

WALDRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Waldridge Parish Council held on 11 December 2018 at 7.00pm



Present: Councillors - Bell, Davies, Foster and Sexton.

Also in attendance – Sarah Wilson - Parish Clerk, Brian Laidler - Caretaker, Cllr Alan Bainbridge, County Councillor, and 5 members of the public

1. **Welcome** – The Vice Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. **Apologies for Absence:**

Cllrs Corner, Harding, Hollingsworth, Howie and Warren submitted their apologies.

3. **Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

No members declared an interest.

4. **Questions from members of the public:**

One member of the public – David Stabler of St. Barnabas Nursery – asked to speak about allegations he claimed had been made at a Council meeting relating to former Cllr Cork taking payments from the nursery in order to secure bedding plant contracts. Cllr Foster assured Mr. Stabler that no such allegation had ever been made, and that all Councillors and the previous Clerk had confirmed this. When questioned by Cllr Foster, Mr. Stabler then stated that he had been told that a member of the public had overheard a member of the Council making these allegations. Cllr Sexton then stated that Mr. Stabler had accused him of making these allegations, and that he had asked Mr. Stabler who had told him this, but that Mr. Stabler would not share the name of the person with him. Cllr Sexton then pointed out that Mr. Stabler had originally said that the allegations had been made during a meeting, then changed this outside of a meeting, and now this had been changed again to a member of the public overhearing at an unknown place and time. Cllr Sexton also stated that since joining the Council he has been pushing for rules to be followed, such as the need to obtain three quotes, and that this could be a possible reason why incorrect rumours may have been circulated. He also stated that both Mr. Stabler and himself are victims in this situation. Mr. Stabler then alleged that Cllr Sexton had made comments about Cllr Cork, and when asked by Cllr Sexton to explain what comments he was referring to, Mr. Stabler reiterated that he meant the allegation that Cllr Cork had taken payments to secure bedding plant contracts. Cllr Sexton stated that this was categorically untrue, and that Mr. Stabler should not have made such serious allegations without any evidence. Both Mr. Stabler and Cllr Sexton stated that they intended to investigate further, to see where the rumour originated. Cllr Foster then stated that as the matter had been investigated, and that it has been confirmed by all Councillors that no such allegation was made by the Council, that it was no longer a Parish Council issue. Cllr Bell then read out Mr. Stabler's letter to the Council, in which he had stated that St. Barnabas Nursery had been discussed in a derogatory manner in the previous (November) meeting. Cllr Bell pointed out that the discussion that had taken place in the meeting had been quite the opposite, and in fact the Council had voted in favour of allowing St. Barnabas to re-quote – something that Mr. Stabler had up to now been unaware of, as he had withdrawn his quote before he could be informed. Cllr Sexton then mentioned an email trail involving Councillors, which related to the obtaining of three quotes for bedding plants and watering services, pointing out that in this email trail, Cllr Cork had mentioned innuendo. Cllr Sexton stated that it was possible that Cllr Cork had misconstrued what was said in the email trail, but he confirmed that no derogatory comments were made, and that Mr. Stabler was welcome to view the emails.

5. **Police Report:**

PCSO Donnelly did not attend. The bi-monthly Police Report was discussed – no incidents to report.

6. **Minutes of Council meeting – 13 November 2018:**

Resolved: *The minutes of the meeting held on 13th November 2018 were approved as a true record and were signed by the Vice Chairman.*

7. **Minutes of Council finance and budget meeting – 4 December 2018**

The minutes to be deferred for approval until the January meeting.

8. **Parish matters and ongoing items**

a) **County Councillors report**

Cllr Bainbridge gave an update on Barratt/Birch View – still no progress and he will chase them up.

