

APPROVED

Middridge Parish Council

Minutes of Council Meeting

Village Hall,
Middridge

Monday
15th May, 2017

Time: 7.00 pm

Present: Cllrs H Howe, W Mellors, P Makinson, H Alexander and S Smith.
The retiring Chair of the Council, Mrs A Clarke, chaired the Meeting until Agenda Item 5.

In attendance: Cllrs S Durham, P Howell & J Clare (DCC)
Mr Ian Robertson (part of the time)

Official: A D Jordan (Clerk)

40/17 NOTICE OF MEETING

The Notice convening the Meeting was taken as read.

41/17 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None

42/17 DECLARATIONS

Prior to the Meeting, all five Parish Councillors signed an individual Declaration of Acceptance of Office in the presence of the Clerk. The Clerk pointed out that Parish Councillors must also complete a Register of Interests within thirty days.

Cllrs W Mellors and P Makinson declared an Interest in Agenda Item 19 as they are Members of the Middridge Village Association Management Committee. The Clerk pointed out that in the absence of certain Councillor(s) from future Parish Council Meetings, the Parish Council might be unable to pass any Resolutions regarding the Middridge Village Association, as the Council would be inquorate, but that it was possible for the Parish Council to grant a Dispensation to avoid this problem.

RESOLVED that Cllrs W Mellors and P Makinson be granted a Dispensation to vote on matters related to the Middridge Village Association.

43/17 ELECTION OF CHAIR OF THE COUNCIL 2017/18

Cllr H Howe was proposed by the Chair, and seconded by Cllr W Mellors.

RESOLVED that Cllr H Howe be elected Chair of the Council for the 2017/2018 Municipal Year.

44/17 DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE OF CHAIR

Cllr H Howe signed a Declaration of Acceptance of the Office of Chair in the presence of the Clerk, and then took the Chair for the remainder of the Meeting.

45/17 THANKS TO OUTGOING CHAIR

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Mrs A Clarke needed to leave the Meeting, and it was agreed that this Agenda Item should be discussed next.

The new Chair thanked Mr J and Mrs A Clarke for their 34 years of service to the Community as Councillors and Chairs of the Parish Council, and for all that they had done to help make the Parish Council work so well. He stated that it was intended to hold a Chair's Dinner, to which the Clarkes would be invited, to commemorate this (see below). Mrs A Clarke then left the Meeting.

46/17 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR OF THE COUNCIL 2017/2018

Cllr W Mellors was proposed by the Chair, seconded by Cllr P Makinson.

RESOLVED that W Mellors be elected Vice Chair of the Council for the 2017/2018 Municipal Year.

47/17 DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE OF VICE CHAIR

Cllr W Mellors signed a Declaration of Acceptance of the Office of Vice-Chair in the presence of the Clerk.

48/17 MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

None

49/17 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of 6th March 2017 be accepted, and signed by the Chair as a true record.

50/17 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

None.

51/17 "ELDON WHINS" DEVELOPMENTS & THE COUNTY PLAN

Despite the Parish Council's Objections, the Homes & Communities Agency (HCA) Outline Planning Application for 240 Houses on the "Eldon Whins" Site which HCA own has been approved. The Site will now be sold to a Developer, who will have to submit a Full Planning Application for the first Phase of development, which must include the new Roundabout at the junction of Midridge Road and Greenfield Way.

Ian Robertson was unhappy about the Design and Density of Housing proposed for the "Eldon Whins" Site. Cllr J Clare assured him that there would be an opportunity to comment on this when a Full Planning Application for the first Phase of Development was submitted. He also advised that if the Parish Council wish to speak at the Planning Committee Meeting which will hear the Full Planning Application when it is eventually submitted, they should write to the Planning Committee requesting this now. Ian Robertson then left the Meeting.

Persimmon Homes have submitted a Full Planning Application for 69 Houses on Land immediately to the west of the HCA "Eldon Whins" Site.

In the Annual Parish Council Meeting which proceeded this Parish Council Meeting, at which the full Parish Council were present, Cllr J Clare stated that the Land on which Persimmon propose to build is included in the saved Sedgfield Borough Plan (SBP) Policy H2 "Eldon Whins" Site, as well as the HCA owned Land. This means

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that the saved SBP Policy E4 on “Green Wedges” does not apply to the Land on which Persimmon propose to build Houses, and thus in his opinion the DCC Planning Committee will have little choice but to grant this Planning Application. However, he pointed out that the proposed Access Road to the Persimmon Site was on Land designated as “Green Wedge”, and this could be objected to.

He now suggested that the Parish Council invite the DCC Case Officer for the Persimmon Planning Application, Laura Eden, to attend a Meeting with them to discuss all aspects of this Planning Application, and the Parish Council’s proposed Objections. He also advised that in writing to request this Meeting, the Parish Council should also ask for a dispensation to submit their Objections after the normal deadline.

