

Minutes of the meeting of 18/01/2017 at Oban Court

Attendees: (30) David Milner (Chair), Anne Rudkin, Graham Foster, Judith Murray, Alan Hutchinson, John Atkinson, Jamie Karim, Joanne Karim, Christine Bean, Tom Watson, Ron Wilkinson, Chris Upton, Brian Threadkell, Pat Newton, James Eddy, Peter Plant, Carol Milner, Barry Simpson, Linda Davison, Allanah Robinson, Peter Voss, Barbara Reynolds, David Reynolds, Ann Hutchinson, Brian Hutchinson, Jean Foster, Roger Fitzpatrick-Odahamier, Chris Jackson, Helen Crumby (part), G Chan (part)

Apologies: Tom Nutt, Barrie Newton

It was agreed that Alan Hutchinson record these minutes during Secretary Anne Rudkin's recovery.

Minutes of the last meeting

It was agreed that the minutes of the meeting of 14/12/2016 be signed by the Chair as a correct record, proposed by Allanah Robinson and seconded by Chris Upton.

Matters arising from the Minutes

Asda: A meeting with Asda is to be arranged by Cllrs Helen Crumby and Tom Nutt re. community policy. The issue of Asda's responsibility for rubbish accumulating around the store will also be raised then.

Springfield Park: Cllr Helen Crumby reported that the cameras on the Park are working but that the PCSO was unaware of the issue of the footpath sign. A meeting is to be arranged with the Park Warden and police, and it was agreed that John Atkinson attends to represent WRA.

Parking on footpaths and verges: David Milner had sent out photos to illustrate the problem next to Oban Court. Cllr Helen Crumby reported that the highway was not adopted but the housing officer in charge is examining the issue and bollards are a possibility to solve the problem. Cllr Tom Nutt had met with the Highways Manager of DBC to review the problem across the ward, but it seems that the police are not taking enforcement action as they see the benefits of verge parking not hindering access by emergency vehicles. Cllr Helen Crumby will pursue the issue of council vehicles damaging the grass near Beech Wood. John Atkinson observed that proposed future development across the Town needs to take much more account of the use of roads and walkways. The Chair suggested that there is a point of conflict re. parking on paths and that the issue would probably arise again at future meetings, and the meeting generally agreed that this is the case.

Visit to Haughton Residents Association: Alan Hutchinson had arranged for some committee members to attend the HRA meeting on Thur 2nd Feb re. matters of mutual interest, such as fundraising.

Telephone box, Drummond Close: Alan Hutchinson had written to our ward councillors and now noted that the box had been repaired and the broken glass largely removed. Cllr Helen Crumby reported that the DBC Enforcement Officer was trying to determine whether BT still intends to remove the box.

Chair's report

David Milner reported:

- Since we are no longer able to have table top sales at Asda we may be able to join in with Haughton Residents Association fundraising activities.
- Fresh ideas from members on how to raise funds are needed and Jean Foster suggested that baking cakes and selling to members could be an alternative to holding a raffle.
- The Community Award press release had featured prominently as an article in the Northern Echo and Advertiser but did not appear in the One Darlington magazine as promised, apparently because of lack of space, and David had taken this up with Karen Ann Bell at DBC.

Treasurer's Report

Judith Murray reported:

- There is currently a balance of £1182,80.
- Funding needs to be considered as a priority, and ideas are being carefully looked at currently.
- Our Public Liability Insurance will need to be renewed soon, unless DBC comes up with a deal to cover organisations. Cllr Helen Crumby will speak to Pippa Smalling about this.

Beech Wood

David Milner summarised the 2 major opportunities to improve Beech Wood: the planting of wild flowers with help from Friends of the Earth and a possible grant from Banks Renewables. Peter Plant confirmed that the total grant available to organisations could be £30,000 per year for 25 years and that Whinfield is part of the area covered. County Durham Foundation will administer the scheme and be taking bids later this year. FoE have a lot of wildflower seed available for the coverage of the 650 m² and Pippa Smalling intended that the flower beds be retained. It was hoped that Blairs would lend the use of a greenhouse. Members discussed other ideas, including introducing native species of orchid at the back of the wood. It was then agreed that the Beech Wood Sub-committee should become active immediately as a management structure and 11 members present put forward their names to serve on it. It was further agreed that Peter Plant act as the co-ordinator of the Sub-committee and that he be co-opted onto the WRA Management Committee for liaison. It was agreed that minutes will be kept and reports fed back to WRA meetings. Anne Rudkin offered to book a room for meetings. David Milner will raise with our Ward Councillors the issue of leaves and debris on the Beech Wood paths. It was pointed out that successful projects in this area will attract the attention of residents to hopefully promote improvements in other parts of Whinfield.

Darlington Local Plan

There was no further information re. housing developments but it seems as if a northern relief road is being looked upon favourably by DBC. Judith Murray highlighted that a map in the One Darlington magazine suggested that northern Darlington will be one of the prime areas for large scale development, and that objections re. Muscar House Farm and Darlington Golf Course will need to be re-submitted. David Milner will approach our Ward Councillors to try to ascertain where development sites are likely to be and where we are in the process.

Website

Alan Hutchinson reported that he had posted the minutes and agenda on the Meetings page, as well as the Winter Ward Newsletter, WRA Constitution and articles about Beech Wood and the Big Spring Clean. Distribution of information to members continued to be done via an email workaround, which is working well. Alan floated the idea of producing a WRA Facebook page, but as this would take time to set up and maintain it was agreed that he investigate this possibility for the future.

PACT Meeting

Meetings at Rockwell House are advertised for Wed Feb 22nd and Wed Mar 29th 2017, at 6pm.

Litter

Judith Murray reported that the Big Spring Clean had been launched by DBC, that WRA members had attended the photocall and that WRA will be taking part in the campaign when dates are announced for events. Alan Hutchinson had reported to our PCSOs about wine bottles being thrown from cars in northern Barmpton Lane and extra patrols will watch for this. In response to a question about litter on the path past The Shuttle & Loom, it is believed that this is Asda land. Anne Rudkin commented that it was unfortunate that a Community Warden had recently stopped children picking up leaves.

Any other business

River Skerne: Graham Foster reported that this is currently being cleared out.

Green Lane: Allanah Robinson had emailed Cllr Helen Crumbie about the mess along its entire length.

Sparrowhall Drive area: John Atkinson reported on 4 issues: A fence, erected to protect a hedge and prevent shortcuts, is not working. A bin had been set on fire on a diagonal path across the grass. The stump of the vandalised footpath sign needs to be removed. 2 square concrete manhole covers have no secure rim and are a hazard. It was agreed that John Atkinson pursue these issues on behalf of WRA.

Footway alongside Darlington Golf Course southern boundary: Chris Upton pointed out that there are large amounts of litter in several locations, but that there are no litter bins of any kind anywhere.

Date of next meeting: Wednesday 22nd March 2017 at 7pm at Oban Court.

The meeting closed at 8.15pm.