

Minutes of Meeting held Monday, 14th March 2016 at 7.00 pm,
Parish Community Room, Monteith Close, West Auckland

Present: Cllr C Mairs, Vice-Chairman
Cllr E Farrer
Cllr V Raine
Cllr M Roberts
Cllr G Robinson
Cllr W Robinson
Cllr G Smith
Cllr A Turner
Cllr R Wright
DCC Cllr Christine Wilson
DCC Cllr Rob York – left early.

16.21 TO ACCEPT APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies were received from Cllr Charlton, Cllr Rielly & Cllr Thomas.

16.22 DECLARATION OF INTEREST IN ITEMS ON THE AGENDA.

- There were no expressions of interest declared for any agenda item.

16.23 TO CONFIRM MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING & MATTERS ARISING

The Minutes were agreed as a true account of the meeting and signed accordingly with the exception of a query about Cllr Rielly's resignation.

The Clerk confirmed that she was under the impression that Cllr Rielly's resignation was not official until it was presented at a formal meeting. The Clerk has since sought advice on the possibility of Cllr Rielly taking a 2 month holiday, prior to confirming her decision to resign and has been advised that once a Parish Councillor has notified the Chair of a resignation it must be accepted and a vacancy advertised. The Clerk will notify DCC Electoral Services Department and request that they advertise the vacancy with immediate effect. It was generally felt that Cllr Rielly will be a great loss to the Parish Council and Cllr Roberts expressed his appreciation of her commitment and involvement with the Parish Council over the past 12 years; he expressed a wish for Cllr Rielly to consider returning through due process to fill the vacancy if possible.

Matters Arising

- There were no matters arising.

16.24 TO INVITE ANY COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC.

- There was discussion about a newspaper article regarding the village green. It was confirmed that this issue is being addressed by DCC as owners of the village green.

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- A resident thanked local councillors and those involved for their efforts in arranging to have the river side protective wall repaired; the damaged wall posed a significant risk of easy access to the Gaunless River by young children.

16.25 TO RECEIVE CHAIRPERSON/COUNCILLORS REPORT

Cllr Roberts advised that he and Cllr B Robinson had met with Brian Harris, DCC to discuss the options for metal railings around the Christmas tree. This item will be included on the next agenda when full details are expected to be available.

Cllr York attended the meeting to provide an update on various projects at Witton Park, St Helens, Escomb and Bishop Auckland.

An update on progress with the development of the houses at the rear of the youth club and at the old residential home was requested. It was suggested that the area be targeted for a clean-up during the Spring Clean process and advice sought for disposal of large items i.e. sofas, furniture, etc.

16.26 CLERK’S TABLING OF CORRESPONDENCE/ENDORISING INVOICE CHEQUES.

The Clerk tabled all correspondence received and payments were checked on invoices as below:

BDM Services - Monteith rear garden		£240.00
Domestic - L Sams		£52.14
Broadband/phones		£20.00
Open Spaces Subscription		£45.00
Defibrillator & wall bracket		£1,045.80

A coin to commemorate the Queen’s 90th birthday was presented and following consideration, it was resolved that 350 will be purchased to provide one for each of the children attending West Auckland Parish schools. An event to mark the occasion was also discussed and this will be considered fully at the next meeting.

To consider options for a replacement website.

Website options and costs were discussed. A local computer company has been approached and a Parish Councillor has offered to build the website at a cost of £70 per annum. Concerns were expressed about actual requirements and it was agreed that the Clerk should provide a specification of requirements for consideration at the next meeting. ACTION: Clerk to arrange specification and seek technical advice on server and domain requirements to host a secure, public accessible webpage that meets Parish Council requirements.

Following debate it was resolved that that Open Spaces Society subscription is to be renewed.

16.27 TO RECEIVE ENVIRONMENT/PLANNING WORKING GROUP UPDATE.

(i) To receive Stockton & Darlington Railway walk presentation

John Raw attended the meeting to provide an update on the progress with the Stockton and Darlington railway. Mr Raw advised that a Brusselton Incline Group has formed to focus local support and attention on the piece of old railway track from Brusselton to

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Phoenix Row, Witton Park. Volunteers were requested to support Historic England who now has ownership of the works commenced by the Brusselton Incline Group.

(ii) To prepare for annual Spring Clean litter pick.

Saturday, 23rd April 2016 between 10.00 am and 12 noon was confirmed as a suitable date to carry out the annual spring clean. Cllr Roberts agreed to register for the event and request equipment. The Clerk will advertise the event in local shops.

(iii) To confirm new External Audit process via Smaller Authorities' Audit Assoc Ltd

The Finance sub-group had recently met to consider the new audit process which is due to commence 2017. It was recommended that West Auckland Parish Council opt in to the DCC new arrangement for external audit. Cllr Farrer explained that although total income is less than £25,000, expenditure in some years could exceed that due to spending of grants and use of reserve funds for specific projects. It was proposed and resolved that the West Auckland Parish Council opt in and also appoint an external auditor to undergo the external audit process as a matter or standard procedure annually, regardless of whether spending is under or over the £25,000 benchmark, as this was thought to provide an additional layer of financial transparency assurance.

(iv) To consider potential for improvements to the Nursery groundwork

Cllr Roberts provided feedback following the meeting with Nursery residents and it was confirmed that county councillors are seeking to arrange to have pots holes in the area filled. It was confirmed that utility services pipes are being checked for prior to deciding where bollards will be sited; this will prevent vehicular access and mark the village green/Nursery boundary. A salt bin has been purchased and sited at the Nursery.

(v) To consider improving and formalising local footpaths as Rights of Way

The process for formalising rights of way was explained by Cllr Roberts.

(vi) To obtain an update on the use of speed matrix at village entrances.

Cllr Smith advised that details are still being obtained on where the speed matrix can be sited with DCC's involvement and permission. Cllr Turner confirmed that he will contribute towards the speed matrix for Darlington Road which comes under Etherley Parish Council. Cllr Smith has cost details which he will table in due course.

16.28 TO RECEIVE FINANCE WORKING GROUP UPDATE.

(i) To consider quote for replacing Christmas lights on the 2 sycamore trees.

Cllr Smith confirmed that actual costs for tree lights cannot be obtained until this year's brochures are released; this item will be considered at a future meeting.

(ii) To consider options for providing a social event for elderly residents

Following discussion it was agreed that this item should be considered at the next meeting.

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(iii) To consider provision of general maintenance budget for Monteith Community Parish Rooms

It was resolved that £1,000 should be allocated for maintenance of Monteith Close Community Parish Room within this year's Budget Setting meeting.

(iv) To consider purchase of replacement chairs for Monteith Community Parish Rooms

It was resolved there is no need to purchase replacement chairs for the Community Parish Rooms.

16.29 TO DISCUSS CURRENT LOCAL PLANNING ISSUES

There were no planning issues raised.

16.30 TO RECEIVE ITEMS FOR THE MEETING TO BE HELD MONDAY, 11TH APRIL 2016

- To consider promotion of football monument history.
- To consider railings around Christmas tree
- To consider a street party/village event for the Queen's 90th Birthday
- To consider a specification for a replacement website
- To consider elderly residents social event
- To consider progress with the Neighbourhood Plan and plan further consultation process
- To consider use of Oakley Cross school sports hall
- To consider providing carnival public liability insurance cover and supporting road closure
- To approve year end accounts – Finance Group to meet at 6.00 pm on 11/4/16 to review

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