



*The Council of the  
Parish of Esh*

**The Council of the Parish of Esh Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting arranged during Council Recess of the Council held on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> August 2021 at The Miners Institute, Langley Park.**

**Meeting commenced at 7:00pm**

**Ordinary Meeting of the Council**

**1. Record of Attendance**

Cllr. Joe Thompson, Cllr. George Hawxwell, Cllr. Linda Bushell, Cllr. John Duddy, Cllr. Ian Dowson, Cllr. Ollie Moat, Cllr. Allison Wardman, Cllr. Ruth Hughes, Cllr. Kathryn Thompson, Cllr. Louise Dudden, Cllr. Mike McGaun

**Clerk:** Leeanne Owens

1 member of the public was present at the meeting.

**2. Apologies of absence**

**Resolved** by Council to accept apologies from the following members:

Sue Carver -	Personal commitments
Edwin Simpson -	Personal commitments
Jillian Crumbie -	Personal commitments
Eric Bushell -	Work commitments

**3. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest recorded at this meeting.

**4. Minutes from the previous meeting held on the 13<sup>th</sup> July 2021**

**Item 10**

Cllr. Hughes asked the Chair to clarify in the meeting that when he met with the Legal Team at County Hall, who voiced concerns over the voting process regarding the CIC taking over the running of The Miners Institute. The Chair said he could not comment on this.

Cllr. Dowson said his query was why £33,000 had been spent on the CIC and at the time when this money was spent no councillors were formally elected.

Cllr. Hughes raised concerns that information relating to the previous Clerks settlement figure was highlighted at this meeting under item 10. Cllr. Hughes is concerned because this information was never made available to the public. Cllr. Hughes confirmed at this meeting when the member of public made this comment, she clearly heard Cllr. Hawxwell say it is ok, it's in the financials. The Chair noted that financial records are open to the public and the member of public may have seen this information from the financial records produced by the Parish. Cllr. Hughes said that the Chair does need to deal with this issue as it is serious breach if a Councillor has given this information to public members and stated that it breaches Standing Orders section a, b, c, d, e and f. In addition, it breaches part 2.1, 3.2 and 4.1 of the Code of Conduct Policy. Cllr. Bushell also stated that it was Cllr. Hughes who asked the member of public to repeat themselves when they made the comment in relation to the Clerks settlement figure, therefore the minutes need amending to reflect this change.

A lengthy conversation ensued regarding the settlement figure the previous Clerk got and the fact that this appears to have been leaked to public members. Cllr. McGaun stated that in his view the accusation has been made, however this is now being investigated by the Monitoring Officer at County Hall and therefore we should not discuss this matter any further and should await the outcome of the investigation.

#### **Item 11**

Cllr. Hughes stated that Cllr. Dowson had no authority to meet with Jack Marshall from Durham County Council in relation to the closure of Sir Bobby Robson Play Area and all Councillors should have been made aware of the meeting and given the chance to attend. Councillors present at this meeting were Cllr. Thompson, Cllr. Hawxwell, Cllr. Duddy, and Cllr. Dowson. Cllr. Dowson did state the Clerk was made aware of the meeting and was not able to attend. Cllr. Dowson said he became involved as he was already meeting Jack Marshall in relation to the Wetlands and asked about the Sir Bobby Robson Play Area and at this time he needed to know the code for the park as he was not aware if the park was open or closed. Cllr. Dowson apologised for not letting other Councillors know, however he felt concerned that the park had been closed for some time and he referred to a previous Councillors comments made at a meeting on the 9<sup>th</sup> June, when they stated they didn't understand the urgency of the park being opened and explained that the works needed were required otherwise the park was unsafe.

Cllr. Hughes stated that by not letting other Councillors know of the meeting, this breaches Standing Order section 25 a and b. Cllr. Dowson stated that the Parish does have a tenancy at Will to maintain the upkeep of the park and keep the park open and his concerns were that there was no local play area for the children in the village to go to.

The Clerk should have also let other Councillors know of the meeting and Cllr. Hughes did point out that 'The Clerk needs to up her game' going forward.

#### **Minutes from previous meeting held on the 20<sup>th</sup> July 2021.**

#### **Item 4**

Cllr. Hughes and Cllr. Bushell advised that they both declared an interest in Item 6 and this needs to be noted in the minutes.

## **Item 6**

Under the section Resolved Cllr Allison Wardman's name is typed as Cllr Allison Ward, therefore this item needs to be amended.

## **Item 10**

Cllr. Hughes asked Cllr. Hawxwell if the volunteer he knows who is happy to do the newsletter used to work for the Parish before and is it certain that this person will not want payment for their contribution to the Parish newsletter. Cllr. Hawxwell said he will speak to this person again and if the volunteer wants payment for their contribution, then this will have to come back to another Council meeting for discussion/approval. Cllr. Hughes also stated that in conversations she has had with Cllr. Duddy, he has confirmed that he is happy to do the newsletter with the help of another Councillor.

## **Langley Park Social Media Page**

It was noted that this page features The Wetlands, however The Wetlands has no connection to the Parish and therefore it was suggested that this is removed from the Facebook page. Cllr. Hughes advised that she has not seen a copy of the constitution for the Wetlands or a copy of the Committee Structure. Cllr. Hughes said all pictures on this Facebook page need to be removed from the site and said this breaches our Code of Conduct Policy and the Social Media Policy, which Cllr. Hughes read out at the meeting.

## **Item 12**

Cllr Bushell stated that Cllr. Eric Bushell does not rent the whole of the lockup, he rents space for 2 bikes, however he has now given his notice for this space to end at the end of August 2021.

