

GREATER WILLINGTON TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting
8th November 2022

IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor Henfrey, Councillor Smith Councillor Berry, Councillor Elgie, Councillor C Hales,
Councillor D Hales, Councillor McArdle, Councillor Tinsley
Councillor Savage, Councillor Jackson,
Emma McCann (DTC)
Helen Cogdon, Town Clerk (TC) (minutes)

1. ACCEPTANCE OF APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies.

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.

Members are reminded to update their Declaration of personal and prejudicial interest register as and when required, and as soon as is reasonably possible.

None received

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Resident agenda items requested through the Clerk

Discussion continued around the proposed development of a Springfield Community Garden.

All tenants are to be sent feedback forms on the Community Garden proposal to gauge the level of support, address any concerns and new ideas.

Agreement on how the garden will be managed is central to this going forward. There are three options. It would either remain with the Council, be allocated to the Allotment Association or developed by starting a through a Community Garden Association.

**4. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE ORDINARY MEETING 11th October 2022
MATTERS ARISING (FOR INFORMATION ONLY)**

Page 4. The Clerk has bought additional shelving for the archive room which is being fitted.

Page 10. The Spar, Low Willington has been provided with the Defibrillator installation costs and charges required every four years.

The new members have received their iPads and attended set up training. Councillor McArdle's training is to be arranged.

Any other matters arising will be covered in reports.

The minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on the 11th October 2022 as written and circulated were approved as a true record.

Proposed Councillor Jackson

Seconded Councillor Hales

5. TO CONSIDER PLANNING APPLICATIONS AND UPDATE ON PLANNING DECISIONS

New Planning Applications

- DM/22/03189/PNA - Tanners Hall Farm, Stockley Lane, Oakenshaw - Prior notification for the erection of an agricultural general-purpose storage building for the storage of grain / feed and over winter cover for machinery

<https://publicaccess.durham.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?keyVal=RKGV6LGDHBH00&activeTab=summary>

- DM/22/02841/AD - Monarch Green Land At Hawthorn Drive, Willington - Retention of sign and 2no. flagpoles advertising the residential development approved under DM/20/01960/VOC

<https://publicaccess.durham.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?keyVal=RIX3VRGD0CD00&activeTab=summary>

- DM/22/02613/FPA - 19 Clement Way, Willington - Conversion of garage to living room and replacement of garage door with window

<https://publicaccess.durham.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?keyVal=RHSFB3GD0CD00&activeTab=summary>

Previous Planning Application Decisions

- DM/22/02678/FPA – Stable House, 1 Stable Cottages, Willington – Two storey side extension

Approved 25/10/2022

- DM/22/02695/PNA – Tanners Hall Farm, Stockley Lane, Oakenshaw – Prior notification for the erection of an agricultural general purpose storage building (for machinery and feed storage)

Prior Approval is Required

- DM/22/02737/NMA – Finchale House, Laburnum Gardens, Willington – Change the external wall finish from common house brick to smooth render colour white/off-white

Approved 19/10/2022

- DM/22/02031/FPA - Land North Of Croft Way, Low Willington Industrial Estate, Willington - Erection of new industrial unit

Application Withdrawn 24/10/2022

- DM/22/02465/DRC - Land To The North Of Hawthorn Drive And West Of Hill Meadows, Willington - Discharge of conditions 2 (Noise Assessment) and 9 (Carbon Emissions) pursuant to DM/20/01960/VOC

Approved 24/10/2022

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)

- DM/21/04140/RM - Land Adjacent To (East) Ash Drive, Willington - Reserved matters application (appearance, landscaping, layout and scale) for the erection of 88 no. dwellings pursuant to outline planning permission DM/17/00244/OUT (up to 200 dwellings with all matters reserved except access)

- DM/22/02016/FPA - Parkside Academy, Hall Lane Estate, Willington - Enclose external staircase, single storey extension for toilets, 2 No. bin stores, alterations to existing ramped access, relocation of cycle store and formation/alterations to footpaths
- For Information Only - Standard Consultation Expiry Date - Mon 15 Aug 2022

- 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).

For Information Only - Standard Consultation Expiry Date - Fri 19 Aug 2022

- DM/22/02571/FPA – 2 Country View, Oakenshaw – Conversion of stables to 1No. holiday let

Standard Consultation Expiry Date: Thursday 13 October 2022

6. TO RECEIVE THE ALLOTMENT REPORT

Councillor Hales said;

Oakenshaw.

