

DALTON-LE-PALE PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING - 6TH SEPTEMBER 2001

**PRESENT: Councillor W.Hepplewhite (Chairman) Councillors G.Gustard, M.Gustard,
R.Olaman, M.Oliver**

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE :

Councillors E.W.Armstrong, W.Kennedy & A.Westmorland

2. POLICE REPORT:

Sergeant Stephen Taylor and P.C.Paul Hails of Durham Constabulary presented the monthly crime and accident report. On 11th July a van parked in Dale Terrace had been broken into, but the thief had been disturbed, and tools which he had removed were left at the scene. Later in July, suspected poachers had been seen near Dale Terrace, but investigations had failed to locate the persons concerned or their vehicle. On 5th August a number of cars in the parking area near Dalden Tower had been broken into and items stolen, while in Watson Close, a burglar attempting to climb through the window of an elderly person's bungalow in the early hours of the morning had been disturbed and made off. It was reported that this was one of a spate of such incidents in the Deneside area. There had been two accidents involving Police vehicles on the Times Inn Bank within a few hours of each other, and these incidents were under investigation. On 29th October a young resident of the village had had his mountain bike taken from him by youths at the bottom of Stony Cut, and this was also being investigated.

3. MINUTES:

Agreed : That the Minutes of the following meetings (copies of which had been sent previously to each member) be Approved and Signed as a correct record :

a) Council Meeting - 12th July 2001

b) Extraordinary Council Meeting -31st July 2001

4. MATTERS ARISING :

The Clerk advised that most of the matters arising from the July minutes were down to be considered during the course of the meeting, nevertheless the following items were reported:

a) Minute No.4(b) - Public Notice Boards

The Clerk reported that an approach had been made to the gentleman concerned and that he had agreed to manufacture two boards as requested. Details of the costs involved were awaited.

b) Minute No.4(e) - Traffic Calming

Members referred to a number of incidents in which drivers had been seen using the service road at excessive speed, and accidents had been narrowly avoided. The Clerk reported that the additional humps for this stretch of road had been ordered; nevertheless he would press the County Council

further in order to expedite the work.

5. CASUAL VACANCY :

The Clerk reported having been notified by the lady who had expressed an interest in filling the casual vacancy which existed on the Council, that for personal reasons, she could not at this stage commit herself to the duties which would be required.

Agreed : That the situation be Noted and that individual members continue to attempt to identify a suitable person to fill the vacancy, preferably from the Dalton Heights, Dalton Grange and Stockton Road areas of the parish.

6. STAINED GLASS WINDOW - ST.ANDREW'S CHURCH:

The Clerk reported that as instructed at the extraordinary meeting in the Church on 31st July, he had written to the Vicar to identify a convenient date on which to discuss the formation of a joint group to prepare a design brief as proposed by Canon Bill Hall, but no response had been received to date. In discussion, it was noted that the next meeting of the Parochial Church Council would not be held until 26th September, and it was felt that some progress should now be made to expedite matters.

Agreed :

a) That the proposed joint group should comprise Councillors Gerry and Marian Gustard and Marian Oliver on behalf of the Parish Council, and Ken Carter and Evelyn Wood, Churchwarden and Treasurer respectively of the Church Council

b) That Councillors Gustard, Gustard and Oliver meet on an informal basis to commence deliberations on a design brief from the Parish Council's point of view, and that the Church Council be invited to make nominations to the joint group at its next meeting.

7. HEDGEROWS :

The meeting considered as Appendix 1 the report by the Clerk on the recent site meeting with officers of the County Council and the landowner to consider the re-instatement of the hedgrows on the public footpath south from Dalton Bridge. At the outset, the Clerk informed members that one of the officers, Bill Kirkup was no longer with the County Council, but his successor - Richard Jackson had been identified and discussions had taken place. As a consequence, it was now intended to seek quotations from three contractors, and Richard Jackson had confirmed that the specification list in the Clerk's possession was still in use.

Agreed :

a) That the action of the Clerk be Noted and Confirmed, and that three quotations be obtained as indicated.

b) That the resident who had initially brought the subject to the Council's attention be informed of the situation.

c) That on receipt of the quotations, the landowner be asked whether he would wish to carry out the restoration scheme himself, or prefer the Parish Council to proceed with the work.

