

## **Bearpark Parish Council**

At a meeting of **Bearpark Parish Council** held on **Wednesday 15 June 2022** at **7.00 p.m.** held at **Beaurepaire Community Hub.**

**Present:**                    **Councillor J Thompson in the Chair**

Councillors I Cummings, O Edwards and P Wilson.

County Councillor D Nicholls.

### **1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor C Gallacher, R Kemp, J Peart and M Wilson.

### **2. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest in relation to any items of business on the agenda.

### **3. Minutes**

#### **Resolved**

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 May 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

### **4. Police Report**

Councillor D Nicholls informed the Council that thefts of drainage covers had been a particular problem. Dog thefts were also an issue at one point, but the thefts had appeared to have settled down. The rise in inflation and fuel would potentially increase issues of shoplifting. The Clerk informed the Council of the emails from Cllr M Wilson regarding anti-social behaviour in the area, particularly around the Colliery Road Play Area

Cllr P Wilson asked if there had been any reports regarding fires in the woods but nothing had been reported or noted by either the County Councillor(s) or the Clerk.

### **5. Representations from the Public**

There were no representations from the public.

### **6. County Council Report**

Councillor D Nicholls provided a report to the Council as follows:

- Covid 19 cases remained quite high;
- Go Northeast were proposing huge cuts and there were plans to close the bus depot at Chester-le-Street;

- Arriva NE service levels were well below average due to a number of reasons. The company had a lack of drivers and there were high numbers of bus services simply not turning up;
- DCC had failed in their bid to be the city of culture in 2025, with Bradford being successful in their bid. The County bid was runner up;
- AGM of the Council had taken place with a newly appointed Chair of the Council. All other positions - Leader, Deputy Leader and the Cabinet remained the same;
- The County Council were in the process of selling the newly built HQ to the Durham University for use of a business school. The change of use would require planning permission;
- DCC new history centre at Mount Oswald would be called the 'Story';
- Cllr D Freeman is the new Mayor of Durham;
- Upcoming decisions include the financial plan in July, Levelling up Round 2 and the climate emergency response plan.

In response to the issues regarding local bus services, Councillor I Cummings felt that people would be likely to welcome a reduced timetable if the services were reliable.

## **7. Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2021/22**

The Clerk explained that the purpose of the Annual Governance Statement was for the council to publicly report on its arrangements for ensuring business had been conducted in accordance with the law, regulations and proper practices and that public money was being safeguarded and properly accounted for.

The Annual Governance and Accountability Return was made up of three parts:

- The first part was the Annual Internal Audit Report which had been completed by the internal auditor. Sections one and two required completion and approval by the authority (with Section 1, Annual Governance Statement to be approved, before approval of Section 2, Accounting Statements).
- Both sections had to be approved and published on the authority website/webpage before 1 July 2022.
- Section 3 would be completed by the external auditor and returned to the authority.

### **Section One**

The return contained a number of statements, known as assertions, to which the Council had to review and agree to. Appropriate evidence was required to support a 'Yes' answer. In relation to assertion M, the Council did not meet the requirements of the 2015 Accounts and Audit Regulations to provide electors with a period of 30 working days including the first 10 working days of July, to inspect the accounts. I am satisfied that the matter was simply an oversight by the Clerk and RFO due to a delay in publishing the AGAR and the associated changes which were required to the public rights period. I have recommended that the Council should ensure appropriate

checks are introduced to ensure that the public rights period is checked and that the dates accord with those set out in the associated regulations.

**Resolved**

That the Council agree to assertions A to L, and the Annual Governance Statement for 2021/22.

**Section Two**

The Clerk informed the Council that Section 2 of the AGAR was the statement of accounts in the form of a summary of income and expenditure account and a statement of balances. This was presented to the Council for approval, together with details of income and expenditure for 2021/22, a bank reconciliation and an explanation of variances, which the Clerk summarised for the Council.

**Resolved**

That the accounting statements for 2021/22 be approved.

**8. Report of the Clerk**

The Clerk informed the Council that the Community Emergency Plan training was being repeated in June and urged all Councillors to attend.

Councillor I Cummings informed the Council that the training session he had attended was extremely worthwhile and felt it should be an important priority for the Council. Councillor Cummings wished for the matter to be placed on a future agenda.

The Clerk also provided details of a regional training event taking place on Thursday 7 July at Hardwick Hall, Sedgefield

The Clerk advised that other locations may need to be sought for the installation of a the flagpole as the contractor had raised some concerns with regard to the proposed location. Councillors to give some thoughts to a revised location and an assessment made with regard to the Parish Council land.

**Resolved**

That the information be noted.

**9. Planning Applications**

**DM/22/01457/FPA - Single storey rear extension at 27 Taylor Avenue Bearpark Durham DH7 7AX**

**Resolved**

That the planning application and further comments be noted. There remained no objections or comments further to previous consideration by the Council.

**DM/22/01280/FPA - Erection of 1no 3 bed dwelling at 2 Auton Field Terrace, Bearpark, Durham DH7 7AS**

**Resolved**

That the planning application be noted. There were no comments made.

**10. Village Matters**

Councillors had noted the following issues:

- Bearpark News and Booze was a mess outside;
- Councillor J Thompson had been approached by Mr S Guy from the Durham Miners Association with regard to the Parish Council purchasing a chair at Redhill Miners Hall and asked what Councillors views were. Councillor Thompson felt that Bearpark was often forgotten about as far as mining heritage. A chair cost £100. Councillors were not against the proposal but it was important to understand whether the seat had a plaque etc. Councillor Thompson would provide more detail at the next meeting.

**Resolved**

That the matters be noted and actioned where required.

**11. Any other items of interest**

There were no additional items of interest.

**12. Date of next meeting**

The next meeting would be held on Wednesday 20 July 2022.