

Middridge Parish Council

Minutes of Council Meeting

**Village Hall
Middridge**

**Monday
10th January 2005**

Time: 6.45 p.m.

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

Official: N.Hart (Clerk);

49/04 NOTICE OF MEETING

The notice convening the meeting was taken as read.

50/04 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Morland.

51/04 MINUTES

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 1st November 2004 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman subject to the following correction:-

Min 46/04 General Correspondence

Resolution 3 Delete 'Howe' and insert 'Clarke'.

52/04 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

Development Proposals-Land to the East of Spout Lane, Shildon

No further information had been received regarding the above development.

It was noted however that the Council had been consulted on a planning application to provide associated car parking for the Railway Museum and, in accordance with the Council's earlier expressed views regarding the Museum development as a whole, no objections had been submitted.

RESOLVED That the advice be noted.

Parish Paths (Minute 43/04 refers)

Members were advised that the County Council's Parish Paths Officer had invited members of the Council to attend a meeting with both herself and the appointed contractor to the Parish Paths works in order that consideration could be given to the quality and extent of work undertaken to the Parish Paths. To date, no invoice for any works carried out had been received, and this was seen as an opportunity to assess the works prior to any invoice for payment being submitted.

RESOLVED that the Clerk, on behalf of Members of the Council, accept the invitation to meet with the County Council's Parish Paths Officer and the Parish Paths contractor and arrange a suitable date in consultation with the Chairman; such meeting to take place in the Village so that members could visit the paths in question.

Bus Shelter/Litter bins (Minute No. 43/04 refers)

It was noted that since the last meeting Centurion (a sub group of the Wolverhampton & Dudley brewery) had taken over control of the public house, which would in future revert to being known as the Bay Horse once again. The new Manager of the tenancy was known to members and it was suggested that members approach her informally to remind her of the arrangement which required the Parish Council's permission for the public house to use picnic tables on the Village Green; and at the same time, the Council's wish for the public house to provide a litter bin on the Green be expressed. Such a bin could contain whatever sponsorship or advertising the brewery considered appropriate. In addition, the brewery be contacted to remind them of the above agreement and to request, once again, that they consider providing a waste bin on the Green to alleviate the problem of litter.

RESOLVED that:-

1. Members approach the Manager of the public house to seek her assistance in securing the brewery's agreement to them providing a waste bin on the Village Green.
2. The Clerk write to the brewery to remind them of the agreement regarding picnic tables on the Village Green, and to request them, once again, to give consideration to providing a waste bin on the Green to alleviate the problem of litter.

Gates/Walkers (Minute 43/04 refers)

It was noted that Durham County Council had advised that whilst agreement had been reached with the owners of adjacent properties in Walkers Lane regarding the opening and locking of an appropriate gate at the top of Walkers Lane (to stop the abandonment of unwanted vehicles and other problems of vandalism/damage), no agreement had been reached amongst the owners over who would pay for such a gate; estimated to be in the region of £300+. The County Council had no budget for this work as it was on un-adopted highway.

Members reported that since the initial problem had been identified some time ago, the problem seemed to have dissipated and therefore, in the absence of any available or identified funding for the works, the matter be no further pursued.

RESOLVED that no further action be taken regarding the erection of a gate at the top of Walkers Lane.

Traffic Survey (Minute 43/04 refers)

Members had not yet met to discuss DCC policy on speed limits so as to be able to present a new submission/case for a review of the current limits.

Reference was made to a previous decision by members in Jan-March 2004 which sought to challenge the County Council's policy on speed limits on the approach road to the village and, in the light of this, whether there was any further need to approach the Council further.

RESOLVED that the Clerk investigate the Parish Council's previous consideration of this matter in Jan-March 2004 and advise the Chairman accordingly in order that the need to present a further submission to the County Council can be confirmed.

Christmas 2004 (Minute 43/04 refers)

Reference was made to the excellent service and tree provided by Lyndhurst Nurseries as part of the Christmas celebrations; and by Durham County Council who erected and dismantled it. It was requested that, when submitting payment in respect of the invoice for the tree, members appreciation be expressed to Lyndhurst Nurseries for their excellent service.

It was however disappointing to note that the Christmas party/celebrations had been poorly attended this Year and that as a result a number of 'left over' selection boxes had been donated to the Village Fete.

It was hoped that consideration could be given to improving the celebrations for 2005.

RESOLVED that Lyndhurst Nurseries be thanked for their excellent service; and the matter of Christmas celebrations be considered afresh in 2005 with a view to making them more enjoyable for all.

Land on Village Green (Minute 43/04 refers)

The Chairman reported that a letter had been received from solicitors confirming that there would be no further action necessary regarding access to land on the Village Green.

Play Area off The Meadowings (Minute 46/04 refers)

The Clerk reported that Zurich Municipal Insurance had confirmed that they would be willing to carry out an inspection of the safety of the play equipment at the above play area, provided the Parish Council were able to arrange for a suitable engineer to carry out the dismantling of equipment and subsequent assembly.

Contact had therefore been made with Great Aycliffe Town Council's Parks Section and they had indicated that they would carry out such work on a mutually convenient date for all parties.

Councillors J.Clarke and Howe indicated that they would inspect the play area to identify whether they could carry out any of the other 'non-technical' works to improve the appearance of the play area.

RESOLVED that the Clerk contact Zurich Municipal and Great Aycliffe Town Council to establish a date when such works can be carried out and inform members accordingly in order that they too can make themselves available.

