

**THE MINUTES OF THE ORDINARY MEETING OF**

**THE HEALEYFIELD PARISH COUNCIL**

**HELD ONLINE THURSDAY 23 APRIL 2020**

**Present:**

Councillor A. Pearson (Chair)

Councillors A. Hird, J. Robson, K. Spencer, A. Wallace

County Councillors J. Considine

J Coates, L. Standish (Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer) and 5 members of the public.

**Chairs Update**: Office Holders, A. Pearson (Chair) and J. Robson (Vice Chair) will remain in office until May 2021. There will be no election this year, or any annual meetings of electors or Annual Parish Meeting, all have been suspended by Government.

**1.** **Apologies for Absence**

Councillors J. Forster, D. Dixon

**2. Declaration of Interest**

None

**3. Public Participation**

S. Stephenson, G. Scott, W. Benson, M. Wotherspoon, J. Fife.

Residents are perturbed by the proposed development. A lot of residents don’t have online access, ie. How can the aged have their say? The Housing Survey was ambiguous and looked like junk mail, the questions were very general. Further issues are documented in section 5.

Chairs response: If members of the public do not have online access, the meeting can be accessed by telephone, using a standard landline. The parish council would have liked to call a public meeting, but under the circumstances we have been unable to. Regarding the survey the Chair had a conversation with the Northern Echo clarifying that the survey was requested by DCC during the Pre-Planning Application and not by the parish council.

**4. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

No meeting in March due to COVID-19

**RESOLV ED** that minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 27 February 2020 were accepted as a true and correct record.

**5. Planning Application**

Land between 18 to 20 Watergate Road for 35 properties of mixed tenure. The application will be determined by The Planning Committee.

**RESOLVED** move to object to planning application – Majority

Objections to be forwarded to Durham County Council by letter:

**HOUSING**

* There is no need in the village for affordable housing as proposals are already in place developments behind The Horse and Groom and on Drover Road.
* There is enough housing going around the Consett area already.
* A reference was made about a lack of bungalows in the village, there are at least 76 in Castleside. So, 12 to 13% properties in Castleside are bungalows.
* There are currently six houses within the village for sale at less than £100,000.00

**VILLAGE AFFECTS**

**Traffic**

* A68 gets blocked with bad weather making the road impassable at times.
* The entrance to the proposed planning is not far from the school, there will be additional traffic at least twice a day pulling off A68, which is already a busy road additional construction traffic and then homeowners would only make this worse.
* A speed survey was done January/February from 8am to 8.20am, 17% of vehicles seen were speeding which is almost a 1/5 in the 20 minute slot, which is high in the given time it was conducted. During busier times of the day the average speed would increase significantly. This survey showed average speeds of 33mph.
* Extending the boundaries of Castleside with 35 individual plots would mean contractors using site, given the topography of the site - a lot of soil to be removed before foundations commence. Which means increased lorries on an already busy road.
* Traffic accelerate up hill and fast coming in downhill coming in to the village. The entrance from A68 is dangerous and an extra burden on Watergate Road. Most properties have 2 cars which would cause an extra burden.

**Facilities**

* The areas behind Horse & Groom and Waterboard field (Drover Road) within the boundaries of Castleside, adding this planning would go beyond the natural boundaries of the village.
* The new housing would be bringing people from outside the village in rather than residents moving to the new houses.
* The traffic entering/exiting the development site would have a wider impact on the village and other residents. For example, the use of Drover Road which has a weight limited of 7.5 tons which is rarely adhered to.
* Documents on the planning application show a report by Northumbrian Water, nothing should go ahead until a proper consultation had taken place. There are a lot of issues at the bottom of Watergate Road with drainage, extensive work has done in last few years, small sewer. There will be an extra burden on village drains, which Northumbrian Water would need to investigate. The Chairman clarified that whilst the parish council are aware of these problems, planning permission could be granted by DCC without a detailed consultation with Northumbrian Water. DCC would apply a condition that the development could not proceed until that was conducted.
* The land could be potentially contaminated given the past use as a lead smelt mill.
* There will be a burden on the facilities we already have; Doctors etc
* There is a lack of shops, etc within the village

**Landscape**

* The revised DCC plan will detrimentally affect the landscape and encroach on an area of the village.
* The view from the top of Rowley Bank commands an outstanding panorama across Castleside and the Derwgent Valley, this would be lost forever should the development proceed.
* The site is within 25m of an historic ancient woodland also within 25m of the lead mine workings.
* The Chair had a conversation by email with Steve France, who referenced the New County Plan, which has not yet been approved, but has gone through to its final consultation. In that plan, the Strategic Housing Planning land availability assessment, refers to the site being as poorly contained within the settlement and effectively located within the open countryside. Development of this site would result in significant negative impacts on the landscape, which is a landscape conservation priority area. Significant adverse residual landscape and visual impact would occur. The site lies within the an HLV (High Landscape Value Area) and very close to the AONB it is a prominent elevated site.

