

WITTON – LE – WEAR PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the ordinary meeting of Witton le Wear Parish Council held on Monday 9th January 2023 at Witton le Wear Community Centre commencing at 18.15.

Present: Councillors P. Cowan (Chair, mins), L. Docherty, C. Cook, O. Wilson
P Parsons, S. Brabban

Also Present: John Metcalf, Janet Willey

Apologies: Councillors H. Murray-Leslie, S. Morehead

Declaration of interest: None

69/22 Minutes of the Ordinary meeting held 14th November 2022.

Agreed as being an accurate record of the meeting.

70/22 Electronic Decisions made since the last meeting

None

71/22 Action Log

To be reviewed fully at next meeting.

72/22 Representation by Residents

Mr Metcalf outlined some work that he is undertaking to raise funding for the Ukraine Humanitarian Fund. The fund-raising is being carried out in a personal capacity to provide supplies to the people of Ukraine and is not affiliated to a particular charity.

It was agreed that the Parish Council would do the following:

- Put details in the Witton Word so that residents can support this cause
- Have a collection point with Cllr. Wilson at the Dun Cow.

The Parish Council will raise the matter with CDALC to understand if a donation could be possible.

Cllr. Wilson agreed to be a point of contact between the Parish Council and Mr Metcalf.

J Willey joined the meeting

Janet raised an issue relating to the lack of provision of salt bins around St. James Gardens. Cllr. Cowan advised that this has been raised with Durham County Council's Clean and Green team. Cllr Cook has a call scheduled with Clean and Green and will raise this matter with them again.

A further issue with dog fouling, particularly around the cemetery, was discussed. Cllr Parsons agreed to write an article for the Witton Word.

73/22 Matters arising from the previous minutes.

1. Traffic Working Group

Awaiting feedback from DCC following a number of attempts to gain an understanding of what traffic management measures might be suitable for our village.

Councillors discussed a number of different approaches to how we could move this forward.

It was agreed that Cllr Parsons would draft an update for residents in the Witton Word.

Residents present agreed that there are a number of traffic issues throughout the village.

Discussions with residents could link well with the Parish Plan work that the Parish Council intends to undertake.

2. Witton Word

Cllr. Brabban has sent reminders to our usual contributors informing everyone of the next Witton Word deadline. Cllr Brabban to speak to Eli Press to obtain an update on pricing for the coming financial year.

Cllr Cook to provide an article to update residents on the Disability Access Ramp (DAR) project.

3. Climate and Nature Group

No update

4. Emergency Response Group

Application for Grant Funding to be submitted.

5. Bench at West End

New bench should be in situ within the next week.

6. Correspondence with Chapel

E-mail correspondence has been received from David Payne who has confirmed that he remains the contact if repairs are required to the building.

The correspondence indicated that the Chapel is likely to be sold.

Cllr Cowan to feed this information back to the resident who raise the matter with the Parish Council.

7. Dropped Curbs

Cllr. Cook advised that the funding contribution has been paid by the Parish Council and that there will be an 8 week turn-around for installation of the DARs.

8. Public Footpaths

- Witton Castle – Cllr Cowan has contacted DCC regarding a notice that has been displayed around the lakes at Witton Castle. The notice appeared to be seeking to bring an end to various rights that have been enjoyed by residents. Clarification has been sought from DCC seeking to understand what this means in practice. An update is awaited.
- Walking board repairs – Cllr Parsons to action
- Long river path – the riverside footpath running west of the old bridge has formally been closed by DCC due to riverbank erosion. DCC have advised that this should be removed from our strimming contract as this is no longer a public right of way. Cllr Cowan to ask DCC if they need to take more action to prevent access to this path.
- Procurement of strimming contractor – Lynda Bentley has offered to obtain quotes from various contractors to find a supplier to do this work.

9. Christmas Lights

Awaiting invoice from Derek Bradley for the new Christmas globes.

Cllr Wilson to contact DCC for a quote to decorate a further tree on the village green.

Cllr Brabban asked if the Christmas globes could be put up earlier in future years. There is an issue with the life of the batteries which influences the timing that the globes are put up. We can explore buying longer life batteries for future years.

