

**GREATER WILLINGTON TOWN COUNCIL**  
**Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting**  
**14<sup>th</sup> November 2023**

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**IN ATTENDANCE**

Councillor D Hales, Councillor C Hales, Councillor Smith, Councillor Tinsley,  
Councillor McArdle, Councillor Jordan, Councillor Savage, Councillor Berry,  
Councillor Jackson, Councillor Henfrey  
Emma McCann (DTC) (Minutes)

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**1. ACCEPTANCE OF APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Helen Cogdon, Town Clerk, Councillor Berry, County Councillor Gunn

**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.

**3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

**Resident agenda items requested through the Clerk.**

**THE ECO CHURCH PROJECT – PRESENTATION BY MR & MRS PARKER OF ST STEPHEN'S CHURCH**

Eco Church is a scheme run by A Rocha UK equipping churches to care for God's creation.

Awards are given at bronze, silver, and gold levels.

Currently St Stephens has achieved Silver, one of only 5 in County Durham. Interestingly, a second is Willington Methodist church and we look forward to engaging in joint events to further our mutual push to gold.

There are five areas that a church must demonstrate environmental engagement with to receive an award:

Worship and teaching, Management of church buildings, Management of church land. Community and global engagement and Lifestyle.

We are in pretty good shape with respect to the to the first three topics. Indeed, we have been gold for Worship and teaching throughout. We thought buildings would be a problem regarding insulation etc, however, as a grade 2 listed building we have some exemptions here. In fact, we are probably better placed with regard to this that St Mary's (Hart) who were the first (and to-date the only) church in the Diocese of Durham to achieve gold.

One change we hope to make here is to install a water-butt, with access to the churchyard so visitors can take water to top-up flower urns,

For land we have developed the churchyard to include a wildflower garden, bird boxes, insect lodges and hedgehog homes. Bird feeding stations are under consideration, but there is concern this might encourage rodents

With respect to engagement with the council, we look for support on the last two topics, i.e. Community and global engagement and Lifestyle.

We are already engaged with a number of community projects, such as;

Fun Days – held in school holidays, and have included activities such as bulb planting and art and craft work. The latest fun day during the recent half-term was on the subject

of light, producing artwork, displayed on the notice boards bought with a council grant and making candles from recycled wax. Thank you for the grant, it is appreciated. Afternoon teas - held on Sunday afternoons throughout the summer months. Some of you may have enjoyed this activity.

Summer Fair and Craft Fair is at St Stephen's on the 17th and 18th November. Dates for your diary perhaps?

We are giving support to the project to transform two abandoned Springfield Allotments (with Victoria Hall, one of our eco ambassadors) and turn the area into a community space. A daunting task as the photo shows, however Willington has an history of transforming ugliness into beauty as seen with Dante's heap and the Oakenshaw nature reserve.

Similarly, St Stephen's is looking to create a community space in the churchyard, with the wildflower garden, a welcoming bench just outside the church porch and outside activities when weather permits.

Mission to new residents of planned estate to the east of St Stephens

A most interesting idea floated by the St Stephen's worship team is to produce a welcoming newsletter for new residents.

Information to be included:

- The role of St Stephen's it's services and support offered, e.g., marriage. Baptisms etc.
- Information on local support such as Doctor's surgery's, dentists, schools, local networks etc.
- Local visitor attractions.

This seems an excellent initiative (light bulb moment) and could be taken up by local estate agents to give to any prospective in-comers.

Would the council like to partner St Stephen's in putting a newsletter together.?

Last and by no means least on the topic of community engagement is the work members of the church carry out with local schools

These include school visits, special church services, such as the recently held harvest services, a member of our congregation is chair of governors at St Stephens primary school and another provides input to the RE department at Parkside. We hope that the schools might use the churchyard for environmental projects.

We invite suggestions from the council on what else St Stephen's could do with respect to community engagement.

The fifth eco-church topic i.e., Lifestyle is where we seek help from the council and wider community. The programme calls for us to measure not only the church congregation with respect to certain topics, but to include the wider community.

Behaviour will be assessed via simple (usually one page) questionnaires. These can be completed anonymously if so desired.

Eco Church has (among others) the following 2 statements that require the use of a questionnaire

- Our church encourages members to limit their waste by adhering to the principles of reduce, re-use, recycle:
- As part of our life together, the members of our church undertake an environmental lifestyle audit

Would council members be willing to complete these questionnaires?

David and Carole Parker thanked the Council for their time to present St Stephen's eco church journey this evening.

Councillor D Hales suggested to David that they contact the site office of the new housing estate to see if they would be prepared to be a centre of information.

Councillor Tinsley said the Church could become a hub for what is an expanding area within Willington.

