



*The Council of the
Parish of Esh*

Minutes of the Ordinary meeting of the council

Held on Wednesday 13th November 2024 at the Miners Institute, Langley Park

Meeting commenced at 6 p.m.

Item 1 Record of Attendance:

Cllr Ollie Moat (Chair), Cllr A. Wardman (Vice Chair), Cllr Edwin Simpson, Cllr Kathryn Thompson, Cllr Pat Short, Cllr Jackie Clark, Cllr Andy Walker. County Cllr B. Coult

There were 4 members of the public present.

Item 2 Apologies for absence:

Cllr John Duddy, Cllr Mike Quinn, Cllr C Greenham-Denny, Cllr J. Crumbie.

Item 3 Declarations of Interest:

Cllr Thompson item 13 and 16

Resolved: councillor items of interest noted

Item 4 Minutes of previous Ordinary meeting on 9th October 2024:

The minutes from the ordinary meeting held on October 9th had been circulated to councillors via email, prior to this meeting. It was proposed by Cllr Simpson that it be noted that the minutes are a true and accurate representation, this was seconded by Cllr Clark.

Resolved: It be noted that the draft minutes are a true and accurate representation of the meeting on October 9^h 2024.

Item 5 Opportunity for members of the public to raise matters of interest:

There were four members of the public present, 2 from Esh Village, 1 from the Walk and Talk Trust and 1 local resident.

The local resident has been involved in issues around parking at Browney Court. He thanked Esh Parish Council for the support that he has received from them.

The residents from Esh village requested the assistance of Esh Parish Council in the objection of a diversion of Public Bridleway 33. There has been a proposal made from the land owner to divert Public Bridleway 33. The proposed diversion has been submitted to Durham County Council with a period of objection until 21st November. Esh Parish Council have received notification of the proposal via letter at the end of October, however, the first opportunity for the council to discuss this matter is at the meeting held tonight. The current path of the bridleway runs through lovely countryside and has beautiful views over the valley, the new proposal runs alongside a 6ft hedge, therefore the residents are citing that an objection can be raised on the grounds of loss of public enjoyment. The residents also mentioned that there is a lack of signage notifying of a Public Right of Way and that gates to the bridleway are locked and quite often it is impassible due to the overgrown state. The matter was discussed with councillors who concluded that the clerk lodge an objection to the planned diversion of Bridleway 33 through both email and letter, explaining that the reason for the objection was that there was very little information provided by the landowner for the reason for the diversion and that Esh Parish council were in support of the residents. Cllr Simpson also mentioned that the landowner is duty bound to maintain the public right of way and have it as an accessible resource for the community. Cllr Moat proposed that an objection be lodged, Cllr Clark seconded this a vote was held, which returned as unanimous.

There have been several enquiries to the clerk, firstly from a local resident who had read about the 50th anniversary of the closure of Langley Park Pit in the latest edition of Esh Leaves. The anniversary of the closure is next year 2025, the resident thought that it would be good to have a celebratory event that marked the closure of the pit.

Resolved: in relation to the first enquiry, the clerk is to lodge an objection via email and letter to Durham County Council as a matter of urgency. All objections must be lodged by 21st November 2024.

The second enquiry, let it be noted that the resident's enquiry has been considered and that Esh Parish Council will consider holding an event to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the closure of the pit.

Item 6 County Councillors report:

County Councillor Coult presented her report which highlighted issues such as grants for welcome spaces, warnings for being aware of scam emails and texts messages over the festive period. The report also mentioned information regarding plans for the new AAP network going live in April 2025. Local issues included secured funding for projects such as a new bench on Low Moor Road, Langley Park, new planters at Esh Village and resurfacing part of The Fold Road at Quebec. Parking remains an issue in Langley Park with many people flouting rules of the road and parking on double yellow lines, chevrons etc.

One point on the report mentioned Vehicle Activation Signs (VAS) which have been installed in Esh Village in the hope to reduce speeding. It was mentioned that speeding is an issue in Langley Park and that VAS might help with speeding if installed at the village entrances. The cost of these is £10,000 each which due to all county council funds being allocated, there is no money left. It was mentioned that Esh Parish Council could potentially fund VAS as a measure to reduce speeding in Langley Park. Speed observations are being carried out during December. Cllr Simpson thanked County Cllr Coult for her comprehensive report.

