tree be left for another year, and it improved in 2013.

RESOLVED that Rodger Lowe be asked to inspect this Tree again, and advise on appropriate action.

Action: Clerk

APPROVED

Eileen Hunting from 4, Northside has complained to the Clerk that a Tree on the Village Green is restricting Light in her Property. The Draft DCC Tree Management Policy advises that no action is necessary in this case.

RESOLVED that no action be taken at this time, but that Rodger Lowe be asked to inspect this Tree as well, and advise on whether any action should be considered.

Action: Clerk

71/14 PROPOSED DISPOSAL OF ALLOTMENTS BY DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL, MIDDRIDGE

Cllr J Gray is currently investigating this situation, but the DCC Officer concerned (Gerald Derby) is currently unavailable. Dependent on the result of her investigations, further action will be considered at the September Council Meeting.

72/14 COMMUNITY RIGHT TO BID

The Parish Council is currently working on registering various Assets of Community Value under the Localism Act's Community Right to Bid Scheme. An electronic version of the necessary Application Form has been obtained; this requires the Name & Address of the current Occupier(s) and Owner(s) of the Property in question, although their consent is not necessary. The situation is as follows:-

- i) The Bay Horse – the Clerk has written to the Landlord requesting the Owner's details.
- ii) The Village Hall – the Middridge Village Association have been notified of the Council's intentions. The Title of the Village Hall is vested in the Commissioner for Charities.
- iii) The Allotments – owned by DCC.
- iv) "The Paddock" - owned by DCC.

73/14 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

A Planning Application for modifications to Eldon Moor Farm to install a Biomass Boiler and Solar PV Panels has been received.

RESOLVED that the Parish Council has no objection to this Planning Application.

The Residents of Middridge Farms, Walker's Lane have received a Letter notifying them of plans to install a farm-scale, single Wind Turbine to the South-East of East Thickley, Spout Lane, Shildon; this is within Shildon Parish.

RESOLVED that the Parish Council take no formal action until a Planning Application is received. The Clerk to Shildon Parish Council to be contacted to check whether they are aware of this proposal. The Residents of Middridge Farms, Walker's Lane to be consulted as to their views.

Action: Clerk

74/14 CHILDREN'S' PLAY AREA

The situation with regard to the Repairs to the Play Area Equipment undertaken by Active Playground Maintenance Ltd. Is as follows:-

- i) Climbing Frame – repairs satisfactory.
- ii) Climber/Slide – the Nuts securing the Climber Foot Grips are considered to be dangerous, and require corrective action (preferably as per the original Nuts).
- iii) Swings – Chain Links still to be replaced.

RESOLVED that this situation be discussed with Doug Wallace of Active Playground Maintenance Ltd. on his planned visit of 8/9 July (to fit the Swing Chain Links), and appropriate action agreed. Payment of the Invoice for these Repairs is authorised, subject to the agreed corrective action being completed satisfactorily.

Action: Clerk

75/14

C35 NEWTON AYCLIFFE TO SHILDON ROAD-TRAFFIC CALMING

A DCC Speed Matrix was installed in the Village for a few days, and had a marked effect in reducing Vehicle Speeds, although some alarming Speeds were noticed. The Unit stopped working because the Battery became flat; when this was reported to DCC, the Officer concerned stated that this indicated a very high Volume of Traffic, and/or number of Vehicle Speeding.

RESOLVED that this indication of very high Volume of Traffic, and/or excessive Vehicle Speeds, be reported to Keith Jameson of the DCC Highways Department.

Action: Clerk

The Council's Application for a Grant from Durham's Police and Crime Commissioner for a Speed Gun, and training in its use, was unsuccessful.

76/14

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Clerk was recently notified that the Council's Application for the whole of Middridge Parish to be designated as a Neighbourhood Area would be approved shortly, but no further communication has been received.

RESOLVED that Michael Lowe be contacted urgently to establish the situation regarding the Neighbourhood Area Application.

Action: Clerk

Mike Peel has requested that he join the Neighbourhood Plan Working Party, and has been accepted.

77/14

GATC COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

The Parish Council have been successful in organising a steady flow of Letters from Middridge Residents to the Newton News opposing the Great Aycliffe Town Council (GATC) Petition to take over Eldon Whins.

A Document has come into the Parish Council's possession, indicating that at a Meeting of the Horndale Residents Association on 4th June, Members were informed that "Eldon Whins will be part of Middridge unless we sign the Petition to keep it in GATC". This is the complete opposite of the actual situation, and in view of the fact that a copy of the GATC Petition was available at this Meeting for signature, it is likely that some Residents may have signed the GATC Petition for invalid reasons.

RESOLVED that a Letter be sent to the Secretary of the DCC Constitution Working Group (Jocasta Lawton) stating that the Parish Council consider the GATC Petition is not valid for this reason.

Action: Clerk

Andrew Bailey mentioned at the GAMP Local Council's Meeting that Persimmon had contacted GATC with some questions regarding the DCC Eldon Whins Plans, but had been informed that Eldon Whins was in Middridge Parish.

APPROVED

RESOLVED that a Letter be sent to Persimmon regarding this matter.

Action: Clerk

78/14 WEBSITE

The situation with regard to the Parish Council paying for Website Hosting of the Village Website seems to be satisfactorily resolved. Some aspects of the Website with regard to the Parish Council still need updating.

RESOLVED that the Village Website be updated.

Action: Cllr P Makinson & Clerk

79/14 STATUTORY POLICIES

RESOLVED that the Council undertake a Review of its existing Statutory Policies.

Action: Cllr W Mellors & Clerk

Proposals for amendments will be prepared, for consideration by a Sub-Committee of the full Council, to meet before the September Meeting.

80/14 ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT

Councillors considered a Schedule of Accounts for Payment.

RESOLVED that the following Accounts be approved for payment:-

Hayfields Contracting Ltd.	Parish Paths; 1 st Cut	£ 492.00
JWS Powerwash	Bus Shelter Cleaning	£ 36.00
CDALC	Village Greens Training Course	£ 27.00
NAC	Membership Fees 2014/15	£ 78.00
Active Playground Manage	Play Area Repairs	£ 942.00
Alan Jordan	Clerk's Expenses	£ 77.05

81/14 GAMP - AREA ACTION PARTNERSHIP – FEEDBACK

(i) GAMP Board Meetings

RESOLVED that the Council should endeavour to have a Representative at all future GAMP Board Meetings.

The Clerk agreed to attend the next Meeting at the Village Hall, Aycliffe Village on 16th July at 6.00 pm.

(ii) GAMP Local Council's Meeting

Cllrs W Mellors and J & A Clarke attended the recent GAMP Local Council's Meeting; Cllr A Clarke was elected Vice-Chair.

Amongst other matters (see above), Plans to merge Greenfield (Newton Aycliffe) and Sunnydale (Shildon) Comprehensive Schools were discussed.

82/14 GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE

Nothing to report.

83/14 ADDITIONAL ITEMS

(i) Shildon/Aycliffe Railway Path

Victoria Lloyd has been contacted with a view to providing access for Cyclists from Walker's Lane onto the new Path.

APPROVED

(ii) Clerk's Probationary Period

The Clerk has finished his 6 months Probationary Period, and is prepared to continue his employment.

RESOLVED that Mr A Jordan be confirmed in his employment as Clerk to Middridge Parish Council.

84/14

NEXT MEETING

Monday, 1st September 2014 at 6.45pm.

Chairwoman _____