

NOTES ON MEETING

of

Neasham Annual Parish Assembly held on 2 May 2017 at 6:30 pm in Neasham Reading Room.

Present: **Parish Councillors** :- G Crute, P Dunn, E Miller, C Murray, K Sandick, J Weighell (Chair), D Dodwell,
Ward Councillors L Tostevin, J Kelley,
NPC Clerk:- J.Walker
Neasham Reading Room Chair Lesley Blundell
Members of the Public – Open Invitation

A17/01 Chair's Introduction

- Since this was an inaugural meeting there were no previous records to approve
- JW (Chair) welcomed the 18 members of the public who attended the meeting and introduced them to the Councillors and other representatives

A17/02 Chair's Annual Report

- JW (Chair) presented his annual report (a copy of which is attached)

A17/03 Parish Council Budget and Precept

- Cllr Murray gave an overview of the budget and precept. The precept had risen from £1887 (last year) to £3774 (current year). The increase was largely due to "catch-up" and imminent changes in regulations which will cap the increase at 2%. Councillor Murray also listed the major items of expenditure and the need to ring fence funds for certain items which will no longer be provided by DBC

A17/04 Update on Environment Agency Plans

- The update on the EA plans was included as part of the Chair's report

A17/05 Proposed Updated Bye-laws

- GC reported that the existing bye-laws had been produced in the 1960s and needed updating to be relevant to today's modern society. Draft bye-laws had been prepared and as part of the adoption process a consultation had to be undertaken with the electorate. This was in the form of a questionnaire based on the proposed bye-laws. Hard copies were handed out at the meeting and had also been posted on the website. GC urged all parishioners to respond

A17/06 Ward Councillors Report

- Cllr Tostevin gave an interesting resume on the workings of DBC which had 50 councillors who attended bi-monthly meetings and as well as being members of committees dealing with specific subjects voting on many key issues, the decisions on which were subject to scrutiny. High profile recent decisions taken were budget cuts and the proposed closing of the library. Lorraine has had many years experience with the NHS which has benefitted the committees on which she serves.
- Cllr Kelley opened discussion on various issues of concern to parishioners which included election of Tees Valley mayor (with an annual budget of £15m), the almost non-existent bus service to Neasham (although well used when available), the slow progress on broadband in the area (despite interest by both BT and Virgin), airport development (airport currently

loosing £2m/year). All evoked a lively discussion. Joe has been a ward councillor for 6 years.

A17/07 Neasham Reading Room Report

- Lesley Blundell (NRR Chair) leads a committee of 11 members and outlined recent improvements to the premises in particular the new kitchen. LB emphasised the importance of fund raising in view of future improvements to the toilet area and external painting. The NRR continued to expand its programme of events, recent additions include rural drama and pilates.

A17/08 Looking after Neasham

- Village Boundary. GC advised that the “village envelope” with regard to planning was not enforceable until DBC had a new policy in place.
- Dog fouling has greatly reduced since the erection of signs, whether lighter nights have contributed to this remains to be seen
- Speeding. The NPC proposals to erect speed warning signs in the village were outlined, DBC had offered to contribute by providing posts free, but the cost of signs was still liable to be in the region of £4k. Suggestions from the floor that signs that provide data would be more effective and organising a fund raising event to help costings were both noted. Police traffic sergeant had agreed to attend a NPC meeting to assist in solving the problem.
- Tree maintenance. GC reported that a survey was under preparation with all trees numbered for future reference
- Defibrillators. The floor felt it was a good idea to provide one and the best location for it was on the village green
- Litter picking. It was felt that the Neasham Road approach to the village was a disgrace and a recent litter pick by volunteers had removed a staggering amount of rubbish (It was reported that DBC had equipment for this type of operation that could be obtained from them at their Clock Tower depot in South Park).
- Broadband had been covered in Cllr JK’s report
- Suggestions from the floor
 - There was an old double posted dog foul sign on the river bank that needed replacing (one for the new defects reporting process?)
 - It was questioned if a Neasham Public “Rights of Way” Leaflet could be produced. This should be referred to Steve Petch, the rights of way officer at DBC

Many thanks to the Councillors who had provided the light refreshments. The assembly dispersed at approximately 8.30pm .