**FINANCIAL**

* The developers have proposed that a repairing lease of no less than 99 years be granted to The Parish Council for the land for allotments, presumably a fenced off area which needs to be maintained, secured, insured, which will require manage leasing.
* Similarly, a Community building is also proposed, again on a repairing lease no less 99 years for The Parish Council to maintain, provide utilities/security, insure of which will have to come out of the Parish Council budget.
* The Parish Council would be fully obliged for maintaining and utility costs (gas, electric, water) and annual compliance checks and repairs. Money would be well spent on facilities we already have ie. Village
* At no point has the applicant or Agent consulted with the Parish Council as to whether this would be something that is desirable to the Parish Council or consulted with the public. The report on the Housing Needs Survey stipulates that there has been a lack of community buildings, the parish council strongly disagree. Castleside is well served such facilities including: Village Hall, Scout Hut, Club, community room in St Johns church and just outside the Parish there’s the Church Hall of St Johns. There are also numerous Church Halls and Community Venues in Consett itself and surrounding villages/suburbs.
* Our Precept could not cope with the additional pressure of facilitating allotments and community building. The parish council would therefore have no choice but to significantly raise the precept by 30%, quite a dramatic increase, to ensure our sustainability.
* Unfair to make a decision when we have been unable to have proper consultation due to COVID-19, it should be deferred until we can get everyone to attend the village hall and have a proper consultation and let residents have a vote.

Cllr. J. Considine suggested having a look at planning considerations. Can only do this on material planning considerations.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Parish Clerk draft a Letter of Objection. Letter to be circulated to councillors prior to being submitted. This letter would also include a request that a member of the Planning Committee visit the site prior to determination.

**6. Flower Tubs Summer Planting**

**RESOLVED** colour scheme red/white/blue

Planting to be agreed, J Forster to be consulted and A. Wallace to obtain a price from Briary Services to plant. Plants to be ordered from Beveridages by A Pearson.

**7. VE Day Celebrations/Commemoration**

**RESOLVED** villagers to make their own flags and decorate their houses (no competition).

J Robson to take a speaker on wheels playing 4 war songs around each street, lyrics and schedule to be distributed. VE Day is Friday 8th May 2020.

**8. Finance**

**i) Accounts for payment**

**RESOLVED** March accounts distributed - approved

**RESOLVED** April accounts distributed - approved

**ii)Account balances and summary**

**RESOLVED** March accounts distributed - approved

**RESOLVED** April accounts distributed – approved

General Funds balance is a negative as budget set prior to precept being received. Slight overspend on salaries due to overlap of Clerks with J Coates/L Standish.

Day/month of signature to be added to reconciliations

**iii)AGAR**

**Section 1** **RESOLVED**

Annual Governance Statement completed by Councillors - Approved

**Section 2 RESOLVED**

End of year balance £21,233.98, bank statement £22,359.39 less uncleared cheques

of £1,125.41 (which has already been committed)

Total Income £18,123

Total Expenditure £17,582

Figures Approved by Councillors

Specified dates to be published online 1st July to 11th August – statutory form to be completed and displayed on Parish noticeboard.

VAT refund applied for.

**9. Speeding on A692**

* Refer it to the Police and ask for monitoring. Issues between 7pm to 10pm
* Clerk to contact Durham Police, as previously reported.

**10. Clerks Report**

* Bank Account – problems contacting Lloyds during COVID-19. J Coates to continue to have access to online account to print statements.
* Laptop – nothing available at the moment, prices increased and quote expired.

J Coates investigating, allowance to be increased from £350 to £500, more quotes required.

* A Byte – Fee is for our online email account (£4.56,) price would be £10 p/m with OneDrive. A Byte are the administrator, we need to sever ties and buy with Microsoft direct. The Hosting Fee was paid February 2020 for 1 year. Over 3 years approx. £700, A Byte won’t release any information to get quotes elsewhere. Suggestion is to invest in a website that removes A Byte. We need to arrange a new website, which will save over the years. Approximate cost of £700, for a website. The Domain belongs to the council, a fee which we have to pay but we can transfer it. J Coates to obtain details. Jude checking with Lanchester what they use.

Clerk to schedule for discussion Aug/Sep

* Viaduct signs – Alan forwarded an email to everyone, Clerk to forward to Louise Armstrong **RESOLVED**
* CCTV Cameras – Details received and being chased but no reply at the moment
* J Coates, as clerk, final meeting. The Chair thanked the outgoing clerk for his work over the last 15 months and wished him all the best in his new role.

**11. Communication**

* Time line to chase ‘in house’ communication is 48hrs – **RESOLVED**
* Phil Archer – Ball games complaint since 2015. The Parish Council would have no control over the nature of this complaint – Clerk to respond to Phil and pass on to neighbourhood wardens.
* Alan Bean – problem with dogs Healeyfield Farm and sheep being put down. The Parish Council would have no control over the nature of this complaint – Clerk to reply to Alan and pass on to the police.

**12. Date of Next Meeting**

Thursday 28 May 2020, if not in person via Zoom. **RESOLVED**

**13. Confidential Items**

One item raised.

# Conclusion of Meeting at 7.54pm

Signed …………………………. Cllr A Pearson Chair of the Council