



*The Council of the
Parish of Esh*

Minutes of the Ordinary meeting of the council

Held on Wednesday 10th January 2024 at the Miners Institute, Langley Park

Meeting commenced at 6 p.m.

Item 1 Record of Attendance:

Cllr Joe Thompson (Chair) Cllr Ollie Moat (Vice Chair), Cllr Allison Wardman, Cllr Kathryn Thompson, Cllr Jillian Crumbie, Cllr George Hawxwell, Cllr Edwin Simpson, Cllr Pat Short, Cllr Carole Greenham-Denny.

There were two members of the public present.

Item 2 Apologies for absence:

Cllr John Duddy, Cllr Louise Dudden, Cllr Ross Lardner., Cllr ruth Hughs, Cllr Linda Bushell

Item 3 Declarations of interest:

Cllr Jillian Crumbie – items 11 and 12

Item 4 Minutes of Previous Meetings:

Minutes of the ordinary meeting held on 8th November 2023

Accepted as a correct record. Proposed by Cllr Edwin Simpson and seconded by Cllr Alison Wardman

Resolved: to accept Minutes of the meeting on 13^h December 2023 as a correct record.

Item 5 : Opportunity for Public to raise matters of interest:

There were two members of the public present, no issues were raised by them.

Item 6 County Councillors Report:

County Councillor presented her report on local issues. Concerns were raised by County Councillor Coult on behalf of EVRA (Esh Village Residents Association) regarding them feeling isolated from the rest of the parish. Presently there are vacancies with the Parish Council, with no representation from

the ward of Esh Village, Councillor Coult that this would be conveyed to them. Councillor Coult praised the success of the Santa Run by the parish council. It was also mentioned that the Christmas toy appeal had been successful with 55 children within the ward receiving Christmas gifts from it. Surplus gifts were donated to One Point. Her report included that Find and Fix County Durham have been carrying out works to the paths between Langley Park and Kaysburn, they have been cutting back overgrown trees and vegetation to make the paths safe to walk along.

Resolved: To accept County Councillor Coult's report

Item 7 Precept and Budget:

The clerk presented a budget to council, that examined the spend of previous years, the spend for the current financial year and forecast for expected spend for the year 2024/25. The forecasted spend for 2024/25 saw no increase and therefore the clerk saw no need for the precept to be increased. Councillor J. Thompson proposed that the precept remain the same as the previous years and it was noted that there had been no increase in the precept since 2021. A vote was taken which returned a unanimous decision.

Resolved: Clerk to complete necessary paperwork regarding the precept and return it to the County Council.

Item 8 Christmas Updates:

There were various planned events from the parish council to celebrate Christmas. They were very successful. These included an afternoon tea, held on December 20th, which was very well attended and received positive feedback from attendees. A tombola at the event raised £52 for DH7 Community Events. Two Santa runs took place on 22nd and 23rd December. The first being around Langley Park and the second night covered Esh Village, Quebec and Wilks Hill with the addition by special request of Cornsay Colliery and Hamsteels Estate in Esh Winning. The feedback from both nights was very positive. Over 500 selection boxes were distributed amongst the children of the parish alongside 350 letters from Santa with magic keys for younger children. Collections were taken on both nights which raised around £200 for CRY on 22nd and £112 for DH7 Community Events on 23rd. Thank you to members of the Parish Council that gave up their time to make these events a success.

Moving forward the Parish Council would like to build upon the success of the Santa run and request volunteers to assist, especially from TRACC at Cornsay Colliery and Cornsay Parish Council on the Hamsteels Estate. Cllr Moat put forward a suggestion that the Parish Council highlight the need for volunteers in a newsletter in November and to have assigned stop offs to reduce the burden.

Christmas lights were promised by the contractors to be up and operational from Friday 1st December, they were erected by the contractor in Langley Park and Quebec on the 3rd and 4th of December and not until 13th December at Esh Village, whose lights were white and not the coloured lights as consistent with the rest of the parish.

There have been concerns from some parishioners over the lights being on all day and that they should be on a timer due to costs and environmental impact. The cost of this will be discussed with the contractors. The clerk is to make contact with the contractors to discuss when the remainder of the lights are going to be taken down.