Resolved: *Report noted.*

b) **Waldridge in Bloom working group**

Cllr Sexton that the winter bedding plants had now been planted, and that summer bedding plants need to be ordered as soon as possible. The three quotes were then read out. Cllr Foster asked whether the Parish Council could enter Northumbria in Bloom, as the previous entry had been Waldridge in Bloom with support from the Parish Council, and Cllr Sexton assured the Council that they could enter, and that as stated in a previous meeting, he would be happy to take care of the paperwork. Cllr Davies suggested that the Parish should not enter Northumbria in Bloom in 2019, but it was pointed out by Cllrs Foster and Sexton that the Council had already voted to enter. Cllr Bell asked whether entering and not achieving a high award would count against the Parish, and it was agreed that it would not. The Council then discussed the planting and maintaining of the flower beds, with Cllr Sexton stating that a lack of volunteers often leaves a large amount of work for the Caretaker. Cllr Foster stated that nobody comes up with a better service for labour than DCC, and Cllr Bell suggested that DCC could assist with the bulk of the work, with the Council getting schools and community groups involved with the rest. Cllr Bell also pointed out that at present there is no backup for labour, and Cllr Sexton stated that using DCC's service would allow the Council to have as much or as little involvement as they want. Cllr Davies asked how we would be charged for watering, and would we be charged extra if it was a dry summer, and the Clerk stated that she did not believe so, and that the price should be the same. Cllr Foster asked whether we would pay less if we used less labour, and Cllr Sexton stated that he believed that this would be the case.

Resolved: *The Council voted and selected Durham County Council as the bedding plant supplier for the next year. It was also agreed that Durham County Council would be used for planting, maintenance and watering services, with the Council deciding their level of involvement. Both votes unanimous. As all of the winter bedding plants have already been planted, no vote on this subject was required.*

c) **Working Group**

There were no updates or suggestions.

Resolved: *None needed.*

d) **Updates from Facebook**

In the absence of Cllrs Harding and Warren, Cllr Foster read out the Facebook report. Firstly, a resident had made a request for additional dog foul bins. Cllr Sexton asked that Cllrs Harding and Warren contact either himself or Cllr Bainbridge, so that they can look into this. Both the 'Tis the season to give socks, and the Nightwear before Christmas campaigns have had a lot of resident participation. Lots of positive feedback had been received regarding the The Festive Pyjama party, and there has been a lot of interest in having films screened on a more regular basis. The Council discussed this and agreed that it should be placed on the agenda at a future meeting. A resident reported an intruder had entered their house in Waldridge Village. Cllrs Bainbridge and Sexton advised that residents should report all incidents to 101, as without reports, it is more difficult to get the police to increase patrols. Another resident reported a near miss crash in the village, and highlighted that cars were parking over the new white lines. Cllr Sexton stated that whenever he has driven by, the white lines have been left clear. Cllr Foster asked whether it is illegal to park on single white lines, and it was confirmed that it is not. A further complaint had been received, this time regarding parking at the Hermitage Academy on the road next to the Whitehills pub. It was agreed that the parking situation was concerning, and that it was still a problem despite the extending of the lines. Cllr Davies questioned whether the road is in the Parish or not, and Cllrs Bainbridge and Sexton confirmed that the road is the boundary. Cllr Foster stated that even if it had not been within the Parish, many children from the Parish attend the school, and that it is important to consider their safety. Cllr Sexton suggested that himself, Cllr Bainbridge and the Clerk could look into this further, perhaps with assistance from DCC. It was suggested that as the installation of the play area has now been delayed, that a post should be made informing residents of the new anticipated install date. Cllr Sexton agreed to work with the Clerk to create a post. Finally a resident had requested that the Facebook report be shared to the Parish Facebook group after each Council meeting.

Resolved: *Report noted. It was agreed that the Facebook report should be shared on Facebook after each meeting (unanimous).*

e) **Millennium Green Subcommittee**

The Caretaker gave a verbal report. All flower beds have been planted. The sleepers and the boards on the boardwalk have now been replaced. The Millennium Green itself is in good condition, with the exception of some waterlogging. All equipment has been inspected and no issues identified. The Caretaker had obtained a quote of £1,200 for maintenance of all of the shrubbery on the green. The Clerk will contact further companies to arrange quotes, with the Caretaker meeting them to show what is required. To be placed on next agenda for further discussion.

Resolved: *Report noted.*

f) **Publishing of Vacancy and Election notices**

A discussion on the publishing of Vacancy and Election notices took place. Cllr Sexton stated that he believed that the Council had already agreed that notices should be posted on Facebook and the website, as well as in the noticeboards. Cllr Bell stated that the Council should follow the rules, and if it had been previously agreed, then it should be done. Cllr Sexton stated that the rules only required notices to be published in the noticeboards, but that Council had agreed to publish on Facebook and the website in addition to this.

