

Hurworth Parish Council

Finance Meeting held on Friday, 16th November 2012,

Starting at 6:30pm at Hurworth Grange.

1. Those attending

Ian Holme (Chair), Val Hughes, Jean Peacock, Peter Foster, Tony Winnett, Tony Needham
Also Peter Allan (Parish Clerk RFO)

2. Apologies for absence

Ken Pattison, Jeff Kemp, Jill Russell, John Howard

3. Declarations of Interest

Ian Holme with regard to Hurworth Community Association (Personal)

4. Minutes of the Meeting held on 29th April 2012

The minutes were accepted, proposed by Peter Foster and Seconded by Jean Peacock.

5. Correspondence

- a. E Mail from Mr George Lawman suggesting that the PC should consider the project to develop the cycle path from Hurworth to Darlington; it now has a greater importance due to the evening bus service being discontinued.
The council discussed this, and the two possible routes which could be considered. DBC has already withdrawn from their offer to participate due to lack of available funds. The cost of a bridge over the A66 is prohibitive. The route via the old railway line, linking to the existing tunnel, may require some land purchases, and the tunnel is believed to be in a bad state of repair. Again the costs are prohibitive.
Additionally, concern has been expressed, that the route could attract some unwelcome visitors to Hurworth; Middleton St George has suffered from this when their route to Darlington was opened.
Decision: no further action at this time.
- b. Circular from Steve Ragg DCALC to all local councils. Councils should start to prepare their recommendations for the 2013-14 Precept, but must take no firm decisions until the end of December, as an edict will be coming from Central Government with guidance on how to proceed, and the levels recommended.

6. Financial Update

The following summary was presented by the Clerk

INSERT

Discussion points:-

- a. Peter Foster expressed concern over the planting of any new trees, due to the serious dangers imposed by the Ash tree disease. The meeting agreed, and the recommendation is that the council should delay any new tree projects.
- b. MUGA. We have not been able to identify a suitable location for a MUGA, as Hurworth Comprehensive Academy has withdrawn their permission to house it in the school grounds. It was agreed that this project should be put on the back burner, and some of the suggested funding can be released.
- c. Skateboard project. The skateboard work which has been completed has not been totally successful, as it has exposed the poor condition of the areas which have not been resurfaced. The Committee agreed that the project should be expanded to embrace the rest of the surface. The committee recommended that a further £2,500 be allocated immediately, to cover this, and that HCA should be asked to arrange for the work to be completed as quickly as possible. This decision will need to be ratified at the December PC meeting. The Chair said that the money withdrawn from the MUGA project could be assigned, as the aims and objectives are similar. Proposed by Val Hughes, Seconded by Tony Winnett, all agreed.

Note: this will mean that HCA will need to contribute about £500, being the VAT cost.

Action: Clerk to make appropriate arrangements.

- d. **FOTC.** This group has attracted new members and they have enhanced their objectives to address projects outside of the confines of Hurworth Grange. Their Treasurer has approached the PC requesting some funding. There is an amount of £1000 in the 2012-13 budget under this heading.
The meeting expressed concern that this money may be used for 'bees', but the Treasurer of FOTC has assured the Council that this was not the case, and quoted a project in Roundhill Road.
The committee agreed in principle to award upto £1000, provided that the details of the projects are stipulated in their request. Proposed by Ian Holme and Seconded by Tony Winnett. Val Hughes declared a personal interest in this and did not vote, all others voted in favour.
- e. Traffic Control. Tony Needham stated that the allocation of £7000 to this project had been overstated, and that £6000 should be adequate.

7. Parish Plan Review

The committee reviewed each section of the 'Action Items' of the 2010 Parish Plan, and the following points were raised.

- a. **Parking** It has been confirmed that double yellow lines will be imposed on both sides of the road at Spar Corner.
- b. **Transport.** Although there is an ongoing dialogue regarding providing an evening bus service, the recent survey has rendered a very small response to date. This will be further reviewed.
- c. **Recycling'** Tony Winnett strongly supports the requirement / need for a recycling facility in the Parish. He suggested two possible locations could be at either Stressholme or at the Sewage Plant road, between Croft and Hurworth Place.
- d. **Playground**
Val Hughes has carried out a survey of other playgrounds in this area and other areas, and has concluded that the playground at Hurworth Grange is below the safety

standards, and is also badly equipped. Other playgrounds which she has visited have the correct ground base, with either tree bark or sponge type flooring. There is a much wider range of equipment available, and our facility is well out of date.

The cost of improving the ground, to meet minimum standards will be circa £1000.