Resolved: to accept County Councillor Coult's report.

Item 7 Clerks' report:

The clerk's report had been distributed to councillors prior to the meeting and included information such as an approach by the company that governs Esh Parish Councils communications, with regard to internet security. The clerk has taken advice from an IT specialist, who concluded that the system that the communications company were trying to sell was for much bigger corporations that held databases of information. As Esh parish Council is a small entity, this equipment wasn't needed. Cllr Moat proposed that Esh Parish Council follow the advice of the IT consultant, this was seconded by Cllr Clark. A vote was taken which was unanimous, therefore the clerk would make contact and thank them for their interest, however Esh Parish Council would be declining their offer.

The clerk had received a request under FOI in regards to an article in the Esh Leaves newsletter, there has been an acknowledgement of the FOI which is ongoing.

A matter has been brought to the clerks' attention that an ex-councillor has requested permission that she returns to meeting as a member of the public. The question was posed to council, it was suggested that because of past incidents, the ban from the Miner's Institute remains in place. Cllr Moat proposed this point which was seconded by Cllr Wardman. A vote was taken, Cllr Wakker abstained as he felt he didn't have enough knowledge to make a decision. Cllrs Moat, Thompson, Wardman, Simpson, Clark, Short voted that the ban from Esh Parish Council and The Miner's Institute stand. This vote has enough to be quorate and will stand.

There was also information regarding the recent Halloween party at The Miner's Institute which was very successful with around 50 children attending with their parents/ carers and costed around £3.80 per head.

Esh Parish Council currently have an ongoing small claims with a contractor who did not fulfil a contract. This has now been escalated to court bailiff involvement, Esh parish Council are waiting on next steps.

The toilets in The Miner's Institute have been decorated and the contractor has supplied a quote to refurbish and paint the lintels and sills of the bay windows at the side of the building. Cllr Moat proposed that Esh Parish Council accepts the quote and books the contractor for the work. Cllr Short seconded this, council voted unanimously to accept the quote.

The clerk also included in the report timetables for October's and November's use of The Miner's Institute. Mainly to highlight how well the institute is being used and there may be a call for extra volunteer key holders during holiday periods. As there are six key holders including the clerk, it was decided to keep as is.

Resolved: To accept clerks report

Item 8 Public Bridleway 33 Diversion:

See item 5- Opportunity for the public to raise matters of interest.

Ongoing: Clerk to lodge objection with relevant bodies.

Item 9 Management Agreement with LPAA;

The clerk has received a staged plan of 3, 6, 9 and 12 months of improvements from LPAA, with this in mind Esh parish Council have decided to allow the go ahead of a 10-year Management Agreement with Langley Park Allotments Association, which will be backdated to September.

Resolved: Clerk to contact LPAA in relation to them signing a 10-year Management Agreement.

Item 10 Walk and Talk Trust:

Esh Parish Council received an update from the Walk and Talk Trust in regards to the proposed walk from last month. The route had been tested and was ideal. Some permissions are yet to be granted, for example through Stobilee Wetlands. Permission has been sought from Esh parish Council to start at The Rec with a post to demark the start of the route. There would also be discs along the route for guidance. Cllr moat proposed that a post be installed at The Rec, this was seconded by Cllr Clark and returned a unanimous vote. The walk is to be one of the Heritage 100 walks with stories to accompany about the local areas. It was also discussed about the opportunities to advertise the launch.

Ongoing: Walk and Talk Trust to send designs of the post to the clerk for council approval.

Item 11 Allotment inspection update:

Cllr Moat gave an update on the allotment inspection that had been carried out, this was a subsequent inspection and was performed as the allotment holders had failed their first inspection. There were 7 plots that had the re-inspection, many of which had made improvements, however, there were still two that gave cause for concern and improvements are still required to bring these plots to an acceptable standard. It was advised that the clerk contact Langley Park allotments Association to thank them for the measures and improvements that have been taken and to highlight the work still to do.

Ongoing: Clerk to email and congratulate on work carried out and highlight plots still raising causes for concern.