APPENDIX A

Chairs Report 2016/2017

2016 saw several changes in the Parish. Due to the dissolution of Low Dinsdale PC and Sockburn Parish Meeting, Neasham Parish almost trebled in size as it took over responsibility for these areas. The old Neasham Parish Council ceased to exist on March 31st and following an election, in which all original Councillors were returned unopposed, a new Neasham Parish Council was formed on May 1st which included a new Councillor, Tina Murray. The increased Parish size which now includes Low Dinsdale, Dinsdale Park, Brass Castle, Fishlocks, Sockburn, parts of Newbus Grange and Neasham Village resulted in an additional Councillor being required and we co-opted Councillor Geoffrey Crute. Councillor Murray set up a village website on behalf of the Parish Council and Reading Room which is proving to be a good platform for village news and information. Contact details for all of our Councillors can be found on all four Parish notice boards as well as the website. The notice boards can be found on the village green, Sockburn Lane, Low Dinsdale church and at Dinsdale Park. A map of the new Parish can be found on the village green and website.

<http://www.parish-council.com/neasham>

Precept.2017.

We had been warned by NALC that this would possibly be the last year that we could precept over 2.9% without a referendum. We decided to increase precept by 100% and ring fence money for items such as elections, grasscutting and pumphouse maintenance.

Vacancy for a Parish Councillor

Our Clerk, Bob Heward retired from office due to pressure of business leaving a vacancy for a parish Clerk. After advertising the post, our new clerk John Walker was appointed. Due to the resignation of John Alderson, a vacancy has arisen for a Parish Councillor. Anyone interested should give their name to any Councillor. We thank John for all his years of work and support

Police Matters

Due to the shortage of police manpower, we still seem to be fighting a losing battle against speeding and we will continue to work on this perennial issue in fact we are at present exploring the costs and possibility of installing speed warning posts in Teesway as many other villages have done. We do have successful cross border Rural Watch in operation where volunteers assist Police with patrols after dark in village and rural areas. A successful year with vehicles seized and arrests made for poaching, illegal vehicles, trespass etc. Further volunteers are always welcome. Please contact Farmwatch co-ordinator, Sue Proudfoot on 07939 268178. Residents can keep up to date with police issues on www.keepintheknow.co.uk.

Upon our insistence at PACT meetings for action and prosecutions to be taken against speeding, Darlington police are now training Special Constables in the use of Speed gun. Several checks have occurred in the past few weeks but unfortunately I can not give any feedback or statistics at this stage.

Environment Agency

It is now twenty years since the last major work was carried out along the riverside path and steps.

The Environment Agency intends to refurbish the steps during 2017 on the flood bank and re-align any sunken slabs along the riverside walkway. The Environment Agency will remain responsible for the structure of the Flood Bank, but will be passing over to the Parish Council certain other maintenance aspects.

Planning Applications.

We have had numerous Applications to consider in the past year mainly relating to Spa Wells and Sockburn Hall. One controversial one was for ten dwellings on the former Woods site in New Lane which despite our objections was approved by DBC Planners.

BT public phone box

As the payphone kiosk on Teesway has not been used for over two years, BT intend to remove it and reinstate the verge sometime during this year. We had hoped to possibly buy the old kiosk to install a defibrillator for residents use but we decided this was not economically viable. We still intend to install a defibrillator in a central position in the village.

Trees.

We had a safety survey carried out on all village trees and it was reported that a cherry tree outside No5 Teesway was badly diseased and would need to be removed. To that end we have bought a mature tree to replace it with in the near future.

Litterpicking.

My thanks to all volunteers who give their time to patrol the village and surrounding roads and paths to keep our area litter free.

Flower beds and roadside tubs.

Many thanks to Coun Dunn and village volunteers who put a lot of effort in to keep Neasham a gold medal winning village.

Awards.

Coun Eric Miller and Jane were drawn out of the hat to attend Buckingham Palace garden party. Congratulations Eric.

The chair, John Weighell was presented with a 25 year service plaque by Mayor of Darlington, Coun Brian Jones. Many thanks.

All in all a very successful year for NPC. My thanks to everyone who have put in so much effort during the year. Thank you all for help and support.

Coun John Weighell. Chair Neasham Parish Council.