

GREATER WILLINGTON TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting
12th December 2023

IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor D Hales, Councillor C Hales, Councillor Smith, Councillor Tinsley,
Councillor McArdle, Councillor Elgie,
Councillor Jackson, Councillor Henfrey, Councillor Berry,
County Councillor Gunn
Emma McCann (DTC) (Minutes)

1. ACCEPTANCE OF APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Savage, Councillor Jordan and Helen Cogdon, Town Clerk.

2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Members are invited to declare any personal and/or prejudicial interest in matters appearing on the agenda and the nature of their interest.

None received.

Councillor D Hales mentioned she had attended the Code of Conduct Training Course and declarations of interest was a topic of conversation. It was noted that even burial plots on DCC owned land must be recorded.

The Deputy Town Clerk said she would email all councillors the link to where their completed forms are stored so that they can check them and amend if necessary. Forms are available from the office.

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Resident agenda items requested through the Clerk.

None received.

4. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE ORDINARY MEETING 14TH NOVEMBER 2023

The minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 14th November 2023, as written and circulated were agreed as a true record.

Councillor D Hales signed the minutes.

Proposed Councillor Smith

Seconded Councillor Jackson

MATTERS ARISING (FOR INFORMATION ONLY)

Item 5. County Councillor Olwyn Gunn thanked the Chair for raising the issue of the missing mention of GWTC in the Northumbria in Bloom Awards. County Councillors Gunn and Tinsley will also express their views regarding missing mention of Northumbria in Bloom awards to GWTC, Hunwick Community, Social and Environment Group and Brancepeth Parish Council all of which are in their Division.

5. TO RECEIVE THE ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

Councillor Savage had provided a report in her absence. Councillor D Hales declared an interest as Treasurer of Greater Willington Environmental Improvement Group (GWEIG).

Daffodils were planted at West Road recently and the new Christmas Tree for Low Willington has been planted at the War Memorial.

Crocus bulbs are to be planted tomorrow (Wednesday 13th December 2023) at Church View at 9am. Any help would be appreciated. It shouldn't take long.

The Town Council will send a letter of thanks to DCC Joe Merone and team, Graeme Hopper, and Hedley's Farm. Also, to Simon Robson who is always there to help. Projects like these could not be completed without the help of town councillors and other kind people.

Councillor Savage would like approval to buy winter bedding plants for the planters. The summer plants were purchased from Lidl around £65 which filled all planters.

Councillors agreed this should be paid out of the GWEIG funds.

Proposed Councillor Elgie

Seconded Councillor Henfrey

Finally, would it be possible for the Council to organise a thank you morning or afternoon for everyone who has helped with all environmental projects over the past year?

This was agreed.

Proposed Councillor Berry

Seconded Councillor C Hales

Northumbria In Bloom 2024 entries are open and need to be submitted by the end of the month.

It was agreed to apply in both names as GWTC & GWEIG.

Proposed Councillor C Hales

Seconded Councillor McArdle

6. TO RECEIVE THE ALLOTMENT REPORT

More asbestos was found on Springfield Allotments, so another site visit has taken place. The previous quote was for £730 plus VAT which was approved at a previous meeting but with the new asbestos that has been found, the new quote is now £1630 plus VAT.

The Allotment Budget is almost spent due to higher-than-normal water bills and a new fence at Park Top. To cover the cost of the asbestos removal, final quarterly water bills and possible further maintenance up to the end of March 2024, we have the option of transferring £3,000 from the Business Account. This was agreed.

Proposed Councillor Berry

Seconded Councillor C Hales

Councillor Tinsley suggested seeking advice from The National Allotment Society and DCC. Asbestos is a big issue that can lead to major concerns. We will have to factor asbestos and what to do about it into our Allotments Lettings Policy for 2024.

Springfield Allotment Association previously asked for a skip which was approved at the November meeting. This will be delivered to site on Wednesday 24th January 2024.

The funding application that was submitted for replacement fencing, a new gate and a new fence at the rear of the site, has been unsuccessful due to the funding panel having been inundated with applications. We will look at other grant opportunities when we return in the new year.

A tenant at Oakenshaw Allotments has requested permission to erect a lean-to summer house 4m x 1.5m, a reclaimed veg bed 6m x 5.5m and a Geothermal Green House Potting Shed 8m x 3.5m. An email has been sent to Jayne Pallas who dealt with the last application from this tenant asking for further information on the proposed structures. Her response was, planning permission would be required for the proposed new structures. The acceptability of the proposals would hinge upon an assessment of detailed plans (including elevation plans) and further details regarding their proposed use. It is noted that the site is already heavily developed, but there may be scope to remove some buildings/structures to accommodate new development.

