

WOODLAND PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Annual General Meeting held on

Thursday 9th May 2024 - 7.30pm

Woodland Village Hall

Present

Cllr Teasdale, Cllr Brydon, Cllr Rutter, Cllr Gardner, Cllr Snowdon
Parish Clerk, Simon Land
Cllr Coslett DCC Evenwood and Barony

1 Apologies

Cllr Timms

2. Election of new chair

2.1 Cllr Peckett agreed to become chairperson for next 12 months. Cllr Teasdale to step down as chair with immediate effect.

2.2 Cllr Gardner proposed Cllr Timms as vice chair in place of Cllr Peckett, although absent Cllr Timms had prepared a letter stating she would be in agreement to being proposed as vice chair should that be the case. Cllr Teasdale proposed Cllr Brydon who was not in agreement with the proposal at present, therefore Cllr Teasdale proposed Cllr Rutter who did accept the nomination. Both candidates seconded. Vote taken - Cllr Timms elected vice chair.

3. Declaration of Interest

3.1 Cllr Gardner stated that she was of the opinion, and suggested that, Cllr Teasdale and Parish Clerk Simon Land should declare an interest in Woodland Community Group should there be a conflict of interest in the future

4. Confirmation of minutes

4.1 Parish clerk discussed the requested amendments from previous meetings. To be discussed further at future meeting.

5. Matters Arising

5.1 Cllr Rutter stated he felt he had a right to know what was said in the private closed meeting on 14th March 202. Cllr Gardner explained that the Model Officer Councillor protocol states that there are some issues which in fairness should not be discussed in front of the clerk as he would have no means of defending himself, and therefore as an act of courtesy, whilst following the protocol it was requested that that part of the meeting was therefore closed to parish clerk and those with a conflict of interest, Cllr Rutter and Cllr Teasdale. At the time of the meeting in March WPC had not yet adopted their own officer councillor protocol and therefore the protocol given to councillors was used as a guide.

5.2 Cllr Rutter asked why there were no notes. Cllr Gardner stated it was a private and confidential meeting and therefore no audio, minutes or vote was taken. This decision was agreed by all councillors present in the closed meeting. Cllr Rutter challenged the legality of this. Parish Clerk quoted 1960 Public access to meetings act. Cllr Rutter requested it was noted he disagreed. It was again stated no minutes, audio of the meeting were taken

6. Public Participation Period

6.1 Parishioner asked what had happened to Mobilis in children's playground. They were present at last parish council meeting, and it was stated that further discussions would be had before a decision was to be made regarding its future.

6.2 Parishioner requested if any plans for parish council to help with speeding through the village. Clerk stated that there had been many discussions re speeding, asked were people aware of the gates located at Kinninvie. Parish council previously had funds available to pay for cost of 2 flashing speed signs but were advised by DCC that the only ones able to be erected were the ones DCC provided, and they were £10,000 for 5 years which PC were unable to finance. Clerk has requested horse aware signs but not had response. Etherley PC have speed detection system, manned by villagers, now not used by Etherley PC and could be used by parish. Locally van monitoring speed not widely supported by Durham Police. However, it was mentioned that Ingleton were still using this method. Cllr Snowdon has raised a case with Durham Highways after a recent incident involving a horse. Highways will send out an officer to view the village as a whole with regard to most suitable location for signage. Parishioner enquired as to whether stickers placed on refuse bins could be a means of making drivers aware of speeding, BHS will provide free stickers for villages. Parish clerk stated he would proceed with this and erection of white gates, now precept had been agreed. Cllr Cosslett stated he would raise the issues of speeding signs at the next TAP meeting.

6.3 Parishioner enquired as to whether the council would be prepared to purchase litter pickers so that a clean of verges could take place. Cllr Cosslett stated that Clean Green Team would supply these for free.

