

Middridge Parish Council

Minutes of Council Meeting

Village Hall,
Middridge

Monday
6th January 2014

Time: 6.45pm

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

In attendance: Cllr J Clare, Cllr J Gray, Cllr M Dixon and CA Stenger

Official: AD Jordan (Clerk)

1/14 NOTICE OF MEETING

The Notice convening the Meeting was taken as read.

2/14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for Absence were received from Cllr H Howe.

3/14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr P Makinson made a Declaration of Interest with regard to Agenda items concerning the Allotments, as he is a Member of the Allotment Association.

RESOLVED that an Application for Dispensation be prepared for the next Meeting, so that Cllr P Makinson need not make such a Declaration of Interest in future.

Action: Clerk

4/14 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 4th November 2013 were signed by the Chair as a true record, after an Amendment so that Item 78/13 (ii) reads "RESOLVED that the resignation be accepted *with regret*".

The Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting held on 11th November 2013 were signed by the Chair as a true record, after an Amendment so that Item 84/13 reads "AD Jordan confirmed that he was prepared to accept the position as offered".

5/14 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

(i) Dog Litter Bin (64/13 ii refers)
Still awaiting action by the Neighbourhood Wardens to replace the missing Dog Litter Bin.

(ii) County Durham Plan (74/13 refers)
Cllrs A and WJ Clarke attended the Consultation at Woodham Village Community Centre on Friday 6th November 2013, but had nothing specific to report.

(iii) GATC Civic Carol Service (77/13 ii refers)
Cllr Mellors was unfortunately unable to attend the Civic Carol Service.

(iv) New Clerk (84/13 refers)

APPROVED

RESOLVED that the draft Contract of Employment be approved. The Chair and AD Jordan signed Copies of the Contract of Employment, and AD Jordan was welcomed to his new position as Clerk.

A Gift Token was presented to CA Stenger as an expression of the Council's thanks for her work as the previous Clerk.

6/14 ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT

Members considered a Schedule of Accounts for Payment.

RESOLVED that the following Accounts be approved for payment:-

Lyndhurst Nurseries	Provision of Christmas Tree	£ 180.00
DCC	Christmas Tree erection/lights	£ 439.00
Carol Stenger	Reimbursement for voucher	£ 10.00
Carol Stenger	Clerk wages (Oct-Dec 2013)	£ 280.00
HMRC	Tax liability (Oct-Dec 2013)	£ 70.00

(i) Christmas Tree

More personnel to assist with the installation of the Christmas Tree need to be organised for next year. There are also problems with the Christmas Tree Lights (owned by the Parish Council).

RESOLVED that DCC be asked to inspect the Christmas Tree Lights, and if possible effect repairs up to a limit of £200. If the Lights are not repairable within this cost, a Quote for their replacement to be obtained.

Action: Cllr WJ Clarke

7/14 BUDGET/PRECEPT SETTING 2014/15

It was noted that the current Balance Sheet for 2013/2014 indicates that the Council has a Surplus of Income over Expenditure, and a healthy Cash Balance. The revised figures provided by DCC were discussed. It was noted that in order not to increase Council Tax, a Precept £6,089.44 would be required. With an LCTSS Grant of £488, this would mean a total Income of £6,577.94, a reduction of £52.06 compared to this year.

RESOLVED that the Council apply for a Precept of £6,089.44, so as not to increase Resident's Council Tax.

Action: Clerk

8/14 GROUNDS MAINTENANCE & GENERAL REPAIRS

Quotes for Grounds Maintenance & General Repairs for 2014 were obtained from Walkers (£2080 + VAT) and Complete Weed Control (£1800 + VAT); no Quote was received from the third Company approached. General satisfaction with Complete Weed Control's performance with regard to the 2013 Contract was expressed.

RESOLVED that the Contract for Grounds Maintenance & General Repairs for 2014 be awarded to Complete Weed Control.

Action: Clerk

A Quote was obtained for Parish Path's Maintenance (which the Council undertakes on behalf of DCC) for 2014 from Complete Weed Control (£1230 + VAT).

RESOLVED that the Contract for Parish Path's Maintenance for 2014 be awarded to Complete Weed Control.

Action: Clerk

(i) Millennium Hedge

APPROVED

All necessary arrangements for the use of the Millennium Hedge in an "Introduction to Hedge-laying Course" on 11th/12th January have been made. If this results in significant improvements to the Hedge, the Council will consider making a Donation to the Organisers.

(ii) War Memorial

A Quote to clean and generally repair the War Memorial was obtained from Addingtons (£380 + VAT). It was agreed that the Fence also needed sanding down and repainting.

