



*The Council of the  
Parish of Esh*

The Miners Institute, Church Street, Langley Park, Durham, DH7 9TZ  
0191 3736687

Clerk : Leeanne Owens  
Chairman : Cllr Joseph Thompson

**The Council of the Parish of Esh Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on  
Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> February 2022 at Esh Village Hall.**

**Meeting commenced at 6:00pm**

**Ordinary Meeting of the Council**

**1. Record of attendance**

Chair 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. Edwin Simpson, Cllr. Jillian Crumbie

County Councillor Bev Coult

3 members of the public were present at the meeting

**Clerk:** Leeanne Owens

**2. Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

**3. Declarations of Interest**

Cllr. Linda Bushell declared an interest in items 18, 19 and 20.

Cllr. Ruth Hughes declared an interest in items 19 and 20.

Cllr. Ollie Moat declared an interest in items 19 and 20.

#### **4. Minutes from the previous meetings held on the 8<sup>th</sup> December 2021 and 5<sup>th</sup> January 2022**

Cllr. Simpson moved that we move both sets of minutes as an accurate and true record. Cllr. Crumbie seconded this.

**Resolved** That the minutes from the meetings on the 8<sup>th</sup> December 2021 and the 5<sup>th</sup> January 2022 be agreed as a true record.

#### **5. County Councillors Report**

County Cllr. Coult presented her report to the meeting which included key events since her last attendance at the Parish meeting. County Cllr. Coult agreed to share this report with the Clerk to enable the Clerk to forward this to Councillors. This report will be available on request.

As part of her report County Cllr. Coult wanted to share her thanks for the support received from Cllr. Ollie Moat during the recent storms.

As part of her report County Cllr. Coult asked 2 questions for the Parish to consider:

- 1, In light of the recent storms would the Parish have a contingency plan in place and consider opening the Miners Hall to help local residents by offering a hot drink/snack, etc.
- 2, Have the Parish got any plans for the Platinum Jubilee.

In answer to County Councillor Coult's questions it was:

**Resolved** That the Parish are happy to open the Miners Hall to assist residents in light of another storm.

**Resolved** That Cllr. Crumbie will look at some ideas for the Platinum Jubilee and feed these back to the Parish for discussion.

**Resolved** That the report from County Councillor Coult be noted.

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

The Clerk read out 3 emails from public members who raised concerns over the fact that queries were raised from 2 Councillors in relation to the £2,500.00 the Parish awarded to Quebec and District Village Hall Association.

The Clerk read out a further email from a member of the public who raised concerns over the Esh Triangle highlighting concerns with sunken kerbs and an unrecognisable footpath. It was noted that kerbs and footpaths fall under the responsibility of the Highways Commission. The Parish does have the power to maintain kerbs and footpaths, however it was proposed by Cllr. Crumbie that we take this issue back to County Cllr. Coult and ask if she is able to look into this. Cllr. Simpson seconded this.

**Resolved** That the reports and concerns raised be noted.

**Resolved** That the issues in relation to Esh Triangle be took back to County Cllr. Coult to look into.

## 7. Clerks Report

The Clerk presented a verbal report to Councillors and discussed the following:

The Clerk confirmed that the AGAR from Mazars has been received now and will be shared with Councillors.

The Clerk raised some issues in relation to the running of the Miners Hall which included Fire Alarm Testing, Legionella Testing, Emergency Light Testing and PAT Testing and advised Councillors that measures need to be put in place to ensure these essential maintenance checks are being conducted and recorded effectively.

In her report the Clerk also shared an update to Councillors for the Conduct Training all Councillors and the Clerk are to receive in light of the complaints received via the Monitoring Officer. Training has been arranged from 5:30pm on the 24<sup>th</sup> February 2022.

Tenders were discussed as part of the Clerks report, and it was highlighted that not every contractor is quoting for the same jobs in the same way. The Chair highlighted that this is because the contractor has met with different Councillors to quote for the same work, therefore The Chair suggested that going forward he will delegate one Councillor to meet contractors who are quoting for the same work. In addition to this, councillors asked if quotations can be submitted to the Parish in different methods such as via email or posted to the Parish in an envelope to be opened only at Parish meetings. In addition, quotations will continue to be recorded as Quote A, Quote B, etc.

In relation to the discussion about quotations Cllr. Dowson proposed that we move forward with this idea and Cllr. Crumbie seconded this.

In the Clerks report Ushaw College was also discussed due to the extreme cost of this venue. Cllr. Hughes highlighted that she feels that the venue does need to be used as we have Parish Councillors who represent this area. The Clerk was presented with a name from the College who she could liaise with over the cost of the venue.