8. CORRESPONDENCE :

a) The Clerk reported details of a series of consultation meetings being held by the District Council as part of its Environmental Services Best Value Review. The Chairman and he had attended the first of these meetings on 3rd September, which consisted of a coach tour of the area in order to obtain an overview of its work on grounds maintenance, vehicle maintenance, refuse collection etc. Members were given details of future meetings at which, dog fouling, grasscutting, street cleansing, highways etc. would be scrutinised. The Clerk circulated copies of a questionnaire which sought residents' views on the performance of the District Council in tackling a series of environment related services. These would be collated and returned for statistical purposes.

b) The Clerk reported that the 55th Annual General Meeting of the Durham Association of Parish & Town Councils would be held in County Hall on Saturday 20th October. The Chairman and Councillor Westmorland were appointed as the Council's representatives at the Annual Meeting in May.

c) The Clerk reported receipt of correspondence from the District Council indicating that this year's Inter-Parish Sports Competition had been cancelled because of a gradual decline in the level of support for the event. Efforts were being made to revamp the competition in an attempt to regenerate interest.

d) The Clerk reported the results of the Tidy Garden Competition 2001 as follows:

1st Mr.J.Monarch, "Dun Roaming" Dene Road
2nd Mr.H.Robinson "Brookside" Dene Road
Most Improved Mr.D.Gowans 44 Dalton Heights

Agreed : That the presentation of prizes be held during the Council meeting on 4th October.

e) The Clerk reported receipt of the Audit Report for the financial year ended 31st March. An unqualified certificate of the Accounts of the Parish Council had been issued, but a number of issues had been raised which required attention, such as the need for some form of interim internal audit, an increase in the amount of the Clerk's Fidelity Guarantee insurance cover, and a reduction in the amount of bank balance being held. The Clerk explained that the report had only recently been received, and a full report would be made to the October meeting.

f) Correspondence from the District Council inviting the Clerk, Chairman and partners to the Chairman's Civic Service on Thursday 20th September in St-Cuthbert's Church, Peterlee was noted. The Clerk explained that he would be away from home on that date, and had enquired as to possible alternative attendance. It had been confirmed that the Vice Chairman or another member with their partners could attend.

9. PLANNING MATTERS - LAND EAST OF "CONISCLIFFE" :

Members considered as Appendix 2 a report by the Chairman and the Clerk on their meeting with a senior planning officer at the District Council in connection with the forthcoming hearing in connection with an appeal against rejection of a planning application for the erection of two dwellings at the above location. The meeting had centred around the appellant's statement of case to be considered by an inspector of the Planning Inspectorate, and the details of the further submissions to be made by the District Council and the Parish Council. The meeting had been most informative, and had revealed that the District Council in considering the report of the Government Inspector dealing with objections to its draft local plan, had rejected the recommendation that the land in question should be allocated for not more than two dwellings, and that the Inspector had withdrawn his recommendation.

Agreed : That the action of the Chairman and Clerk in attending this meeting and in drafting a submission to the Planning Inspectorate be Noted and Approved.

10. INTERNET ACCESS :

Members considered an addendum prepared by the Clerk and circulated at the meeting, outlining details of a report by Councillor Westmorland on the estimated cost of additional technology required to enable the Clerk to access the Internet. The report indicated that the necessary items could be purchased for around £400 and Councillor Westmorland undertook to carry out the necessary installation. Additionally, it was recommended that BT be used as the Internet provider so as to be compatible with the Clerk's existing telephone system, and that the "pay as you go" option be chosen at a cost of 1p per minute after 6 pm and at weekends. This system allowed for a breakdown of the telephone bills, which would be of benefit for internal audit procedures.

Agreed : That the recommendations of Councillor Westmorland be accepted and that the necessary equipment be obtained.

11. NORTHUMBRIAN WATER:

The Chairman reminded members of his meeting with Mr.Lee Edwards, Technical Support Team Leader of Northumbria Water, following the difficulties which he had experienced recently with sewerage problems. In view of the forthcoming extensive development planned at Dalton Flatts and the inevitable impact which this would have on the village's sewerage system, he suggested that Mr.Edwards be invited to attend a special meeting to answer members' concerns in this connection.