6.4 Parishioner asked for update regarding cemetery chapel. Parish clerk stated that chapel is in bad condition, this was highlighted in the 1970's. Council agreed to a spend of £200 for a survey to be carried out by Carl Swainston, Surveyor and structural engineer of Pond Farm, Woodland. Report can be read in full on WPC website. Parish clerk stated that original deeds relating to chapel have not been located, he was keen to look into the possibility of converting the chapel to heritage centre and has spoken to Gaunless Valley Heritage Trust. Cllr Gardner stressed that ownership of chapel would need to be determined first and foremost. Clerk has looked on land registry to attempt to determine the ownership, which highlighted that property had never been sold or changed hands. The only correspondence he has was from Teasdale District Council stating that the council will take on from Woodland Parish Council and Burial Board ownership of the cemetery except for the chapel and war memorial. Clerk wrote to Burial Services DCC, they do not hold the deeds and suggested to contact the assets department at county hall, who also do not hold the deeds. Parishioner then asked what the estimated costs of would be restoring the building. Cllr Gardner stated that restoration could only be considered if ownership belonged to the parish council, she also stated that at a previous meeting the sum of £150,000 had been mentioned as a figure for restoration by the parish clerk. Clerk then stated he had said £50,000-£150,000. Local builder had promised to supply budgetary figure after looking at the chapel. Cllr Gardner stated that as a parish council we could not justify spending most of the parish council's monetary reserves on this project. Parish clerk has approached Heritage Lottery fund and commenced application, but this has stalled as he was unable to ascertain ownership at this stage. Parishioner suggested opinions of residents in the village should be sort before any decisions on the chapel's future is decided. Parishioner asked what will happen if ownership of chapel cannot be established. Cllr Gardner

replied stating that the parish council would have to attempt to lodge an objection with the county council or land registry following which the district council would have to become responsible. Questions from the general public arose regarding the suitability of a visitors' centre in a cemetery, there are no toilet facilities. Parish council have previously agreed that all council meetings would be held in the village hall as this is a more safe and suitable location.

7. Finance

7.1 Issue has arisen with banking arrangements due to change of chair necessitating new mandate be set up. This has now been done. This has had a knock-on effect regarding internal audit. Parishioner asked if individuals would have sole authority to make payments- parish clerk stated that no this was not the case.

Further parishioner also expressed concern that it would appear that the parish council has been in breach of banking regulations since 2008 and asked what contingency plans had been put in place and queried if PC should change to another more suitable bank. They stressed this was a serious issue and need swift attention by speaking to a business banking specialist.

7.2 Currently bank balance is £13,626 which includes £3,000 this year's precept, precept up 14% on last year.

7.3 Internal audit - auditor who has previously audited for the council is now not in a position to audit. New internal auditor now needs to be found.

8. Playground

8.1 Mobilis removal - Former Cllr Cliff Harding was qualified to inspect playground equipment, each year ROSPA came out to also inspect equipment in the playground. Parish council had spent £6,500 on refurbishing the equipment, including mini climbing frame. Parish clerk stated that there was a fault with the mobilis head and it would need to be refurbished, and that there was a note on a parish council spreadsheet stating estimate £500 to inspect Mobilis and that at previous parish council meetings it was discussed that the time was approaching when funding would need to be sought to improve/replace some of the playground equipment. Parish clerk stated that he had recently met with Area Action Partnership to commence the process of seeking funding. Clerk stated "we decided to look at it ourselves", due to £500 cost for inspection. "Anecdotally it was claimed that 2-3 young people had been hurt by the Mobilis" said the parish clerk. No reports of accidents logged. Parishioner who had been present at last meeting stated that when Mobilis was discussed the decision was made to not remove it and that further discussion would be had. They stated that there had been poor communication from the parish council and no discussions regarding it being dismantled. Parish clerk said "On bank Monday Bob (Cllr Teasdale) and I went to the playground to look at it, it was a windy day and it took me all my strength to stop the mobilis as it was spinning wildly. It hit me and therefore I climbed a ladder held by Bob and removed the rubber bellows/ donut which were full of holes and the inside was full of water which was the braking system. It was corroded and a universal joint was jammed hard, all of which he stated were finished. In order to get this refurbished we would take out the 4 bolts which were in the top of the column. However, these corroded in and therefore the only way was to cut it off". Cllr Snowdon stated that none of the parish council were aware or had been informed beforehand that the Mobilis was to be dismantled. Cllr Gardner, Cllr Snowdon and Cllr Timms listened to the audio recording of the previous meeting to clarify the decisions made regarding the Mobilis/playground. Cllr Gardner stated that Cllr Teasdale said 2 children

