DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MONTHLY MEETING OF
OUSTON PARISH COUNCIL
HELD ON THURSDAY 23RD MARCH 2023 IN OUSTON COMMUNITY CENTRE
THE MEETING OPENED AT 7.00PM.

1. COUNCILLORS PRESENT

Chair Mrs. D Rowe, Mr. J Tate, Mrs. A Bell, Mrs. M Duncan
County Councillors – Mr. D. Wood and Mr. P Pringle
Other Attendees – Lisa Blondrage - Parish Clerk

2. APOLOGIES OF ABSENCE

Cllr Wake, CC Batey and Ouston Community Association

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None declared.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING – 23rd FEBRUARY 2023

Previous minutes agreed and accepted by the PC.

5. REPRESENTATION OF RESIDENTS AND ALLOTMENT TENANTS

None

6. COUNTY COUNCILLORS REPORT

CC Wood presented the Councillors report supported by CC Pringle.

At the last meeting CC Wood informed the PC that the CCs are using £13,000 of their Neighbourhood Budget Funding to replace the damaged bucket swing at the Brooms Park. Cllr Bell said there are two swings suitable for under threes but no swings for older children. CC Wood said the CCs are using the Neighbourhood budget to replace the previous piece of equipment. Cllr Bell said she would have preferred two swings suitable for three-year-old plus. CC Wood said the Nest / Bucket swing had been removed and therefore would be replaced like for like using the Neighbourhood budget funding.

CC Wood stated that the following DCC consultations are live:
Home School Transport ending 12th April.
Community Engagement – Review of the Area Action Partnership
Planning documents supporting DCC plan ending 11th April
The CCs encouraged residents to review and feedback their comments regarding DCC Consultations. DCC Consultations can be found by visiting **www.durham.gov.uk/consultation**

CC Wood said he has contacted DCC for updates regarding the trees on Aberfoyle and the junction of Turnberry and Ross.

7. OUSTON COMMUNITY CENTRE

Due to other commitments, the OCA Board were unable to attend and sent their apologies.

The PC considered OCAs requests for a donation to help fund, up and coming events.

OCA are holding an Easter event on 11th April. On Sunday 7th May the OCA are holding an event to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III for adults and children. On Saturday 15th April the OCA are holding two events, one for children and one for adults. CC Wood said Urpeth PC and the County Councillors are financially contributing to the events. LB said OPC had agreed to donate £2500 (annual donation) to OCA and have allocated a further £1990 in their budget to help fund events and repairs. OPC agreed to donate £450 towards the events.

8. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN - UPDATE

Pelton PCs Clerk has sent the relevant documents to DCC to support the application for a Pelton, Urpeth and Ouston Neighbourhood Plan. Once DCC have confirmed everything is in order the next step is for DCC to publicise the application for at least 6 weeks. The consultation is available on the www.durham.gov.uk/consultation website from 24th March until 5th May.

LB uploaded the relevant documents on to OPCs website for residents to review and Cllr Rowe and Cllr Duncan will attend the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group meeting on behalf of OPC on Monday 15th May 2022 at 6pm in Pelton Community Centre.

9. ALLOTMENTS

9.1 Pest Control

The pest controller attends site every two weeks and the PC are sent a list of plots accessed and plots treated. Cllr Bell said tenants are instructed to leave their plot unlocked or their keys with the OAA or another tenant if they cannot be present. Cllr Bell said there are a small number of plots where the pest controller has not been able to gain access for some time. PC to identify the relevant plots and LB to send letters on behalf of the PC stating that as per their signed tenancy agreement, plots must be accessed.

9.2 OAA Meeting

The PC received the following questions from an OPC allotment tenant. See below with our response.

1. If the Council are not able to get a skip can you outline what the money taken in rent is going to be spent on, other than water and pest control? In our rules it states tenants must remove their own rubbish. The PC provide a skip if there is money left to cover the costs as a goodwill gesture. Other Parish Councils do not provide skips. The money will be held in reserve for fencing repairs and asbestos removal.

