

**MINUTES OF THE DARRAS HALL ESTATE COMMITTEE
MONTHLY GENERAL MEETING
HELD ON MONDAY, 13 MAY 2019
AT 19:00 HOURS IN THE ESTATE OFFICE**

Present:	Mr A Mate (Chairman)	Mr S Savin
	Mr D Brown	Mrs C Thompson
	Mr A Gilchrist	Mr J Scott
	Mrs S Hill	Mr M Welford
	Mrs S Jaidka	Mr I White
	Mr A Malhotra	Mr G Wright

1. **Apologies for Absence:**

Apologies for absence were received from Mr A Tucker.

2. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 15 April, 2019 were signed as correct.

3. **Matters Arising from Minutes of Previous Meeting:**

There were no matters arising.

4. **Planning Applications:**

Please refer to Plans minutes.

5. **Financial Report:**

5.1 The financial report was circulated by Mrs Duffy.

5.2 Committee were informed that the new Cooperative Bank account is now operational.

5.3 Mrs Duffy was concerned about the level of bank charges now being incurred from Barclays Bank, this was mainly due to the balance of account being over £100,000, but now this was rectified with the split into the Co-op account, it should reduce. Mr Gilchrist suggested speaking to them or holding a meeting to discuss this.

5.4 Mrs Duffy pointed out that due to a number of rents being paid via mobile banking, the statement shows no reference and obviously she cannot, therefore, connect it to the correct address for payment. Once the overdue reminders are posted, this is going to cause quite an amount of aggravation for the office staff with residents being unhappy when they have already paid. Following a brief discussion, it was agreed that a notice be placed on our website and the Facebook group highlighting the importance of including the roll number/reference when making rent payments. It was also agreed that when

the overdue notices are sent out we attach a memo explaining the situation regarding some payments not being processed.

- 5.5 Due to the payment of plans and search monies now being credited to the Co-operative Bank account, our website providers have been contacted with a view to amending the payment system. Apparently, this is an onerous task and will incur a substantial fee. The Committee agreed that payments for planning applications be removed from the website and only rent payments remain. Mr Gilchrist suggested we obtain another card machine from the Co-op to alleviate any difficulties when residents wish to pay for applications in the office.

6. **Sub-Committee Reports:**

6.1 Highways:

- 6.1.1 Mr White informed the Committee that the footpath outside 46 Woodside has now been repaired. NCC have requested that we include an advisory note within our Byelaws regarding footpaths. They suggest, in order to protect both parties, that an inspection be carried out prior to work commencing (in case the pavement is already in a poor state of repair) and that the footpath must remain in a safe condition **throughout** any development, not just repaired on completion. The Committee agreed this was a good idea.
- 6.1.2 A meeting has been arranged with the Convenor of NCC, together with Highways Director, at County Hall next week. Mr Mate and Mr White will be in attendance.
- 6.1.3 The new footpath is almost completed on Eastern Way with only approximately a 10m stretch left to do.
- 6.1.4 Mr White had a meeting last week with the Highways Manager and can report as follows:-
- Work on Fox Covert Lane has improved matters, however, the inbound carriageway will also be reviewed.
 - The trip hazard which was raised by a resident on the footpath at Wentworth Court, leading to the Bridlepath has been inspected. This is not deemed as requiring any attention at this time, but will be reviewed in the local inspector's 6 monthly checks. Mr White and Mr Gilchrist suggested that the pothole/footpath repairs link on our website be highlighted to residents.
 - A suggestion has been raised regarding a pedestrian crossing at Broadway. Mr White believes that Ponteland Town Council had originally included this in their submission to LTP but was not included in the project. This will be followed up with the relevant NCC department.
 - There was some discussion regarding obscured lighting and signage due to overgrown foliage. Any particularly dangerous

areas will be targeted by NCC and specific areas of concern need to be identified, e.g. 20mph sign at the end of Old Station Court.

- The general road repair schedule will be updated. Phase 4 of Middle Drive is included in the program and we will be advised on timing. Other areas of work to be covered within the LTP will also be advised.
- With regards to the new speed indicator sign on Darras Road, NCC expect that PTC will consult with them on the location site.
- The gullies/drains were cleared last year and this is on a 2 year cycle, however, it is being reviewed within the countywide project.
- With regards to the purchase and installation of new waste bins, following a poll on Facebook, the most popular positions appeared to be Woodside at the junction with Edge Hill and the Fellside cut on Western Way. Mr White has checked that these sites are safe/suitable with NCC who have now approved them. Mrs Ireland is in discussion with our maintenance contractor with regards to purchase/installation costs and NCC are also being asked to give us a tender for the same. Once estimates are received, the Committee agreed to go ahead with this matter and report, once complete, on website.

6.2 Land & Property:

Mr Pile reported as follows:-

- New footpath is complete in the Estate car park leading towards the United Reformed Church and the School.
- The damage sustained to Grasslands has still not been rectified. Mr Pile was hopeful that, following another dry spell of weather, this work could be carried out. It was agreed that once Mr Pile was happy, we would contact the owner on Middle Drive and insist upon works being carried out.
- Tim Fish, NCC, informed Mr Pile that the barriers have still not been removed between Meadow Court/Dunsgreen, however this should happen very soon.
- Mr Pile had attended a Ponteland Community Partnership meeting where he was asked if the Committee would support the exercise initiative taking place in an around the area. Exercise markers are erected to promote walking (especially among the elderly) and the Committee await a formal request from the Group which will be looked upon favourably.

7. Letters Received & Any Other Business:

- 7.1 Mr Mate reminded the Committee of the importance to complete the Byelaws review. It was agreed that suggested dates for interested parties be circulated and this be arranged as early as possible.
- 6.3 Mr Scott asked for clarification of the rules for building work being carried out on at weekends. He was informed that NCC have planning enforcement officers who ensure that no noisy work is carried out after 1pm on Saturdays plus Sundays and Bank holidays. He was also concerned about the number of contractors vehicles parked on the highway at various development sites. Mr Savin said that the Police will respond to continuing obstructions on the highway and have powers to insist on their movement on safety grounds.
- 6.4 Mrs Woodall has received a statement from the joint owners of the land at Meadow Court asking that the Committee reconsider their decision to maintain one vacant plot at all times for parking of vehicles. They included a letter of support from surrounding residents. Following a discussion, the Committee agreed that the affected residents be contacted to assess their views and if they are happy then the Committee will agree to this. There should, however, be a proviso that the road will be cleaned once a week.

Addendum to Minutes

Committee Discussion regarding Staff Pension Contributions

Mrs Thompson explained the current situation regarding pension contributions. This is, as previously agreed by the Committee, a contribution of 3% of the staff's gross salary is made to their pension fund. Changes have been introduced by the Government from 5 April 2019 in that employees now pay 5% and the employer's minimum contribution remains at 3%.

Mrs Thompson advised that after discussions with the staff they want to contribute to their qualifying earnings only which is their gross salary less £6,136 per employee. It was agreed by the Committee that we would make an employer's contribution of 5% of the employees qualifying earnings.

This matter will be reviewed by the Committee annually or when the government require changes to be made. Mr Gilchrist enquired when staff/salary reviews take place. Mrs Thompson said it was in October/November and it was agreed that the Committee would have the opportunity to discuss staffing matters before the reviews take place. Mr Mate added that this was always brought to the attention of the Committee at the relevant MGM.

8. Date & Time of Next Meeting:

Monday, 10 June 2019 at 19:00 hours in the Estate Office.