

## **MINUTES OF CORNFORTH PARISH COUNCIL MEETING:** **OCTOBER 2016.**

Minutes of the Meeting of Cornforth Parish Council held at 7.00pm, in the Community Centre, Cornforth, on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> October 2016.

Present: Councillor Mr. A. Hodgson and

Councillors: Mr. C. Hodgson, Mr. P. Metcalfe, Mrs. S. Neville, Mrs. M. Poole, Mr. R. Poole, Mr. M. Simpson, Mrs. S. Traynor, Mr. R. Vaughan and Mrs M. Walker.

Apologies: Councillors: Mr. C. Baker, Mr. T. Cutmore, Mrs. H. P. Drew, Dr. S.C. Drew and Mr. A Wilson.

### **1. APOLOGIES.**

The above apologies were noted and accepted.

### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.**

There were no declarations of interest with regard to any item on the agenda.

### **3. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2016, a copy of which had been circulated with the agenda, were altered at the request of Councillor M. Simpson who had declared an interest with regard to item 14, and thereafter agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

### **4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES NOT COVERED ON THE AGENDA**

There were no matters arising that were not covered on the agenda.

### **5. POLICE LIAISON**

The Vice Chairman was not in attendance and no report was received.

### **6. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no requests from the members of the public who attended the meeting to speak to any of the items.

### **7. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS AND CORRESPONDENCE.**

The Chairman reported that he had received a letter from Ferryhill Town Council inviting Members to the Carol Service.

He reported that he had also received a letter from Councillor Mrs. Walker sent to some Members of the Council expressing disquiet about various actions of the Parish Council. He asked that where Councillors wished to have issues addressed that they follow the correct procedure and address them in writing to the Clerk for discussion by the whole Council. Members of the Council also asked that the practice of writing such letters should cease, advised that they did not want to receive them and asked that the correct procedure be followed.

## 8. AAP ISSUES

The Chairman, as an elected member of the AAP Board, reported that the 4Together Partnership had prepared its priority subjects for support by the AAP in September and that voting on them would end in November 2016.

## 9. COUNTY COUNCIL ISSUES

Our County Councillor representative reported on the following Durham County Council issues:

- i) The Bridge Road closure reported at the last meeting would now take place on the night of 3<sup>rd</sup> December only.
- ii) The County Council intends to dispose of the former pit heap in the village. It is surplus to the Council's requirements and will likely be leased to the Woodlands Trust.
- iii) Durham County Council is holding an exhibition and consultation on proposals to improve the Durham Bus Station. The exhibition is being held in the Methodists Church in North Road, Durham on 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> November 2016.

## 10. BANK RECONCILIATION STATEMENTS – POSITION AT 30<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2016.

The Clerk had circulated the current bank reconciliation statements and a comparison of this year's budget to actual expenditure for this period at the meeting. The report was received.

## 11. SCHEDULE OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS TO 30<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2016.

Receipts		£	Cheque No.
<b>Payments</b>	VAT refund	20,728.77	
Northumbrian Water	Allotment water	110.97	765
A. Sunman	Allowances (July)	85.85	766
Durham County Council	Churchyard bench	1,193.86	767
Altogether Greener	Ground Maintenance (July)	2,596.67	768
R. A. Sunman	Salary (September)	666.10	S/O
	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	4,653.45	
	NET INCOME	16,105.32	

Recommendation: The schedule be approved.

Under this heading Councillor Mrs. Walker had sought clarification on the payment of cheques No.'s 745 and 750 to Altogether Greener. The Clerk had reported that the payments were for work carried out in the February and March periods of 2015/16 and that a full list of payments and their related periods for 2015/16 financial year had been sent to the external auditors as part of the Annual Accounting process. It was agreed that Mrs. Walker would view the document outside of the meeting and discuss it with the Clerk.

## 12. PLANNING MATTERS AND APPLICATIONS FROM DURHAM COUNTY'S WEEKLY LISTS.

The Clerk reported that at the time of the despatch of this agenda, which included applications up to and including 30<sup>th</sup> September 2016, no applications had been received that were of interest to this Parish Council.

It was noted that the following application had been determined and approved:

- i) DM/16/01938/FPA – Ms. J. McMahon - 21 The Green – New timber sash windows, cast iron rainwater goods and rendering of dwelling. Demolition of front porch and single storey rear addition. Construction of single storey extension to rear, terrace and alterations to existing two storey rear extension, including pitch roof.

## 13. ALLOTMENT LETTINGS AND REPLACEMENT GATES AND TAPS

Councillor Metcalfe was unable to report on quotes to replace the damaged allotment gate or progress with new taps.

The Clerk reported that following the last meeting letters had been sent to tenants about none cultivation. A site visit showed that the tenant of plots 36, 38 and 28 had removed the fence from between plot 28 and plot 23 to allow his horse to graze. Members instructed that unless the fence was replaced and the horses removed from plot 23 within three months the tenancies would be terminated.

The Chairman reported that 87 cu. m. of water had been used. A resident attending the meeting suggested the use of water in the stream following the cleaning of the culvert to improve flow and quality. It was felt that there was a risk to horses drinking from this source. It was agreed that the water supply should continue to be monitored following a series of low bills and that an Allotment Sub Committee be held after the next Parish Council.

## 14. REQUESTS FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE.

The Clerk reported that a request for financial assistance had been received from a Community Development CIC "Inside Outside" operating from the Church Hall for a contribution towards the costs of setting up a new rug making group for 20 people for twelve weeks. The total estimated cost is £840. The cost of the hall hire is £240. Members discussed the issue and felt that the costs were high, that additional funding sources were unclear and that a similar venture held in the Village Library had failed. A decision was deferred as the CIC had not submitted a bank statement.

