

GREATER WILLINGTON TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting
12th March 2024

IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor D Hales, Councillor C Hales, Councillor Smith, Councillor Tinsley,
Councillor McArdle, Councillor Elgie, Councillor Savage,
Councillor Jackson, Councillor Henfrey, Councillor Berry,
Emma McCann (DTC) (Minutes)

1. ACCEPTANCE OF APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Helen Cogdon, Town Clerk, and Councillor Jordan
Proposed Councillor Smith
Seconded Councillor Berry

2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Members are invited to declare any personal and/or prejudicial interest in matters appearing on the agenda and the nature of their interest.

Councillor Tinsley declared an interest in item 6 as a committee member of the Cricket Club.

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Resident agenda items requested through the Clerk.

None received.

4. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE ORDINARY MEETING 13TH FEBRUARY 2024

The minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 13th February 2024, as written, and circulated were agreed as a true record.

Councillor D Hales signed the minutes.

Proposed Councillor C Hales

Seconded Councillor Jackson

MATTERS ARISING (FOR INFORMATION ONLY)

None.

5. RECEIVE THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT GROUP UPDATE

Councillor Savage reported,

Following an inspection of the planters around the town, three of them were in a very poor condition and have now been removed. These were at Sunnybrow Primary School and Sunnybrow Shop and West Road. The planter at West Road has been replaced by one of the new ones from North Lane. This now leaves six planters around Willington.

Further to Councillor D Hales email regarding the wildflower planting on the Town Green, DCC have sprayed off the areas ready for planting and they will cut the flowers back after they have set seed at the back end of the year.

The snowdrops that were previously planted between the lavender on the Town Green have been dug up and planted on the grass bank opposite the junction to the Spectrum. Thank you to Councillor Smith who started this job on her own in the drizzle.

Also, a reminder to everyone that the Environmental Group will meet the first Wednesday of every month at 10am at the Town Council office to maintain the flower beds.
Proposed Councillor Smith
Seconded Councillor C Hales

6. TO CONSIDER PLANNING APPLICATIONS

There are no new applications or decisions since the last meeting.

An application was recently submitted to DCC seeking approval for the allocation of monies currently being held in DCC Section 106 account.

As this was only received today and councillors not having the chance to read the information, the DTC will circulate to all members tomorrow morning. All councillors will then have seven days to view and make any comments to the DTC before a response is submitted to DCC.

7. TO APPROVE THE BANK RECONCILIATION (FEBRUARY 2024)

The DTC reported,

The Council February 2024 with a starting balance of £5,410.63.

There was expenditure of £11,656.65 and credits of £14,031.20, leaving an end balance of £7,785.18.

Proposed Councillor Berry

Seconded Councillor McArdle

8. TO RECEIVE THE BUDGET REPORT AND APPROVE FINANCIAL DECISIONS (FEBRUARY 2024)

The DTC reported,

As updated at the last meeting, the budget 2023-2024 had increased to £136,249.00.

There is a Spend to Date of £128,480.19 and Committed Costs of £6,600.32. This leaves an Available Resource on Budget of £1,168.49.

As there is only £7,785.18 left in the Current Account at the end of February 2024, committed costs are over £6,000, there are some other Direct Debits due to clear before the Annual Precept will show in the account. A transfer of £1,949.81 from the Business Account will cover us for these associated costs.

Proposed Councillor C Hales

Seconded Councillor Smith

Allotment Rents

Allotment Rents were frozen in 2017/2018, 3% increase 2018/2019, frozen 2019/2020, free 2020/2021, frozen 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 and a 5% increase in 2023/2024.

To increase the rents for 2024-2025 by 3% would generate an increased amount of £175.47 over all three allotment sites.

To increase the rents by 5% would generate an increased amount of £292.45.

Members agreed to a 5% increase for the rents for 2025/2026.

Proposed Councillor Smith

Seconded Councillor Savage

A funding application for to Fun & Food for Easter Activities for the value of £515.25 was submitted and successful. The Easter Event will take place on Thursday 4th April 2024. This has been advertised through the schools for children with DfE needs. The Department for Education made the decision to introduce tickets for eligible children to apply.

An application for funding was also submitted to County Durham Community Foundation for £2026.00 to provide a Welcome Space. This funding will ensure a Welcome Space is available on Monday and Tuesday from 10am till 1pm at the Town Council office.

9. TO CONSIDER THE NOMINATIONS FOR CHAIR OF THE PACT MEETINGS

The DTC reported that Councillor Elgie has resigned from being the Chair of PACT effective from February. A discussion with the Neighbourhood Policing Team allowing for a nomination from another Councillor to become Chair would be welcome.

Thanks were extended to Councillor Elgie for her time chairing the meetings.

Councillor Jackson was nominated and accepted the position.

Proposed Councillor C Hales

Seconded Councillor Berry

10. RECEIVE THE TOWN COUNCILLORS MONTHLY REPORT

Councillor McArdle had attended meetings with the Patient Participation Group. Today, she had reported large potholes on Rockingham Road, Sunnybrow. She also asked that where the planter was at Sunnybrow shop, could some bulbs be planted. The Greater Willington Environmental Improvement Group will investigate this.

Councillor Jackson said the hanging baskets had given the town a boost when installed. He has been in discussions with the contractor and confirmed they would be £5 per basket than they were last year. Councillor Jackson will meet with Councillor D Hales, Councillor Smith and Councillor Savage to look at potential funding.

Councillor Smith had recently spoken to Mr & Mrs Parker of the Eco Church Group at St Stephens Church, and they would like to meet with Greater Willington Environmental Improvement Group and the Town Council to discuss a plan of works.

Residents at St Thomas Close have been in contact regarding rats in the community garden.

Councillor C Hales has also attended Patient Participation Group meetings. Also attended Allotment Management Training with Councillor Berry which was interesting. Lots of useful information given.

Councillor D Hales and Councillor Smith have been visiting the local Primary Schools and spoken to the school council. The schools have been invited to attend the office to do a presentation to the full council.

11. TO RECEIVE THE COUNTY COUNCILLORS MONTHLY REPORT

At the Durham County Council Budget meeting there was a vote on the Budget with the recommendation that the Council Tax be increased by 4.99%. The Government cuts to Council budgets over 12 years have resulted in a precarious financial position. Reserves have been used as never before and that is unsustainable. Because of the cuts 30% of Council staff have been lost since 2010 amounting to 3,000 and that is having an impact on some Council services.

Durham Bus Station has opened, and the New History Centre is due to open this year. There has been no decision regarding a building to replace County Hall although the highest floors have been taken out of use.

12. TO CONSIDER COMMUNITY FUND APPLICATIONS

None received.

13. TO CONSIDER CIVIC FUND APPLICATIONS

North of England Brass Band Championships have applied for a donation. They attract bands from Cumbria, County Durham, Cleveland, Tyne and Wear and North Yorkshire.

They anticipate an entry of over forty bands of which 50% have beginner, learner, or youth bands and 45% have former connections with the Northeast mining industry.

They hold a contest at the prestigious Gala Theatre since 2015. They will be holding it on 16th and 17th March 2024. The number of young people, under eighteen, performing over the 2 days is estimated at 400.

The cost to hire the Gala Theatre cost almost £6,500 in 2023.

This was approved.

Proposed Councillor Tinsley

Seconded Councillor Savage

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS (FOR INFORMATION ONLY)

None.

15. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

9th April 2024 at 6pm.