

Middridge Parish Council

Minutes of Council Meeting

**Village Hall,
Middridge**

**Monday
7th July 2008**

Time:6.45pm

Present: Councillors Mellors (Chairman); Mrs A.Clarke, W.J.
Clarke, H.Howe and P.Makinson.

Official: N.Hart (Clerk);

17/08 NOTICE OF MEETING

The notice convening the meeting was taken as read.

18/08 MINUTES

- i) The Minutes of the meeting held on 12th May 2008 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record subject to the correction of the spelling of 'Whinns' to 'Whins' (Minute 6/08 refers).

19/08 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

- i) **Npower Invoice-Christmas Tree Lights (Minute 8/08 refers)**

Councillor Clarke advised of his investigations and discussions with Npower regards the disputed outstanding invoice; which equated to two separate billings in respect of administration (and not usage) for the financial years 05/06 and 06/07. It was noted that at the time of initial connection of the lights, Durham County Council had indicated that the actual amount of usage was so minimal that it could be included within their usage re the lighting column. This information had been relayed to Npower.

It was proposed that no further action be taken with regard to payment of the disputed invoice.

- ii) **C35 Middridge-Traffic Speeds (Minute 8/08 refers)**

It was noted that the Police had advised that they could not disclose with the Council the results of their secret trial of traffic speed through the Village. However,

members noted a recent near accident involving a car that later sped off, and a resident of the Village. Details had been forwarded to the Police and would be retained as part of their accident intelligence data.

20/08 ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT

Members considered a schedule of Accounts for Payment.

RESOLVED that the following accounts be approved for payment:-

JWS Power Wash	Bus Shelter-Cleaning	£30.00
N.Hart	Salary	£175.00
N.Hart	Postage	£1.80
Mr C.Gray	Audit of Accounts	£65.00
CE Walker	Grasscutting-May/June	£517.00
Nat. Assoc of Cllrs	Subscription	£76.38

21/08 ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2008

Consideration was given to the final accounts for the period ended 31st March 2008 following consideration by the internal auditor, and prior to submission for external audit.

Reference was made to the amount of fixed assets held by the Council given that new play equipment was now in place since the last audit. It was also suggested that enquiries be made to establish an accurate value for the Council's civic chains.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The accounts for the year ended 31st March 2008 be approved subject to the inclusion of an appropriate value in respect of fixed assets for the new play equipment owned by the Council; and the accounts be referred to the external auditor for inspection.
2. The Clerk make enquiries regards obtaining an accurate value for the Council's civic chains.
3. The Council's thanks be extended to Mr C.Gray for the internal audit carried out.

22/08 GROUNDS MAINTENANCE & GENERAL REPAIRS

- i) Seat adjacent Bus Shelter, Northside

Members advised that following an inspection of the seat adjacent to the Bus Shelter at Northside, they considered that

the seat could be made good through replacement of the wood. It was proposed that Councillors Clarke and Howe arrange the necessary repairs, which were likely to cost in the region of £150.

RESOLVED that Councillors Clarke and Howe be authorised to oversee the above repairs.

23/08 CHILDREN'S PLAY AREA

Consideration was given to the Clerk's monthly inspection report regarding the condition of the play area and equipment.

It was noted the larger swing seats were beginning to show signs of fraying; and it was therefore suggested that the Clerk obtain an estimate cost for their replacement from Playdale Ltd.

Members were also advised of a residents concerns regarding anti social behaviour around the facility; and the subsequent action being taken by Sedgfield Borough Council's (SBC) Neighbourhood Enforcement Team.

It was also noted that following damage inflicted by a SBC Refuse Collection vehicle, the Borough Council had also subsequently cut down and removed a tree on the perimeter of the play area. Members expressed concern that the tree had not been replaced; and requested that the matter be referred to SBC for consideration.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The report be noted.
2. The Clerk obtain an estimate cost for the replacement of the two larger swing seats from Playdale Ltd.
3. Members concerns regarding the removal of the damaged tree adjacent the play area be noted; and the matter be referred to SBC for their comments/consideration.

24/08 GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE

The following correspondence was noted:-

- (i) Tees, Esk & Wear Valley NHS Trust-Developing Mental Health Services for Older People

RESOLVED that the document be noted and Councillor Mrs Clarke be authorised to review the content and submit any comments as necessary.

25/08

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

(i) Proposed Housing Development at Eldon Whins

Consideration was given to notification received from Sedgefield Borough Council of their decision to refuse the proposed development of 400 dwellings at Eldon Whins. The reasons for refusal; which included objection to the development of housing on Greenfield land contrary to PPS1 and PPS3-Housing & Policy RSS, were submitted in full.

Members expressed satisfaction with the decision taken, but requested confirmation from SBC of the status of the land in respect of approved planning policy.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The decision in respect of the above proposed development be noted.
2. The Clerk be requested to clarify with Sedgefield Borough Council the current planning status of the land as regards approved planning policy.

(ii) Proposed Development of Detached Dwelling adjacent 38 Southside

Consideration was given to a planning application received for the development of a detached dwelling adjacent to 38 Southside.

