



Middleton St George Parish Council

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DUE TO THE CORONAVIRUS LOCKDOWN THIS SCHEDULED MEETING COULD NOT TAKE PLACE IN PERSON. A REMOTE VIRTUAL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING WAS HELD USING ZOOM. THE DECISION-MAKING SPREADSHEET WAS SENT BY THE CLERK TO THOSE PARISH COUNCILLORS WHO WERE UNABLE TO ACCESS THE REMOTE VIRTUAL MEETING.

Minutes of the Remote Virtual Meeting of the Parish Council held on Monday 6th April, 2020

Present: Councillor Mrs. C. Gilsean (Chairman),
Councillor A. Blacklee,
Councillor H. Bullock,
Councillor L. Foggett,
Alan Macnab, Clerk.

Supplied with and returned the Decision Making Spreadsheet: Councillor S. Crowther (Vice Chairman),
Councillor S. l'Anson.

The meeting started at 6.30 p.m.

1331. Apologies for Absence

No apologies for absence were received.

1332. Declarations of Interests

No declaration of interests were made.

1333. Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting on the 9th March, 2020

The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on the 9th March, 2020 were presented.

The Parish Council **agreed** that the minutes were a true record of the proceedings, subject to the following amendments being made:

Minute No. 1285. March 2020 Payments to include the payment to Mrs. M. Beadle for purchasing cleaning materials for the Parish Council building. £10.25 which was approved.

Minute No. 1299.2 MUGA. Amend paragraph 1 to read "The Chairman and Councillor Bullock reported on the site meeting held on 25th February 2020 with the Sports Development Officer of Darlington Borough Council, Chris Hutchinson from Durham FA, the Chairman of Middleton Rangers JFC and MSGCA Trustees, which went well. The meeting also discussed improved car parking but there was little interest in car parking at the meeting but there was a need to examine car parking in the Water Park as a whole.

Minute No. 1299.2 MUGA. Amend paragraph 2 to read "The Chairman had indicated that the Section 106 Agreement for the Sadberge Road development (Ref.13/00950/OUT) had included a funding contribution of approximately £40,000 for "Improvement of sports pitches in the vicinity of the area", but she had been informed that this was for play equipment, not pitch improvements. The Chairman had queried this and was waiting for a response. It was hoped that, as the money had not yet been allocated, it could be used for the proposed improvements to the MUGA."

Chairman's Signature..... *CJ Gilsean* Date *08/06/2020*

The Chairman signed and returned the minutes to the Clerk

1334. Vacancies for Parish Councillors – Update

The Clerk reported that there were currently four Parish Councillor vacancies. Two (Former Councillors Beadle and Smith) were advertised after the statutory 14 day notice period with a closing date of 27th March 2020. There has been one tentative enquiry. Two (Former Councillors McBride and Wilkinson) were awaiting the statutory 14 day notice period.

The Parish Council **agreed** that the Clerk will ask the Democratic Services Officer of Darlington Borough Council for guidance on issuing the statutory notices for the vacancies in the light of the current emergency.

1335. Coronavirus Emergency

1335.1 Employee Situation and Pay

The Chairman’s reported that the Litter Picker and Cleaner had both decided to self isolate because there were family members who have underlying medical conditions. The Clerk will continue to work normally from home. Guidance was received from CDLC which indicated that if the Parish Council operated a PAYE payroll scheme employees can be furloughed on full pay and then to reclaim the money back from the government.

It looked like the Government had stepped back a little from the advice it put out earlier last week about furloughing and public sector organisations. They updated their website later on the 2nd April 2020. The current advice public sector staff should not be furloughed.

The Parish Council **agreed** that the Litter Picker and Cleaner be furloughed because they could not work due to the lockdown) and they be kept on full pay throughout the emergency period, but the Parish Council will not claim 80% from the Government under the Business Retention Scheme because their pay has been budgeted. The Clerk will work normally from his home.

1335.2 Delegation of Decisions during COVID-19 Emergency Period

The delegation of decision making during the emergency period was considered.

The Parish Council **agreed** that during the COVID-19 emergency anything which requires urgent decisions be delegated to the Chairman, Vice Chairman and the Clerk. A report on the actions taken be reported to the next Parish Council meeting.

1335.3 Upcoming Meetings

The Parish Council had just learned that the 2020 Regulations (Coronavirus) had just come into force on 4th April, and further full guidance on these was awaited from the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and the County Durham Association of Local Councils (CDALC).

The full name of the new Regulations was *The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.*

The Parish Council had not had a chance to consider the provisions of the new Regulations in advance of the meeting, but did note those relating to certain meetings.

