

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 4 December 2023 at 6.30 p.m.**

Present:

Councillor K Beal in the Chair

Councillors T Bird, I Bourne, J Clark, J Moore, J Nicholson and R Simm.

Clerk Ian Croft

1. Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from County Councillor S Quinn.

2. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. Matters arising

Councillor Simm referred to the request for a donation towards refreshments for the Christmas carol service and also the request for a donation towards the costs of a Monday night extension of the youth club which he had raised at the previous meeting. Despite a request for costings for both of these approaches, none had been forthcoming. Councillor Nicholson suggested a more accurate minute of the previous meeting should refer to these requests as not being agreed in principle but being subject to costings being provided.

Councillor Simm referred to a meeting which was taking place on 14 December via Teams which at which he would discuss a second CCTV camera for the area and request a follow up on both CCTV cameras and the level of contribution requested for the Safer Villages Project. To date the Parish had received only one CCTV camera and two dog bins.

Councillor Beal reminded the meeting that the Parish Councils agreed contribution of up to £8,400 was towards the total costs of the schemes that were proposed at the time. Since this time the proposed alley gates were not now happening and the projects within the scheme had been changed from those originally proposed.

Members expressed general dissatisfaction at the level of feedback provided to the Parish Council on the Project as a whole and requested the Clerk to email Katherine Ward at DCC to express disappointment at the speed of progress on the projects initially identified on 10 October 2022 and also the lack of feedback/progress updates to the Parish Council on this scheme.

Councillor Nicholson informed the meeting she had raised queries about the minutes of the last GRT Forum meeting held in July which did not mention communication with the Parish Council regarding issues with the Gurney Valley TSOA site. The County Council was not providing a service to legal standards on this site and the provision of temporary toilet provision had not yet been sorted. There were 10 pitches provided on the site, yet up to 16 had been on the site. Anybody using the site should be there for no more than 28 days with no return. The perimeter fence had only been half completed because of budget issues and this was not acceptable and had no effect. Councillor Nicholson added that West Auckland Parish Council had experienced a similar problem regarding fencing and the Parish Council had to partially fund the fencing to get it completed. All of these issues needed to be addressed before April 2024 when the site would be open again.

Councillor Simm added that the County Council had a duty of care to both travellers and local residents and queried why this was the only extended site in County Durham.

Councillor Nicholson replied that this was an extended TSO site which was open from April to September, adding that no consultation had taken place on this. However, she had been told there was no requirement for the County Council to consult with local residents.

Councillor Simm considered at the very least the capacity of the site should be limited to the 10 pitches it was proposed for.

Councillor Nicholson informed the meeting that a possible alternative may be the St Phillips Close caravan site and/or the building of a permanent toilet block.

4. Budget 2024/25 and Precept 2024/25

The Council considered a report of the Clerk regarding the budget for 2024/25 and the level of precept for 2024/25.

Members were cognisant of the current cost of living crisis being experienced by local residents and also the levels of funds within the Parish Council accounts. Members also noted that the Council Tax Base within the Parish had increased from 2023/24 and this would result

in an increased income to the Parish Council should there be no precept increase. Upon discussing various options for 2024/25 it was:

Resolved:

- (i) That there be no precept increase for 2024/25
- (ii) That there be no allotment rent increased for 2024/25
- (iii) That the Clerk submit the precept request to the County Council.

5. Police Update

Councillor Bird informed the meeting that at a recent PACT meeting it had been reported a local resident had experienced his windows being put out on two occasions. This had been twice reported to the police and a police officer was to investigate the incidents under victim follow-up.

Councillor Beal reported that four wheelie bins had been set alight last week.

6. Play Areas

The Clerk read out a recently received email from Paul Hebron at Durham County Council which gave an update on the transfer of the Randolph Street play area to the Parish Council.

Quotes for both refurbishment of the Randolph Street play area and the renewal of the Randolph Street play area were circulated, as well as quotes for new equipment at the Coronation play area. Councillor Beal considered that the Parish Council should concentrate on the Randolph Street play area as a priority.

Councillor Simm reported that quotes from Pennine Play Equipment were expected by the end of the week and it was agreed that a special Parish Council meeting should be held in January to focus on the play area refurbishments/renewals. The date of the meeting was agreed as Monday 22 January 2024 commencing at 6.30 p.m.

Councillor Beal requested that the Clerk send a letter of thanks to the Durham Tees Valley CRC for their work carried out on play areas within the Parish.

Councillor Moore reported that the Coronation Play Area was currently being used by people on quad bikes.

7. Planning Issues

Councillor Clark circulated a list of planning applications either within the Parish Council or bordering the Parish Council which had been received or determined since the last meeting (for copy see file of minutes).

8. Footpaths

Councillor Moore informed the meeting he had nothing to report on footpaths.

Councillor Clark reported that the railings on the footpath between Rosemount and South Church had been hit.

9. Allotments

Members discussed a plot at Grange Avenue allotment site which had previously been discussed and correspondence sent to the allotment tenant. There had been no feedback from the tenant and no rent had been paid and it was therefore agreed that the tenancy should be terminated.

10 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.

Members considered a request for financial assistance from the Great North Air Ambulance and agreed that a donation of £250 should be made.

The meeting finished at 8.30 p.m. Next meeting – Special Meeting on 22 January 2024.