

HEDLEYHOPE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 25 January 2024 at 7.30 pm in the Village Hall, East Hedleyhope

Present

Chair: Sarah Woodroffe (SW)

CLLrs: Peter Ayling (PA), Charlene Huntley (CS), Tony Reeve (TR), Jeff Stobart (JS),
Deb Warde (DW)

Officer: Gillian Bell (Clerk)

Also present: Martin Hurton (MH) (resident)

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Cllr Chrissy Stobart, County Cllr Dan Nicholls, County Cllr Marion Wilson

2. **Declarations of Interest**

PA, CH, TR, JS, DW and SW declared an interest in item 11 as local residents.

3. **Public Participation**

MH had been invited to the meeting to discuss his application for co-option to the Parish Council (considered under item 7).

4. **County Councillors' Report**

A written report had been circulated.

- *Council update on financial position for 2024* – The Council's financial forecasts and Medium Term Financial Plan have been updated following the government's Autumn Statement and local government settlement at the end of 2023. If all the proposed savings are approved by full Council, and assuming council tax increases in line with government expectations of 4.99 per cent in 2024/25 and 2.99 per cent per annum thereafter, DCC are facing a £42 million shortfall over the four-year period, with £6 million of this falling into 2024/25. In County Durham a 4.99% increase in council tax would result in an increase of between £1.15 and £1.54 per week for residents. Households on low incomes would be protected from any increase, either in full or in part.
- *Durham Bus Station reopens* – the new bus station on North Road opened to the public on 7 January 2024.
- *Independent committee members sought to help council maintain high standards* – applications are now open for two independent person posts on DCC Audit Committee, which advises the council and its cabinet on audit and governance issues. The two independent members will join the committee in reviewing internal processes, risk assessments and financial management and reporting procedures. The positions are for three years, from April 2024 until April 2027, and the successful candidates are required to attend five-to-six meetings at County Hall in Durham each year. A full induction and training will be given and while the roles are unpaid, reasonable travel expenses can be claimed.

5. **PCSO briefing**

No report received.

6. **Minutes and recommendations therein agreed from previous meeting on 30 November 2023**

Proposed by DW, seconded by TR.

7. **To consider applications for co-option to the Parish Councillor vacancies**

MH discussed his application and reasons for wishing to join the Parish Council. It was agreed that MH be co-opted to the Parish Council. The Clerk will arrange for him to sign the Declaration of Acceptance form and complete the Register of Interests form.

8. **New Parish Council policies**

As part of the National Lottery funding application (item 10) the Parish Council was required to have Safeguarding and Health and Safety policies in place. Draft policies had been circulated prior to the meeting. It was agreed to adopt the Safeguarding policy and this will be added to the website. JS raised issues relating to the Health and Safety policy, particularly in regard to the Construction Design and Management Regulations 2015 and the need to delegate duties to contractors. It was therefore agreed to revise the draft policy and bring this to the next meeting for further discussion.

9. **Progression of on-going projects**

Community Emergency Plan: items for purchase and storage options

TR indicated that he would purchase the required items in the next few weeks. It was agreed that the Clerk would go ahead and purchase a metal store and will contact Richard Curtis to arrange installation at the front of the hall.

10. **Matters relating to the village hall, village green and nature reserve**

Village hall replacement doors and heating system

The Land Registry had confirmed that the title deed for the village green also covered the village hall: a separate deed was not needed to prove ownership of the hall. Durham Community Action have agreed that the Parish Council can receive the National Lottery funding of £23,500 to cover the costs of new heating, replacement doors, insulation and any decorating or making good, but the money needed to be spent quickly. An estimate of £13,500 had been received in September 2023 for an air source heat pump and radiators but a government subsidy of £7,500 would also be available. An estimator from Geowarmth was visiting on 26 January to provide a full quote. A cheaper quote had been obtained for an air conditioning unit but there was no subsidy for this option and it would only heat the main hall and kitchen. JS raised the issue of annual service costs for the heat pump and also whether the heating would need to be left on over the winter months when there was a risk of pipes freezing. It was agreed to look into the possibility of a smart thermostat, which would require an internet connection in the hall. Using mobile broadband would be investigated as an interim solution and it was noted that offering WiFi in the hall would help make it more attractive to hire.