As landowner, Greater Willington Town Council ultimately have the overall say. After a lengthy discussion, the Town Council decided to refuse the application for the proposed Summer House and the proposed Geothermal Greenhouse Potting Shed. We have no objections with the reclaimed veg bed.

A letter informing the tenant of this decision should include that there was insufficient information provided with the application and that there is over development on gardens already.

Proposed Councillor Elgie
Seconded Councillor Smith

Councillor Berry reported that as the water bills were higher than usual, she had contacted Northumbrian Water regarding the water meter at the top of New Row. It was noted that it needs some maintenance work. Going forward Councillor Berry is happy to take meter readings to assess water usage. As a Council, we have concerns regarding water leaks. Further feedback will be given at the next meeting.

7. TO CONSIDER PLANNING APPLICATIONS AND UPDATE ON PLANNING DECISIONS

New Planning Applications

- DM/23/03429/FPA | Single storey extension (dressing area and en-suite) | The Bays 1 Queensway Willington

For Information Only - Standard Consultation Expiry Date Fri 08 Dec 2023

[DM/23/03429/FPA | Single storey extension \(dressing area and en-suite\) | The Bays 1 Queensway Willington Crook DL15 0DL \(durham.gov.uk\)](#)

Previous Planning Application Decisions

- DM/23/02776/FPA | Erection of detached double garage, extended driveway, new vehicle access and new boundary wall. | 20 Park Terrace Willington Crook DL15 0QL

Approved 15 November 2023

- DM/23/02255/FPA | Erection of extension to rear to provide additional retail and storage space with first floor terrace above serving residential flat | 84 - 85 High Street Willington Crook DL15 0PE

Approved 28 October 2023

- DM/23/02618/FPA | Garage conversion (retrospective) | 6 Kasher Road Willington Crook DL15 0GN

Approved 30 November 2023

Previous Planning Applications Waiting Decisions

- DM/19/02002/OUT – Site of Former Kensington Hall Hotel, Kensington Terrace, Willington – Housing development of 9 no. dwellings (Outline – All Matters Reserved Other Than Access) (Amended 21/04/2021)
- DRC/22/00261 - Land Adjacent To (East) Ash Drive, Willington - Discharge of Conditions 5 (Construction Management Plan and Method Statement), 6 - (coal mining legacy), 8 (off-site highways), 10 (Arboricultural Impact Assessment), 14 (contaminated land) and 16 (archaeology) pursuant to planning permission DM/18/03443/OUT (erection of up to 200 dwellings).
- DM/23/00966/FPA - Land North Of Croft Way, Low Willington Industrial Estate, Willington - Erection of a warehouse (Class B2/B8) with ancillary office space and orangery to be used as a showroom
- DM/23/02084/DRC - Land Adjacent To (East) Ash Drive Willington - Discharge of Conditions 7 (drainage) and 9 (pedestrian, cycle and bus infrastructure) pursuant to DM/18/03443/OUT (as amended by DM/23/02103/NMA) in relation to Phase 1
- DM/23/02085/DRC - Land Adjacent To (East) Ash Drive Willington - Discharge of Conditions 3 (internal highway network), 4 (materials), 5 (surface treatments) and 6 (landscaping scheme) pursuant to DM/21/04140/RM
- DM/23/02787/FPA | Erection of agricultural building | Land South East Of Whitworth Lane Brancepeth

8. TO CONSIDER YOUTH ENGAGEMENT PROJECT

Councillor D Hales said that following the discussions at the last meeting, herself and the Deputy Town Clerk had visited Brandon Carrside Youth and Community Project on Wednesday 6th December 2023 where they observed a session between the Project Manager Leoni and a group of around eight girls. On Monday 11th December 2023, Councillor D Hales, Deputy Town Clerk and Councillor Smith had a meeting with the Project Leader Joanne from Groundworks who would be appointing Youth Workers if this youth provision was to go forward. They also visited Brandon again to observe a mixed group of children. Lots of questions were asked and answered. There was great interaction and a lot of enthusiasm at both visits.

It was suggested to trial this project and monitor the situation. Suggested day would be Monday between 5pm and 7pm and starting with children in year 7.

Discussions were under way regarding the overall project which will be explored in the new year.

This project was agreed in principle.

Proposed Councillor Elgie

Seconded Councillor Tinsley

County Councillors have both confirmed they would like to work with us on this project.

It was suggested to have a meeting in January 2024 with GWTC councillors, County Councillors, PCSO's and Youth Workers.

9. TO APPROVE THE BANK RECONCILIATION (NOVEMBER 2023)

The Deputy Town Clerk reported,

The Council entered November 2023 with a starting balance of £38,605.64.

There was expenditure of £11,592.25 and credits of £2,748.10, leaving an end balance of £29,761.49.