- 4. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE ORDINARY MEETING 12<sup>th</sup> September 2023**  
The minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2023, as written and circulated were agreed as a true record.  
Councillor Smith signed the minutes as Chair of that meeting.  
Proposed Councillor Jackson  
Seconded Councillor Smith

**MATTERS ARISING (FOR INFORMATION ONLY)**

None.

**5. TO RECEIVE THE ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT**

Councillor Savage reported;  
Greater Willington Town received a Silver Gilt at the Northumbria in Bloom Awards held on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2023 and were overall winners of the Small-Town category. Willington have been invited to enter next year; entry fee £125.

The Christmas tree on the town green has been under planted with Cyclamen Hederifolium corms as part of the Willing To Bloom project.

Daffodil bulbs have been received and are hopefully to be planted on West Road on the 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2023.

Christmas Tree for the War Memorial site:-

- New Row Nursery, Tow Law are unable to source a Christmas tree.
- Poplar Tree Garden Centre, Shincliffe – quote received for rooted 4/5ft £57.99.
- A Hill and Sons Garden Centre, Stokesley – quote received for rooted 10/12ft Nordmann Fir Christmas Tree of £854.01 including tree stakes, delivery and VAT – please note the quote is valid until 30th Nov 2023.  
A forklift is needed and this has been sorted. DCC have kindly offered to dig the hole for the tree.

It was agreed for the Council to pay the Entry Fee and to buy the tree from A Hill and Sons Garden Centre.

Proposed Councillor Smith  
Seconded Councillor Tinsley

Councillor Dorothy Hales informed members that the Durham News had written an article on Northumbria In Bloom and Willington had been missed out so she sent an email expressing how we had been omitted. A response was received confirming the only groups mentioned in the article were the ones that Civic Pride had been working on.

**6. TO CONSIDER PLANNING APPLICATIONS AND UPDATE ON PLANNING DECISIONS**

New Planning Applications

- DM/23/02727/NMA | Non-material amendment to Condition 1 (Approved Plans) pursuant to DM/20/01960/VOC for the addition of a single garage to Plot 13 and 24 | Land To The North Of Hawthorn Drive And West Of Hill Meadows Willington DL15 0GJ

For Information Only: Approved 30 October 2023

<https://publicaccess.durham.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?keyVal=S0V7NKGD0LT00&activeTab=summary>

- DM/23/02654/PND | Application for prior approval for the demolition of the Former Scout Hut | Former Scout Hut Colliery Road Willington Crook DL15 0EX

Prior Approval Not Required

<https://publicaccess.durham.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?keyVal=S0GUVQGD0LA00&activeTab=summary>

- 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

For Information Only – Standard Consultation Expiry Date: 13 October 2023

<https://publicaccess.durham.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?keyVal=S16LPCGD0LT00&activeTab=summary>

- DM/23/02787/FPA | Erection of agricultural building | Land South East Of Whitworth Lane Brancepeth

Standard Consultation Expiry Date: 15 November 2023

<https://publicaccess.durham.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?keyVal=S16VDKGD0M3S00&activeTab=summary>

- 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

For Information Only – Standard Consultation Expiry Date: 6 October 2023

<https://publicaccess.durham.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?keyVal=RYGQ5KGDLDV00&activeTab=summary>

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

For Information Only – Standard Consultation Expiry Date: 30 October 2023

<https://publicaccess.durham.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=summary&keyVal=S05U29GDLW200>

#### Previous Planning Application Decisions

- DM/23/02664/TPO - Ashley Lodge 2 Queensway Willington - Thin out crown of trees plus crown lifting and cutting back overhanging branches across the boundary line. - TPO-CWUDC -3- 1971 (G7)

Refused 31 October 2023

- DM/23/02529/FPA - Goodwell Farm Goodwell Field Brancepeth - Open fronted porch and solar panels to outbuilding

Approved 23 October 2023

- DM/23/02299/LB - Goodwell Farm Goodwell Field Brancepeth - Open fronted porch and solar panels to outbuilding

Approved 24 October 2023

- DM/23/00443/FPA - Oak House, 21A Acorn Drive, Oakenshaw - Conversion of outbuilding to home office

Approved 11 October 2023

- DM/23/01555/FPA - 45 High Street, Willington - Development of retail store with associated car parking and servicing on land adjacent to 45 High Street Willington DL15 0PF

Approved 23 October 2023

Councillor Tinsley explained that they are now organising contractors. Councillor Savage asked if it was possible for her to extract the Crocus bulbs before any work commences. It was suggested to contacted DCC to arrange this.

#### 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

Councillor Smith asked Councillor Tinsley if there were any updates on the Kensington Terrace site. Councillor Tinsley explained that the application is at the commenced stage so still live. Concerns have been expressed that this is becoming a dumping ground. Drainage issues were also raised and Councillor Tinsley suggested arranging a site visit with Brian Featherstone.