Agreed : That arrangements be made for Mr.Edwards to attend a special meeting to be held on Thursday 8th November at 7 p.m. (subject to the availability of the hall).

12. BEST VALUE PROGRAMME :

Further to Minute No.12(b) of the July meeting, the Clerk sought members' wishes on how best the suggestions made at that meeting could be pursued. In view of the absence of Councillor Kennedy who had raised the matter, it was

Agreed : That the matter be discussed further at the next meeting of the Council on 4th October.

13. ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT :

Agreed : That Approval be given for payment of the following Accounts :

020	J.Abbot	Clerk's salary - August 2001	£233.36
021	J.Abbot	Postage/Telephone/Printing - June/July 2001	£26.55
022	J.Abbot	Postage/Telephone/Printing - August 2001	£16.85
023	District of E'ton	Repairs to swings	£30.00
024	Universal Office	Files/Stationery	£25.26

(At this point. Councillor Olaman left the meeting)

14. REPORTS:

a) Easington District Council - Consultative Panel

The meeting considered as Appendix 3, the report by the Clerk on his attendance at a meeting of this Panel on 26th July, as part of the District Council's consultation process in connection with its Best Value Review which was to continue until January 2002. The meeting was specifically concerned with environmental matters, and had been convened to allay the fears of many Parish Councils surrounding dog fouling problems, litter, street cleansing, grounds maintenance etc. Officers present were committed to providing a better service district wide on all of these items, which included a possible return to the "lengthsman" system of street sweeping and litter picking. It was intended that a process of partnership agreements might be established with individual parish councils, and that groups of parishes might well find it beneficial to arrange such partnerships to their mutual benefit. Further meetings of the Panel would be held in due course, and it was emphasised that such meetings would not affect the continuance of the Area Forums which were now well established.

b) Easington Economic Audit & Community Appraisals

The Clerk reported having received a detailed document in connection with this item, which had to be completed and submitted by Friday 7th September. The appraisal was being conducted as part of the new European North East of England Objective 2 Programme for 2002 -2006. The Easington District now has 22 wards eligible for support from Priority 4 of this programme, and in order to bid for new money under Objective 2 it was necessary to under-new appraisals in wards which have previously been unable to access such money. Enquiries have revealed that while Murton East ward is not at this stage included in this round, Deneside ward will be eligible. In view of the very short consultation period allowed, the Clerk reported having completed and returned the questionnaire in consultation with the Chairman by the deadline date, and had passed a copy of the document to the Dalton-le-Dale Community Association for its attention.

Agreed : That the action of the Chairman and Clerk in this matter be Noted and Endorsed, and

that further consideration of the document be given at the October meeting.

15. OTHER BUSINESS:

a) Trees

The Clerk reported having conveyed the concern of members at a number of fallen trees alongside the beck to the District Council's Tree and Woodland Officer so that the appropriate remedial action could be taken. Further general tree problems were reported in the area of woodland to the east of Dene Road, and it was

Agreed : That the Clerk request a site meeting with the Tree and Woodland Officer to identify and eradicate the problems.

b) Dog Waste Bins

The Clerk reported having ordered two "Fido" dog waste bins from Glasdon Ltd. and that delivery was expected in a few days.

Agreed : That the Clerk's action be Noted, and that Approval be given for an agreement to be made with the District Council for the servicing of the bins at a weekly cost of £2.10 each + VAT.

c) Parish Council Periodicals

The Clerk reported that at the present time, the Council received two periodicals - "Community News" from the Durham Rural Community Council on a quarterly basis, and "Local Council Review" from NALC on a monthly basis. Ten copies of each were received at an annual cost of £40 and £90 respectively. It was suggested that these orders be reduced so as to achieve a pro rata saving, and that copies be circulated between members as appropriate.

Agreed : That the order for these periodicals be reduced to six copies of each.

16. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

It was Noted that the next meeting of the Council would be held on Thursday 4th October 2001 at 7 p.m.