- Continuing retrospective dialogue concerning planning applications across plots 1-3. Tenant currently in compliance with advice from Susan Porter, DCC Enforcement and has applied to DCC for planning permission on 20th October 2022. This is for four structures that are no older than four years old. However, there is a further one that should be considered.

As landowners the Council has a final say on the allowable structures. With members agreement. A meeting between staff and Councillor Berry and Hales will be allowed to agree the preferred GWTC option.

- Regarding previous notice on plot 4 regarding bags of chicken feed attracting rats, these now come under the Defra instructions to help prevent the spread of Avian Flu, securing feed undercover.
- A number of plots previously identified as requiring improvement continue to do so. Letters previously acknowledged need to be sent. It was observed a loose chicken on plot 14 during most recent inspection, needs to be addressed in the light of the now current Avian Influenza Prevention Zone.
- Can there be an update on plots 20/21, 29/30 and plot 36 where there is some evidence of preparation for cultivation.
- The Clerk has purchased the 4 new padlocks and keys as instructed. The keys and locks are security coded so they cannot be copied. The code is in the safe at CLASS if more copies are required. The total cost is £531.86. The actual cost of the keys is £6.50 the council can charge tenants more if required to recoup costs.
- There was evidence of winter crops being cultivated.

Springfield.

- There are developments regarding the potential for the creation of a community allotment (please see agenda notes). Two potential users have been expressed an interest. Further discussion required. There are two separate issues to explore one is the need for a Community Garden which could be retained by the Council as there is no other representative body at this stage.

The second is the support from tenants in forming a new Allotment Association.

The Clerk has spoken to Mr Smith about the old association.

- A number of allotments remain overgrown and disused. Letters may well be required to tenants.
- Good use being made of winter cultivation, allotments offer the opportunity to grow crops all year round and provide for community use.

- Water features are an integral part of an allotment according to the National Allotment Association for the promotion of beneficial wildlife. The dimensions may need to be clarified for potential hazards.

Park Top.

- The fencing has been sourced and quote accepted. The provider is Pete's Fencing and work will start on the 28th November 2022. This should facilitate the eventual re-letting of a number of plots.

The removal and landscaping of plot 1 has left the opportunity to divide the space into two usable gardens. The adjoining neighbours however have asked for the area to be gravelled. The responsibility for the boundary fence was also discussed. Together with what to use to repair or renew the fence.

- Much of the site is dangerous to negotiate and with steep inclines and locked structures, potentially very difficult. There are some plots which reflect good "Housekeeping" and clear evidence of winter crop cultivation.
- The site has potential and there remain *allotmentees* who clearly work hard and take pride in their plots. This makes it difficult to reach a determination on its future for those who have been there many years.

A letter has been sent to the escaped chicken owner.
It is No Dig Policy Week next week.

Councillor Berry said that sacks of potatoes, carrots and broccoli have been donated to the Open Door Church from Oakenshaw Allotment.

The size and legality of allotment ponds are to be researched.

Proposed Councillor Berry
Seconded Councillor Smith
Approved.

7. TO RECEIVE THE TOWN COUNCILLORS MONTHLY REPORT

i) Project Updates.

Willington Events 2022

Halloween

Wednesday 26th October 2022

The Deputy Clerk submitted a successful AAP Fun & Food application for £695. This delivered a Pumpkin Carving Session in the Town Council office between 12noon and 3pm. Limited to 20 spaces and qualifying criteria is that children are in receipt of free school meals or other vulnerability needs.

Thank you to the Clerk, Councillor Hales, Councillor Berry and County Councillor Gunn for their help and support to deliver the event.

Monday 31st October 2022

There was a Magic Show and a Disco at Willington WMC from 5pm till 9pm. Flash will be making his annual appearance. He will commence at 5.30pm with a one-hour magic show and 30 minutes of party games.

County Councillor Gunn suggested sending event photos to Sandy Denny, AAP to publicise what the Council does.

Thank you to Andy Logan who has volunteered his services and equipment for a disco and the Clerk and Councillor Hales for leading the Halloween event at the Working Mens Club.

Willington WMC provided hot dogs for all attending.

