

Middridge Parish Council

Minutes of Council Meeting

Village Hall,
Middridge

Monday
9th May, 2016

Time: 7.00 pm

Present: Cllrs A Clarke (Chair), W Mellors, W J Clarke, P Makinson.
Mr J & Mrs M Smith, Ms K Bullock.

In attendance: Cllrs M Dixon, J Gray & J Clare (DCC)

Official: A D Jordan (Clerk)

39/16 NOTICE OF MEETING

The Notice convening the Meeting was taken as read.

40/16 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr H Howe.

41/16 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllrs W Mellors, W J Clarke and P Makinson are Members of the Middridge Village Association Management Committee.

Cllrs M Dixon and J Clare are Members of the DCC Planning Committee.

42/16 ELECTION OF CHAIR OF THE COUNCIL 2016/17

Cllr H Howe had indicated that he was not prepared to serve as Chair due to his current business commitments. Cllr A Clarke indicated that she was prepared to serve as Chair for a further year; this was proposed by Cllr W Mellors, and seconded by Cllr P Makinson.

RESOLVED that Cllr A Clarke be elected Chair of the Council for the 2016/2017 Municipal Year.

43/16 DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE OF CHAIR

RESOLVED that the Declaration of Acceptance of Office be signed by Cllr A Clarke and received by the Clerk.

44/16 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR OF THE COUNCIL 2015/2016

Cllr H Howe had indicated that he was prepared to continue as Vice-Chair; this was proposed by Cllr P Makinson, seconded by Cllr W Mellors.

RESOLVED that Cllr H Howe be elected Vice Chair of the Council for the 2016/2017 Municipal Year.

45/16 DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE OF VICE CHAIR

RESOLVED that the Declaration of Acceptance of Office be signed by Cllr H Howe and received by the Clerk.

46/16 THANKS TO OUTGOING CHAIR

Since Cllr A Clarke continued as Chair, this was not considered necessary.

47/16 MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

None

48/16 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting of 7th March 2016 were accepted, and signed by the Chair as a true record.

49/16 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

(i) Police Speed “Sculptures” (25/16 (i) refers)

No further Police Speed “Sculptures” have appeared.

RESOLVED that B. Riley of GAMP be contacted to establish what is happening with the remaining “Sculptures”.

Action: Clerk

(ii) Transparency Code Funding (25/16 (iii) refers)

On investigation it is not possible to use this Funding to purchase new Software.

50/16 “ELDON WHINS” DEVELOPMENTS & THE COUNTY PLAN

The Persimmon “Eldon Whins” Planning Application has been withdrawn.

However, the Homes & Communities Agency (HCA) subsequently submitted an Outline Planning Application for 266 Houses on the “Eldon Whins” Site, which they own. A Leaflet has been delivered to all Residents to inform them of this, and how they can make Objections if desired. In light of the results of the Parish Housing Questionnaire, where 90% of the 67.1% of Households who responded indicated their opposition to any Development at “Eldon Whins”, the Parish Council plan to object to this Planning Application.

Since the Draft Durham County Plan has been withdrawn, the master Local Plan for Planning purposes remains the old Sedgefield Borough Plan. The Parish Council have found evidence that although “Eldon Whins” remains in Policy H2 of this Plan for technical reasons, Sedgefield Borough Council had accepted that Development at “Eldon Whins” no longer formed part of the Plan. However, Cllr M Dixon pointed out that owing to the age of the Sedgefield Borough Plan, it was unlikely to carry much weight when it came to considering the HCA Planning Application.

RESOLVED that the Parish Council’s Objection to the HCA Planning Application be submitted as soon as possible.

Action: Cllr A Clarke & Clerk

Persimmon have just delivered a Leaflet to all Residents asking for their comments on a new Proposal for a small Development to the west of the proposed HCA “Eldon Whins” Development. Note that this is not (yet) a Planning Application.

RESOLVED that Persimmon be contacted to take up their offer of a Presentation to the Parish Council, and possibly Residents, on this Proposal.

Action: Clerk

APPROVED

Cllr M Dixon advised that should the Persimmon Proposal be followed by a Planning Application, the Parish Council would stand more chance of successfully objecting if they treat the proposed HCA & Persimmon Developments as being completely separate.

Cllr J Clare stated that in the absence of a Draft Durham County Plan, and due to the age of the Sedgefield Borough Plan, it would be difficult for the DCC Planning Committee to reject any new proposed Housing Developments. Consequently he advised that the Parish Council should progress the Middridge Neighbourhood Plan as a matter of urgency.

51/16

GROUND MAINTENANCE & GENERAL REPAIRS

(i) Parish Paths Maintenance & Modifications

This year's Parish Paths Maintenance Budget of £840 has been approved; this is the same of last year, providing for two Cuts.

John the Handyman was asked for a Quotation to repair the Metal Gate on the second Parish Path 7 (the Tramway) Stile, but owing to a misunderstanding he has completed the work, and submitted an Invoice for £36.

RESOLVED that this Invoice should be paid.

Action: Clerk

Nothing more has been heard regarding the proposed Parish Path 7 improvements.

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

Action: Clerk

(ii) DCC proposed Street Light Removal

Nothing more has been heard regarding the proposed DCC Street Light Removal programme for the Parish.

RESOLVED that Yvonne Edwards of DCC should be contacted to establish what is happening.

Action: Clerk

(iii) DCC Councillors Ward Inspection

Following an Inspection, the DCC Highways Department have determined that the damage to the South Side Pavement is insufficient to warrant immediate action, but will be dealt with as future Planned Maintenance.