had been injured although no parents had come forward to notify the council of injuries. The parish clerk stated 1 child was with a parent and the other 2 were with a private company. An inspection had been done and that an estimate had been sought and the cost for repair was £500. Cllr Snowdon had asked parish clerk for a copy of the estimate but had not received it. Estimate was a verbal estimate said Parish Clerk. Cllr Snowdon had since been in contact with the suppliers/installers of the Mobilis, HAGGS, who have quoted £6,500 + VAT to replace, installation costs £4,500, ? if this includes VAT, and because the Mobilis has been partially removed there would be a cost £11,500 to replace the wet pour flooring, totalling around £30,000. HAGGS did say that they have a current spare part and could have refurbished the Mobilis. Parishioner enquired as to whether in view of sharp edges of Mobilis being exposed is there a plan to close the playground on safety grounds, and should there not currently be signage indicating said equipment is unsafe and unusable. Parish clerk stated he felt it could not wait another 2 months until next meeting to discuss what he and Cllr Teasdale had deemed themselves to be unsafe equipment. Parishioner stated that surely an extraordinary meeting of the parish council could have been called for an urgent matter such as this. Clerk stated that cordoning off with tape and a sign would not have stopped children using it. Cllr Gardner queried to the clerk why other parish councillors were not consulted and asked to make a decision by email. Parish clerk stated in his opinion it could be repaired. Parishioner stated that as it was not the company which installed the equipment it would be unlikely that they would be able to repair it, and queried was it destruction of public property. Also asking in the interim what was to happen to the playground. Safety of those using the playground is paramount. Discussion followed where results of playground questionnaire were made public. Results of playground questionnaire can be found following these minutes. Parishioner asked how easy it would be to remove the remains of the Mobilis. Clerk agreed to personally remove the remainder of the Mobilis and make good the wet pour flooring. Council voted to parish clerk removing remnants of Mobilis and making good flooring and he agreed to carry out these works.

Parish clerk said following incidents in playground, there were 3 not 4 as stated previously. He stated that there was no accident book for the parish council. He stated that he had bought one and would now use it.

Social media involvement- Cllr Gardner asked if parish clerk would remove social media posts commenting negatively about parish council. Parishioner asked what had the council achieved in the past 12 months and asked if the council could move forward and work together collectively over the next 12 months as they were supposed to represent Woodland Parish Council. Chair requested a moratorium on all social media activity concerning the council and the village hall. Unity should be the key for the future and perhaps could Woodland Show be an attempt to unify the village. Clerk stated he had not been admin on community social media page for some time. Parishioner then challenged the clerk stating that according to social media at that particular time he was still listed as admin on this social media page. The clerk stated he was unable to remove himself or amend any posts. He agreed to look into this matter when challenged.

9. Authorisation of Application for grants

Permission requested to start looking for grants, clerk spoke last week to TAP regarding match funding, who mentioned that they would be prepared to issue WPC a grant for playground. Parish clerk asking for agreement from parish council to apply to TAP for £12,000 funding. County councillors from Evenwood and Barony would be

prepared to give Woodland Parish Council £12,000 as a match fund, and parish council could then apply to lottery fund. Cllr Snowdon has spoken to Annelise Ward at TAP and they would require permission from land owner of the playground, Lord Barnard, and an inspection of the playground completed. Agreed by the council to continue

Parish clerk applied for photograph of the king, he enquired whether the village hall would display it on behalf of the parish council.

Next meeting

Thursday 11th July 2024 at 7.30 pm Woodland Village Hall

These are true and accurate minutes of the meeting as agreed by the council

Date

Signed

Minutes for all Parish Council meetings are available to view once agreed and signed by the council. These are available on the council website woodlandparishcouncil.gov.uk. The minutes will normally be available no later than 4 weeks after the date of the council meeting.

Please note, all parish council meetings will be audio recorded for the purposes of accurately producing the minutes. The recording will be retained by Woodland Parish Council until the minutes have been agreed and signed. The recording will then be deleted unless the retention is requested by a lawful authority.