Following the report from the Clerk it was:

**Resolved** That the Clerks update be noted;

**Resolved** That the Clerk prepares the necessary templates and arranges the necessary building compliance checks discussed;

**Resolved** That quotations received are brought to future meetings in the order they are received and any that are posted to the Miners Hall are opened only at the meetings for which they are to be discussed;

**Resolved** That the Clerk contacts the contact provided for Ushaw College to see if a suitable cost to the use the venue can be negotiated and if this is not possible the Clerk is to look for other potential venues in Ushaw Moor.

## 8. Planning Applications

The Council noted the following planning applications:

- **DM/21/04071/FPA – 18 Linden Mews, Langley Park, Durham, DH7 9DZ**
- **Appeal APP/X1355/C/22/3290662 – School House, Front Street, Quebec, Durham, DH7 9DF**

Cllr. Simpson confirmed that he has no objections with the planning application in respect of Linden Mews and proposed that the Parish move the planning application received. Chair Cllr. Joe Thompson seconded this.

In relation to the appeal received for School House, Front Street, Quebec, Durham, DH7 9DF Cllr. Simpson moved that the Parish asks the Clerk to write to the Planning Officer to request that the appeal is dismissed. Cllr.

Simpson prepared a letter for the Clerk to send to the Planning Team stating the reasons the appeal needs to be dismissed.

**Resolved** That the Clerk writes to the Planning Team requesting that on behalf of the Parish the Appeal in respect of School House, Front Street, Quebec be dismissed.

**Resolved** That it be noted that the Parish have no issues with the planning application in respect of 18 Linden Mews.

## **9. Repairs to the Miners Hall and Lockup**

The Clerk shared with Councillors a list of repairs needed to the Miners Hall and Lockup that were never completed in the past due to Covid.

In relation to the repairs presented to Councillors it was noted that following the storms there has been further damage to the roof at the Miners Hall and the guttering. In addition, there has been further damage to the Lockup roof.

Discussions took place and it was suggested in the first instance that our insurance cover should be checked to see if we are covered for storm damage and if so establish if the damage caused via the storms be investigated. Chair Cllr. Joe Thompson also suggested that quotations are sought for the additional work required to enable the Parish to have a clearer picture of what work is needed and the cost of this work.

**Resolved** That the Clerk contacts the insurance to check what the Policy for the Parish covers and establish if the damage created as a result of the storm will be covered;

**Resolved** That the Clerk makes contact with suitable contractors to provide quotations for the other work needed.

## **10. Insurance Renewal**

The Clerk presented the new Insurance Policy which runs from January 2022 to January 2023 at an annual cost of £4,131.59 to Councillors for approval.

Following a discussion, it was;

**Resolved** That the Parish accept the new insurance policy and that the Clerk makes arrangements to pay the policy with immediate effect.

## **11. Service Level Agreement with Durham County Council HR Advisory Service**

The Clerk discussed the Service Level Agreement received from the HR Team at Durham County Council which advises if we wish to use their service for HR advice, the cost will be £75.00 per hour plus VAT.

**Resolved** That the information be noted, and that the Parish considers this request at a future meeting.

## **12. Update on Rebuilding The Weir at Wall Nook on the River Browney**

Cllr. Simpson provided an update on this agenda item and asked the Parish if he can have permission to see if there are any grants available to enable the Parish to invest in this project and to conduct further research on this

project. Cllr. Simpson proposed that the Parish agree to him establishing any funding sources for this project and Chair Cllr. Joe Thompson seconded Cllr. Simpson's proposal.

**Resolved** That the update be noted.

**Resolved** That Cllr. Simpson seeks to establish if any funding is available to support this project.

### **13. Payments to make and bank reconciliation**

The Clerk presented a list of payments to Councillors that are due for payment.

**Resolved** That the payments are authorised by the Council.

### **14. Section 106 Funding**

The Section 106 Funding was discussed at the meeting, and it was discussed that the Parish are going to apply for funding via the 106 Funding to use as a contribution to the proposed play park at the Recreation Ground.

**Resolved** That the Clerk completes the application form for the Section 106 Funding as soon as possible.

### **15. Intruder Alarm System Maintenance Contract**

The Clerk shared a quotation from CDS Security and Fire with Councillors for an additional alarm panel in the AAP Office, at a cost of £518.00 plus VAT.

