

Bishopton Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday, 15th November 2017 at 7:00pm in Bishopton Village Hall

Present: Cllrs: L. MacMahon [Chair], N. Melaney, M. Moses, J. Robins [Minute Taker], C. G. Preston, D. Latham and Cllr B Jones of Darlington Borough Council

1. Apologies for Absence: D Thorman [Parish Clerk]

Visitors: Mr Peter Wood and Mr Geoff Baines

Mr Wood confirmed both he and Mr Baines were attending on behalf of the Village Hall Association (VHA) following the letter from the Parish Council (PC). Mr Wood explained that he understood the current budget pressures on the Parish Council, but felt it may be beneficial to provide some background information around the current finances of the VHA. He explained that the VHA wished to continue working amiably with the PC to find a constructive and mutually agreeable solution. Mr Wood referred to past minutes, which had been previously circulated, and explained that it was his understanding that the PC would require a referendum to cancel the annual payment to the VHA, stating that any discretion in the payment should be made by the VHA.

Cllr Jones explained that the precept is converted into an amount per council tax band, which is added onto the council tax bill and paid to parish councils in order that they can carry out works within their village that are not covered by the Local Authority. Cllr Jones' understanding was that it was the decision of the PC on how these funds were spent and queried whether the notice sent to parishioners constituted a referendum i.e. asking residents to vote on a proposal, or whether the notice was seeking objections to the proposal.

Mr Baines provided an overview of the uncertain future of the Village Hall, following the latest structural survey, the report for which had cost £2,000. The works highlighted in the report were estimated to be in the region of £7,000. Mr Baines also explained that there was a problem with the kitchen drains, the survey for which had cost £1,300. He clarified that the damage was as a result of mature tree roots from the Churchyard and following an approach to DBC, they had advocated responsibility stating it was 'the developer's responsibility'. DBC had provided a solution to repair the damaged drains, which was likely to be in the region of £7,000. Mr Baines explained that from a budget surplus of £19K these spends, coupled with the removal of the payment from the PC places the future of the village hall under the threat of potential insolvency.

Cllr MacMahon provided a full explanation of the PC's current financial position and highlighted the nature and areas of actual spends, which were causing immediate budget pressures and concerns. An explanation of the rationale around the transfer of the monies to the VHA, which will be reviewed next year, and the need to increase the precept by £2,000, together with the agreement of a potential contingency fund from DBC should the PC require a short-term loan.

Cllr Jones expressed his concerns that DBC had advocated their responsibility regarding the tree damage from the Churchyard, which was 'closed' with responsibility for maintenance being transferred to the Local Authority. Cllr Jones confirmed he would speak with the Assistant Director on this matter and also seek legal advice on the precept. Cllr Jones suggested that Mr Wood and Mr Baines may also wish to consider the Moorhouse Community Grant Funding – Energy Projects.

Mr Wood provided a suggestion to the PC, that they may wish to consider raising the precept to £3,000 in order that the £1,000 for the Village Hall can continue. Mr Wood also tabled that the Village Hall Association would be happy to work alongside the PC in a fundraising event, which could be potentially match funded.

Cllr MacMahon thanked the members of the Village Hall Association for attending the meeting and providing a greater understanding of their finances and their opinions and comprehension of the payment to the Village Hall. Cllr MacMahon confirmed that the decision made was not perceived to be permanent and would be reviewed.

Agreed by all present that the Parish Council and Village Hall Association should meet again in May 2018 to discuss/review this matter again.

L.M.

2. Declarations of Interest in Items on the Agenda: Cllr. Robins declared a non-fiscal interest in item 4.3

3. Previous Minutes:

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved and were duly signed by the Chairperson as a true record of the 18th October 2017 meeting.

4. Matters Arising from Previous Minutes:

4.1 *Community Speed Watch – progress report*

Still require a couple more community volunteers to assist. Hoping the forthcoming newsletter will encourage more volunteers to come forward.

Cllr Preston to arrange charging and re-erection of monitoring equipment. Agreed speeding appears to have increased again. Cllr MacMahon to contact Clerk to transfer IT programme for recording/analysing speed.

4.2 *Funds held for Young Persons of the Parish – play area – progress report*

Cllr MacMahon to contact Phil Newton, Solicitor, to seek a progress report.

Cllr Preston to complete community fund application form.

4.3 *Village Green annual inspection 2016; Works to footpath 11-17, and garage access to 11 High Street and condition of footpath Nos. 3 – 7 The Green – progress report*

No progress to report at this stage – Cllr MacMahon to contact Mr Lonsdale of AWG for a progress report.

4.4 *Parish Neighbourhood Plan – progress report*

No progress or updates to report at present.

4.5 *Casual Vacancy – progress report*

DBC have confirmed vacancy can now be advertised. Advert to be placed on notice board and on the newsletter.

4.6 *'Battles Over' – progress report*

Richard Frankland has confirmed the Church is likely to participate in the 'Let the Bells Ring Out' tribute, however, this would need to be discussed at the next Standing Committee.

4.7 *Bishopton Airfield – progress report*

Cllr Melaney confirmed he had sourced a stone – castle stone, buff coloured, medium grain, approx. 1.5/2T. Stone, with cut angled face, will be in the region of £150.00. Cllr Melaney advised that, following a conversation with Lewis Stokes, this project may meet the Banks funding criteria.

4.8 *Flag Pole Purchase – progress report*

No progress or updates to report at present.

4.9 *Works to Cenotaph – progress report*

Cllr Melaney confirmed area is greatly improved, however, would still require an application of weed killer to help remove moss.

