

Middridge Parish Council

Minutes of Annual Council Meeting

**Village Hall,
Middridge**

**Monday
12th May 2008**

Time:6.50pm

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

Official: N.Hart (Clerk);

In Attendance: C.Walton, D.Walker (Sedgefield Borough Council
Planning Dept), along with 9 residents from the Parish.

1/08 NOTICE OF MEETING

The notice convening the meeting was taken as read.

2/08 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL

RESOLVED that Councillor W.Mellors be appointed Chairman of the Council for the 2008/2009 Municipal Year.

3/08 DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

RESOLVED that the Declaration of Acceptance of Office be received.

4/08 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL

RESOLVED that Councillor Makinson be appointed Vice Chairman of the Council for the 2008/2009 Municipal Year.

5/08 DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

RESOLVED that the Declaration of Acceptance of Office be received.

NB In view of the invited guests and public interest surrounding the proposed planning applications received, it was agreed that this item (item 12) be considered at this point.

6/08 PLANNING APPLICATIONS:-

-Development at Spout Lane-Progress

Consideration was given to an update from the Planning Officers on progress regards the development at Spout Lane; which had

previously been granted outline approval for a scheme comprising 270 houses/Community Park; Museum/landscape works; and the development of a Shildon Gateway. Whilst work on the latter two elements had commenced, discussion on the housing development and the detailed design scheme was still at an early stage with consideration being given as to how the proposals compared to Government standards.

With regard to the Community Park, this was to be a flagship project of North East Community Forest, who had a good track record in other areas of the region and would be responsible for the management of the woodland and ownership of the land. It was hoped that these arrangements would include the appointment of a ranger/warden on site. The Park itself would form a barrier to any further housing development, unless there was any further variation to the Local Development Framework. Essential work had been carried out to the hedgerow in order to protect the wildlife and maintain sightlines for traffic.

-Proposed Development at Eldon Whinns

The Planning Officers advised on the content of the planning application received from Yuill Homes for the development of 400 houses and Roundabout at Eldon Whinns.

The applicants, in support of the application, had stated that the development would be phased with 50 units per year; would be of the latest energy efficiency high standards; would provide mixed tenure of house type, with some 3 storey units; would contain active frontage and green boulevard space, and would include the necessary urban drainage systems. There would be no retail units provided within the development.

A brief planning history of the site was provided, and it was noted that although previously earmarked for housing development in the Local Plan, the site had since been excluded from the new Plan last year; although the developer maintained that its inclusion was still relevant.

The Chairman outlined a summary of the Parish Council's concerns as follows; and asked that these objections be noted by the Borough Council as this Council's response to their consultation on the application (a draft copy of which was circulated):-

-The public consultation did not include the Parish in which the development is proposed and was held at such a distance away from the site as to be almost a sham consultation;

-The planning policy and supporting statement is shown to be at least misleading, as the score for the site is significantly inflated whilst downgrading scores of other sites;

-The flood risk assessment makes no mention of existing flooding problems caused by run off from the site and does not deal with problems downstream in Woodham Burn which will be caused by any development;

-The travel plan discusses accessibility without offering a solution to the problem of crossing the busy road between the site and the town, the effect of which will prevent disabled users from getting to the accessibility of a nearby non-existent school, supporting its case by marking it on a map!

Residents present were invited to submit their own comments on the application direct to the Planning Case Officer. The deadline for comments was the 20th June 2008.

RESOLVED that this Parish Council's objections to the proposed housing development and associated roundabout development at Eldon Whinns be noted; and a full written copy of the reasons for objection be forward to the Borough Council prior to the 20th June 2008.

6/08

MINUTES

- i) The Minutes of the meeting held on 5th March 2007 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

8/07

MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

- i) **Parish Paths-Map/Notice Board (Minute 57/06 refers)**

Consideration was given as to whether there would any benefit gained in pursuing with DCC a grant towards producing promotional literature for the Parish's public footpaths. It was suggested that a more permanent, and more cost effective promotion of the footpaths would be to include a map of the footpaths on the Middridge Residents Association website; thereby allowing any persons interested in following the footpaths to print their own map.