Resolved: *It was agreed that Vacancy and Election notices should be published on Facebook and the website, and that the Clerk should control the posting of the notices (unanimous).*

g) **Response to election campaign leaflet**

The Council discussed the leaflets that have been recently distributed by a candidate standing in the upcoming Parish election. Cllr Sexton stated that the last year is arguably one of the best the Parish Council has had, delivering many successful projects and events, and that the leaflets are very misleading. He stated that the candidate in question has previously lied in leaflets and has admitted to doing so. Cllr Foster questioned why someone who wanted to join the Parish Council would use political party logos, when the Parish Council is politically neutral. Cllr Foster also questioned why the candidate would state that he regularly attends Parish meetings, when Councillors can only remember him attending once, when he had applied to be co-opted. Cllr Sexton mentioned that several criticisms of the Council, such as the failure to repair pot holes, are in fact County Council issues, and not something that falls under the remit of the Parish Council. Cllr Davies suggested that the Council ignore the leaflets.

Resolved: *It was agreed that the Council would not respond to the leaflets (unanimous).*

h) **Clippings**

The Council discussed the publishing of the Clippings and potential publishing dates.

Resolved: *It was agreed that an issue of the Clippings should be published in January, and that a decision of further publication dates should be deferred until the next meeting.*

i) **Attendance of Parish events by non-residents**

The Council discussed the attendance of Parish events by non-residents, and how this should be controlled. Cllr Foster stated that she believed that this was already being controlled, and Cllr Bell agreed, stating that this has been controlled well at previous events, such as Halloween and the Cinema event. Cllr Davies mentioned that as not all residents are on Facebook, they are sometimes not aware of events until the Clippings is published, and by this time tickets may be all allocated. Cllr Sexton suggested that a plan with event dates should be made well in advance, so publication of details on Facebook, the website, and the clippings can be co-ordinated.

Resolved: *As it was agreed that event attendance was already being well controlled, no votes were required.*

j) **Allotment hedge**

The Clerk provided the Council with a quote that she had received from the trimming of the allotment hedge, and informed the Council that she was waiting for replies from two further contractors.

Resolved: *It was agreed to defer the decision on the trimming of the allotment hedge until three quotes have been obtained.*

k) **Attendance at meetings**

The importance of attendance at meetings was discussed by the Council. Cllr Sexton stated that while it is understandable that sometimes people are ill, or unexpected situations arise, when a meeting to discuss important matters such as finances and budget is called by the Chairman, the Chairman should perhaps attempt to reschedule if they cannot attend. Cllr Bell agreed, stating that there is no more important meeting than a finance and budget one. Cllr Davies pointed out that failure to attend six meetings in a row would result in a Councillor losing their place on the Council. Cllr Foster stated that the procedure for submitting apologies is that apologies and reasons for absence must be submitted to the Clerk in writing. Cllr Sexton suggested that when apologies are received, that all members of the Council should be made aware, as if it becomes apparent that attendance will be low, Councillors may make extra effort to attend meetings to ensure that the Council has a quorum. The Clerk agreed and suggested that she would pass on apologies to the Council when received, omitting any sensitive or personal information that may be given as reason for absence.

Resolved: *The procedure for submitting apologies was noted.*

l) **SLCC membership**

The Council discussed the renewal of the Clerk's annual SLCC membership.

Resolved: *It was agreed that the Clerk's SLCC membership should be renewed at a cost of £136 (unanimous).*

m) **Action Plan**

The Action Plan was discussed, and it was suggested that this should be updated more regularly and treated more like the Action Log which follows on from every meeting.