Members expressed concern that the proposed access to the development (which was shared with the adjacent property) was not sufficient to cater for the extra vehicles expected. Members disputed the actual width of the access as contained within the planning application and had concerns regards the safety of vehicles accessing/egressing onto the C35 road. Members also felt that the development would not be in keeping with the visual appearance of the surrounding conservation area and was of inappropriate height in comparison with the immediate area.

RESOLVED that Sedgefield Borough Council be notified that this Council objects to the proposed development on the grounds outlined above.

(iii) Proposed Development of Caravan Club, Middridge Meadows

Councillor Mellors advised of matters following the erection of a notice advising that a 5 place Caravan Club was to be developed in the field at Middridge Meadows. Discussions had subsequently taken place with Sedgefield Borough Council who had advised that no formal planning approval was required for such a development provided it was approved by the Caravan Club and that adjacent neighbours had been given the opportunity to comment. It was also believed that certain facilities had to be provided, including the provision of clean water and facilities for the disposal of chemical toilets. Members queried the full extent to which facilities were required; and wished to ensure that the disposal of rubbish was also a condition and that all other factors were maintained should the site be developed. It was proposed that members advise neighbouring residents of their rights to comment on the proposal; and that the Clerk seek to obtain from the Caravan Club a full list of conditions/criteria that must be met prior to the site being approved by them as a Caravan site.

RESOLVED that members advise neighbouring residents of their rights to comment on the proposal; and that the Clerk seek to obtain from the Caravan Club a full list of conditions/criteria that must be met prior to the site being approved by them as a Caravan site.

26/08 REQUESTS FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Consideration was given to a request received for financial assistance from Mencap.

RESOLVED that the application be noted.

(The Parish Clerk then left the meeting during consideration of the following item of business)

27/08 CLERK'S SALARY-2008/2009

Consideration was given to the salary of the Parish Clerk for the 2008/2009 financial year.

RESOLVED that the Parish Clerk's salary be increased by £50 for the 2008/2009 financial year to £1,100.

28/08 ADDITIONAL ITEMS

(i) Parish Elections in 2009?

Members were invited to comment as part of consultation undertaken by the Department for Communities & Local Government on the effects of the Structural Change Order for Durham County which sought to put future parish elections on the same cycle as the elections to the new unitary authority; and would therefore seek to defer the next parish elections from 2011 to 2013, resulting in a six year term since the elections held in 2007.

The consultation sought views/support for the proposal to hold parish elections in 2009 to avoid the scenario outlined above.

RESOLVED that Members support for the proposal to hold the next parish elections in 2013, be noted.

(ii) Middridge Parish/Police Partnership

Proposals for local police representatives to host regular surgeries prior to each meeting of the Parish Council were noted as a positive means of contributing to community safety. It was suggested that the Chairman co-ordinate arrangements for such surgeries to be held from 6.00pm in the Village Hall immediately prior to each Parish Council meeting.

(iii) Manure Heaps, C34 Road to Old Eldon from Four Lane Ends

Councillor Mrs Clarke advised of her discussions with both Sedgefield Borough Council and the Environment Agency (EA) following the notification of public concern to the smell emanating from manure heaps at the above location.

EA officials had since inspected the site and had found there to be no odour nuisance as governed by Waste Management Licensing regulations. They did however speak to the operator responsible for the manure heaps who inspected the sites twice per week; and advised him to cover the heaps with straw or some other cover.

Members expressed concern that the sites, which were likely to be permanent, were in the wrong position and were too close to the adjacent footpath. Concern was expressed that effluent running from the sites may then make the footpath unsafe. It was proposed that members undertake an inspection of the site and report back to the next meeting.

(iv) Parish Paths Scheme-Extension to Public Footpath No.2

Councillor Mrs Clarke advised that discussions were ongoing with the Parish Paths Officer at Durham County Council regarding securing more monies to facilitate works to maintain Footpath No.2 leading to 6 Houses. Shildon Town Council had also now agreed to participate in the Parish Paths Scheme.

(v) Durham County Council School Admissions Policy

Members expressed concern and confusion regarding the school admissions policy applied by Durham County Council (DCC) following the recent refusal of two children from Middridge to gain admission to nearby Byerley Park School. Attempts had been made to clarify the matter at both School Governing Body level and via discussions with DCC. A response from the latter was still awaited.

It was proposed that in an attempt to clarify understanding of the admissions policy being applied by DCC, the Clerk write to the Director of Education at DCC to request that an officer from their LEA Appeals Team (or other appropriate officer) attend a future meeting with members of the Parish Council to discuss the situation.

RESOLVED that the Clerk write to the Director of Education at DCC to request that an officer from their LEA Appeals Team (or other appropriate officer) attend a future meeting with members of the Parish Council to discuss the admissions policy being applied by DCC in the light of the two recent decisions to refuse admission to Byerley Park School from children living in Middridge.

29/08

NEXT MEETING

Monday, 1st September 2008 at 6.45pm