Parish meetings/assemblies are not included in the 2020 Regulations and must take place in person, and therefore they should be cancelled this year.

The Parish Council **agreed** that due to COVID-19 and acting within the 2020 Regulations:

Chairman’s Signature..... *CJ Gibson* Date..... *08/06/2020*

- a. The scheduled Parish Council meeting on the 20th April, 2020 be cancelled.
- b. The next Parish Council meeting will be held on the 11th May, 2020 (remotely if necessary)
- c. The Annual Meeting of the Parish Council will now be held at a later date along with the approval of AGAR.
- d. The Annual Parish Assembly scheduled for 23rd May, 2020 will be cancelled.
- e. The Community Centre be informed that the Annual Parish Assembly will be cancelled and notices posted informing residents that the Assembly has been cancelled.

1335.4 Public Participation in remote meetings

The Chairman drew the Parish Council's attention to Regulation 13 of the 2020 Regulations on the access of the press and public to meetings including remote video conferencing meetings during the emergency.

The Parish Council **agreed** that the Clerk will post notices of meetings as usual, and if anyone wishes to address the Parish Council at the meeting, to be invited to join the meeting via the remote meeting link.

1336. VE Day Commemorations. Request from the organisers for a Section 137 Grant

It was reported that the Parish Council had agreed on the 23rd March, 2020 to reimburse the organisers the costs which they had incurred in printing the leaflets for the event which was £100. The Clerk reported that receipts still had not been received.

The Parish Council **agreed** that the £100 Section 137 grant be paid to the organisers and receive the receipts afterwards.

Financial Matters

1337. Financial Report as at the 31st March, 2020

The Clerk gave the financial report as at the 31st March, 2020. The report gave the reasons for the Contingency Accounts and the reserves,

a. Parish Council Accounts

Contingency - Saver Account 1 – Barclays	- £21,439.53
Contingency - Saver Account 2 – Barclays	- £16,366.31
Reserves - Account with Darlington Credit Union	- £5,095.42
Barclaycard Expenditure March 2020	- NIL
Community Account:	
Income	- £138,002.83
Expenditure	- <u>£ 56,437.52</u>
Balance as at the 31st March, 2020 and carry Forward to 2020-21	£ 81,565.31

Chairman's Signature..... *CJ Gibson* Date 08/06/2020

b. Progress against the Budget

The income for the 2019-20 at the end of the financial year was £138,002.83 and the expenditure was £56,437.52 with a carry forward surplus balance of £81,565.31 to the 2020-21 financial year.

c. Bank Reconciliation

The bank reconciliation as at the 31st March, 2020 showed that the Community Account spreadsheet balance held by the Parish Council was £81,565.31 and the Community Account balance held by the bank was £81,579.80. A difference of £14.49 which was because cheque numbers 200044 for £4.50, 200046 for £9.99, had not been cleared by the bank. The cancellation of these two cheques had not been carried out but this would be done as soon as possible.

d. Accounts Spreadsheet and Bank Statement

The Spreadsheet of all the accounts including the transactions in the Community Account and the bank statement for the period from the 3rd March to the 1st April 2020 were presented. The bank statement showed the balance in the Community Account at the bank on the 31st March, 2020 was £81,579.80.

1338. Payments received and payments for approval

a. Payment In:

Date	Customer	Amount
01.04.2020	Darlington and District Model Boat Club Rent and Electricity Charge	£746.21

b. April 2020 Payments

Date	Supplier	Amount
07.04.2020	Scottish Power. Electricity Monthly	£3.00
07.04.2020	HM Revenue and Customs. Clerk's PAYE April 2020	£163.68
07.04.2020	Mrs. M. Beadle. Cleaning materials for the Parish Council office	£10.25
07.04.2020	NEST Arrears of Employer's Pension Contributions for January to March 2020	£16.77
12.04.2020	Scottish Power. Gas Monthly	£30.00
24.04.2020	BT Hub Monthly	£40.49
27.04.2020	NEST Employer's and Employee's Pension Contribution – J. D. Lynn April 2020	£47.44
30.04.2020	Cleaner - C. I. Wood Pay	£70.00
30.04.2020	Litter Picker - J. D. Lynn Pay	£563.31
30.04.2020	Clerk - A. W. Macnab Pay	£654.72
	Total	£1,599.66

The Parish Council agreed that the payments for April 2020 be made.

1339. Timetable of Controls for April 2020

The Timetable of Controls report for April 2020 was presented.