It was suggested that DCC be contacted with the request that their permission be sought to include reference to the footpaths within the Residents Association website.

- ii) **Condition of Bus Shelters (Minute 57/06 refers)**

Details of the report received from Brewis Glazing regarding the estimated cost of carrying out interim repairs and future maintenance for the two bus shelters in the Parish were received. This followed a previous similar report from the Parish's existing contractor (JWS) some twelve months or more previously.

In considering the extent of what repairs were required to be undertaken to the shelters it was suggested that JWS be invited to once again inspect the shelters to provide up to date costings, including in particular the replacement of the fascia on the stone shelter. At the same time, contact be made with Chilton Parish Council and DCC regards recent works they had undertaken to replace their bus shelters; and DCC be again contacted regarding what support they would offer to the Parish should it wish to replace its bus shelters, rather than carry out short term repairs.

9/07 ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT

Members considered a schedule of Accounts for Payment.

RESOLVED that the following accounts be approved for payment:-

Durham Assoc of Local Councils	Subscription-LGC	£45.03
Zurich Insurance	Local Council Policy	£522.57
Zurich Insurance	Engineering Inspection	£293.75
N.Hart	Salary	£166.67
N.Hart	Postage	£4.20

10/07 ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2007

Consideration was given to the interim accounts for the period ended 31st March 2007. It was proposed that the accounts be subject to internal audit by the auditor Mr C.Gray; and be then presented to the next meeting of the Parish Council for approval, along with details of the Council's Annual Return to be submitted to the external auditor by the 13th July 2007.

RESOLVED that the accounts be subject to internal audit by the auditor Mr C.Gray prior to being presented to the next meeting of the Parish Council for approval, along with details of the Council's Annual Return to be submitted to the external auditor by the 13th July 2007.

11/07

GROUNDNS MAINTENANCE & GENERAL REPAIRS

i) Parish Paths Partnership 2007/2008

It was noted that the Parish Council's application to participate in the Parish Paths Scheme for 2007/8 had been approved by DCC and the Parish Council's preferred contractor had been advised and instructed to commence the works.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

ii) Bus Shelters

It was noted that the introduction of 'No Smoking' regulations from 1st July 2007 could have implications regards the displaying of appropriate notices in the parish's bus shelters. It was requested that the Clerk make appropriate enquiries with smokefree England regarding the Parish's obligations in this regard/

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

iii) Bridge, Heighington Boundary/Footpaths Condition

Councillor Mrs Clarke advised that she had reported the condition of the above bridge to the relevant authorities; as it was in a poor condition. Similarly, some footpaths within the Darlington boundary; and those towards Eldon, had also been identified as being in a poor condition/badly marked, and DCC had been informed and a reply was awaited.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

12/07

ADOPTION OF THE REVISED MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS

Consideration was given to the adoption of the new Revised Model Code of Conduct for Members as produced by the Government Department for Communities and Local Government.

The main changes to the Code included:-

- clarification to make the language gender neutral;
- amendments to prejudicial interests so that a member only has such an interest where his interest is greater than the majority of the people in the ward affected; rather merely greater than the interest of other people in the Council's area;

- allowing members with a prejudicial interest to speak at Council meetings providing this is solely to allow them to make representations, answer questions or give evidence; but not to vote;
- applying the Code to Members conduct in their private capacity where such conduct has resulted in a criminal conviction.

RESOLVED that the Parish Council adopts the Revised Code of Conduct un-amended and its 10 General Principles of conduct.

13/07

NOTIFICATION OF FINANCIAL AND OTHER INTERESTS/RECEIPT OF GIFTS OR HOSPITALITY

Members were invited to complete the necessary documentation regarding their notification of Financial and other Interests; along with any notification of any gifts or hospitality received.

