

Hurworth Parish Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council with Banks Group held at Hurworth Grange on Wednesday 5th April 2017 starting at 2:00pm.

1. Those present: Margaret Williams (Chair), Paul Walters, Peter Foster, Jean Peacock. Dorothy Oughton.

Also attending: Cllr L. Tostevin and Peter Allan (Parish Clerk),

Representatives from Banks Group: Lewis Stoles, James xx, Stuart Morgan

2. Apologies for absence

Carol Paylor and Wilma Campbell,

3. Declaration of Interests

Not applicable

4. Chairman's Welcome

The Chair welcomed the representatives from Banks Group and the councillors and explained that this meeting was being held because Banks Group had offered to provide an update on the status of the housing estate project at Roundhill Road.

Lewis addressed the meeting and provided the following information:-

1. A contractor has now been selected; he had hoped to be able to divulge the name today, but it must be withheld for another few days.
2. The latest housing map was distributed for the councillors to see, and Lewis answered questions appertaining to it. The new layout contains 95 houses, which is in accordance with their promise of less than 100.
3. It appears that the style of houses and superior houses. With a predominance of detached houses. And a few bungalows. There are no 'affordable houses on the new plan. (Margaret Williams expressed her concern over the high cost of the houses, with little chance of first-time owners being able to purchase a residence on this estate).
4. The Full Application will be submitted very soon now, and it is expected to pass through DBC Planning Department quickly.
5. There has been great interest in the houses, and several people have already put their names down to purchase.
6. Due to the lack of an agreement between HPC and Priory school, there is no scope for a pathway to link up with Manorfield. Priory School refused to discuss this project.
7. The new estate will, effectively be isolated, as there is no link road or pathways between the existing estates; the only entrance and exit is Roundhill Road.
8. There is no suitable space for a playground within the boundaries of the new estate.

Section 106 commitments

The following commitments have been made to DBC, and payment is scheduled soon:-

1. An evening bus service into Darlington, committed support for 5 years.
2. Local Highway improvements, specifically:
 - a. Roundhill Road traffic calming.
 - b. Traffic calming near the Hurworth Academy
 - c. Financial support for the Primary School, specifies as a sheltered area in the playground.

When asked by the council the Section 106 payments will be made strictly to DBC, and are specifically to be used for the items listed above.

There appears to be no payment of any kind to HPC. The allocation of Affordable Houses forms part of the Section 106 amount, and this will be determined by DBC. It appears unlikely that any affordable houses will be allocated to Hurworth.

The council expressed their disappointment that the Parish Council will receive nothing, and that nothing has been allocated for the community amenities, such as the second playground. Banks responded by informing that this has occurred because of the attitude of a section of the residents, their aggressive anti-engagement policy and lack of willingness to co-operate. He referred to another current project at Pelton, where the residents and parish council entered into a full engagement, and all parties have benefited, whereas Hurworth's attitude has lost these benefits.

When asked about community applications for grant awards, Lewis informed the meeting, that because of the ill-will from a section of the community, Banks had taken the decision to withhold all community funding, until the project is passed and approved. There are four community applications, which have all been suspended due to the lack of engagement.

The council agreed that we must learn an important lesson from this, and ensure that we adopt a more pragmatic approach in future ventures.

Cllr Foster asked about whether trees will be planted and open spaces provided on the estate. The answer is yes. This raised the question of who will become responsible for the care of the trees and open spaces. Banks Group informed the meeting that a Management Company will be established to perform ongoing maintenance, and the householders will all pay a maintenance fee each year.

This is a fairly new arrangement, and will protect the parish council against additional 'duty of care' expenses.

When asked who will 'name' the streets, Banks responded that this will be done by the contractor, in conjunction with DBC. Cllr Tostevin agreed to investigate this to try to set up a meeting so HPC can be part of this decision.

Lewis offered to try to arrange an introduction to the selected contractor, and that he will assist, initially, to establish engagement meetings on an ongoing basis.

The chair thanked the Banks team for attending the meeting and sharing the latest information.

The meeting closed at 3:35pm.