#### 14. REQUESTS FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE (CONT'D).

Members were reminded that in February this year the Parish Council considered a request for financial assistance to a local campaign "A Promise for Zac" in support of action to screen children for the condition known as "Krabbe Leukodystrophy". The Clerk could find no charity set up for that purpose but the parents of Zac had set up a bank account to support a more general screening programme. Members deferred a decision until the details of the screening charity were known.

#### 15. REPAIRS TO PAVING ON THE GREEN.

The Clerk reported that he had sent out tenders for the resurfacing work at Village Farm and advised both Durham County Council and our insurers of the claim made by Mr. Crowe at No.16 The Green. It had been intended to carry out the footpath repairs at No's 16 and 18 The Green with other resurfacing. The Clerk had discussed the situation with both residents as instructed. Mr. Crowe had costed up the none-footpath repairs for information and would like the Parish Council to carry out the footpath work quickly, treating any other work as a separate issue. The owner of No.18 had made no claim about his property but was also anxious to have the work done before the winter. Members agreed that the Clerk should update both the insurers and Durham County Council of the latest situation and ask the tenderers to include for the work at No. 18 The Green alongside the other resurfacing work. It was agreed that no further work involving No. 16 should be undertaken until both parties had reported their views.

Members instructed that once a tenderer had been chosen for the tarmac works, the quality of the work should be monitored and if found satisfactory then in line with Financial Regulations and Standing Orders the same company be asked to quote for similar work to repair the paths and resurface other failing block paving on the Green in tarmac.

#### 16. NOTICE OF CONCLUSION OF AUDIT.

The Clerk reported that he had received the Parish Council's external auditor's report on its Accounting Statement and that he had circulated them with this agenda. The documents had been displayed on the Parish Council notice board and web site as required. The report was presented to the Parish Council for approval and review.

He stressed that contrary to claims made, the Council had followed the correct legal procedure on approving its Annual Accounting Statement before starting consultation upon it. The consultation period had been correct and the external auditor's report made no reference to wrong-doing on these matters.

The external examiners had requested alteration to the submitted figures on income and staff costs in the statement to ensure consistency year on year rather than transparency. This been done as shown in the documents circulated, which had been agreed by the external auditors.

The auditor's qualified report noted a failure in the year to approve/alter the Financial Regulations, the Standing Orders and the Risk Assessment policy. This was a common failure in their view amongst Parish and Town Councils. Nevertheless, the Clerk assured the Council that the omission would be addressed, not least because new legislation on procurement would need amendments to Standing Orders.

16. NOTICE OF CONCLUSION OF AUDIT (CONT'D).

New draft Orders are being prepared by NALC and would be placed before the Council when available.

VAT had been claimed and received as reported in item 11. There had been no loss of revenue.

The Chairman referred to the Cornforth Residents Association web site in which claims of the Council's incorrect actions had been made. Councillor Mrs. Walker expressed her continued concerns about the approval of the accounts. The Parish Council approved the report and the actions to review the short-comings set out in it.

17. PROPOSED CLOSURE OF THE PARADISE FARM FOOTPATH.

The Clerk reported that Durham County Council had advised the Parish Council that the Paradise Farm Footpath in Coxhoe Parish will remain closed for a further 24 months from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2016 or until repairs are complete. The situation was noted.

18. COUNCIL TAX REFERENDUM PRINCIPLES FOR PARISH AND TOWN COUNCILS.

The Clerk reported that Town and Parish Councils were being consulted by Government on plans to change the referendum principles that apply to them on holding a referendum to increase the Council Tax. This is an important issue and the letter from CDALC had been circulated with the agenda. Members considered the proposals and unanimously resolved to endorse the response drafted by CDALC for submission to both the Government and NALC by 20<sup>th</sup> October 2016 and to our MP.

19. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLANNING AND 2017/18 BUDGET SETTING.

The Clerk reported that using the updated Tax Base figures and the forecast grant reductions provided by the Government, Durham County Council had prepared a model of the combined impact on Cornforth Parish Council for the next financial year as set out below:

Current tax base (2016/17) [A]	586.90
Tax base for 2017/18 [B]	591.80
Tax base increase from 2016/17 [C] = [B] – [A]	4.9
Current Band D Council Tax [D]	£136.93
Increase in Council Tax Yield [E] ([C] x [D])	£670.96
Removal of 2016/17 LCTRS Grant [F]	(£19,540.00)
LCTRS Grant Support to Cornforth for 2017/18 [G]	£17,024.00
<b>Net Position [E] – [F] + [G]</b>	<b>(£1,845.04)</b>

In addition, the County Council forecasts a reduction of £468.00 in 2018/19 and £1,189.00 in 2019/20.

Members noted the position ahead of its budget-setting meeting to be held in January 2017.

## 20. TURSDALE WAR MEMORIAL STATUE.

The Clerk reported that the application to Durham County Council's Neighbourhood Fund had been revised to take into account the contributions offered by three other County Councillors. This in turn has necessitated the alteration of the application for funds from Tarmac. The County Council had approved the grants and Members were each given a copy of the terms and conditions for information. Tarmac had been advised of the approval and would consider its position at its meeting in late October or early November 2016. It is hoped that following the Remembrance Day Dance to be held on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2016 (i.e. at the November Parish Council meeting), Members would be able to commission the statue. Members agreed to invite the County Councillors who had contributed and their partners, along with representatives from Tarmac to the dance as Civic Guests.

**NOTE: At the close of the meeting Members were be asked if they had any items for inclusion on a future agenda. None were requested.**

Signed: ..... Dated: .....

Ray Sunman Parish Clerk 17<sup>th</sup> October 2016.