Item 12 Bobby Robson Refurb:

Cllrs Clark and Thompson have brought to the council's attention the cost of a total new refurb of The Bobby Robson play area. It is thought that much of the existing play equipment is serviceable and with the addition of a few new pieces and new flooring the park will be improved at a reduced cost. This would maintain structures within the park for older children such as the skate area which was due for removal in the original plans, however parts of the skate area need to be refurbished. The fencing also needs to be replaced with 4ft bow top fencing rather than the palisade fencing in existence.

Ongoing: Clerk to contact contractors to obtain quotes for works to be carried out.

Item 13 Bat and Owl boxes for Rec:

Cllr Moat has received quotes for bat and owl boxes from several suppliers including one from a local company that works with adults with learning difficulties and mental health issues and provides them with skills and training in wood working and arts and crafts. Cllr Moat proposed that we approach this company to supply the bat and owl boxes. Cllr Clark seconded this. The vote taken was unanimous to approach this company.

Resolved: Clerk to make contact with the company and place an order.

Item 14 Table and benches at parks/ roadside towards Kaysburn:

This item has been ongoing and documented in previous months minutes. Cllr Thompson had an old copy of Esh Leaves in which it stated that Esh Parish Council had replaced the benches along the road side to Kaysburn. Because of the uncomfortable nature of the existing benches, It was proposed by Cllr Moat, that Esh Parish Council replaces three of the benches with benches made from recycled plastic bottles. Cllr Clark seconded this and it returned a unanimous vote.

Resolved: Clerk to contact suppliers of the benches and contractors to obtain quotes for fitting.

Item 15 Halloween update and forthcoming events - Christmas:

Halloween update was discussed in the clerks' report, item 7. The Remembrance services around the parish were well attended that included church services and the service held at the cenotaph. Moving forward, it was suggested that a collection box be placed at the cenotaph next year to raise funds for the Royal British Legion.

Forthcoming events were discussed. There are plans to have the Santa sleigh around the parish. This is organised and ran by volunteers, with provisional dates being Saturday 21st for Langley Park and Sunday 22nd December for the rest of the parish. The selection boxes for this have been ordered. Cllr Thompson mentioned the possibility of including a book for younger children.

There are also provisional plans for a Christmas afternoon tea event for people. This event will be ticketed and for 50. Suggestions to have this were for Friday 13th December. No children or dogs to be allowed.

Resolved: Clerk to produce tickets and advertise events on social media once confirmed.

Item 16 Toilets at Miner's Institute

Storage space at the Miner's Institute is an issue, there is a cupboard to the side of the main hall which holds tables and chairs and is also used for storage of the cleaner's materials and equipment. Cllr Clark proposed that if a toilet was converted to a cleaners' cupboard, then all cleaning items could be stored in there, freeing up storage space in the larger cupboard. Council though that was a good idea. Cllr moat proposed that the works go ahead, Cllr Clark seconded the motion, which returned a unanimous vote.

Resolved: Clerk to make contact with company.

Item 17 Goal Posts:

Deferred until next month's meeting in December

Item 18 Smallholding permissions to temporarily move fence panel at smallholding, securing the bottom of the new fence and a polytunnel:

A tenant from a smallholding has requested permission to move a fence panel which would be reinstated once work has been carried out. The removal of the fence panel is for contractors to gain access. The tenant would also like permission to erect a polytunnel and to block the bottom of the

fence where gaps are due to the fall of the land, to prevent foxes from getting into the smallholding. Cllr Moat proposed that the tenant be allowed permission for all of the requests that they have made. Cllr Clark seconded this proposal; a vote was taken which was returned as unanimous. Cllr Moat also highlighted recent DEFRA information on Avian Flu and to pass this onto all tenants and request that all tenants share their DEFRA registration numbers with the clerk.

Resolved: Clerk to contact tenants, firstly to inform of permissions granted and secondly to request DEFRA registration numbers and inform of latest DEFRA advice on Avian Flu.

Item 19: Payments to be made and bank reconciliation

The clerk distributed information on payments made, petty cash income / balance and bank balances for councillors to take note.

Resolved: Accounts are correct and that payments are authorised by the Council.

Item 20. Date of next ordinary meeting:

The date of the next ordinary meeting for Esh Parish Council is Wednesday 11th December 2024.