There is also a desire to add to the Christmas light offering in key areas in the village. J Willey thought the Church would be happy to work with the Parish Council to increase the provision of Christmas lights in the village. Cllr Docherty will pick this up with Kate Atkins.

10. Coronation Event / Memorial to Queen Elizabeth II

Cllrs Cook and Docherty to consider what the village might like to do to mark the Coronation of King Charles III. No official guidance has been issued at this stage. Cllr. Brabban suggested that we should involve as many of the village groups as possible. An update will be provided at the next meeting.

Cllr Brabban to contact the Witton Word mailing list to ask for ideas.

A memorial to Queen Elizabeth II was discussed. A number of ideas were discussed between Councillors. It was agreed to put an article in the Witton Word to seek ideas from residents as an initial step.

74/22

Financial Statement and Report

Balance of Current Account and Cash £5,785.65 as of 31st December 2022. An additional £40 is held in the Yorkshire Bank Account which needs to be closed and transferred to the current account.

Councillors ratified the payment of invoices as follows up to 31st December 2022:

CDALC Budget Training	£20
Eli Press (Witton Word)	£175
Queen Memorial Flowers	£44.50
Hanging Basket Flowers	£47.47
Marmax Bench (West End)	£250
Remembrance Wreath	£25
Eli Press (Witton Word)	£175
DAR Contribution	£4,000
Electricity	£21.98
Bank Charges	£18
Total	£4,776.95

Budget paper had previously been circulated to inform the setting of the Precept for 2023/24. Councillors discussed the financial paper in detail. The usual Precept request has been £6,600 for a number of years. Given increased costs to the Parish Council it was agreed to increase the Precept to £7,500 by majority vote (4 in favour of the increase, 2 in favour of holding at same level). This is subject to seeking advice from CDALC to understand what other Councils are doing this year. Cllr Cowan to write an article for the Witton Word to advise residents.

Insurance renewal is due this month. Parish Council has been quoted £391 (inc VAT).

It was resolved:

All financial matters agreed as being correct.

75/22

Planning Matters

None

76/22

Neighbourhood and Parish Plan.

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Signed by the Chairman.....

Stuart Carter is the contact at DCC and has offered to meet the Parish Council to discuss how to form a Parish Plan. Cllr Cowan to set up a meeting with Stuart. Cllr Brabban asked if we could set Parish Council principles to provide a guide to inform what we want to achieve as an authority.

77/22

Correspondence

Resident has approached the Parish Council about potholes in various locations, but particularly on Cemetery Bank. These have been reported to DCC and the repairs have been completed.

The May meeting of the Parish Council would usually take place on Monday 8th May, however, this is the bank holiday for the Coronation. It was agreed to delay the May meeting to Monday 15th May at 18:15.

Chairman's Report

We have had a positive meeting with a candidate who expressed an interest in the Parish Clerk Vacancy. Cllrs agreed to have further discussions with the candidate to see if he would accept the job role.

CDALC has provided a draft contract. The pay for the role has increase to £12.50 per hour (an increase of £1 per hour). We would also need to cover training costs for a new Clerk of £250 plus VAT.

78/22

Members Reports

Cllr Wilson raised the issue of parking in St James Gardens. Utilities in the area have previous been quoted as a reason why more formal car parking spaces cannot be created in this area. No further actions agreed at this time.

Cllr Brabban asked if we can change the way we distribute paperwork in advance of the meeting. This can be picked up when a new Clerk is in post. Cllr Parsons agreed to look into transcription software for the production of the minutes.

Cllr Cook is looking into the payment of the domain name for the Parish Council website.

Cllr Docherty raised the issue of the condition of the grassed areas within St James Gardens. They are becoming damaged by vehicles parking and turning on them. Cllr Cook to contact Believe Housing to see if anything can be done.

Cllr Wilson left the meeting.

Cllr Brabban asked if the Parish Council can use a different room in the Community Centre for the regular Parish Council meetings. Cllr Cowan to discuss with the Community Association.

79/22

Date and Time of the next Meeting

13th March 2023

The meeting finished at 19:57.