RESOLVED that the Declarations be received and be forwarded to the Borough Council's Monitoring Officer.

14/07

CHILDREN'S PLAY AREA

Councillor Mrs Clarke reported that the Parish Council had been successful in its application for Lottery Funding to the sum of £4,618 as a contribution towards the overall £30k cost of redeveloping the children's play area in association with the Borough Council. Once credited to the Parish's Community Account, it was suggested the funds be transferred to the higher interest rate Base Rate Tracker Account, while confirmation of a contract start date was awaited from the Borough Council.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

15/07

GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE

(i) DCC Unitary Local Government Stakeholder Consultation

Views on the above consultation were required by the 22nd June 2007. Members noted that they considered the proposed DCC new Unitary Council for Durham as being too remote and unlikely to encourage neighbourhood engagement.

(ii) SBC Proposals for Future Unitary Structures

Members were invited to respond to questions posed by Sedgfield Borough Council (SBC) on the decision of the Government to consult on only one option for a single Unitary Council for Durham, as proposed by DCC. Members views on

the issues, including the concerns expressed regarding the possible remoteness of a larger Unitary Authority, were noted and would be forwarded to SBC.

16/07 REQUEST FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

consideration was given to a request from the Village Residents Association for a donation towards the cost of a raffle prize for the Village Summer Fete; together with a request to use the Village Green on the day of the Fete.

RESOLVED that permission be granted for the use of the Village Green on the day of the Fete; and a donation of £30 be provided towards the cost of a raffle prize.

17/07 CAR PARKING PROBLEMS, MDDRIDGE

No further problems had been reported regarding problems experienced in the recent past as regards inappropriate car parking.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

18/07 PARISH CLERK SALARY 2007/8

Consideration was given to a review of the Parish Clerk's salary.

RESOLVED that the Parish Clerk's salary be increased by £50 to £1,050 per annum.

19/07 ADDITIONAL ITEMS

(i) Planning Applications:-

Erection of Buildings, inc Hay Store & Stables, Rear of 11-16 Middridge Farms

It was noted that members had determined that they had no objections to the proposed development on the condition that traffic implications, including the speed limit concerns expressed many times by the Parish Council as regards the C35 stretch of road, be considered by the Borough Council. Such concerns had similarly been made by DCC regarding vehicles entrance/egress on to the C35 road; and it was suggested that their very own concerns reflected those of this Parish made to them in the past regarding vehicles using excessive speed on this section of road; and that they should be advised of this fact.

Retrospective Planning Application for Removal of Ash
Deposits-Simpasture Junction, Newton Aycliffe

No comments on application.

Development at Spout Lane

Consideration was given as to when development on the above site was due to commence; developers having now erected signs to advertise the forthcoming development and the local press having reported that work was to commence following the developers acquisition of land from Theakston Estates. It was also reported that 9 hectares of land had been released to North East Community Projects for the creation of community land. Members expressed concern as to the extent of this particular proposal and questioned how management and maintenance of the public park land would be carried out.

The Clerk reported that SBC had advised that the application site had only presently been approved for outline development; and that no formal application for the detail of the proposed development had yet been received. Some survey work and peripheral tree planting had however been carried out, making an imminent application likely. SBC's Chief Planning Officer had offered to meet with the Parish Council once such an application had been received.

RESOLVED that the offer from SBC's Chief Planning Officer to meet with the Parish Council be taken up; and he be invited to attend the next meeting or a future meeting once an application has been received, in order that questions regarding the detail of the application can be discussed, including the proposed creation of community land and the future management and maintenance implications of this proposal.

(ii) Finger Signage- Eldon Crossroads

It was noted that the Finger Signage had recently been re-painted, although not repaired. This followed previous futile enquiries made by this Council to identify any grant funding to carry out repairs to such signage. It was suggested that DCC be asked whether they had been involved in carrying out this maintenance.

20/07

NEXT MEETING

Monday, 25th June 2007 at 6.45pm