It was limited to 120 tickets which will be £2.

Remembrance Day

Friday 11th November 2022 at 11am. George Burdon Mc Kean V.C Remembrance and wreaths laid. Final plans to be decided.

Sunday 13th November 2022. Service as usual. Letters have been sent to all businesses who usually order a wreath. Wreaths can be collected from the Town Council office the Clerk will provide a receipt.

Away Day – Metro Centre

Saturday 19th November 2022. Pick up at 9.30am on the Town Green. Leaving the Metro Centre at 6.00pm. Final away day for the Home & Away Project. Tickets will be £3 each. Only one bus allocated at the moment. This will be advertised next week and the tickets will go on sale beginning of October.

Pantomime

Saturday 26th November 2022. 3pm at Willington WMC. Cinderella.

County Councillors Fraser Tinsley and Olwyn Gunn have kindly allocated £400 each from their Members Small Grants Funds.

Children will get to visit Santa in his fairly new Grotto and receive a present. Snacks will be provided to all children.

Tickets will be £4 each.

Total Project Cost: £1739. County Councillors £800. Anticipated Ticket Income £480. GWTC £459.

Low Willington Christmas Trees 2023

The Clerk has met with Johnathon Wilson, D.C.C Estimator, Street Lighting regarding the supply to the two oak trees at the War Memorial to be dressed Christmas 2023.

Fortunately, as the supply runs along the footpath it is relatively easy to connect.

Jonathon is securing a quote from Northern Power Grid who will do that part of the work. DCC will then site the column next to the trees.

Newsletter

Information is still being gathered for the Newsletter. The Clerk is going to try a different approach this time and make it more of a photo journal.

Warm Spaces

Agreed to liaise with Sue Hine however Councillor Berry has been unwell.

The Clerk said;

Grants of £1000 are available to groups providing regular Drop-In service for residents. CDALC have suggested that parishes complete the online application if they have less than 50% of the previous year expenditure in reserves.

Expenditure 2021/22 £166,028

£74,002 current reserves. The Council is therefore eligible to apply. This was noted.

Also Believe Housing are offering a Keep Well Keep Warm Community Fund where not for profit groups can apply for £500.00.

The Clerk will progress the Warm Spaces project with Councillor Berry.

Councillor Berry asked if members would consider using the building as a Community Charging Hub. It was noted that this was available at the Civic Centre and members were concerned about costs.

County Councillor Gunn said that the library is being used as a Warm Space. Hot drinks are being served. There is no toilet provision.

Councillor Tinsley said the Council should apply for the £1000 grant and sign up to the scheme to let people know we have a Warm Space.

This was agreed.

ii) Environmental Improvements

Tree Planting

The Clerk said;

She has been in discussions with Sue Mullinger, DCC Landscape Delivery Officer about the potential Cherry Orchard. Sue has agreed to add the Cherry Trees to DCC 2023 winter planting programme so there will be no cost to the Council or the Environment Group.

A NB Small Grant application has been submitted for the Park Corner Community Garden. The costs of the three mature Silver Birch Trees will be shared between County Councillor Gunn and Tinsley and GWTC at £373.00 each. To be planted by Clean and Green.

Tow Law Nursery have advised that the Lavender for the flower beds and the five rootball Silver Birch for the wildflower area on the Town Green are due to arrive this week. D.C.C Find and Fix It are to plant the lavender and Clean and Green the trees.

Bulb Planting

The bulbs have been ordered and delivered.

Children from Our Lady and St Thomas School Council will be joining the Town Council to meet members to talk about looking after our Town and help with the planting.

D.C.C Clean and Green Officers and members will plant more bulbs in Low Willington. This is to be followed by a litter pick with St Thomas School Council provisionally on the 16th November 2022 at 1.30pm starting from the office.

Planters

Cornerstone have agreed to build the two replacement planters for North Lane. The Clerk is waiting for a delivery date. The cost is £480.

Due to the health of the contractor, the winter planting of the Town Planters will be done by members and staff. The Clerk will arrange to have plants delivered to the office.

Energy Costs

The government is introducing some relief to rising energy bills for businesses and non-domestic customers including the voluntary sector through the Energy Bill Relief Scheme. The Scheme started 1st October and ends 31st March 2022.

Access to relief depends on the type of contract you have. If you are on a fixed price contract which started before April 2022 you may not be eligible for a discount.