Following an Inspection, the DCC Tree Inspectors have decided not to undertake Crown Lifting on the DCC owned Trees in the small triangular Copse adjacent to 28, South Side; in their opinion this would only make the current situation worst.

(iv) Dog Fouling

The DCC Neighbourhood Wardens have advised that the provision of an extra Dog Litter Bin by the start of Parish Path 7 is unlikely to be approved, because this would be too close to the existing Bin in the Play Area.

It was noted that one of our Dog Litter Bins has been missing from Walkers Lane for a long time. It is not clear whether the Dog Litter Bin at the end of Walkers Lane is being emptied.

RESOLVED that DCC's 'Clean & Green' Helpline should be contacted to discuss the situation regarding Dog Litter Bins.

Action: Clerk

(iv) DCC Grass Cutting

There has been a suggestion that the Parish Council might take over responsibility for cutting the DCC owned land in the Village. This is complicated by the fact that Livin are now responsible for The Meadows.

RESOLVED that no action be taken unless we are approached by DCC.

52/16 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

None

53/16 CHILDREN'S' PLAY AREA

The Clerk's Monthly Inspection Report was approved.

Cleaning the Moss from the Senior Swings Base is still outstanding.

Action: Clerk

The Inspection to investigate the feasibility of providing Notice Board(s) in the Play Area is still to be undertaken.

Action: Cllr A Clarke & Clerk

54/16 C35 NEWTON AYCLIFFE TO SHILDON ROAD-TRAFFIC CALMING

Both our local MPs (Sedgefield and Bishop Auckland) support the extension of the Shildon 40 mph Limit to the 30 mph Limit at the western edge of the Village, as favoured by our DCC Councillors and the Parish Council, and have written to the DCC Highways Committee. However, the DCC Highways Department continue to argue that they will only extend the 40 mph Limit if the Speed Limit through the Village is raised to 40 mph, which the Parish Council do not support.

Cllr M Dixon provided information on the DCC Highways Department's claim that there is evidence to show that a 40 mph Limit is more effective in reducing excessive Vehicle Speed than a 30 mph Limit. This is based on data from Stanhope; Cllr W Mellors commented that this was more to do with the Road Layout there, and was not applicable to the Middridge situation.

The Parish Council await an opportunity to argue their case before the DCC Highways Committee.

55/16 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Draft Neighbourhood Plan was sent to a Consultant for his comments, but he was not prepared to respond without being paid a substantial Fee.

The Draft Neighbourhood Plan has now been modified to incorporate the results of the Parish Housing Questionnaire, and a number of other suggestions.

RESOLVED that the latest version of the Draft Neighbourhood Plan be circulated to all Working Group Members, and then sent to DCC for their comments.

Action: Cllr W Mellors

56/16 ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT

The Parish Council's 2015/16 Accounts have been approved by our Internal Auditor (Colin Gray), without alteration, and he has signed the Internal Audit Report Section of the 2015/16 Annual Return Form.

APPROVED

RESOLVED that the Parish Council formally adopts the Parish Council's 2015/16 Accounts as approved by the Internal Auditor, and that the Chair should sign the Annual Governance and Accounting Statements Sections of the 2015/16 Annual Return Form. An Honorarium of £65 should be paid to Colin Gray for his services.
Action: Cllr A Clarke & Clerk

The Council's Insurance Cover renews this month, and Quotations for 1, 3 and 5 year Contracts from our current Insurance Provider (Zurich) were considered.

RESOLVED that the one year Quotation from Zurich be accepted, but that the possibility of alternative Providers for next year's Insurance be investigated.
Action: Clerk

A letter from the Middridge Village Association 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.

In view of the fact that 3 of the 4 Councillors present had an Interest in this matter (see 41/16 above), this could not be approved by a Resolution of the Council. However, the Parish Council has always given permission for the Village Green to be used for the Annual Village Fête in the past, and recently always given a Donation of £40 for a Fête Raffle Prize. Consequently, it was considered that to repeat these measures this year would not be controversial, and consequently this was **AGREED**.
Action: Clerk

Councillors considered a Schedule of Accounts for Payment.

RESOLVED that the following Accounts be approved for payment:-

Payee	Purpose	Sum
Colin Gray	Internal Auditor's Honorarium	£65.00
John the Handyman	Path 7 Stile Gate Repairs	£36.00
Zurich Municipal	Insurance	£663.36
Middridge Village Association	Fête Raffle Prize	£40.00
	TOTAL	£804.36

57/16 GAMP & CDALC

The Parish Council expressed their congratulations to the Clerk on his being appointed as a Public Member of the GAMP Board from 19th July.

Cllr Anne Clarke stated that it was good to have Steve Ragg back in post as Secretary to CDALC, a position which is now fully funded by CDALC, albeit at slightly reduced hours, after Steve was made redundant by DCC.

58/16 GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE

Letters were received from The County of Durham School Benevolent Fund, and Citizens Advice County Durham, requesting Donations. It is the Council's policy to only support Charities in the immediate local area.

RESOLVED that **NO** Donations should be made.

59/16 OTHER MATTERS

(i) Big Spring Clean

This was as successful as ever, although there appeared to be less rubbish than usual.

APPROVED

(ii) Queen's Garden Party

The Parish Council considered supporting Cllrs J & A Clarke with regard to their Expenses incurred in attending the Queen's Garden Party; these were stated to be £324. Note that Cllr H Howe expressed his views in writing.

RESOLVED that the Parish Council will pay 50% of the Expenses (£162).

Action: Clerk

(iii) Parish Council Meeting Dates

RESOLVED that the Parish Council accepts the Meeting Dates as proposed.

60/16

ADDITIONAL ITEMS

None

61/16

NEXT MEETING

Monday, 4th July 2016, at 6.45pm.