RESOLVED that the Parish Council will object to the Persimmon Planning Application, and that a Meeting with Laura Eden be organised as soon as possible.

Action: Clerk

The need to inform Residents of the Persimmon Planning Application, so that as many of them as possible can make any Comments or Objections, was discussed. Either an Edition of the “Middridge Mercury” or a special Flyer will be required.

RESOLVED that Residents be informed by the most appropriate method as soon as possible.

Action: Cllr W Mellors & Clerk

The Clerk mentioned that Carol Stenger delivers the “Shildon Crier” every week, and has kindly offered to assist with the delivery of any Parish Council Leaflets.

52/17

GROUND MAINTENANCE & GENERAL REPAIRS

(i) Parish Paths Maintenance

This year's Parish Paths Maintenance Budget has yet to be approved.

RESOLVED that the Parish Paths Partnership should be again contacted to establish what is happening.

Action: Clerk

Cllr S Smith mentioned that many of the Village Pavements were being encroached on by grass, and needed to be cleared. This is the responsibility of the DCC Highways Department, but if they are not interested, Cllr W Mellors suggested that it might be possible for the Parish Council to organise for Community Offenders to undertake this work.

RESOLVED that the DCC Highways Department should be contacted to establish what can be done.

Action: Clerk

(ii) DCC proposed Street Light Removal

Yvonne Edwards of DCC has not responded to an Email from the Clerk requesting that the Parish Council are assured that nothing is to be done about removing any Street Lights until the matter of the Cost of a possible Service Level Agreement to retain them is resolved.

RESOLVED that Yvonne Edwards of DCC should be contacted by Letter to try and clarify the situation, and obtain the desired assurance

Action: Clerk

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Cllr S Smith mentioned that she has recently become aware of a Low Energy Efficiency Scheme which may affect the proposed Walkers Lane Street Light Removal, and will pass this information to the Clerk.

Action: Cllr S Smith & Clerk

(iii) Dog Litter Bins

The Dog Litter Bin at the end of Walkers Lane was found to be full; this was reported, and the Bin was quickly emptied. Allan Wilson has kindly volunteered to monitor the situation in future.

(iv) Play Area Ash Tree

The large Ash Tree in the Play Area is not coming into leaf like other Ash Trees, which is causing concern. This Tree is due to be inspected by the DCC Foreman responsible for removing Tree branches from another Tree in the Village, but we have no idea when this might occur. Cllr J Clare kindly agreed to speak to Colin Curry about this.

53/17 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

None

54/17 CHILDREN'S' PLAY AREA

The Clerk's Monthly Inspection Report was approved.

Cleaning the Moss from the Senior Swings Base is still outstanding. The Chair suggested that Ian Hayman may be able to help; this is to be investigated.

Action: Cllr H Howe

55/17 ROAD-TRAFFIC

The Racist Graffiti have been removed from the Gas Station Door, but the two disfigured 30 mph Speed Limit Signs have yet to be replaced. In the meantime, another 30 mph Speed Limit Sign in Walkers Lane has been damaged; this has been reported.

The damaged Road Sign for No's 17-20 Middridge Farms has been replaced.

56/17 "THE PADDOCK"

It has been confirmed that the Funding for the proposed Project to transform "The Paddock" into a Wildflower Grassland is from a Section 106 Agreement attached to the approved HCA "Eldon Whins" Planning Application.

57/17 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

For the benefit of the two new Parish and County Councillors, the Chair briefly outlined the history of the Middridge Neighbourhood Plan. Shaun Hanson has produced a modified version of the proposed Questionnaire for a new Community Engagement Exercise; this has still to be approved. The question as to whether to use "Survey Monkey" is also outstanding.

Cllr J Clare stressed that in the light of the various "Eldon Whins" developments, he considered it essential that the Middridge Neighbourhood Plan be progressed as fast as possible.

RESOLVED that a Meeting of the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group be organised as soon as possible to consider these matters.

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Action: Cllr W Mellors

58/17

ACCOUNTS

The Parish Council's 2016/17 Accounts have been approved by our Internal Auditor (Colin Gray), without alteration, and he has signed the Internal Audit Report Section of the 2016/17 Annual Return Form.

RESOLVED that the Parish Council formally adopts the Parish Council's 2016/17 Accounts as approved by the Internal Auditor, and that the Chair should sign the Annual Governance and Accounting Statements Sections of the 2016/17 Annual Return Form. An Honorarium of £65 should be paid to Colin Gray for his services.

Action: Cllr H Howe & Clerk

The Council's Insurance Cover renews this month. In the course of looking at alternative Insurance Providers it has become apparent that none of the Parish Council's Assets (Play Area Equipment, Bus Stops etc.) are insured.

