

West Rainton & Leamside Parish Council
Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held at
19:00 On Thursday 20th March 2025
at St Mary's Church Meeting Room, West Rainton

Present: Councillors I Diggory (Chairperson), S Corfield, B Kellet, M Massey, A Wallage & K Wood

In Attendance:

Parish Clerk

3 members of the Green Group

2 members of the public

NOTE:

The meeting was not audio or video recorded.

Cllr Diggory informed members that he had received a letter of resignation from Cllr Boettcher which was accepted. The Parish Clerk advised that he would inform Electoral Services, but there would be no co-option process at this stage due to the upcoming elections.

1) Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Cllr Langford (family emergency). Cllr Morson was not in attendance and no apology had been received.

Parish Council resolved to approve the absence of Cllr Langford and that the Cllr Morsons absence would be recorded as unauthorised.

2) Declarations of interest

It was agreed that declarations of interest would be dealt with as and when the need arose.

3) Public Participation

There was nothing raised from those present.

4) Minutes of Previous Meeting

Parish Council resolved that the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 20th February 2025 be approved as a correct record.

5) Tree Planting – Green Group

Cllr Diggory suspended Standing Orders to allow the Green Group to present their findings regarding suggested options for tree planting around the Parish. The Green Group went through their findings and thoughts about the location and variation of trees that could be planted.

Signed:.....

Dated:.....

Cllr Diggory advised that Parish Council would need to consider a number of factors including the cost, supply and maintenance of any trees planted. It was also noted that a separate exercise regarding potential additional trees on Believe Housing Land was also currently being considered. Durham County Council would also need to be consulted if any planting was proposed to be done on their land. Cllr Diggory thanked the Green Group for their work and advised that Parish Council would consider the information with a view to developing a plan to move forward.

6) Finance Report

PART A: FOR INFORMATION			£			
1. INCOME		Burial (Re-Open) MV	194.00			
2. EXPENDITURE						
A) Expenditure previously agreed by Parish Council due this month						
ITEM	PAYEE	PURPOSE	Payment Method	AMOUNT (£)		
1	M Ramshaw	Parish Clerk Net Salary - March 25	BACS	497.82		
2	HM Revenue and Customs Only 465PD00171320	HMRC Liability - March 25	BACS	124.40		
3	Special Branch Tree Services NE Ltd	Cemetery maintenance - Feb 25	BACS	391.81		
4	Lloyds Bank	Service Charge (Debit Card)	BACS	3.00		
5	Unity Bank	Service Charge	BACS	6.00		
4	WR&LVP	Grant - Big Lunch	BACS	590.00		
5	WR&LVP	Grant - Annual Show	BACS	250.00		
6	1 st Rainton Gate Brownies	Grant - Pantomime Trip	BACS	250.00		
7	1 st Rainton Gate Brownies	Grant - Rent for Sessions (JH)	BACS	475.00		
8	Durham Area Youth	Grant - Venue rental costs (JH)	BACS	4000.00		
9	Not a Statistic NE	Grant - Venue Rental costs	BACS	300.00		
		TOTAL		6888.03		
B) Expenditure requiring approval						
ITEM	PAYEE	PURPOSE	Payment Method	AMOUNT (£)	BUDGET PROVISION	
10	Lloyds Bank	Debit Card transaction - Postage x19 large letters	BACS	49.40	Y	
		TOTAL		49.40		
Total Expenditure A + B				6937.43		

The Parish Clerk referred members to the previously circulated Finance Report and discussed its contents.

The Parish Clerk advised members that he had received a further invoice that was not included on the Finance Report. The invoice was from G Coates for £87.50.

Parish Council resolved to:

1. Note income and expenditure reported for information.
2. Approve expenditure listed in Part B
3. Approve the invoice received late from G Coates

Signed:.....

Dated:.....

7) Planning Applications

There were no planning applications to consider from the DCC circulated lists. Cllr Wallage advised members that the application for additional social housing on the Station Road Development, awaiting determination by DCC, had yet to be supported by DCC Highways. Highways had objected to the original proposal after raising a number of concerns. The site plan was subsequently amended by the applicant and now incorporates 20 not 21 dwellings and a higher number of bungalows (12) than originally proposed. However, the revised plan has still not been accepted by Highways.

There was also some discussion around a current Petition initiated by a resident campaigning that the site for this proposed development should be used for a much needed "express" type food store.

Parish Council noted some residents support for this, but as it was understood that no commercial interest from any such food retailer had been forthcoming over the last 6 years, which has then lead to the submission of this current planning application by the developer, consideration of this aspiration was considered to be outside the scope of this planning application.

8) Jubilee Hall

Cllr Diggory referred members to the previously circulated notes.

The Working Group has now been formed and includes Cllr Wood (Chair), Cllr Langford, Chris Burns and Janet Tayler.

A meeting of the Trustees of Jubilee Hall has taken place to consider the situation and support being offered. It was noted that Trustees had agreed to support the approach being taken.

