

Middridge Parish Council

Minutes of Council Meeting

**Village Hall,
Middridge**

**Monday
5th September 2005**

Time:6.45pm

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

Official: N.Hart (Clerk);

25/05 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 4th July 2005 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

26/05 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

Accounts for the Year Ended 31st March 2005 (Min 18/05 refers)

It was noted that Mr Colin Gray had agreed to carry out an internal audit of the Parish Accounts prior to their submission to external audit by the 22nd October 2005. It was requested that the Council's thanks be forwarded to Mr Gray.

Conservation Area Status (Minute 18/05 refers)

A response to the information requested regarding the advantages/disadvantages of Conservation Area status was still awaited from Sedgefield Borough Council. It was suggested that this information be requested and, upon receipt, it be considered with a view to the Council's Conservation Officer being invited to a future meeting of the Parish to discuss some of the issues arising.

Millenium Oak (Minute 20/05 refers)

The Chairman reported that he had visited the suggested site for the location of the Millenium Oak and had found it to be unsuitable due to rock infill. It was suggested that its siting a couple of metres away from the original site would be sufficient; and would still allow for suitable overhead clearance. Planting could therefore go ahead within a month or so.

Refuse Collection Arrangements (Minute 23/05 refers)

It was noted that refuse collection arrangements were now being carried out on a Tuesday. Information was however requested on the current timetable for recycling collections.

RESOLVED that the Clerk request the above information.

27/05 ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT

Members considered a schedule of Accounts for Payment.

RESOLVED that the following accounts be approved for payment:-

C.E.Walker	Grasscutting-June	£230.30
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J.W.S Power Wash	Bus Shelter Cleaning	£27.00
Cllr Clarke	Reimbursement of Golden Wedding Bouquet	£10.00
N.Hart	Salary	£141.67
N.Hart	Postage	£1.20

28/05 DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL-PROPOSED SALE OF ALLOTMENTS, MIDDRIDGE

The circumstances which had led to the Parish Council discovering of the County Council's intentions to sell the 3 acres of allotment land adjacent to Walker Lane were noted.

It was believed that the land was to be sold at public auction, along with an adjacent 4 acres of land behind the allotment, by the end of September 2005. Councillor Mellors had therefore requested the appropriate purchase papers from the estate agents (Smiths Gore) appointed by the County Council to administer the sale; in order that this Parish could protect the allotment holders interests if necessary. Documentation was however still awaited from DCC regarding the status of the land.

Members expressed concern that DCC had the appropriate authority to dispose of the land in the manner they proposed, which had excluded any period of consultation with the allotment holders themselves. Advice received from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) regarding the disposal of statutory and non-statutory allotment land was submitted. It was suggested that the Clerk write immediately to DCC urging that they suspend their proposed course of action on the grounds that had not carried out the necessary action regarding the disposal of allotment land. In addition, the ODPM be advised of DCC's intended course of action, and be asked to intervene as appropriate, and the local M.P., county Councillor and Borough Councillor be advised of this Parish's concerns. Information was

also suggested to be sought from both the local Association of Parish and Town Councils and from the National Association of Allotment Holders, including clarification of the legal position in such action.

RESOLVED that:-

1. This Council's grave concerns regarding both the lack of consultation and intended disposal of allotment land be noted.
2. The Clerk be requested to write to the organisations/persons listed above regarding the further information required and report back to members with a view to special informal meetings of members being held in order that appropriate action may be taken prior to the end of September deadline.

29/05

GROUNDS MAINTENANCE AND GENERAL REPAIRS

Consideration was given to the following Grounds Maintenance issues:-

-(a) Additional Works to Public Footpaths

An estimate had been received from the existing contractor responsible for maintenance of the above footpaths which identified additional works to remove 'overhanging' tree limbs and to provide a wicket gate and ironwork on the footpath over Eldon Road. It was suggested that Durham County Council be contacted with a view to the works being funded either by themselves as part of the Parish Paths Scheme, or they contact the responsible landowners requesting that they carry out the necessary reinstatement works.

Reference was also made to Parish Path No 3 (Cobblers Hall) which had been 'ploughed up' recently and was unfit for public use. It was suggested that DCC be advised and asked to ensure that the path was reinstated for public use.

-(b) Tree Maintenance

The Clerk advised that Sedgefield Borough Council (SBC) had advised that they were unable to resume responsibility for tree maintenance within the Parish, following Great Aycliffe Town Council's recent instruction that they were now no longer able to carry out such works.

SBC had however provided the Parish with a list of private contactors they themselves recommended for use. It was therefore requested that the Clerk invite quotations from Hamsterley Tree Surgeons, Tommy Walton (existing contractor

for footpaths) and Houghall College for tree maintenance works specified by the existing contract specification; and that each be asked to inspect the condition of the trees on the Village Green and a member of the Parish be invited to be in attendance. Particular reference was made to the condition of the trees adjacent Nos 3,5 & 7 Northside; as well as to those at Mrs Dent's property at Southside and fallen willow branches behind Southside and Walker Lane.

-(c) 'Finger' Signage-Restoration

Durham County Council had previously indicated that they had insufficient funds to carry out restoration works to the ironwork 'finger' signage within the Parish. It was believed that the Office for the Deputy Prime Minister had recently made funding available for such works; and it was therefore requested that DCC be contacted with a view to acknowledging the availability of grant aid funding .

30/05 GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE

Consideration was given to the following correspondence received:-

- SBC Local Development Framework-Key Issues Report
- DCC Minerals and Waste Development Framework
- Planning Application-Insertion of Dormer Window-26 Northside
- SBC Local Improvement Programme
- SBC Fixed Play Equipment Proposals
- DCC Building Schools for the Future
- DCC Environmental Operation Plan 2005/6
- SBC Clean Up the World Campaign
- DCC A689/C35 Rushyford 'Middridge' Road Signing

RESOLVED that the content of the above correspondence be noted, and details of the existing play equipment be forwarded to SBC; and Great Aycliffe Town Council be thanked for their maintenance of the equipment following the last insurance inspection.

31/05 ADDITIONAL ITEMS

Members referred to the forthcoming Remembrance Sunday and suggested that this Parish again contribute two wreaths (on behalf of both the Village and the Parish) at a cost of £25 and that Cllr Mrs Clarke be authorised to arrange and be reimbursed at the Parish's next meeting.

The necessary 'spot weeding' works to the Millennium Hedge were referred to and it was suggested that members invite other residents within the Borough to accompany them on a 'Clean Up the Parish'

morning on the 17th September 2005 to coincide with the Clean Up the World Campaign.

Councillor J.Morland announced that it was his family's intention to leave Middridge some time next year; and that regrettably therefore he would have to tender his resignation from the Parish Council in due course.

32/05 NEXT MEETING

Monday 7th November 2005 at 6.45pm.