5. Planning Applications:

5.1 None

6. Matters Raised by Councillors & the Clerk:

6.1 *Newsletter and Distribution*

Draft newsletter circulated for discussion and comments.

Agreed the Christmas Tree Scheme will go ahead if enough residents come forward. All Cllrs agreed that the PC would donate £100.00 in aid of St Teresa's Hospice. Christmas trees could be left on the Village Green outside of Manor Farm for collection by Darlington Rotary Club.

Cllr Moses and Cllr Preston volunteered to distribute the newsletter to the outlying properties and Cllr Preston & Cllr Lathan to cover main village properties.

6.2 *DAPC Meeting*

Cllr Moses updated meeting on items discussed, which included: Planning - Section 106 Obligations, Peel Holding's Tees Valley Airport and the average salary of a Parish Clerk being in the region of 12K.

Date of next DAPC meeting to be confirmed.

6.3 *Collection of Christmas Trees (Cllr Jones)*

See 6.1 above.

6.4 *Tree Charter Legacy Tree*

Wild Cherry tree whip delivered – Cllr MacMahon has planted in a suitable pot until tree established.

6.5 *Parish Clerk advertisement*

Vacancy advertised in Parish News, however, following verbal requests for applicants, a letter of application has been received from a potentially extremely suitable candidate. Given the pressure to fill this vacancy, agreed by all to arrange an interview on Monday, 20th November 2017 at 6:00pm.

A discussion took place regarding proposed working hours and pay scale for Parish Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer. Agreed by all that post holder should be contracted to work 12 hours on Scale G – SCP 22 i.e. £10.709 per hour.

7. Village Green:

7.1 *Leaf Collection*

Streetscene have scheduled in the collection of leaves from the Village for beginning of December. Mark Leighton has been notified and has agreed to work within this timeframe.

7.2 *Damage to Chain & Bus Shelter*

Cllr Melaney to pick up this item on behalf of the Clerk and fit the replacement hook.

Issue of a small number of youths damaging the bus shelter would need to be monitored.

8. Wind Farm Proposals:

8.1 *Lambs Hill Liaison Committee*

No updates to report

8.2 *Moor House Liaison Committee*

No updates to report – next meeting 29th November 2017.

9. New Residents: None

d.f.m

10. Financial:

- 10.1 *2017/18 budget monitoring & current financial position*
Budget reports circulated for information and comment.
- 10.2 *Transparency Fund Application – progress report*
Cllr MacMahon updated on progress and it was agreed by all that a higher specification/memory capacity laptop and printer would be more beneficial, which may increase spends. Update to be provided at the next meeting.
- 10.3 *Payment for Remembrance Wreath*
Payment of £50.00 requested by Cllr Moses – Proposed by Cllr Melaney, seconded by Cllr Preston.
- 10.4 *Payment to E & M Layton for Strimming*
Payment of £54.00 to E & M Layton – Proposed by Cllr Preston, seconded by Cllr Moses.
- 10.5 *Precept Levels for 2018/19*
A further discussion took place regarding the potential to raise the precept to £3K. Agreed by all to leave the increase at £2K.

11. Correspondence

- 11.1 *Email from Carl Reay – DBC Re: Local Roads, Bishopton (Complaint from resident)*
Concerns raised regarding the DBC's response. It was felt the policy described by the Highways Inspector was rudimentary and would result in eventual long-term problems.

Agreed roads should be monitored over the winter periods and Cllr Melaney would draft an appropriate response to DBC supporting the concerns of the resident.

INCOMING

1. Invoice E & M Leighton strimming £54 31.10.17
2. Email Karl Reeve TVRCC voting request 24.10.17
3. Email Woodland Trust re tree request 27.10.17
4. Minutes Litter Free Darlington meeting 24.10.17
5. War Memorial News 31.10.17
6. Email Paul Dalton Election Officer DBC co-option permission 6.11.17
7. Email Darlington Rotary Club with Christmas Tree collection scheme 6.11.17
8. Helen Crute DAPC agenda 6.11.17
9. Email copy letter to DBC re roads from J Haslam 7.11.17.
10. Email legal briefing LO7-17 NALC 7.11.17
11. CLCA legal Briefings LO8-17 and LO9-17 13.11.17
12. Response Carl Reay DBC re letter J Haslam re roads 10.11.17

OUTGOING

1. Email to Phil Newton DBC confirming go ahead with lease for playground 19.10.17
2. Letter G Baines Village Hall Committee re annual payment 20.10.17
3. Tree Charter Team application free tree 21.10.17
4. Email all Councillors re damage to bus shelter and chain 27.10.17
5. Email all Councillors re Parish Clerk advert 6.11.17
6. Email Mark Leighton requesting leaf collection 6.11.17
7. Email Parish News requesting advert Parish Clerk 7.11.17

EMAIL CHAINS

1. Sandra Innes DBC re leaf collection

Handwritten signature: S.F.M.

12. Matters dealt with since last Meeting

12.1 *Christmas Tree Order*

Following a previously circulated email from Cllr Latham, it was agreed a Christmas tree should be ordered from Maynard's Nursery. Costs were £128.00 for a 15-16ft spruce tree - £195.00 for a tree around 20ft.

Agreed the tree should be 16ft+ depending on shape and costs to be in the region of £128.00 plus £30.00 for delivery. Cllr MacMahon to pay for tree when delivered on the 28th November 2017 at 11:00am.

13. Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday, 20th December 2017 at 7:15pm, in the Village Hall.

The meeting closed at 9:14pm

Signed: Chairperson:

D.F. MacMahon

Date:

20-12-17