RESOLVED that a Quote be obtained from "John the Handyman" for repairing the Fence, and to investigate possible sources of Grants towards the costs of improving the War Memorial.

Action: Cllr P Makinson

(iii) Tramway Path

There are two narrow Stiles which need an additional step to improve access for those with restricted mobility. Cllr A Clarke has been informed that there is no money available to make such improvements in this year's DCC Budget, but that it may be possible for this work to be done by Volunteers.

RESOLVED that the DCC Parish Paths Chief Ranger (Elaine Crow) be approached to see whether improvements to these Stiles can be made now.

Action: Cllr A Clarke

(iv) New Path to Shildon

Shildon Town Council seem to have established a new Path from Middridge to Shildon which avoids the necessity of walking along the C35 roadside Pavements, and in particular the need to cross the C35 half way up the hill to Shildon. In principle this new Path is a significant improvement, but the access via a new Kissing Gate at the corner of the Allotments is steep, muddy, and potentially dangerous, and the surface of the Path could do with improvement.

RESOLVED that the DCC Parish Paths Chief Ranger (Elaine Crow) be approached to investigate whether improvements to this new Path can be made.

Action: Cllr A Clarke

9/14 PROPOSED DISPOSAL OF ALLOTMENTS BY DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL, MIDDRIDGE

There has been no further progress on this matter.

RESOLVED that discussions be held with the Allotment Association as to how to proceed.

Action: Cllr P Makinson

10/14 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

RESOLVED that the Council will not oppose a Planning Application for new uPVC Windows at Eldon Moor Farm.

11/14 CHILDREN'S' PLAY AREA

It was noted that the Clerk's Monthly Inspection Report of the Play Area showed no problems, nor did the Insurer's Annual Survey.

12/14 C35 NEWTON AYCLIFFE TO SHILDON ROAD-TRAFFIC CALMING

APPROVED

The new Speed Visor Post has been installed, but not yet used. The 'Rumble' Strips have yet to be renewed.

13/14 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Questionnaire Results were briefly considered, and the Council's thanks were expressed to Mrs CA Stenger for her work on the Neighbourhood Plan.

Questionnaire Results to be analysed to give percentage data.

Action: Clerk

Comments and Responses to be analysed to identify the main Themes.

Action: Cllr W Mellors

RESOLVED that representatives attend the Neighbourhood Planning Group Meeting at the GATC Offices on January 30th, which will be discussing the Upper Eden Neighbourhood Plan (a similarly sized Parish), before this matter is considered further.

Action: Cllr A Clarke & Clerk

14/14 GATC COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

The 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 in the near future.

15/14 WEBSITE

The Village Website is currently hosted and paid for by Cllr W Mellors. It was noted that as the Website Domain Name is well established with Internet Search Engines i.e. Google, it would be desirable if this Name could be maintained.

RESOLVED that in principle the ownership, and costs of operation, of the Village Website should be transferred to the Parish Council in some way.

Suitable new Web Hosts to be investigated.

Action: Cllr P Makinson

The transfer of the Website Domain Name from the existing Host to the new Host to be investigated

Action: Cllr W Mellors

It was recognised that Web Hosts are normally paid by Direct Debit, a form of payment not normally permitted to the Parish Council.

RESOLVED that Steve Ragg (the Council's CDALC representative) be consulted as to the practicality of making Payments by Direct Debit.

Action: Clerk

16/14 2014/2015 MEETING DATES

RESOLVED that the Council Meeting Dates for 2014/2015 should be as follows:-

Monday, 12th May 2014

Monday, 7th July 2014

Monday, 1st September 2014

Monday, 3rd November 2014

Monday, 5th January 2015

Monday, 2nd March 2015

The Village Hall to be booked for these dates.

Action: Clerk

17/14 GAMP - AREA ACTION PARTNERSHIP – FEEDBACK

The next GAMP Meeting is on Tuesday, 21st January at the Oakleaf Centre. It was noted that our DCC Councillors have agreed to provide funding from their Neighbourhood Budget via GAMP to the Middridge Village Association for repair of the Hall Rendering.

18/14 GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE

(i) DCC have requested applications from 2 Councillors and partners to take part in a Lottery for attendance at this year's Queen's Garden Party.

RESOLVED that Cllr W Mellors and partner, and Cllrs A and JW Clarke should be put forward.

Action: Clerk

19/14 ADDITIONAL ITEMS

None

20/14 NEXT MEETING

Monday, 3rd March 2014 at 6.45pm

Chair _____