Resolved: *It was agreed that the Clerk should update the Action Log to remove any completed projects, and that any new projects would be added at a later date (unanimous).*

n) **Three-year budget**

A discussion of the three-year budget took place. Cllr Sexton pointed out that as DCC have now added VAT on to the street lighting invoices, this should be reflected in the three-year budget. Cllr Davies questioned whether the 25% minimum reserve should be 25% of total spend, and not 25% of the precept. The Clerk explained that it was 25% of the precept, and pointed out the email from CDALC with information from the external auditor that confirms this, and gives examples of the calculation. Cllr Bell raised the subject of the ROSPA inspection of the new play area that had been emailed to Councillor by Cllr Howie. Cllr Bell stated that this had not been budgeted for, and questioning whether it is necessary, or whether this could be carried out by the County Durham Safety Advisory Group. The Clerk agreed to look into the matter and report back to the Council. Cllr Bell also pointed out that it is important that when budgeting for a project, that all potential costs are taken into consideration at the beginning, to avoid unexpected and unbudgeted costs arising at a later date.

Resolved: *It was agreed to defer the setting of the three-year budget to the next meeting (unanimous).*

o) **Policy review**

The Clerk gave an update on the progress of the Safeguarding policy. Cllr Bell stressed the importance of having a full Parish policy, and not just one to cover the play area.

Resolved: *Update noted.*

p) **Timetable of training events**

The Vice Chairman read out the date and time of the upcoming Code of Conduct training – 8th January at 6pm.

Resolved: *The details of the Code of Conduct training were noted.*

q) **Grants / fundraising**

Cllr Bell mentioned the recent donation of Christmas decorations by LCA Community Charity, and stated that they had requested some help with fundraising in return.

Resolved: *Update noted.*

r) **Planning Applications**

DM/18/03433/FPA	9 Shillmoor Close Chester-le-Street DH2 3TA	Demolition of rear conservatory and erection of single storey rear extension.
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Resolved: *To recommend approval.*

s) **To consider any planning applications received after the agenda was published**

- None received.

t) **Correspondence received**

1. Letter from The Great North Air Ambulance Service – thanking the Council for their donation.

Resolved: *Letter of thanks noted.*

u) **Correspondence received after agenda published** (to note only)

- Email from resident concerning the storage of rubbish and building materials on the grass to the rear of 4 Rothbury Close since approximately May of this year, and the damage to the grass and land as a result.

Resolved: *Cllr Sexton confirmed that the residents who have been having the building work done have been spoken to, and that they have agreed to repair the damage to the grass. It was also confirmed that they understand that if they do not carry out the necessary repair, that this will be done on their behalf and the bill will be forwarded to them.*

v) **Clerks Report / Action Log**

The Clerk gave an update on all items on the Action Log from the November meeting.

w) **Urgent issues for noting (Clerk to use delegated powers if necessary) and any items Councillors wish to agenda for next meeting**

- No issues to note.

10. **Financial Matters**

	(a) <u>Payments</u>	
<u>Resolved:</u> That the following payments be agreed:		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9) (10) (11) (12) (13) (14) (15) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> That the sum of £989.58 be paid to Miss S Wilson (November 2018 wage) That the sum of £221.74 be paid to Mr B Laidler (November 2018 wage) That the sum of £36.00 be paid to Miss S Wilson (allowance) That the sum of £56.00 be paid to E.ON (gas and electricity) That the sum of £22.74 be paid to XLN Telecom (broadband) That the sum of £286.77 be paid to Net Island UK (Web hosting) That the sum of £120.00 be paid to Net Island UK (Content management plan) That the sum of £115.00 be paid to A. M. Locksmiths (locksmith call out) That the sum of £30.05 be paid to Brenda Wright (wool for WW1 poppies) That the sum of £8,977.00 be paid to J. R. Power (Parish rooms refurb) That the sum of £7.80 be paid to Charleton Fencing (notice board fixings) That the sum of £75.50 be paid to K Harding (Halloween expenses) That the sum of £108.79 be paid to SLCC (Arnold-Baker book) That the sum of £118.80 be paid to SLCC (ILCA course fee) That the sum of £221.50 be paid to P Sexton (Awards Evening prizes)
	(b) <u>Receipts</u>	<p><u>Resolved:</u> That the following receipts be noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) That the sum of £100 was received from Charleton Fencing (sponsored flower bed)
<p>11. <u>Date of Next Meeting</u></p> <p>8 January to commence at 7.00pm.</p> <p>The meeting terminated at 8.45 pm</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Chairman Date</p>		