Cllr Wood advised that a leaflet/poster was being developed which will then be distributed throughout the community to let people know about the current situation with Jubilee Hall and it will also invite people to a public meeting (no date set yet).

9) Appointment of Internal Auditor

The Parish Clerk sought approval to utilise AS Accountancy Services for the 2024/25 internal audit. **Parish Council resolved** to approve the request.

10) Asset Register

The Parish Clerk referred members to the previously circulated Asset Register. **Parish Council resolved** to approve the updated Asset Register.

11) Community Speedwatch

Cllr Wallage referred members to the email from Kevin Hall (Police) requesting volunteers for the Community Speedwatch scheme. Cllr Wallage reminded members that the issue of speeding was first raised by residents in the Community Led Parish Plan in 2016. It has continued to be a concern to date and is captured in the current annual plan as an outstanding action. There had been some support for Community Speedwatch previously with some success; In 2018 Community Speedwatch findings led on to police covert speeding surveys which in turn led to on to DCC implementing some, although limited. traffic calming measures ("slow" road markings on the Old

Signed:.....

Dated:.....

Sunderland Road/Chantry Place). However, residents' concerns remain about speeding in this particular hot spot and have frequently requested additional measures. Despite the PC raising the concerns again with DCC, no further action has yet been taken. A Community Speedwatch campaign will help raise awareness of on-going residents' concerns and current speeding limits in known hot spot areas. This in itself may act as a deterrent and recorded outcomes will hopefully go on to support the need for additional traffic calming measures.

Parish Council resolved to publicise the Scheme via Facebook and the Parish Council website to encourage residents concerned about speeding to volunteer for the scheme.

12) School Avenue Project

Cllr Wallage advised members that the ground at the site had been damaged. DCC were about to carry out the furniture installation however this has had to be delayed until site conditions improve. DCC cleaned the site and are hoping to install the furniture next week.

The fence to enclose the site is currently being manufactured.

13) Cemetery

The Parish Clerk gave a verbal update regarding the Cemetery.

The new Policy comes into place on 1st April and written correspondence has gone out to all Exclusive Rights of Burial holders in the most recently opened area to the rear of the Cemetery which included a copy of the new Rules & Regulations.

Information is available on the Councils website and a link will be put on the Facebook page shortly. A briefer version of the Rules & Regulations has been publicised on the noticeboard at the Cemetery.

The Parish Clerk then advised that he had met on Site with the new Cemetery maintenance contractor, Makepeace Landscapes. This was a positive meeting and the contractor was made aware of the specification and expectations.

They currently maintain a number of Cemeteries.

The existing contractor will cut the grass and tidy the Cemetery for the last time on 27th March.

14) South Street entrance to St Marys Church

Cllr Wallage shared a brief report with photographs of the poor state of repair of the tarmac outside the South Street entrance and pot holes along the adjacent area which is Parish Council maintained land. The need for repairs to this area had been recognised in the 2024 Risk Assessment and was an outstanding action in the 24/25 Annual Plan.

Despite seeking quotes from a number of companies only one firm quote was received. This was £1500+VAT.

Parish Council resolved to approve this quotation and asked the Parish Clerk to ensure that evidence of public liability insurance is received before work can start.

Signed:.....

Dated:.....

15) Closed churchyard entrance

Cllr Wallage advised members that the area around the graves and headstones where you enter the Church graveyard has been maintained by a volunteer for a number of years. The volunteer has now stepped down. While DCC maintain the grass of the wider churchyard area they do not have machinery small enough to maintain the area in question.

The Church are querying this with DCC. If this is not forthcoming, Cllr Wallage asked if Parish Council would consider asking Gary Coates to maintain the area as he does with other areas within the Village.

Parish Council resolved to approve Gary Coates carrying out the maintenance work if DCC are not forthcoming.

16) Risk Management Strategy

a) Review of Risk Management Strategy

Parish Council resolved to approve the reviewed Risk Management Strategy.

b) Review of Risk Assessment

Parish Council resolved to approve the revised Risk Assessment.

17) West Rainton & Leamside & Village Partnership

Cllr Diggory advised that the Village Partnership received an update from Chris Burns regarding Jubilee Hall, and this was well received. Cllr Diggory went on to inform members that both the Chair and the Secretary of the Village Partnership are stepping down.

18) Smaller Councils Forum

No update, due to Cllr Boettcher's resignation. As Parish Councillor Representatives to outside bodies will be appointed at the Annual Parish Council meeting in May, following the elections, a replacement representative was not considered necessary at this time.

19) General Correspondence

The Parish Clerk shared with members a letter that had been received from a Parishioner regarding a recent Parish Council meeting that they had attended. Cllr Diggory advised that in response to the receipt of this letter he had prepared a draft response. This was shared with members for their consideration.

Parish Council resolved to approve the response.

20) Date and time of next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting is Thursday 17th April 2025 at 7.00pm

Signed:.....

Dated:.....