RESOLVED that the Council's Insurance is renewed based on the Zurich Mutual Quotation. The additional Insurance Costs to cover the Parish Council's Assets will be established, to allow the Council to decide what action to take.

Action: Clerk

The Clerk was asked to leave the Meeting whilst the question of the Clerk's Salary was discussed.

RESOLVED that the Clerk's Salary be increased to £1550 per annum.

Action: Clerk

An Email from the Middridge Village Association (MVA) requesting permission to use the Village Green for the Annual Village Fête, and raising the question of the Parish Council's usual Donation of a Fête Raffle Prize, has been received.

RESOLVED that the MVA have permission to use the Village Green for the Annual Village Fête, and that a Raffle Prize of £40 be provided.

Action: Clerk

Councillors considered a Schedule of Accounts for Payment.

RESOLVED that the following Accounts be approved for payment:-

Payee	Purpose	Sum
Planning Advice Plus *	Final NP Training Payment	£2553.10
Middridge Village Association *	Hall Hire for NP Training	£120.00
Mrs A Clarke	Plants for Village Green Tubs	£80.00
Middridge Village Association	Fête Raffle Prize	£40.00
Colin Gray	Internal Auditor's Honorarium	£65.00
CDALC	Annual Subscription	£60.67
Zurich Municipal	Insurance	£628.09
	TOTAL	£3546.19

* With the agreement of Councillors, these Cheques had already been issued, and hence the Approval given was retrospective. This Expenditure forms part of the 2016/17 Accounts.

59/17

GAMP & CDALC

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The planned GAMP activities to invite suggestions from Organisations for new Projects in the agreed Themes have been delayed due to “Purdah” for the Council and General Elections.

The Village Defibrillator should be installed before the end of the month. Information regarding Publicity Events and Training Sessions is to be included in the planned Edition of the “Middridge Mercury”.

Action: Cllr W Mellors & Clerk

The question of the Parish Council’s representation at future Meetings of the County Durham Association of Local Councils (CDALC) following Mrs A Clarke’s resignation was discussed.

RESOLVED that Cllr W Mellors and the Clerk will represent the Parish Council at CDALC Meetings.

60/17 GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE

A Letter was received from the Speaker of the House of Commons regarding the annual UK Parliament Week Event. The Parish Council noted this Event, but no action is planned.

A Letter was received from Citizens Advice County Durham requesting a Donation.

RESOLVED that a Donation of £50 be made to Citizens Advice County Durham.

Action: Clerk

61/17 OTHER MATTERS

(i) Council’s Statutory Policies

The Clerk described the Statutory Policies which the Parish Council are required to have, details of which had been circulated to Parish Councillors before the Meeting. Financial Regulations and the Risk Assessment Register must be re-adopted annually as part of the Annual Return Audit Process, whilst it is considered good practice for the other Policies to be re-adopted on the formation of a new Council.

RESOLVED that all the Parish Council’s Statutory Policies be re-adopted.

Action: Clerk

(ii) Big Spring Clean

This was as successful as ever.

(iii) Transparency Fund Drop-in Session

The Clerk will attend the Transparency Fund Drop-in Session at County Hall.

(iv) Unmetered Electricity Supply

The question of the Bill of £0.77 for the Unmetered Electricity Supply for the Christmas Tree Lights, and the request that the Parish Council enter into a formal agreement with the Supplier (Northern Powergrid), was discussed. Cllr W Mellors pointed out that the Parish Council’s Address in Schedule 5 was incorrect; the Clerk stated that he had already raised this with Northern Powergrid.

RESOLVED that the outstanding Bill be paid, and the Clerk sign the proposed formal Agreement on the Parish Council’s behalf, with the correct Address.

Action: Clerk

(v) Chair’s Dinner

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The Chair stated that it was planned to hold the annual Chair's Dinner at the Talbot, Bishopton, to which Mr J and Mrs A Clarke would be invited, so that they could be presented with a Memorial Gift in recognition of their many years of Public Service. Cllr J Clare was asked to make the Presentation on the Parish Council's behalf, and agreed. It was also agreed that our former DCC Councillors, M Dixon and J Gray should be invited to attend, and that the necessary arrangements should be made.

Action: Clerk

62/17

ADDITIONAL ITEMS

(i) Parking Bays

The Clerk stated that with the previous Chair's agreement he had asked the DCC Highways Department whether they could paint White Lines in the North Side Parking Bays, with a view to increasing the number of vehicles which could be parked. However, DCC had stated that this was not their Policy, and Cllrs W Mellors and P Makinson indicated that they would not have favoured this proposal.

(ii) Forthcoming Talk

Cllr J Clare stated that the Bishop Auckland Civic Society were giving a Talk on Riseburn & Eden Pit on 23rd May at 7.30pm in the Bishop Auckland Town Hall.

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NEXT MEETING

Monday, 3rd July 2017, at 6.45pm.

Chair _____