

APPROVED

Middridge Parish Council

Minutes of Council Meeting

**Monday
7th September 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). Mr W McCready.

Official: A Jordan (Clerk)

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

61/20 NOTICE OF MEETING

The Notice convening the Meeting was taken as read.

62/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None

63/20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

64/20 MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

None

65/20 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting of 13th July 2020 were accepted, and will be signed by the Chair as a true record.

66/20 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

(a) Village Green Maintenance (50/20(a) refers)

Cllr J Clare reported that DCC had apparently failed to restart Grass-cutting in the Village because when they came on site they found that Ian Hayman had already cut their grass! However, normal DCC Grass-cutting has now resumed.

67/20 POLICING

A Resident raised concerns about the use of the Village Hall Car-park by Drug-users. Notices have been posted in the Village Noticeboards advising Residents not to attempt to dispose of Drug Syringes themselves, and who to contact to have this done safely.

The Middridge Village Association are in the process of fitting improved Car-park Lighting and Security Cameras to try and deter Drug-users from using the Car-park.

APPROVED

68/20 “ELDON WHINS” DEVELOPMENTS & THE COUNTY PLAN

Persimmon Homes have asked whether the Parish Council have any views on the Public Artwork they are required to erect in their new Development (“Acorn Gardens”) as a condition of the Planning Permission; they have suggested a statue of the “Midldridge Fairies”. However, research suggests that the “Midldridge Fairies” were not friendly, and a statue reflecting their nature might not be appropriate for children. One possibility might be a montage including the “Byerley Turk” and references to the Parish’s Mining Heritage and connection with the Stockton to Darlington Railway. These ideas are to be further discussed by Email, and Residents asked for their views via Facebook.

Action: Parish Councillors

Concerns were raised as to whether the Government’s proposed new Planning System might mean more new Housing being authorised in the Parish in a new County Durham Plan (CDP). Cllr J Clare said that as far as DCC were aware there was no new target for housing in the county, and therefore the CDP’s existing provision, which does not allow for any more housing in the Parish, should be adequate.

69/20 “THE PADDOCK” WILD-FLOWER GRASSLAND

Cllr J Clare reported that Tammy Morris Hale’s expected report has been delayed by COVID-19, and is unlikely before the beginning of next year. There was some further discussion of possible alternatives to the proposed Wild-flower Grassland Project, and it was accepted that it would be impossible to please everyone. It was agreed that Tammy Morris Hale should be contacted to discuss these possibilities.

Action: Clerk

70/20 GROUNDS MAINTENANCE & GENERAL REPAIRS

(b) Bus Shelters

One of the Safety Glass Windows in the Southside Bus Shelter was broken (whether by accident or deliberately is not clear). DCC were contacted to clear glass fragments from the road and pavement, and have subsequently installed a new plastic window.

71/20 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

None.

72/20 CHILDREN’S PLAY AREA

A Meeting was held with a possible Contractor regarding cleaning the rubberised Play Area surfaces, but he has failed to provide the promised Quotation. Cllr H Howe stated that he knows of another possibility, whom he will contact.

Action: Cllr H Howe

It was reported that Travellers had recently been seen parking in the Play Area, but only for a short time, as they had gone when a check was made, which showed there was no damage. Cllr W Mellors said that Travellers occasionally stopped in the Play Area overnight on their way to the Appleby Fair, but had never been a real problem. Cllr J Clare said that should this become a problem in future, DCC had powers to deal with it.

APPROVED

73/20 ROAD-TRAFFIC

- (a) Thanks to Cllr J Clare the Police have been in contact regarding Training for Village Volunteers in the use of Police Speed Guns. We now have 6 Volunteers, and are awaiting the promised Training; to be chased.
Action: Clerk
- (b) Cllr J Clare has been in touch with the DCC Highways Department regarding the possibility of reintroducing “Rumble Strips”, and they have promised to contact the Clerk about this.
Action: Clerk
- (c) Cllr J Clare has also arranged for the DCC Highways Department to contact the Clerk regarding the possibility of extending the 30 mph Speed Limit all the way down Walkers Lane, and adding a ‘No Through Road’ Sign.
Action: Clerk
- (d) Residents of 28-33 Southside have complained of vehicles parking in their road, and the short section of road near the Village Hall which is not subject to the new ‘No Waiting’ restrictions. It was foreseen that this might prove a problem, but applying the ‘No Waiting’ restrictions to these roads would have required DCC to consult local Residents, which they were reluctant to do at the time (particularly when the Village Hall Car-park is usually available for public use). It is not clear how much of a problem this is, and Residents will be asked to provide evidence (records and photographs) so it can be decided whether any further action is justified.
Action: Clerk

