

Midbridge Parish Council

Minutes of Council Meeting

Village Hall,
Midbridge

Monday
3rd March, 2014

Time: 6.45pm

Present: Cllrs W Mellors (Chairman), A Clarke, WJ Clarke, P Makinson

In attendance: Cllr J Clare and Cllr J Gray (DCC)

Official: AD Jordan (Clerk)

21/14 NOTICE OF MEETING

The Notice convening the Meeting was taken as read.

22/14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for Absence were received from Cllr H Howe.

23/14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr P Makinson presented an Application for Dispensation with regard to Agenda items concerning the Allotments, as he is a Member of the Allotment Association.

RESOLVED that this Application for Dispensation be accepted.

24/14 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 6th January 2014 were signed by the Chair as a true record.

25/14 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

(i) Dog Litter Bin (5/14 i refers)

A new Dog Litter Bin has been ordered.

(ii) Christmas Tree Lights (6/14 I refers)

DCC have successfully repaired the Christmas Tree Lights for no charge.

(iii) Tramway Path (8/14 iii refers)

A Meeting was arranged with the DCC Parish Paths Chief Ranger (Elaine Crow) and Ian Hayman (Complete Weed Control). Suitable modifications to the various Stiles to improve access for those with limited mobility were agreed, and a Quotation for the work has been included in next year's Parish Paths Maintenance Grant Application.

(iv) New Path to Shildon (8/14 iv refers)

This is a Permissive Path, and as such cannot be improved. To date no-one has been able to establish who installed the new Kissing Gate whose steep, muddy access could do with improvement.

(v) Queen's Garden Party (18/14 i refers)

The Council were unsuccessful in the Lottery for places at this Event.

26/14

ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT

Members considered a Schedule of Accounts for Payment.

RESOLVED that the following Accounts be approved for payment:-

JWS Powerwash	Bus Shelter Cleaning	£	36.00
Anne Clarke	Carol Stenger's Leaving Gift	£	50.00
Thirsk Community Care.	Payroll Preparation	£	61.00
Alan Jordan	Clerk wages (Jan-Mar 2014)	£	280.00
HMRC	Tax liability (Jan-Mar 2014)	£	70.00

(i) DCC Christmas Tree Invoice

An Invoice from DCC for £439.20 for the Erection and Removal of the Christmas Tree and Lights dated 10th February 2014 was included in the Schedule of Accounts for Payment for this Parish Council Meeting. However, the Clerk pointed out that the Minutes of the Meeting of 6th January 2014 indicated that this Invoice was approved for payment at that Meeting, and with the information to hand he was unable to establish whether this Invoice had already been paid.

RESOLVED that the DCC Christmas Tree Invoice was approved for payment, but a Cheque should only be issued if it could be established that the Invoice had not already been paid.

Action: Clerk

(ii) Authorised Signatories

It has just been discovered that when Cllrs H Howe and P Makinson were added as Authorised Signatories for the Parish Council's Bank Accounts some time ago, the other Parish Councillors were inadvertently removed, although the Bank has continued to honour Cheques signed by those Parish Councillors who are technically no longer Authorised Signatories.

RESOLVED that the the necessary action be taken to ensure that **ALL** five Parish Councillors are Authorised Signatories for the Council's Bank Accounts, and any two are required to authorise Cheques etc.

Action: Clerk

27/14

GROUNDS MAINTENANCE & GENERAL REPAIRS

(i) Millennium Hedge

It was agreed that the work done to the Millennium Hedge in the "Introduction to Hedge-Laying" Course, when this was eventually held, is a significant improvement. It is hoped that this will be completed in the near future.

(ii) War Memorial

No practical sources of Grants towards the costs of improving the War Memorial have been found.

RESOLVED that a Quote be obtained from "John the Handyman" for Cleaning and Painting the War Memorial, and repairing the Fence.

Action: Cllr P Makinson

28/14

PROPOSED DISPOSAL OF ALLOTMENTS BY DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL, MIDDRIDGE

Cllr P Makinson reported that there has yet to be a Meeting of the Allotment Association this year, but in general the Members would be happy with any proposal provided it was a permanent solution, and did not significantly affect their Rent.

APPROVED

In principle the Parish Council are prepared to take over ownership of the existing Allotments from DCC, but only if there is no question of Vehicular Access to the "Paddock" behind the Allotments being required in the future e.g. if this land was sold for Housing Development. There are basically two options:-

(a) Rent the "Paddock" from DCC on a long-term Lease; a cost of £350 per annum was mentioned, which the Parish Council considered is excessive in relation to their Annual Budget.