**7. TO RECEIVE THE ALLOTMENT REPORT**

The asbestos that has been found on various plots on Springfield Allotments will be removed shortly following agreement from Allotment Portfolio Holders.

Springfield Allotment Association has asked if it is possible to provide a skip for the removal of rubbish that has been left from previous tenants on various plots.

This was approved.

Proposed Councillor Hales

Seconded Councillor Jordan

A funding application has been submitted for the replacement fencing and gate and the installation of new fencing at the rear of the site. The funding panel have been inundated with applications for the grant, but we remain positive.

Park Top allotments have recently had new locks installed with coded access to the gates. The Police contacted the office on Friday 3 November 2023 asking for access to Park Top Allotments on Saturday morning to search for the missing local man. The Deputy Town Clerk contacted tenants to ensure the gardens were open.

**8. TO APPROVE THE PARISH PLAN**

Durham Amateur Football Trust have organised an exhibition in the Town Council office. Local schools Football Team Captains, boys and girls and Bond Care have been invited to the opening of the exhibition to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Willington Football Club playing in the FA Cup.

The exhibition will be opened at 10am on 24th November 2023 in the Town Council offices and closed at 12noon so that some exhibits can be moved to the Cricket Club for the next part of the event.

They have also been invited to a Buffet at Willington Cricket Club on the same day, 2pm - 4pm. This event will be aimed at sharing football related memories.

It is hoped that former players and officials will also attend this event and perhaps speak. Substantial relevant memorabilia will be on display.

The Town Council are providing the refreshments for the Opening Exhibition and the Buffet at the Cricket Club. The total cost for the Buffet is £250 and £50 room hire charges. Members of the Community are eligible to apply for a ticket to this event via the Town Council. Successful candidates will be notified in due course.

Proposed Councillor Smith

Seconded Councillor C Hales

This year's Civic Carol Service will take place at Our Lady & St Thomas Roman Catholic Church on Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> November 2023 at 6.00pm. Father Jim Angus is new in residence and will lead the Service. Students from Parkside Academy, St Johns School and Our Lady & St Thomas Primary School have been asked to do readings. Our Lady & St Thomas Primary School may also provide a choir for two of the Carols. The Christmas Tree Switch On will be at 7pm on the Town Green, followed by refreshments in the office.

Crook Police are looking for a venue for the Willington Youth Club and they believe the GWTC building would be a perfect location. They still have some funding available for both the location and the youth workers.

Ideally it would be once a week between 17:00 – 19:00. The day of the week would depend on both groundworks (youth workers) and the venue's availability.

They are aware there have been some issues in the past and would be up for any suggestions e.g., group sizes, age range etc. They would be looking to have at least two youth workers as well as a police representative (if possible).

Councillors discussed this in detail and agreed they would need to investigate further before a decision can be reached. This will be addressed at the next meeting in December.

Remembrance Day Service took place at George Burdon McKean Memorial Site on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2023 at 10.55am. County Councillor Olwyn Gunn read her own poem about George Burdon McKean named Willington Hero. The Venerable Shirley T Griffiths read a prayer. The flags were raised by Deputy Town Mayor Councillor Angela Smith, Councillor Stephen Jackson and PCSO Katie Corner.

Remembrance Sunday Service took place at the War Memorial on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2023 at 3pm. The Service was led by The Venerable Shirley T Griffiths. Aycliffe & Brancepeth Brass Band provided the music. Thanks were given to all who took part in the Service and to all wreath layers. Following this Service, the procession led everyone to St Stephen's Church for their Remembrance Service.

Comments were made about the excellent turn out of people coming together to remember.

Premier provided the Road Closure for this event. They did raise concerns that some drivers ignored the signs and their employees were at risk. The Deputy Town Clerk apologised on behalf of the Council that this should not have happened. She asked that any details be provided so that we can seek advice.

Councillor D Hales asked that we email Premier to thank them for their services.

County Councillor Gunn emailed to convey her thanks to GWTC for organising both Remembrance Events and how it was a pleasure and privilege to attend and take part.

Thanks were extended to Judith Guthrie from the Get Crafty Group for the decorated bike that was put on display at the Town Green noticeboard. The Poppy Net was also on display in the Town Council office again. Councillor D Hales asked for an email of thanks to be sent to Judith for all her work.

Christmas Pantomime this year is provided by M&M Theatrical Productions and it is Beauty & the Beast. Oh yes it is!

Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> November 2023 at 3pm. Funding of £800 was approved County Councillors Fraser Tinsley and Olwyn Gunn towards the project. Thank you very much. Santa will be visiting in his Grotto again where all children 11 years and under will receive a selection box.

The Parish Plan will be updated and circulated to members in due course.