74/20 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN (NP)

Despite concerns that the Government’s proposed new Planning System might invalidate the Middridge NP, both our Consultant (Shaun Hanson) and Cllr J Clare recommend that work should continue. Accordingly it was agreed that Shaun Hanson will be contacted to provide the required Policy statements.

Action: Clerk

75/20 ACCOUNTS

The Parish Council’s 2019/20 Accounts have been approved by our Internal Auditor; and the Certificate of Exemption submitted to the External Auditors. The Period for the Exercise of Public Rights will be complete by the end September; and it will then be possible to reclaim last year’s VAT payments.

Action: Clerk.

DCC have informed the Clerk that the Parish Council’s 2021/22 Precept should increase by £72.36, even though the LCTRS Grant will no longer be paid. This is due to the new Residents at “Elder Gardens”, and the Clerk pointed out that this would mean the Parish Council’s Precept can now be expected to increase substantially in future years.

RESOLVED that the following Accounts be approved for payment:-

Payee	Purpose	Sum
Colin Gray	Internal Auditor’s Honorarium	£70.00
	TOTAL	£70.00

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

APPROVED

76/20 GAMP & CDALC

GAMP – a Board Meeting is to be held by Video Conferencing on 15th September.

CDALC – Cllr W Mellors expects to attend an Executive Committee Meeting by Video Conferencing in the near future.

77/20 GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE

None

78/20 OTHER MATTERS

(a) Remembrance Sunday

It is not clear whether the usual commemoration can be held this year due to COVID-19. It was agreed that Shildon Town Council should be contacted to see what they are proposing to do.

Action: Clerk

(b) FSDR Membership

Following discussion, it was agreed to renew the Parish Council's Membership of the Friends of the Stockton and Darlington Railway Society, at a cost of £50.

Action: Clerk

(c) Village Website

The Government have introduced new Regulations which come into force on 23rd September, and require the Parish Council's Website to meet stringent new requirements to make it easily accessible to Smartphone users. Websites must display a new Web Accessibility Statement, which indicates whether they are fully or partially compliant with the new Regulations, which the Village Website is not, or what is planned to be done to ensure future compliance.

Action: Clerk/Cllr P Makinson

Whilst it was planned to upgrade the Village Website's software, Cllr P Makinson stated that the new requirements would mean a complete re-write, which he is not in a position to undertake. Following discussion, the following was agreed:-

- i. Sue Smith is currently having a Website developed for her business, and will see if her Supplier can give a Quotation for the Parish Council Website.
- ii. The Clerk has received an offer of help from a Supplier, and will investigate this.
- iii. Cllr John Clare said DCC might be able to help, and will investigate this.
- iv. The Clerk will also investigate the possibility of Grants to fund the necessary work.

79/20 ADDITIONAL ITEMS

- (a) New Residents – some while ago, it was noted that two new names (Paul and Angela Clark) had suddenly appeared in the Electoral Register, resident at "Little Hare Farm", Walkers Lane. No one knew these people, but it was believed they must be living in the Horse Riding field accessible from the Bridleway near "Ten Houses". Cllr J Clare agreed to investigate, and has established that they are living in a caravan on this site, which is illegal unless there is a future change to the "Planning Use", which would

APPROVED

require a Planning Application..The Clerk wondered whether it was possible for people to be added to the Electoral Register when they are technically illegal residents; this is to be investigated.

Action: Cllr J Clare & Clerk

- (b) Clerk's Salary.- Councillors agreed that the Clerk's Annual Salary should be increased, but further research will be necessary to determine by how much.

Action: Parish Councillors

80/20 NEXT MEETING

The next Meeting of the Parish Council will be held on Monday, 2nd November 2020, at 6.45 pm., using "Zoom" Video Conferencing.

The Chair closed the Meeting at 8.45 pm.