**Resolved** That all Councillors were happy to proceed with the quotation and that the Clerk instructs CDS Security and Fire to complete the work as soon as possible.

### **16. Service Level Agreement – Durham County Council – Grass Cutting Team**

The Clerk informed Councillors that the current Grass Cutting Contract with Durham County Council is due to expire at the end of March 2022 and if we wish to cancel the contract, we need to provide at least 1 months' notice to the Council. Discussions ensued in relation to the service we currently receive, and it was noted that the level of service we have received has constantly been queried as we are not receiving the level of service and standard of service we are paying for.

Cllr. Crumby moved that because of our concerns we give notice to Durham County Council to end our contract with them and Cllr. Simpson seconded this.

**Resolved** That the Clerk provides notice to Durham County Council to terminate our agreement with them;

**Resolved** That the Clerk makes contact with other contractors who can offer a grass cutting service and bring the quotations to a future Parish meeting, for discussion.

### **17. Running of the Miners Hall**

Chair Cllr. Joe Thompson read the Decision notice received from the Governance Solicitor at Durham County Council which was in respect of a number of complaints received from a number of Councillors, to all present at the meeting. During the Chairs update section 9 of the report was highlighted where it indicates that the Council

consider a small working group between a small number of members of the Council and Directors of the CIC to explore the arrangements for the benefit of all with the support of a qualified mediator.

Discussions took place around the CIC running the Miners Hall and Cllr. Crumbie stated that she has asked on a number of occasions if she can receive the appropriate information on the CIC which includes their constitution, business plan, etc. Cllr. Crumbie said she is not in a position to consider the CIC running the Miners Hall without knowing anything about them.

Further discussions took place about the voting process which decided in May 2021 that the CIC would take over the running of the Miners Hall with certain members of the Parish Council believing that the voting process was not legal. In addition, the paperwork for the CIC was queried from another Councillor present at the meeting. A further query was raised on what have the CIC done since the decision for them to run the Miners Hall was agreed, however Cllr. Hughes said that herself and Cllr. Bushell who are the Directors for the CIC have not been able to enter the Miners Hall due to locks been changed, therefore the group has not been able to start anything.

During discussions Cllr. Simpson clarified that a resolution previously agreed at a meeting cannot be reversed for 6 months, however we have now reached this point, therefore Cllr. Simpson explained that you are able to rescind a previous resolution as an agenda item. It was clarified that for a motion to be reversed, 4 Councillors need to put this in writing and this needs to be placed on the agenda for the next meeting.

Following a lengthy debate Cllr. Dowson proposed that 4 Councillors put it in writing that they wish for the vote for the running of the Miners Hall which was granted to the CIC, be reversed. Cllr. Dudden seconded this.

**Resolved** That the running of the Miners Hall be considered again at the next meeting of the Parish Council.

## **18. Update on the Tractor**

Cllr. Dowson provided an update on the Tractor and said that at present he is waiting for the Police to contact him at which point he will be better placed to advise further.

Following the discussions paperwork was passed to the Clerk which stated that Cllr. Bushell accepted to look after the Tractor for the Environment Committee on behalf of the Parish. Cllr. Bushell did state that it was in fact her husband's signature and not hers, therefore it was questioned that a non-Parish Councillor had accepted equipment on behalf of the Parish.

**Resolved** That the update be noted and that Cllr. Dowson is to feedback further once he has an update from the Police.

## **19. Funding made to Quebec Village Hall Association**

Cllr. Hughes read out a statement in relation to the £2,500.00 that was awarded to Quebec Village Hall Association from the Parish and as part of her update various Councillors were questioned.

Cllr. Simpson quoted information to Councillors which indicated that the Parish do have the power to give Local Community Halls money if we wish and as we are in a position to do this. Cllr. Simpson moved that the Parish stand by their decision to offer Quebec Village Hall Association this money and Cllr. Crumbie seconded Cllr. Simpson's proposal.

**Resolved** That the update be noted;

**Resolved** That the Parish stand by their decision in offering £2,500 to support Quebec Village Hall Association.

## **20. Service Level Agreements**

This item was discussed as private and confidential and the members of the public present at the meeting were asked to leave the meeting.

An update was provided to Councillors and Councillors made a clear decision in relation to this item.

**Resolved** That the update be noted.

## **21. Date and Time of the next meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled to take place on Wednesday the 9<sup>th</sup> March 2022 from 6pm at The Miners Hall, Langley Park.

**Meeting closed at 8pm.**

**CERTIFIED AS A TRUE RECORD**

**CHAIR .....**

**DATE .....**