## **9. TO UPDATE ON BUILDING COMPLIANCE**

The Deputy Town Clerk reported that she had been in contact with DCC to look at them providing us with an SLA for Building Compliance activities. These are things they believe all public buildings should have to comply. Costs were provided which include;

Legionella Risk Assessment £140.00 (every two years)

Induction Loops £150.00 (per annum)

Asbestos Management Plan £200.00 (per annum)

There will be a one of charge of £390 to install two induction loops. One for the Ground Floor Large Meeting Room and one for Reception.

The SLA details costs for the financial year April-April but these will be invoiced accordingly based on servicing dates/pro rata where necessary with the SLA being part way through the financial year.

The SLA will also include a £50.00 Management Fee payable annually.

The final thing outstanding is a EPC or DEC. She has been advised, as a Town Council, we would require a DEC.

(DECs must be accompanied by an Advisory Report listing cost-effective measures to improve the building's energy rating. Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) are required for all other properties when they are constructed, sold or let.)

The Deputy Town Clerk is collating the information they require in order for them to provide another quote for this to be added.

This information was circulated to members on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2023 and the majority were in support of this. The Service Level Agreement has been signed and forwarded to Durham County Council. The first-year costs will be £780.00 and the second year will be £400.00. We are waiting for a date for the installation of the Induction Loops. Once everything is confirmed, an update will be provided.

Quotes are being obtained for the loft insulation and repairs to the roof. These will be circulated once received.

**10. TO APPROVE THE BANK RECONCILIATION (SEPTEMBER 2023 & OCTOBER 2023)**

The Deputy Town Clerk reported;

The Council entered into September 2023 with a starting balance of £73,870.82.

There was expenditure of £13,796.50 and credits of £6,999.00, leaving an end balance of £67,073.32.

The Council entered into October with a starting balance of £67,073.32.

There was expenditure of £29,616.51 and credits of £1,103.47, leaving an end balance of £38,560.28.

Proposed Councillor D Hales

Seconded Councillor Smith

Thanks were expressed to the Deputy Town Clerk for all her hard work on the accounts. All councillors concurred.

**11. TO RECEIVE THE BUDGET REPORT AND APPROVE FINANCIAL DECISIONS**

The Deputy Town Clerk reported:

At the 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023 the overall budget 2023-2024 had increased to £140,462.00 due to successful funding applications. Current spend to date is £91,036.14 leaving a resource on budget of £49,425.86.

Proposed Councillor McArdle

Seconded Councillor C Hales

Thank you was extended to County Councillors Fraser Tinsley and Olwyn Gunn for all the funding allocations we have received this year.

**12. TO RECEIVE THE TOWN COUNCILLORS MONTHLY REPORT**

Councillor McArdle had attended the Patient Participation Working Group meeting. They are trying to inform people on what they are doing. Very interesting meeting. There are lots of services. Information can be accessed directly from the Doctors Surgery.

Councillor C Hales said there is a lot of information on the screen in the waiting room.

Councillor D Hales and C Hales had attended Sunnybrow Primary School and Willington Primary School Harvest Festivals at St Stephens Church recently.

**13. TO RECEIVE THE COUNTY COUNCILLORS MONTHLY REPORT**

This was deferred.

**14. TO CONSIDER COMMUNITY FUND APPLICATIONS**

Sunnybrow Community Centre has 20 members who get together twice a week on a Wednesday and Friday where they have a natter with a cuppa and biscuit and play bingo. They have applied for £500 to pay towards a Christmas Buffet, a small box of chocolates for each member, raffle prizes and 6 months rental costs. Their total project cost is £720.

Proposed Councillor Tinsley  
Seconded Councillor Smith

The Deputy Town Clerk;

Willington Spiritualist Church have informed her that the works have now been carried out on their building as the roof was leaking so bad. She let them know that we couldn't fund anything retrospectively and that the application would now have to be closed. She advised that they could apply to the Community Fund in the future and if they needed any support with the form, to contact the office. Willington & District Angling Club were also asked for additional information, but nothing received. They have also paid invoices therefore given the same advice that they can apply for something else in the future.

**15. TO CONSIDER CIVIC FUND APPLICATIONS**

Great North Air Ambulance Service (GNAAS) have applied to the Town Council for funds. Along with the two helicopters based in the Northeast and Cumbria, they operate a fleet of rapid response vehicles that allow the team to respond to urgent medical incidents beyond daylight hours or during adverse flying conditions. In January 2023, they extended the hours they offer this service to seven nights a week across the Northeast meaning they provide 24/7 critical care. In the first ten months of this service, they have responded on average, to at least one patient in need of care every night.

Previously the Town Council provided £200 sponsorship to the GNAAS, and it was agreed we would provide sponsorship of £200 again for financial year 2023-2024.

Proposed Councillor Savage  
Seconded Councillor Smith

**16. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

12<sup>th</sup> December 2023 at 6.00pm.