## **Item 13**

Cllr. Bushell made a correction to this item noting that you whilst you can't have anymore that £85,000 in one bank account you have to factor in affiliated accounts.

**Resolved** That the Clerk makes the necessary changes to the minutes of the meetings held on the 13<sup>th</sup> July and 20<sup>th</sup> July. That Cllr. Hawxwell speaks with the volunteer concerned to ascertain his position in relation to the Parish Newsletter and bring this information back to a later meeting.

## **5. Opportunity for the public to raise matters of interest**

The member of public present at the meeting did not have anything to discuss with Councillors.

## **6. Finances**

Discussions took place around the banking, and it was noted that the Parish are in the process of having the bank signatories changed following this decision at the last meeting. A lengthy debate ensued regarding the issues the Parish are experiencing at present, and it was noted that these issues are delaying many invoices being paid.

For the purposes of the minutes, it was noted that the Clerk started in her role on the 10<sup>th</sup> May. Cllr. Bushell confirmed that herself and Cllr. Drion were Councillors until the 10<sup>th</sup> May 2021. Between the 11<sup>th</sup> May 2021 – 25<sup>th</sup> May no Councillors were in place, however the Clerk authorised Cllr. Drion to make payments in conjunction with Cllr. Bushell as at this point in time Cllr. Bushell held the only dongle the Parish had. Cllr. Drion was re-elected to the Council on the 25<sup>th</sup> May 2021, however Cllr.

Bushell did not become a Councillor again until her signed form of acceptance was completed on the 9<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

Cllr. Hughes confirmed that to move the banking issues forward she did try and arrange a meeting between the Chair Cllr. Thompson and Cllr. Linda Bushell in her home. Cllr. Linda Bushell agreed to the meeting, however after deliberation Cllr. Thompson said he did not wish to meet Cllr. Bushell in this setting. Cllr. Thompson said in the past 3 allegations have been made about his behaviour been intimidating and threatening and he did not wish to put himself at risk by meeting in the setting suggested. Cllr. Hughes read out the texts she and Cllr. Thompson exchanged in relation to the meeting, to Councillors for their information.

Further discussions took place and it was summarised that at present Cllr. Linda bushell is in a position to sign the banking paperwork but refuses to and she said she is also not willing to authorise any payments using her dongle. She stated that even if she did sign the forms it could take up to 4 weeks for anything to happen. Cllr Bushell said she would feel more comfortable if she sought advice from Governance on the situation and how to move forward.

Cllr. McGaun made a valid point by advising that at present the Parish cannot operate as we can't pay any bills.

Cllr. Hughes asked the Chair if he was willing to allow a 5-minute recess, which the Chair granted.

**The meeting closed for a 5-minute recess at 8:01pm**

**The 5-minute recess ended at 8:06pm and normal business resumed.**

After much thought Cllr. Bushell confirmed that she is now willing to sign the bank paperwork to remove herself as a signatory, which will allow the parish to move forward with their current banking arrangements. Cllr. Bushell did however confirm that she is not willing to hand over or use her dongle to assist the Clerk in the interim to make payments.

It was also clarified at the meeting that Cllr. Hughes and Cllr Simpson's dongles were never used and were returned to the bank.

**Resolved** That the Clerk takes the signed banking forms to the bank.

## **7. Keys for the Miners Institute**

Finance was discussed at the meeting in relation to the rent for the lockup, however the Chair confirmed that this will be discussed at the next meeting. Cllr. Bushell confirmed that Cllr. Eric Bushell does have 1 key for the lockup; however, he wishes to give notice on the lockup at the end of August.

Discussions took place around the fact that the locks were changed at the Miners Institute and where is the record that this decision was made. Chair Cllr. Thompson confirmed that no decision was made to change the locks, he made this decision as there were security issues concerned as a set of keys that were to have been returned have gone missing.

The member of public present at the meeting asked to speak at this point and this was granted. The member of the public stated that as a previous Chair for the Parish nobody other than the Clerk held keys for the Miners Institute. The Chair confirmed that because the current Clerk works from home it is

not feasible for the Clerk only to hold keys, therefore it has been agreed that in addition to The Clerk, the Chair and Vice Chair also hold keys for the Miners institute.

**Resolved** That Cllr. Bushell returns the set of keys she holds for the Miners Institute with immediate effect.

### **8. Hire of the Miners Institute**

Discussions took place regarding the charges for the rooms at the Miners Hall and the Chair feels that charging a set fee for everyone is wrong. The chair feels that a set fee should be in place for Corporate Events, however Charities using the venue should not be charged. Fees for children's parties should also be a token charge.

Cllr. Wardman said in her opinion the charges we set are not unreasonable. It was discussed in general that if we let the venue out as free, we run the risk of people using the venue and causing damage and this will end up costing the Parish. Discussions took place around charities using the venue and the Parish using the money the organisers pay for the venue and gift this back to the charity.

Input was requested from Cllr. Moat as Cllr. Moat runs the Village Hall. Cllr. Moat said it is different at the Village Hall as they are a charity. It was suggested by Cllr. Wardman and seconded by Cllr. McGaun that the Clerk brings information regarding room bookings that have been made by charities to future meetings, then the Councillors will decide if we give this money back to the Charity.

**Resolved** That the Clerk brings information on any charity room bookings received to future meetings to enable Councillors to decide whether or not to gift the money received back to the charity.

**9. Date and Time of the Next Ordinary Meeting** – Wednesday the 8<sup>th</sup> September 2021, 6pm at The Miners Institute, Langley Park.

**Meeting closed at 20:24pm**

**CERTIFIED AS A TRUE RECORD**

**CHAIR .....**

**DATE .....**