Millennium Hedge (Minute 47/04 refers)

It was requested that the Clerk investigate the arrangements for works to be carried out to the Millennium Hedge and advise at the next meeting.

Maintenance of Trees on Village Green (Minute 47/04 refers)

The Clerk reported that discussions had been held with the Arborist at Great Aycliffe Town Council (GATC) to identify when further maintenance works would be carried out to the trees on the Village Green, in accordance with the maintenance agreement between both parties. Unfortunately, not all of the intended works had yet been carried out, in part due to unavailability of qualified staff to

carry out the works. In addition, the Town Council required details mapping the location of the trees, which had previously been provided by the Parish to Sedgefield Borough Council, but appeared to have not been then passed on further to Great Aycliffe Town Council. It was requested that the Clerk attempt to locate a copy of the map in question and provide it to GATC in order that some maintenance works may now be carried out to the trees, particularly the Ash Tree on the Green which was obscuring the light for an adjacent property.

Reference was also made to this Council's liability should any damage be caused to property or person by falling trees or branches. It was suggested that the Clerk investigate this matter further with the appropriate officer at Sedgefield Borough Council.

RESOLVED that the Clerk seek to provide GATC with the appropriate map necessary to carry out maintenance to the trees; and investigate the extent of this Council's liability should any damage be caused to property or person by falling trees or branches.

Parish Council-External Audit 2003/2004 (Minute 45/04 refers)

Notification had been received from HLB AV Audit plc that they had now concluded the above audit, taking into consideration the comments expressed by this Council at its last meeting regarding the reasons for a reduction in receipts compared with the previous year; and the reasons for the current level of reserves held by the Parish, which was in excess of that recommended by the auditors.

Whilst the auditors had again made passing reference to the amount of reserve ideally being equivalent to twice the amount of the Parish Precept, they had expressed their satisfaction with the actual audit and had issued a Notice of Completion of Audit to be signed by the Chairman and Clerk, and published thereafter.

An invoice for the cost of carrying out the audit (£58.75) had also been submitted by HLB and it was suggested that this be considered at this meeting as an additional invoice for payment.

RESOLVED that the report on the completion of the external audit be noted, the appropriate Notice of Completion be signed and published and the invoice be considered for payment at this meeting as part of the agenda item 'Accounts for Payment'.

53/04

ACCOUNTS/DONATION FOR PAYMENT

Members considered a schedule of Accounts for Payment.

RESOLVED: That the following accounts be approved for payment

JWS Power Wash	Bus Shelters	£27.00
Lyndhurst Landscapes	Xmas Tree	£70.00
*Mrs A. Clarke	Selection Boxes	£70.00
M. Henderson	Salary	£566.67
N. Hart	Salary	£141.67
HLB AV Audit	External Audit	£58.75

*Min 43/04 refers and cheque issued on 6/12/04

54/04 GROUNDS MAINTENANCE AND GENERAL REPAIRS

Consideration was given to two quotations received in respect of the Parish Council's Grounds Maintenance Contract for 2005/2006.

Reference was also made to the following issues regarding general maintenance:-

It was noted that it had previously been the policy of the Council to reward members of the public in some small way for their assistance in maintaining the flower tubs situated on the Village Green. It was suggested that a small payment of £10 be made to each person maintaining the six tubs; which greatly assisted in enhancing the appearance of the Green.

Some damage had also been noticed to the North Side of the Green, believed to be caused by the encroachment of cars and lorries in particular in that area. It was suggested that members inspect the area in question and if necessary, raise the issue in the next edition of the Village Newsletter.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The contract in respect of Grounds Maintenance for 2005/2006 be awarded to CMW Ltd.
2. The Chairman be authorised to write and deliver a note of appreciation to the persons responsible for the upkeep of the six flower tubs on the Village Green; enclosing £10 each (£60 in total) as a gesture of the Parish Council's appreciation for their upkeep of the Village appearance.
3. Members take the opportunity to inspect the damage caused to the North Side Village Green by the encroachment of vehicles and, if necessary, raise the matter in the next edition of the Residents Newsletter.

55/04 PARISH PRECEPT 2005/2006

Members were invited to set the Parish Precept for 2005/2006.

The current precept was £3,300, however, spending for the year had exceeded this amount and had therefore utilised some of the Parish's available reserve, both this year and in the previous financial year. It was therefore proposed that the Parish Precept for 2005/2006 be increased to £3,500.

RESOLVED that the Parish Precept be set at £3,500 for 2005/2006.

56/04 GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE

The Council considered the following correspondence:-

1. Standards Board Guidance on Lobby Groups, Dual Hatted Members & Code of Conduct-Letter from Monitoring Officer.
2. Review of Register of Interests & Gifts and Hospitality-Letter from Monitoring Officer
3. Members Allowances: Report of Independent Remuneration Panel

RESOLVED that:

1. The correspondence received be noted.
2. The existing Register of Interest forms declared by each member be reviewed at the next meeting with a view to any additional interests being declared if necessary.

57/04 ADDITIONAL ITEM

Members referred to the debris of leaves, branches etc that had gathered on the footpath at Southside. It was suggested that the Clerk contact Durham County Council Highways Department to request that the footpath be cleared to make it safe for any members of the public.

RESOLVED that the Clerk contact Durham County Council with a view to getting the above debris cleared.

58/04 NEXT MEETING

Monday 7th March 2005 at 6.45pm.