The Parish Councillor audit of the finances for the period 1st April to the 31st December 2020 was carried out by one of the Parish Councillors with audit responsibilities. The audit for January to March 2020 will be carried out by the internal auditor who will review the whole year.

Chairman's Signature..... *CJ Gibson* Date..... *08/06/2020*

The Parish Council received a statement of receipts and payments to date under each budget heading with actual and planned expenditure in the form of the Accounts Spreadsheet and Progress against the Budget Statement at the meeting.

The banking arrangements were reviewed by the Parish Council at its meeting on the 9th March 2020.

A schedule of payments which required authorisation was included in the agenda for the meeting.

The list of regular payments was included in the schedule of payments as part of the agenda for the Parish Council meeting.

There were no cheques for the counterfoils to be signed at the meeting.

The utility and grounds maintenance contracts will be reviewed at the Parish Council meeting on the 11th May, 2020.

There were no losses, liabilities or damage which could lead to claims.

A seven year lease was issued to the Darlington and District Model Boat Club for the use of the building and Pond 1 in May 2019.

The Parish Council **agreed** to note the report.

1340. Annual Audit and Annual Return (AGAR) 2019-20. Guidance from Mazars and County Durham Association of Local Councils

The Clerk reported that a message was forwarded from both Mazars and County Durham Association of Local Councils regarding the delay in the issuing of AGAR return forms because of the Coronavirus lock down. The Association stated that if Parish Councils wished to receive their copy of the AGAR return form earlier and did not want to wait until the delayed period (three weeks) has ended the advice was to contact Mazars on Local.Councils@mazars.co.uk

The Association also stated that there was a need to wait until the Ministry of Housing, Regions and Local Government and SAAA issue guidance on how the audit is to be conducted. NALC were pressing hard for guidance.

The Clerk also reported that the Internal Auditor of the Parish Council's accounts , Gordon Fletcher, for the purposes of the AGAR 2019-20 will be collecting the accounts and supporting documents and files from the Clerk's home on the 27th April, 2020 and he will be returning the accounts and supporting documents and files during the following week.

The Parish Council **agreed** to note the report.

1341 NEST Pension Litter Picker

1341.1 New Employee Contributions as a result of the increase in the National Minimum Wage

The Clerk reported that the Litter Picker was paid the National Minimum Wage for adults. As a result of the increase in the National Minimum Wage hourly rate of pay from £8.21 to £8.72 with effect from the 1st April 2020 his pension contribution at 5% of his gross pay will be increased from £27.91 per month to £29.65 per month. His net pay will increase from £530.36 to £563.61 per month.

1341.2 NEST Pension employer's contributions arrears from January to March 2020

Chairman's Signature..... *CJ Gibson* Date..... 08/06/2020

The Clerk reported that the employer's contributions made to NEST has been based on 2% of the employee's net pay from January to March 2020 when it should have been 3% of the employee's net pay. The employer's percentage contribution increased from 2% to 3% on the 1st April, 2019 and this was correctly applied to the employer's pension contribution from the 1st April to the 31st December, 2019. The amount of arrears to be paid to NEST for the period January to March 2020 was £16.77.

The Parish Council **agreed** to pay the increased 3% employer's pension contributions to NEST which was £16.77.

Planning Matters

1342. New Planning Applications

The Parish Council considered the following new planning applications:

19/01165/FUL. Partial conversion of Hotel (Use Class C1) to 6 No. self-contained residential apartments (Use class C3) with separate mangers accommodation, erection of two storey rear extension with glazed balcony areas, installation of 2 No. windows to basement, 2 No. windows to western elevation, reinstatement of front door and reconfiguration of rear garden, carpark and service yard (Amended site layout plan received 14th January 2019 Amended plans received 18th March 2020). 16-18, The Front, Middleton One Row.

The Parish Council **agreed** to make no comment on this planning application.

20/00205/TF. Works to various trees protected under Tree Preservation Order (No.7) 1980(G6) - Sycamore(T1) crown clearance (removing dead, dying and diseased branches), Sycamore(T2), Horse Chestnut (T3), Sycamore(T4), Horse Chestnut(T5) pruning away from BT lines to give approx. 2m clearance, crown reduction on west side to allow more light into the property, crown lift to give 3m clearance to path, highway, driveways and gardens.61, Middleton Lane, Middleton St. George.

The Parish Council **agreed** to support the adjoining neighbour's request that the work be carried out with sensitivity.

Other Matters

1343. Parking and Road Safety in the centre of Middleton St. George. Update

The Clerk reported that a response had not been received from the Highways Officer despite his reminder.