Resolved: The Christmas events were a success, moving forward, the clerk requests volunteers come forward to assist with events next Christmas time. Clerk to make contact with contractors in regard to the removal of the existing lights around the parish.

Item 9 Events Committee - Budget;

As highlighted in the previous item, there is a need for an events committee that is responsible for the preparation of various events throughout the year. An events committee requires cooperation from the parish councillors and will promote cohesion between the parish council and the community, it is imperative that one is formed. It was decided that this be an item on February's agenda due to lack of support from councillors.

Resolved: To move this to the agenda for February

Item 10 Area Action Partnership:

The Area Action Partnership are to vacate their office in the Miner's Institute on February 2nd. Cllr Moat proposed that the vacated office be decorated. Cllr K. Thompson seconded the motion and a unanimous vote was returned.

Resolved The office currently occupied by the Area Action Partnership be decorated upon their vacating it. The clerk to seek quotes for the work to be carried out.

Item 11 Small Holdings- annual Tenancy Review:

It was thought that the current tenancy agreement between Esh Parish Council and small holding/allotment tenants requires updating. It was agreed that councillors read through the existing tenancy agreement and give feed back to the clerk, who will update. It was noted that there are significant differences in the prices paid for small holdings. It was suggested that the tenants pay per square footage of their plot.

Resolved: Councillors are to examine the current tenancy agreement and present amendments to the clerk.

Item 12 Allotment Sub Committee – Management Tenancy:

The management of the allotments from Langley Park Allotments Association is due to be renewed. It was that the thought that the current management agreement between Esh Parish Council and Langley Park Allotment Association is outdated and requires updating before the renewal goes ahead. It was suggested that some of the allotments aren't looking their best and that some tenants have extra sheds and other items which aren't stated in the Tenancy Management Agreement. It was agreed that a sub-committee of parish councillors be set up to deal with amendments and meet with the Allotment Association. Councillors Greenham-Denny, Short, Hawxwell and Simpson have agreed to form the sub-committee, with Councillor Crumbie being a point of contact if needed with the aim of improving the standard of the Earl of Durham Allotments to those owned by County Council at The Wetlands

Resolved: Volunteers from the parish council set up a sub-committee to view and amend the existing Management Agreement with Langley Park Allotments Association.

Item 13 Park Inspections

Volunteers from the parish council are required to carry out park inspections of the three play areas within the parish. The duties will include checking for damaged and loose play equipment and litter picking around the play area. The Parish Council are looking for volunteers to do this.

Resolved: Council request volunteers to carry out inspections of the Parishes play areas. Clerk to check for CDALC courses in park inspections.

Item 14 Honorary Freeman:

An Honorary Freeman application from Witton Gilbert Parish Council was circulated amongst councillors, with the idea brought forward by Councillor Hawxwell that Esh Parish Council adopt the award to thank local people for their efforts in the community. Councillors Crumbie and Wardman were not in favour of the proposal due to fact it be open to possible misuse. A vote was taken which returned a unanimous vote not to proceed.

Resolved: Esh Parish Council will not proceed with bestowing the title of Honorary Freeman to parishioners.

Item 15 Commissioners Report:

Esh Parish Council has received notification from the ICO regarding two official complaints that were made from Councillors Hughes and Bushell over a FOI request. The findings of the ICO were that no further action was to be taken against Esh Parish Council, however, they had given recommendation should such a matter arise again.

Resolved: ICO deemed NFA against Esh Parish Council and all recommendations are noted.

Item 16 Payments to make and bank reconciliation:

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

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

Item 17 Barclays Account- Equal Partnership Charity:

The clerk has received information regarding a dormant account in Barclays Bank. This account was held open for the Equal Partnership Charity. The bank has plans to close the account due to it not being used, unless contacted by Parish Council. The trustees of the charity are no longer involved with The Parish Council therefore, requiring a trustee change. The matter was discussed with council and they voted unanimously to close the account alongside the charitable status of Equal Partnership.

Resolved: The Barclays account will be closed as of march 1st 2024

Item 13 Date of next ordinary meeting:

Confirmed as Wednesday 14th February, 6 p.m. at The Miners Institute