A quote had also been obtained from Moorside Windows to replace the main and fire doors (£2,500). JS asked whether it would be possible to add opaque glass to the fire door to allow light into the corridor and it was agreed to get a revised quote to include this.

The funding also included money for insulation and Geowarmth had suggested a company who may be able to carry out this work. SW would follow up to get a quote.

Defibrillator mounting and restored seats

Richard Curtis had agreed to fix the defibrillator mounting and repair and install the two seats. The Clerk would chase up an estimate for both jobs.

Vehicles on the village green

DW raised the issue of damage caused by quad bikes being driven over the village green. This had happened several times recently and it was thought that the riders were from outside the area. SW suggested keeping a log of incidents and trying to identify any regular times that this was happening. The issue will be included in the next newsletter and residents who see quad bikes on the green should report this to the police. The Clerk was also asked to report the recent incidents to the PCSO.

Fire aid kit and accident book for the village hall

The Clerk will check the items in the first aid kit and purchase an accident book for the hall. The need for a trauma kit will also be investigated.

11. Draft comments on the planning application:

DM/23/03047/FPA – Seven wind turbines, up to 149.9m in height, along with associated infrastructure including crane pads, access track, electrical housing, cabling, and a modified site entrance – Wind Farm, High Hedleyhope Farm, East Hedleyhope DL13 4PR

Draft comments had been circulated and it was agreed to submit these to Planning Services. The Clerk would check if members of the public/Parish Council could attend the planning committee meeting, which was scheduled for March.

12. Newsletter

Agreed that SW would supply the content for the newsletter, CH will provide a summary about the playgroup and TR will assemble and print.

13. Members' reports

CH indicated that she wished to step down as a councillor and SW offered thanks on behalf of the Council for her service. In addition, CH noted that the phone box library needed to be tidied and cleaned and it was agreed to add an item to the newsletter to ask for a volunteer to take over this project. CH had also arranged for the red chairs in the village hall to be removed and they will be used in her church hall.

TR indicated that he would also like to step down as a parish councillor following the April 2024 meeting.

14. Clerk's report

Financial

Payments made in December 2023 and January 2024:

Octopus Energy	£ 105.81	Village Hall electricity
G Bell	£ 492.15	Clerk's salary & IT costs
Octopus Energy	£ 61.94	Village Hall electricity
Total:	£ 659.90	

Payments received:

Heart House Workshop	£ 1000.00	Refund
Art Group	£ 280.00	Village hall hire
Total:	£ 1280.00	

Budget review

Balance as of 25 January 2024:

Income: £17,350.86

Expenditure: £13,348.72

Earmarked project expenditure:

Seat repair and installation: £1000

Northern Powergrid Funding for Community Emergency Plan: £4000

- The conifer outside the hall, which had been uprooted in the recent storms, would need to be removed – MH offered to do this.
- A request had been received from two residents to use the village hall for a fundraising event for their daughter who was taking part in a Project Wallacea expedition. It was agreed that there would be no charge.
- The precept for 2024/5 has been requested from DCC.
- Village hall roof: the AAP had been thanked for the funding and the monitoring form completed.
- PAT testing – completed.
- Fire extinguisher service – completed and the foam extinguisher replaced.
- The Art Group had agreed to pay an additional amount to cover heating the hall.
- Clean Earth had confirmed that the Mid-Durham and Three Towns AAPs had expressed interest in managing the community fund which would be linked to the new wind farm if construction goes ahead. Derek Snaithe had confirmed that Mid-Durham AAP had expressed an interest but there were no further details at present as to how this would work.

15. **Date for next meeting:** Thursday 29 February at 7.30 pm in the village hall.

The meeting closed at 9.10 pm.

Signed

Cllr Sarah Woodroffe

Chair

29 February 2024