1344. Grounds Maintenance Contract 2020-21 to 2022-23. Update

The Clerk reported that the new contract with Darlington Borough Council which was due to start on the 1st April 2020 has been suspended until the current emergency restrictions have been lifted. The Borough Council are not providing a grounds maintenance service in other parts of the Borough. No payments will be made for the service until the work re-starts.

1345. Parks and Grounds

1345.1 Water Park

a. Review of the Lock Down Situation

The Clerk reported that the Model Boat Club and fishing activities have been suspended during the current emergency. The Boat Club building has been secured. The front gate to the Water Park and the entrance gate to the MUGA (multi-use games area) have been locked. The Model Boat Club and Angling Club reports were submitted with the papers for the meeting.

Chairman's Signature..... *CJ Gibson* Date..... *08/06/2020*

b. Swan's Nest

Councillor I'Anson reported that a swan's nest was found in the grass in the Water Park and he had arranged for the nest to be fenced off to protect it.

1345.2 Play Area and Playing Field

The Clerk reported that the entrance gate to the play area has been locked. The Vice Chairman reported that the locking of the play area was effective and no one was using the play area.

1345.3 The Front, Middleton One Row

a. Request for change of use on land in front of The Devonport

The Parish Council received in the papers for the meeting an email and notice from ELG Planning Limited informing it that a retrospective planning application had been submitted to Darlington Borough Council for the change of use of the area to the front of The Devonport hotel, to form an external seating area.

The Parish Council **agreed** to note the email and notice.

b. Middleton One Row Woodland Management Project Update

The Chairman reported that she was awaiting a response from Groundwork giving the progress with the Project.

The Parish Council **agreed** that the Clerk will ask County Durham Community Foundation for an extension of the Project which is subject to grant aid until the 30th September 2021.

c. Work on Parish Council land to the rear of 38, The Front, Middleton One Row. Update

The Clerk reported that the current emergency had resulted in the planning application not being completed but it would be completed as soon as possible.

d. Sculpture Update

The Chairman's report on the design of the sculpture was circulated in the papers for the meeting.

The location had been agreed with Groundwork and the Sculptor at the Parish Council meeting of 10th February, 2020 which would be further to the west of the bus shelter on flattish grassed area, as per the plan presented at that meeting.

The Parish Council **agreed** the design of the sculpture and the design for the plinth (a salmon) and asked if the salmon could be designed to show "movement". The Chairman will inform the sculptor that agreement has been made to the design and the request for a change to be made.

e. Sheds at Almora Hall Update

The Clerk reported that the sheds had been reported to the Planning Officer but a visit to the site could not be carried out until the current emergency was lifted.

1346. Policies and Procedures

1346.1 Operation London Bridge

Chairman's Signature..... *CJ Gibson* Date *08/06/2020*

The amended Operation London Bridge Protocol was circulated with the papers for the meeting following consultation with St. George's and St. Laurence's Churches and Middleton St. George Community Association.

The Parish Council **agreed** the Protocol which will be forwarded by the Chairman to the Churches and the Community Association and the Clerk will purchase a Condolence Book which will be passed to the Community Association Trustees for use in the Small Meeting Room in the Community Centre.

1347. Middleton St. George Community Association

The report on the decisions taken by the Community Association on VE Day, the Book of Condolence and the locked gates in the Water Park was circulated with the papers for the meeting for information.

The Parish Council **agreed** to note the report.

1348. Northumbria in Bloom 2020

The Clerk reported that Northumbria in Bloom 2020 NIB 2020 had been cancelled because of the Coronavirus emergency. A request was made for the subscription paid for 2020 to be carried forward to 2021.

1349. VE Day Commemorations 8th May, 2020 – Insurance response

The Clerk reported that the Parish Council's insurers does not cover event cancellation as part of the current policy or as an extension to it which resulted from the Coronavirus outbreak as this was considered a notifiable disease/illness and was not on the standard list. This therefore also applied to the Section 137 grant.

The insurers indicated that they could look to arrange a separate Event Cancellation policy.

The Parish Council **agreed** to note the report.

1350. Middleton St. George Memorial Association. RAF and RCAF Memorial Service and Dinner Saturday 13th June 2020

The Chairman informed the Parish Council that this event had been cancelled due to the Coronavirus emergency.

1351. Councillors Reports and Items for Future Meetings

No reports from Parish Councillors and no items for future meetings were submitted.

1352. Date of Next Meeting

Monday 11th May 2020 at 6.30 p.m.

The meeting ended at 7.27 p.m.

Chairman's Signature..... *CJ Gibson* Date *08/06/2020*