

At a meeting of the Dene Valley Parish Council held at the Dene Valley Community Partnership One Stop Shop, High Street, Eldon Lane on **Monday 10 June 2024 at 6.30 p.m.**

Present:

Councillor J Clark in the Chair

Councillors I Bourne, T Bird, R Coleman, J Moore and J Oliver.

Clerk Ian Croft

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K Beal and J Nicholson.

2. Public Participation

Charlotte Whines, a local resident was in attendance to present an idea for a proposed dog park area at Close House which would create a fenced in area for dogs to be safely let off the leash. The area of land identified by Charlotte was approximately 752 m² and was east of the south end of the allotment site and north of 5 Close House. Details of the proposal were circulated to members (for copy see file of Minutes).

The dog park area would lead to increased safety and peace of mind for dog owners and would be a great area for training. It would lead to a decreased number of off-leash dogs in other public spaces and would be an attractive amenity for prospective residents of Eldon.

The area of land would need to be fenced off and a sign would need to be installed to inform people of the new area and its intended use. There would also be a need for a dog waste bin on the site.

The proposed scheme had the backing of the community with over 100 local people signing a petition in support of the idea.

Members of the Council, while supportive of the proposal, identified that the area of land was currently in the ownership of Durham County Council, from whom consent would need to be obtained for such use.

Once consent had been obtained then sources of funding for the necessary works, such as fencing and the provision of a dog bin, would need to be identified. Charlotte was advised of various sources of

funding which may be available including the Area Action Partnership and Members Initiative Funds. The Council informed Charlotte that once she had gained consent from the County Council and had identified some sources of funding, she should return to the Parish Council which may be able to contribute towards the project.

The Council thanked Charlotte for attending the meeting.

3. Minutes

The Minutes of the meetings held on 15 May 2024 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4. Matters Arising

Councillor Bourne reported that the meeting dates information on the Parish Council website needed updating. The Clerk agree to undertake this update.

Councillor Oliver reported that the Parish Councils Facebook page was up and running and any relevant information should be forwarded to Councillor Oliver to be uploaded onto the Facebook page.

The Clerk reported the following:

- the Audit for 2023/24 had been completed and this was an agenda item for later in the meeting.
- a VAT claim for £2,000.46 had been submitted to HMRC for the period 01/04/23 to 30 April 2024.
- the Mandate form had been posted to HSBC regarding the Auckland Park account.
- the CCTV camera had been purchased and Kate had been made aware if this.

5. Parish Council 5-year Plan

In the absence of Councillor Nicholson this item was deferred to the next meeting.

6. Police Update

Councillor Bird reported the following:

- it had been widely reported that two young people had been moving around the area with a catapult and small bus hammer putting windows out. They had been reported and caught on CCTV and the police were aware of the problem. Councillor Coleman reported there had been similar in the Cockton Hill area a while ago and suggested it may be the same people.

- problems persisted with the use of bikes in the area, particularly after 4 p.m. once the schools had finished.

7. Play Areas

Councillor Beal had contacted the Community Work Team and the grass had been cut at the Auckland Park Paly Area.

Councillor Bird reported that he was awaiting the license for the Fun Day to be held at the end of June. Councillor Oliver asked that he be forwarded further details of this once the license had been obtained so that details could be uploaded onto the Parish Council's Facebook page.

8. Planning Issues

Councillor Clark circulated details of planning applications which had been received or determined in the Dene Valley Parish and surrounding areas since the last meeting (for copy see file of Minutes)

9. Footpaths

Councillor Moore reported that ta permanent fence had now been erected at Shepherds Bridge.

Members asked the Clerk to request any ecology reports which had been submitted for the Auckland Park development.

10. Allotments

Councillor Bourne reported that the lock combination had not yet been changed for the Close House Allotment Site. The Council agreed that this should take place with effect from 1 July 2024 and the Council agreed the new combination.

The Clerk reported that he had received an expression of interest in a Ploy at Close House and undertook to provide the enquirer with details of Councillor Bourne to contact him directly.

11. Finance Update

The Clerk provided the meeting with details of income and expenditure for the since the last meeting. The Chairman agreed the balances and signed the accounts and bank statements.

The meeting considered the 2023/24 Audit which had been prepared by Jenny Linsley and circulated with the agenda. Members discussed various matter raised in the Audit, including:

- the use of a Payroll Company for the Council's Employee Salary and Expenses and HMRC PAYE obligations. Although the saving identified in the Audit had been identified at £600 p/a, the charge for the service was actually approximately £60 a quarter and considered to be good value for money by the Council.
- it had been identified as best practice to have three signatories for the Parish Council bank account. Members agreed that Councillor Beall be approached to ascertain whether he would be agreeable to be the third signatory.
- there was the need for the Council to have an asset register to reflect the assets owned by the Council, namely the Richard Terrace Car Park, Auckland Park Play Area and the Clerk's IT equipment. The Clerk agreed to produce an Asset Register and upload it onto the Council's website.

The Council noted the Council's Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2023/24 and noted it had previously confirmed that only a limited assurance review would be needed because both income and expenditure for 2023/24 were below the £25,000 threshold.

12. Any Other Business

Councillor Oliver reported that when he had recently bought his house he seemed to think there was something in the deeds about a payment to be made to DVPC. Members of the Council were unaware of such a charge and Councillor Oliver agreed to look into this further.

The Clerk reported a communication he had received regarding use of the car park at Richard Terrace. It was confirmed that this car park belonged to the Parish Council and that no commercial vehicles should use the car park.

13. Date of Next Meeting

The Clerk reported that there was a need to move the date of the next meeting from 8 July 2024. Members agreed that this should be brought forward by one week to 1 July 2024.