Proposed Councillor Berry

Seconded Councillor C Hales

The credits from this statement will be allocated where appropriate in a future meeting.

10. TO RECEIVE THE BUDGET REPORT AND APPROVE FINANCIAL DECISIONS (NOVEMBER 2023)

The Deputy Town Clerk had reported the budget report and financial statement to all councillors prior to this meeting. It was recommended that we defer until the next meeting in February 2024 to allow time to allocate income and expenditure over the full financial year effectively.

Proposed Councillor Berry

Seconded Councillor D Hales

11. TO APPROVE THE 2024/25 DRAFT BUDGET TO INFORM THE PRECEPT REQUEST

The Deputy Town Clerk, Councillor D Hales and Councillor Smith had met previously to discuss the draft budget for 2024-2025 and this was circulated to all members.

The Tax Base has increased from 1844.7 to 1846.7. The Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) has reduced from £1,187 to £897.00.

Options available are to either standstill, increase 1%, increase 2% or increase 3%.

Members discussed this in detail and agreed to a 2% increase which is £1.25 higher than last year for a Band D property.

Proposed Councillor Smith

Seconded Councillor Berry

12. RECEIVE THE TOWN COUNCILLORS MONTHLY REPORT

Councillor C Hales said the Patient Participation Group provide newsletters and suggested they contact us at the Town Council to display them in our office.

Councillor D Hales said the Civic Carol Service had been a lovely evening. The students from Our Lady & St Thomas Catholic School sang and signed two Carols. Students from Parkside Academy read some lessons and a former student from St Johns School also read a piece about Christmas which highlighted the true meaning of Christmas. We had arranged for donkeys and sheep to be at the entrance of the Church to greet residents but unfortunately due to the weather, the trailers were unable to leave the Farm. Father Jim Angus led the Order of Service which was his first in the Town as the new priest of Our Lady & St Thomas RC Church. He is interested in building links with the Community.

Thank you to all involved in the organising of this and to all who came along to support.

13. TO RECEIVE THE COUNTY COUNCILLORS MONTHLY REPORT

County Councillor Tinsley said many residents had been in contact about the recent rainfalls and issues were raised about drainage on Hunwick Lane and Kensington Terrace. DCC engineers are aware. Significant works will need to be undertaken.

Councillor Smith also brought this issue up as she has received the same concerns from residents. It was acknowledged that the gulleys and drains on the green were attended to by DCC workers.

County Councillor Gunn reported on anti-social behaviour and theft in Willington. She suggested a joint meeting with GWTC, Crook Police, County Councillor Tinsley and

herself. It was agreed that Cllr Gunn email Crook Police requesting a joint meeting in early January’.

At the recent Full Council meeting the DCC Director OF Public Health presented her Annual Report. Copies can be made available. Included in the Report is:

Life expectancy at birth for males in County Durham is 77.7 years and across England 79.4 years. Males living in the most deprived areas of County Durham live 9.3 years less than those in the least deprived areas.

Life expectancy at birth for females in County Durham is 81.2 years and across England 83.1 years

Females living in the most deprived areas live 7.6 years less than those in the least deprived.

14. TO CONSIDER COMMUNITY FUND APPLICATIONS

Sunnybrow Community Centre thanked the Town Council for the £500 contribution.

Willington Cricket Club would like funding to support their All Stars Project. They intend to run an ECB All Stars Programme in January 2024. The course is for under 9’s and is an introduction to Cricket and game skills. They have ran these courses in the past and found that children from low-income families are not able to access the coaching course as they cannot afford it. It costs £40 per child. They would like to offer 15 free places to these children to give them the opportunity. Many children continue after the course and become members of the club and get involved with all aspects of it.

The total project cost is £600. We can offer £500 or 75% of the costs, whichever is the lesser amount which would be £450.00.

The course would include 12-week coaching programme, All Stars trained coaches, t-shirt for each child with their name on, All Stars kit bag, ball and bat.

The rest of the money will be provided through the clubs’ funds and fund-raising.

Proposed Councillor C Hales

Seconded Councillor S Jackson

Willington & District Angling Club have been to the office to discuss a future application. There were advised to complete a new application and provide supporting documentation in the new financial year.

15. TO CONSIDER CIVIC FUND APPLICATIONS

Great North Air Ambulance Service (GNAAS) have now supplied us their bank details to send their sponsorship. They thanked the Town Council for their generosity.

16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS (FOR INFORMATION ONLY)

The office will close at 3pm on Thursday 14th December 2023 for Christmas and reopen at 9am on Monday 8th January 2024.

Thanks were given to the Deputy Town Clerk for all her hard work and commitment over the last two months.

17. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

13th February 2024 at 6pm.