2. What is the Parish Council's policy on the "No Dig" system of working on an allotment?

In a brief summary No dig, does not mean no cultivation. We require 50% cultivation and tenants can achieve this by using No Dig. No Dig is a technique where the gardener does not dig into the soil and cultivates by planting in layers of mulch and compost. If tenants use this technique, it will require a lot of compost and mulch.

3. The metal heap continues to be an eye sore and abused in that anything and everything is put on it, what can be done about this?

This area has been cleared many times and signs put up, but tenants repeatedly ignore the sign and continue to dump all sorts there, not just metal. LB asked, can we put large planters there to plant flowering plants? The tenant on 18b also said they would extend their plot to include it. The PC asked LB to take photos and it will be discussed again at the next meeting. CC Pringle suggested extending the fence higher to deter fly tipping over the fence.

LB said the new tenants on 53a would like to build a small (probably 4ftX4ft) shed to store basic tools etc and also build either a greenhouse or polytunnel. The PC reviewed and approved the plans.

LB was contacted by a resident from another Parish. They said they had spoken to Cllrs from other villages who said their sites have plots available for disabled / SEN children / adults who have an interest in allotments. They asked, is this something that applies on our allotment site. To find out more about local availability, LB emailed the clerks from Pelton and Urpeth Parish Councils and currently Pelton PC and Urpeth PC does not have specific plots for tenants with SEN/disabilities. Like our plots, they are generic and can be adapted. LB replied, at present, Ouston Parish Council do not have specific plots for disabled/SEN children /adults, but we have generic plots for tenants to adapt and develop to suit their needs. Every tenant has different needs and has different ambitions for their allotment, so the generic plot is theirs to adapt for their personal / family needs, as long as it is within the rules i.e., must be 50% cultivated. Although, the PC don't know much about tenant's personal details, we do have tenants who use wheelchairs on site and they have raised beds and paved access paths in their allotments, which enables them to enjoy their allotment.

CC Pringle kindly offered to collect the compost for the allotment site. Date TBC with OAA

10. EVENTS 2023

10.1 King Charles III Coronation

The PC said they are financially supporting the OCA Coronation Event. The PC has limited land availability and therefore decided against planting trees and installing additional benches. The PC suggested planting King Charles Roses in the Jubilee Rosebed and install an additional plaque. LB to source prices and availability. To be discussed at the next meeting.

10.2 Jubilee Rosebed and Bench Updates

LB still has not received invoice for the Jubilee Bench despite requesting it several times. DCC have installed a metal wedge under the leg and painted it green. Cllr Bell said we would monitor it.

Cllr Bell said the PC need to replace the Roses that failed last year. LB to look at prices for replacement Queen Elizabeth Roses. CC Pringle said a resident has kindly offered to continue watering the Rosebed during dry spells.

11. CLERK'S REPORT

LB said the Local Government pay claim 2023/24 was rejected by trade unions on 9th March. The rejected offer was 3.88% and it is likely that it will be late summer / early autumn before an outcome is agreed.

LB said she had attended a DCC / CDALC training course on Pensions. The Pension Regulator has stated that as a UK employer, the PC will soon be obliged to automatically enrol eligible staff in a work place pension. DCC said most Town and PC use the local government pension scheme. LB to send PC further details.

12. FINANCIAL MATTERS OF THE COUNCIL

12.1 Monthly Accounts & March Invoices

The expenditure for March was reviewed by the PC's.

13. Items to Follow Up for Next Meeting

The April Monthly meeting agenda will include:

- Jubilee / Coronation Rosebed
- Newsletter
- Allotments – scrap area

The Monthly meeting will be held on 27th April 2023 at 7.00pm. Business to discuss will be as per Agenda.

The Parish Council meeting closed at 8.17pm hours.

APPENDIX ONE: CHEQUES SIGNED AT MEETING

Cheque Nbr		Paid to	Description
102104		L Blondrage	March pay 5 weeks
102105		L Blondrage	March HWA
102106		D Johnston	March pay 5 weeks
102107		HMRC	March paye 5 weeks
102108		Kevin Walker	Pest Control Allotments
102109		Wave Water	Allotments
102110		OCA	Events Donation