

## **Bearpark Parish Council**

At a meeting of **Bearpark Parish Council** held on **15 November 2023** at **7:00pm** at **Beaurepaire Community Hub**.

**Present:** Cllr M Wilson (Chair)      Cllr N Anderson      Cllr I Cummings  
                 Cllr R Kemp                      Cllr J Peart              Cllr P Wilson

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

Apologies were received from:      Cllr O Edwards

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

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

### **3. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 October 2023 were agreed as an accurate record.

#### **Matters Arising**

**Overgrown Vegetation at Cook Avenue** had been cut back. Cllr I Cummings requested that further action be taken as vegetation still lying on top of the garages and encroaching onto the road.

#### **Resolved**

That the Clerk report back to DCC.

**Off road bike posters** had been received.

#### **Resolved**

That Cllr Wilson would post in the noticeboard and other suitable locations.

**Parish Council Bench** – the bench would be re-painted as soon as weather permits.

#### **Resolved**

That the Clerk report back once the work was completed.

**Flagpole** – A pre-planning application had been submitted at no cost to the council. A response was expected by 23 November 2023

#### **Resolved**

That the Clerk report back to council as soon as any further information was available.

**Listed Sign** – A pre-planning application had been submitted at no cost to the council. A response was expected by 23 November 2023.

## **Resolved**

That the Clerk report back to council as soon as any further information was available.

**Remembering Bearpark** – The Clerk advised she was awaiting details regarding the appropriate license before a pre-planning application could be submitted.

## **Resolved**

That the Clerk report back to the council as soon as any further information was available.

### **4. Police Report**

Cllr M Wilson advised that she was unable to attend the latest PACT meeting but that she had received a report from the Neighbourhood Warden to advise of recent activity in Esh Winning, Ushaw Moor and Bearpark. This included 8 cases of ASB, 8 abandoned vehicles, 3 bin related incidents, 2 bonfires, 9 cases of flytipping, 4 reports of littering, 10 untidy garden/yard cases, 8 police jobs and 25 proactive reports.

## **Resolved**

That the information be noted.

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

No representations had been received.

### **6. County Councillors Report**

Cllr M Wilson provided an update to the Council as follows:

- From Tuesday 31 October, anyone who is applying to vote by post or proxy will need to provide their national insurance number as part of the application.
- Community groups and organisations across County Durham are being invited to apply for financial support to become Welcome Spaces. Welcome Spaces will replace Warm Spaces which were established in October 2022 following significant rises in energy costs and concerns that County Durham residents would struggle to heat their homes over the winter months.
- Lumiere, the UK's light art biennial returns from Thursday 16 November to Sunday 19 November 2023, when Durham will become a nocturnal art experience hosting works made with light on its streets, bridges, buildings and river.

## **Resolved**

That the information be noted

### **7. Report of the Clerk**

The Clerk provided an update to the Council as follows:

- The following training sessions would be provided by NALC:
  - Making the Planning System Work for Local Councils – 22 November 2023, 12:00 – 13:15
  - Winning Strategies for the Funding Game – 15 December 2023 – 12:00 – 13:15

- The next Smaller Council's Forum meeting would take place on 23 November, 2pm at Great Aycliffe Town Council.
- There have been several missed electricity bill payments over the previous 18 months. The Clerk requested permission to arrange a direct debit.
- The NJC pay award had been agreed and so a backdated payment would be made to the Clerk (and previous Clerk)
- The precept requirement deadline would be 19 January 2024

**Resolved**

That the information be noted and relevant action taken by the Clerk.

**Finance Report** - The Clerk circulated a report which detailed all recent and upcoming expenditure.

**Resolved**

That all costs be approved by the Council

**8. Planning Applications**

Details of planning application DM/23/03290/TPO were circulated. Council did not support the application.

**Resolved**

That the Clerk submit a letter of objection from the Council.

**9. Requests for Financial Assistance**

The Emergency Planning Group had requested funding to print flyers and distribute to residents.

**Resolved**

That the Clerk make the necessary arrangements with agreed funding of £500 or less.

**10. Village Matters**

Christmas 2024 – The tree had been installed by DCC. A competition had been running at the school for two pupils to turn on the lights. The best drawings were chosen (Cllr Marion Wilson did not participate in the judging due to her role as School Governor).

**Resolved**

That Cllr Marion Wilson would inform the school of the winning pupils. The Clerk would purchase a £20 Smyths voucher to present to each the winners at the light switch on event and a pack of chocolate coins for each child who took part in the competition.

**11. Allotments**

The Clerk had visited the allotments and found some concerning issues (youths accessing the site unsupervised and using potentially dangerous machinery). A list of contact details of current tenants had now been drawn up.

### **Resolved**

That the Clerk send a letter to tenants who are allowing dangerous activity to occur. A new tenancy agreement would be drawn up as the previous agreement was now out of date. The new agreement would be issued in January and tenants would be given three months to adhere to rules. A regular inspection programme would be initiated and anyone found to be in contravention of the new agreement would be written to and if necessary the agreement terminated.

### **12. Co-option of Parish Councillors**

A draft expression of interest statement was circulated.

### **Resolved**

That the EOI be placed in notice boards and on social media pages.

### **13. Parish Funded Neighbourhood Warden**

The Clerk advised that a rough cost for a Neighbourhood Warden for 5 hours per week would be £6,000 per year. If the Warden is required at evenings and weekends they need to be in pairs and so this would be £12,000 for the year.

### **Resolved**

That a decision be made next financial year if this is to be funded.

### **14. Heritage 100 Walk**

A request of £1000 had been received to fund the story that would go with the Bearpark walk. A community walk had also been proposed for the coming week.

### **Resolved**

That due to current financial pressures this amount be refused. That an offer of Councillors time to help write the story be made. That the community walk be deferred to the Springtime due to condition of footpaths with current weather.

### **15. Budget Setting 2024/25**

A draft budget forecast made by the Clerk was circulated.

### **Resolved**

That the council consider an increase in precept for 2024/25 by 7.5%. Final decision to be taken at the next meeting.

### **16. Any Other Business**

**Poppies** – the decoration remains on the pit wheel.

### **Resolved**

That the Clerk arrange for the decoration to be taken down in the next week.

### **17. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting would take place on **Wednesday 17 January 7:00pm** at **Beaurepaire Community Hub**.