

West Rainton & Leamside Parish

Annual Parish Meeting

**Held at St Mary's Church Meeting Room, West Rainton on
Thursday 9th May 2024 at 6.30 pm**

1. Present

Councillors: M Boettcher, M Massey, A Wallage and K Wood

M Ramshaw – Parish Clerk (Minute Taker)

15 x Members of the Public

2 x Representatives from Banks Homes

1 x Representative from Woodside Commercial Developments

2. Chairman's welcome and introductions

Cllr Wallage welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

The minutes of the previous meeting held 25th May 2023 were agreed.

3. Banks Group – Station Road Development Update

Russ Hall and Kate Culverhouse introduced themselves to those present.

Russ advised that work was ongoing on the Site and they were currently working on the roads and sewers.

He advised from the 150 properties there would be 30 affordable properties managed by Gentoo. It is anticipated that the first show home will be open in December/January time and the whole build programme would be around 2 ½ years. It is anticipated that the first houses would go on sale from July.

Russ went on to advise that as a part of the Section 278 Agreement there would be visitor parking bays developed and the main junction into the Estate would have the roads flared.

There had been some complaints and DCC enforcement officers had visited the Site and everything was ok.

Kate advised that the local school had engaged with Site from early in the development. The school had started to create posters around Health and Safety and ongoing projects around sustainability and what the children are proud of about West Rainton and Leamside.

Kate also advised that they were working with the Village Partnership in respect of a small Community Fund that is available.

A visit to the site is also being considered for the Youth Group Kate advised

anyone that wanted to get in touch with regards to what's happening should email at: westrainton@banks.co.uk.

A member of the public enquired why all the properties didn't have heat pumps. Russ advised that the properties had already been designed for gas, however the majority of properties would have heat pumps. Charging points for vehicles would be available on every property.

Russ advised that the public right of way would be reopened when safe.

A member of the public questioned about the parking being created along Station Road. Russ advised that DCC would only agree to 4 spaces.

4. Woodside Commercial Developments – Update on Community Hub for the Station Road development

Ronnie Baird introduced himself as the representative from Woodside Commercial Developments who own the land for the commercial development on the Site.

Ronnie advised that despite their best efforts they have found it difficult to attract any interest for proposed commercial units.

He advised he had discussed this with the two County Councillors and had approached the Doctors Surgery but they didn't want to relocate.

The Units wouldn't be big enough for an Aldi or Lidl but something of a smaller scale.

Ronnie advised that the Site would require a mid-sized store as an anchor tenant.

The company had approached the Co-Op, Spar, Nisa etc. but there was no interest. He added that other options such as a petrol station, residential care homes, an extra care scheme and a public house had all been looked at. Again, there was no interest.

The availability of the site for commercial opportunities had been done through a commercial agent over a 7-year period.

As a result of the difficulties being encountered in attracting any commercial organisations interest, Ronnie advised the meeting that they were considering applying for alternative planning permission for affordable housing on a shared ownership scheme. This would be 21 properties and be a mix of 2 and 3 bed houses and bungalows.

5. Chair of the Parish Council to present the 2023/24 Annual Report of the Parish Council

Cllr Wallage referred those present to the Annual Report which had been previously circulated.

Cllr Wallage went through the Report and highlighted some of the areas of work. The Adult Gym is now agreed and grant funding has been secured for the Project. Just awaiting a start date from DCC.

The Parish Council had also agreed grants for the forthcoming year as well as a grant towards the running costs of Jubilee Hall.

A member of the public advised that work was ongoing regarding the viability of Jubilee Hall, with meetings being held with members of the public and those that

hire the Hall.

The member of the public went on to advise that plans for structural changes are in place and builders are to be approached for quotes on the cost of the works.

It was reiterated that Jubilee Hall and those involved would need a lot of support.

Cllr Wallage went on to advise those present that the Parish Council remains in a good financial position.

Cllr Wallage advised that the Parish Council had received concerns from members of the public and cemetery users regarding the cemetery and the current policies. Parish Council as a result are reviewing all cemetery related policies. Cllr Wallage advised that members of the public are able to attend the Parish Council meetings. A member of the public asked when the review would be completed, but no date for completion could be specified due to the number of policies that needed to be reviewed which would take some time.

6. Public Participation - parishioners to raise any matters of concern relating to their local community

A member of the public advised that her husband had removed and rebuilt the damaged broken wooden tap housing in the Cemetery.

Cllr Wallage thanked the member of the public for doing the work. She also advised that it is the Parish Council's responsibility to ensure any repairs identified are carried out by their appointed contractors as its important the Parish Council know who and when contractors are working in the Cemetery. She asked that if anyone notices anything in the Cemetery that needs attention to please let the Parish Council know by contacting the Clerk.

A member of the public asked whether the cemetery gates could be painted. Cllr Wallage advised she would feedback this suggestion to the Parish Council and the Parish Clerk agreed to look into this.

The meeting closed at 20:05.

Signed: Date:

West Rainton & Leamside Parish Council Chairman

Post meeting note

The Parish Council subsequently added the painting of the cemetery gates to its Annual Plan for 2024/25: the gates were painted in August 24..