(b) Purchase the "Paddock" from DCC; a cost of £30,000 was mentioned. The Parish Council would consider the purchase of the "Paddock", but only if a substantial reduction could be negotiated, given that this area had been used for Allotments in the past. The possibility of getting the land designated as a "Limestone Landscape" was also mentioned.

RESOLVED that the option of purchasing the "Paddock" from DCC be pursued.

29/14 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

A Planning Application for modifications to 3, Meadows Edge has just been received, but additional information is required before the Parish Council can make a decision.

Action: Clerk

30/14 CHILDREN'S' PLAY AREA

It was noted that the Clerk's Monthly Inspection Reports showed no problems.

31/14 C35 NEWTON AYCLIFFE TO SHILDON ROAD-TRAFFIC CALMING

A number of Drivers have been stopped and warned for Speeding. The 'Rumble' Strips have been renewed. The Community Police are to receive Training in the use of Speed Guns in the near future.

32/14 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Questionnaire Results, including Comments and Responses, have now been analysed, and considered by a Neighbourhood Plan Working Party. The Upper Eden Neighbourhood Plan is not considered a suitable model for Middridge, but an alternative is being considered.

RESOLVED that the Neighbourhood Plan Working Party meet on Wednesday 12th March to progress this matter further.

33/14 GATC COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

The Great Aycliffe Town Council (GATC) Community Governance Review request to take over the Eldon Whins area of Middridge Parish is to be considered by the DCC Constitution Working Group on 18th March.

It has proved difficult to obtain any details of the GATC Proposal, but it is understood that this is on the basis that the proposed Housing Development would naturally form part of Newton Aycliffe, and that therefore any financial benefits should go to Newton Aycliffe. There is a Plan showing two areas of Middridge Parish which have been considered for appropriation; it is understood that it is the smaller area (marked in yellow) which is included in the GATC Proposal.

Cllr A Clarke expressed her disappointment that after a long history of Middridge and GATC cooperating on many matters, including working together in an Area

APPROVED

Action Partnership (GAMP), GATC should now be attempting to take over part of Middridge Parish purely for financial gain.

RESOLVED that a Meeting be arranged with Colette Longbottom, the DCC Chief Legal Officer, to establish how the Community Governance Review process works, how the Parish Council can be involved, and what would be the most effective way of opposing the GATC Proposal. The Email proposing the Meeting to be circulated to Councillors before sending.

Action: Clerk

RESOLVED that Steve Rag (the Council's CDALC representative) be consulted as to how the Small Local Councils Group could be involved in opposing this takeover bid by a larger Council.

Action: Clerk

34/14 WEBSITE

Cllr W Mellors has discussed the transfer of the Website Domain Name and Website Hosting of the Village Website with his existing Service Provider (BT), as a consequence of which BT have sent a Bill to the Parish Council for payment. This Bill refers to Line Rental Charges, which the Parish Council do not consider they should pay.

RESOLVED that this matter be discussed with BT, and the situation clarified.

Action: Clerk

35/14 GAMP - AREA ACTION PARTNERSHIP – FEEDBACK

Nothing to report.

36/14 DCC CUSTOMER FIRST STRATEGY

It has not proved possible to obtain details of the DCC Customer First Policy from the DCC Website, so this matter could not be considered; Cllr J Clare agreed to investigate the problem.

37/14 GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE

(i) Requests for Donations were received from the Durham County Brass Band Association, and the Toma Fund (a Children's Cancer Charity).

RESOLVED that these organisations not be supported.

Action: Clerk

38/14 ADDITIONAL ITEMS

(i) DCC Tree Management Policy

In general this seems to be an excellent Policy Document, and it was suggested that it should adopted by the Parish Council. Cllr J Clare stated that GATC had adopted a slightly modified version excluding Sections not relevant to them.

RESOLVED that the GATC Clerk (Andrew Bailey) be contacted to obtain a copy of the GATC Tree Management Policy.

Action: Clerk

RESOLVED that the DCC Online Consultation on their Tree Management Policy be completed.

Action: Clerk

APPROVED

(ii) CDALC Representative

Concern was expressed regarding the future position of our County Durham Association of Local Councils (CDALC) Representative, Steve Ragg, who has proved to be a great source of advice and support over the years. The considerable contribution which DCC makes to his salary is to be withdrawn after 2015; a Sub Committee of CDALC has been formed to find a possible solution. The Clerk was requested to provide information regarding our CDALC Fees for the next Meeting.

Action: Clerk

39/14

NEXT MEETING

Monday, 12th May 2014, following the Annual Parish Meeting at 6.45pm.

NOTE – it was subsequently agreed by all Members of the Parish Council to move this Meeting to Monday, 19th May 2014.

Chair _____