To upgrade the facility with equipment, which would make it attractive to individuals over the age of eight, would cost approx £2000 per piece of equipment.

The large tree which overhangs the playground needs to be cut back to provide a heightened canopy. **Action Clerk to arrange this.**

The size of the playground is not adequate to accommodate more equipment, and this needs to be discussed with both DBC and HCA.

Recommendation

Refurbish the ground, and allocate funds for three pieces of equipment; total estimate £8,000. Treat this as a shared project, and HPC contribute £4,000. Proposed by Val Hughes, and Seconded by Peter Foster. Unanimously carried.

e. Rights of Way, bridle paths and heritage walks

Val Hughes suggested that the council arranges an annual walk over all the right of way pathways, to ensure the rights are upheld. Peter Foster suggested that four walks per year would be practical. One different route each season. Peter said that he is prepared to be the guide.

8. Project Review

- a. Tony Needham put forward a project to repair and better maintain the **internal roads within the Village Green**. In total there are fourteen roads, and six require attention at present.

A proposal to allocate £3,000 to this project was proposed by Tony Needham, Seconded by Jean Peacock, and carried unanimously. Work should start in the Spring of 2013.

b. Trees

Peter Foster stressed the need to trim the trees on the Village Green, which are impeding traffic movement. The committee agreed unanimously to allocate £1,000 for this work, and request that John Howard makes appropriate arrangements urgently.

Ian Holme asked whether the council needs to do another tree survey to evaluate the state of the trees in the parish. Peter Foster stated that the survey done three years ago should suffice for the present.

The Clerk reported that there is a large tree, with no TPO, growing in the Burial Ground at All Saints Church, which is disturbing the nearby graves. Peter Foster added that it is a cherry tree, and should be cut down. The council agreed, and the **Clerk was instructed to make the arrangements.**

c. Pedestrian Crossing

Jean Peacock asked whether we could arrange for a new pedestrian crossing be installed next to Don Parr's house, to safeguard children crossing the road. There is already a crossing outside the doctors' surgery, so it is unlikely that DBC will countenance this.

The Clerk was asked to start enquiries with DBC.

d. Public Toilets at Hurworth Place

Tony Needham suggested that the PC either reinstate the toilets or demolish them. The meeting all agreed that demolition is the preferred action.

The **Clerk and Ken Pattison are to research and establish ownership, and get a quotation for the demolition.**

It was suggested that English Heritage may give a grant to help with this work, and create a new feature on the land.

- e. Hurworth Grange building needs to replace the water system, which having had a survey will cost circa £8,000.

It was agreed that this was the PC's responsibility, and that we should initially seek a grant. **Clerk to pursue.**

It was also agreed that this committee recommend that the PC set aside £4,000 towards the cost, in case no grant is available.

9. Precept 2013-14

The Chair confirmed that HPC would not be receiving the grant of £9,785 from DBC, and this would have a major impact on our deliberations in setting next year's precept. He went on to inform the meeting that Middleton St George and some other local councils had already indicated that they intend to pass the total amount of the grant deficiency on as an increase in the precept. The Chair suggested that it may be politically prudent to pass on only a portion of the loss, perhaps 50% or 75%.

The Financial Projection for the year to 31st March 2014 was studied. The salient point is clear, if there is no increase in the precept, then HPC can continue to operate, maintaining their minimum statutory balance, but will not be able to undertake any new projects. Effectively, HPC will become a stagnant council and no longer have a pro-active policy.

Tony Needham advanced the view that HPC should pass on the full shortfall of £9,785, which equates to about £ 6 per year per household, or 50p per week.

The Clerk was asked to ascertain an accurate per household figure for this increase.

After further deliberations the full committee agree unanimously to raise the precept by the full grant deficiency Of £9785. This will be further confirmed when the 'per household' figure is known, and placed before the full council. The Chair reconfirmed that no final decision can be taken until January 2013, when the Government paper is announced.

10. Allotment Rent 2013

The rent in 2012 is £10 per plot, which is known to be very low when compared to the allotment rent at other sites in the area. Most sites are £30 and more.

The council are paying for two skips to be provided to Strait Lane allotments each year and paying for the water at both sites. HPC is paying all the bills for maintenance and upkeep. The total cost exceeds to £570 which is currently generated.

A motion was tabled by Tony Winnett and Seconded by Jean Peacock that the rent should be increased to £15 per plot. This was carried unanimously. **Clerk to put into effect from 1st January 2013.**

The Chairman thanked the councillors for attending and closed the meeting at 8:45pm.