

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 14 October 2024 at 6.30 p.m.**

Present:

Councillor J Nicholson in the Chair

Councillors T Bird, I Bourne and J Clark.

Also in attendance:

Kate Ward - DCC Safer Places

Clerk Ian Croft

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Coleman, Moore and Oliver.

2. Public Participation

There were no Members of the Public in attendance at the commencement of the meeting.

3. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 1 July 2024 were considered by the meeting.

Kate Ward referred to the Police Update which had been provided to the meeting in September which she considered not to be an accurate reflection. Any police updates should be provided either by DCC or the police. The meeting agreed to delete the contents of the minute of the Police Update relating to the September meeting and Kate informed the meeting she would arrange for such updates to be provided to future meetings.

The minutes were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the above amendment.

4. Matters Arising

Councillor Nicholson reported that she was looking at two projects in the area, one for the allotment site at Clayhole and one for Blackies Wood.

Councillor Nicholson referred to the cost of postage stamps raised at the previous meeting and informed the meeting that papers for future meetings would be emailed to all Members and some hard copies would be brought to the meeting. The Clerk added that he hoped to be able to do this with the finance update as well.

5. Parish Council 5-year Plan

The Chair informed the meeting that the Parish Council 5 year plan was an evolving process which would include Town and Village status, a community hub, safer community projects and improvements to play areas. The Plan would be a living document and would be adapted as time went on. There was a need to identify who would be responsible for certain areas of the Plan.

- Town and Village status – Councillor Bourne to lead on this project and provide a brief report for the next meeting in November.
- Safer Communities – Councillor Nicholson informed the meeting that Councillor Oliver was happy to lead on this and she would ask Councillor Oliver to provide a short report on footpaths and roads.
- Community Hub – Councillor Nicholson to lead on this. Councillor Nicholson informed the meeting that the former Surestart building was to be put up for disposal by DCC and she was hoping to gain access to the building for an inspection to take place. Councillor Oliver had mentioned possible help with decoration. She would make enquiries of Newcastle Building Society regarding funding for community buildings. Kate Ward informed the meeting that the DCC Regeneration Team may have funding for help with surveys.
- Play Facilities – the Parish Council was still awaiting the asset transfer of the Randolph Street Play Area and Councillor Nicholson and the Clerk were meeting with the Parish Council's solicitors on Friday to progress this matter.

Members referred to both Coronation and Riverside Play Areas which were in the ownership of DCC yet the Parish Council arranged annual safety inspections of these Play Areas and if necessary facilitated repairs. The Clerk agreed to contact James Young, Outdoor Facilities Co-ordinator at DCC to query this.

Councillor Nicholson informed the meeting that the Parish Council may need to consider whether to spend as much as was initially envisaged

on the Randolph Street Play Area or may need to pare back on its plans.

Councillor Nicholson informed the meeting she was investigating possible Local Nature Recovery Strategies at the former Clayhole Allotment Site and in Blackie Woods.

6. Police Update

This had been previously discussed under Item 3 and Kate Ward would arrange for a Police Update to be provided to future meetings.

7. Play Areas

Councillor Nicholson referred to the Wicksteed safety reports recently provided by Wicksteeds and the need to address the areas of concern identified in the reports.

The Parish Council agreed that all red area of concern identified in the report for Auckland Park should be addressed as a priority and also those amber areas of concern, which if left, could develop into red areas.

The Clerk agreed to contact Wicksteed and DCC to ascertain the costs of such repairs.

The red area of concern at Coronation, the rope swing, was referred to and this needed to be removed. Kate Ward undertook to arrange the removal of this.

While the Parish Council owned the Auckland Park Play Area, Members queried responsibility for maintenance of Coronation and Riverside Play Areas, which were in the ownership of DCC. The Clerk agreed to contact James Young at DCC to ascertain responsibility for the maintenance of these Play Areas.

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

Members raised issues of hedges and trees overgrowing footpaths at the following:

- The location of the recreation ground bungalows to the gate into the football field and hedges on the corner near the bus stop;

- Railway Villas – hedge overgrowing the footpath;
- Footpath from Gurney Valley up to Howlish – need to walk on the road because of an overgrowing hedge.

Kate Ward noted the locations and undertook to address these issues.

10. Allotments

There were no issues to report regarding allotments.

11. Finance Update

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

Councillor Nicholson requested an update on the HSBC account. The Clerk reported that nothing further had been heard from the bank. The Clerk agreed to visit HSBC in Durham with Councillor Clark who was the signatory on the account to progress this matter.

12. Any Other Business

Councillor Bourne referred to the Linden Homes development and informed the meeting that over 100m of ancient hedge had been destroyed – it had been taken out and the roots removed.

Councillor Nicholson replied that she had raised the issue with DCC Enforcement Team as well as the damage caused to the Parish Council seat at this location. Additionally, Footpaths 49 and 86 which had temporary closure orders on them while construction took place had now had properties built across them. Assurances were needed that these Footpaths would be reopened as they were well used Footpaths.

Councillor Nicholson informed the meeting that the gate at the Temporary Stop Over Site was not closing properly and this had led to fly tipping. Kate Ward agreed to refer this to the Neighbourhood Wardens for investigation while asking that Councillor Nicholson report it through the DCC portal.

The following items of any other business were raised:

- There was a need to update the Council's website to include a paragraph pf thanks to the former Chairman, Kenny Beal and to load agendas and minutes as pdf's– the Clerk agreed to do this;
- The ownership of the woodland at the construction site to be investigated – the Clerk agreed to do this;

- The meeting agreed that the Parish Council should purchase a poppy wreath for the Remembrance Sunday service to be placed on the war memorial in the church grounds;
- The meeting agreed to once again purchase small Christmas gifts for the pupils and Prince Bishops Primary School.

13. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting would take place on Monday 11 November 2024.

The meeting finished at 8.30 p.m.