The Council has received a letter to say that as we signed a fixed rate contract before December 2021, we have not been exposed to the recent rises in wholesale prices and are therefore not eligible.

If we sign a new contract we would be automatically eligible and would have the discount applied automatically.

The Clerk has spoken to the Councils energy broker Clayton Henry from Love Energy. They have advised that as we are outside of the final six months of the fixed term contract window energy suppliers are more likely to offer good terms.

The Council is currently paying Standing Charge 25 pence per day and 15.60 pkwh till 15th June 2023.

The offer presented was with British Gas Light which is an online service only. A three-year contract with them would be Standing Charge 45 pence per day and 49.27 pkwh.

By comparison

Valour is 43 p Standing Charge
77.30 pkwh

EDF current supplier will be
60 p Standing Charge
58.10 pkwh

A decision must be made this month if the Council should change suppliers.

Members agreed to continue with EDF, the existing supplier.

The Clerk suggested this matter of when to change contract is delegated to staff as the decision will have to be made on the day of the offer.

This was agreed.

8. TO RECEIVE THE COUNTY COUNCILLORS MONTHLY REPORT

County Councillor Gunn said D.C.C are going through the Annual Budget Consultation. There is a funding shortage and D.C.C need to find £53 million. Reserves can be used over four years.

Year 2023/24 will see cuts of 37.4 million including front line and statutory services.

This will include the reduction in Library opening hours.

There will be 3000 less people employed 2023/24 compared to 2010. This will put more pressure on existing staff.

The D.C.C Budget Consultation is available on the website.

Compared to last year there will be a rise in Council Tax.

Emergency Contingency Plans are being written this will impact across the County.

Again, consultation is via the website

Councillor Tinsley said the County is subject to devolution. A North East Authority Deal (LA7) is being developed. This will include leadership through an elected Mayor. North East Authority will deliver Durham Counties Net Park at Aykley Heads. Decisions will be made in Newcastle rather than Durham.

A fire was lit on the Dante Heap on Bonfire Night using the wooden seating. Residents attending the PACT meeting made their feelings known regarding anti-social behaviour.

There are to be changes to parliamentary constituencies. North west Durham will include Willington, Crook and Consett. There will be a Durham City Constituency. A MPs seat is to be lost. This is currently being held by Richard Holden.

A review of Divisions is being undertaken. There are normally two seats per division. However, D.C.C are looking to reduce the 126 Councillors on the Council.

There is a Community WhatsApp Group Chat available to apply to. This alerts members to incidents as they happen and informs the PCSOs.

9. TO APPROVE THE BANK RECONCILIATION (October 2022)

The Clerk said;

The Council entered into October with a starting balance of £83,918.89

There was £10,974.46 spent and £4,243.48 received leaving an end balance of £77,187.91

Proposed Councillor Jackson

Seconded Councillor Berry

10. TO APPROVE THE BUDGET REPORT (October 2022)

The Clerk said there has been expenditure £65,019.78 leaving an available resource on budget of £53,550.22.

£16,000 VAT Reclaim costs has been ringfenced for approved project costs.

Proposed Councillor Henfrey

Seconded Councillor Berry

11. TO CONSIDER COMMUNITY FUND APPLICATIONS

None received

The Clerk said she had circulated an email to ask if members were willing to sponsor the Willington Football Club Firework Display. This request had been left to the last minute. From those who responded more were in favour than against.

The Clerk awarded the Club £300.

12. TO CONSIDER CIVIC FUND APPLICATIONS

The annual request to support the North East Brass Band competition has arrived. The Council supports this with a £50.00 award each year.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS (for information only)

Councillor McArdle said there was chatter on social media saying that the Council did not support the Firework display. She asked the Clerk to contact the Club.

The Clerk said Wheels to Work is being promoted again. This offers a six-month moped loan with training insurance and breakdown cover servicing and Maintenance Protective clothing and locks for £30.00 per week.

Alternatively, a one off payment of £50.00 will secure a pedal bike for as long as you need it. Leaflets are available from the office.

The Clerk said Know Where Your Old Stamps Are Leaflets are being delivered to homes. This is to let people know that barcodes are being added to stamps. After the 31st January 2023 regular stamps without a barcode will not be valid.

14. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING.

13th December 2022 at 6pm