DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MONTHLY MEETING OF
OUSTON PARISH COUNCIL
HELD ON THURSDAY 14th DECEMBER 2023 IN OUSTON COMMUNITY CENTRE
THE MEETING OPENED AT 7.00PM.

1. **COUNCILLORS PRESENT**

Chair Mr A Wake, Mr G. Batey, Mrs. A. Bell, Mrs. M. Duncan and Mr. D. Wood
County Councillors – Mrs A. Batey and Mr P. Pringle
Other Attendees – Lisa Blondrage - Parish Clerk, Residents Mr. B Howlett and Mr A. Lister.

2. **APOLOGIES OF ABSENCE**

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr D Wood declared an interest for Item 11.1 – due to match funding.

4. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING – 23RD NOVEMBER 2023**

Previous minutes agreed and accepted by the PC.

5. **REPRESENTATION OF RESIDENTS AND ALLOTMENT TENANTS**

Plot 44b would like to move from a half plot to a full plot. The PC unanimously agreed that the tenant can move from their half to an available full plot.

Cllr Tate resigned as a PC (he stated at the AGM he planned to resign at the end of the year). Cllr Wake said on behalf of Ouston Parish Council, he would like to thank Cllr Tate for his service and participation as a Parish Councillor.

Cllr Bell attended the PACT Meeting held in the community centre to raise the issue of parking in Arisaig. The PCSO said they cannot issue tickets. Cllr Bell said cars are parking on the pavements and blocking resident's driveways. Cllr Bell added that the PCSO said they would attend the next coffee morning with an update but has not yet. LB to follow up by email. Cllr Wood said the contact details for DCC Parking Services are 03000 263 985 or parkingservices@durham.gov.uk The form on Do It Online is called "Road or Footpath Obstruction – Vehicle."

Cllr Bell said the PC trees are lovely but the lights are disappointing. The PC agreed that next year LB to purchase white lights.

6. **COUNTY COUNCILLORS REPORT**

Cllr Batey presented the County Councillors report. For more information on the CC report please contact the County Councillors.

CC Batey said the CCs and PCs had received communications from British Gas that they are replacing ageing gas pipes and it will take 28 weeks. The works will include manned traffic lights and will affect commuters. The main locations are St Benet's junction, Milbanke Junction and Conway Place junction.

CC Batey said St Benet's School, the CC's and the Bishop Wilkinson Trust are working together to come up with a positive resolution to the RAAC issue. She added the school are now able to provide hot meals.

The CCs were disappointed with the removal of free car parking after 2pm in DCC car parks in Chester Le Street. The CCs are concerned about the detrimental affect on businesses.

CC Batey said she will send the Clerks the relevant links regarding Chester Le Street Leisure Centre etc.

CC Batey announced an update on Local Government Boundary Commission regarding Pelton Division. Ouston Parish Council, Pelton Parish Council and Urpeth Parish Council all expressed their support for a three-councillor Pelton division. The LGBC are therefore confirming the division as final. CC Batey thanked OPC for their response and Cllr Wood for his input.

7. OUSTON COMMUNITY CENTRE

7.1 Information from the OCA Board

CC Batey said she would like to thank OPC for their financial contribution to the Christmas event on behalf of OCA. CC Batey added that the event was well attended and it was a very successful event.

CC Batey said that roof repair works have commenced and the drains are now unblocked.

8. TREE PLANTING

LB emailed Rob George regarding Tree Planting and he was going to refer it to one of his colleagues. He said from the arial photo it looks pretty much like solid woodland but it's possible some of it has been subject to storm damage or felling operations. He will send it across to colleagues who look after existing woodlands and see what the state of play is and let us know. Cllr Wake sent photos to Rob George to show the location.

9. PARKING IN ARISAIG

Discussed under representations from residents.

10. ALLOTMENTS

LB was contacted by an allotment tenant who alleged another tenant threated to damage their personal property. Cllr Wake said without an independent witness the PC are unable to take further action.

In a separate incident, LB received an email, stating that a resident alleged that they believe an allotment tenant has damaged their vehicle. LB advised the resident to report the damage to the police. Cllr Wake agreed with LBs advice and said the alleged incident was a police matter.

The PC said that issues and concerns are raised at meetings, minuted and will remain on file in case it needs to be referred to at a later date.

CC Pringle said an OAA AGM has not been held due to the Red Lion Public House being closed. The PC said the OAA could ask the OCA if they have a meeting room available to hold their meetings and AGM.

11. 2024/2025 BUDGET AND PRECEPT PROPOSALS

11.1 RBL Poppy Purchasing

Cllr G Batey counted the lampposts from the top of Ouston Bank to the Perkinsville boundary to see how many Poppies are needed and will email the figures to LB. LB checked the RBL website and the 40cm x 36cm Poppies are £5.00 each. The CC's offered to match fund and it was suggested they could be stored at OCA. The PC said rather than a Poppy on every lamppost back-to-back, we could just focus on specific areas like the Memorial Garden. Cllr G Batey to take the lead on this project and liaise with UPC. The PC agreed that they would like CC Batey to provide an additional poppy curtain for the top of Ouston Bank.

11.2 OCA Donation

The current annual donation from OPC is £2500.00. Cllr Wake said it will be discussed at the next meeting.

12. COMPETITIONS 2023

12.1 CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

CC Duncan will send the short list to the PCs

12.2 BEST GARDEN

Cllr Duncan said she had chosen a winner and runner up. The PC agreed.

Cllr Duncan said she will send the winner and runner up details to LB with photos for the newsletter. LB to invite the winners and runners up to January's meeting.

The PC asked LB to email the OAA if they have chosen allotment winners. LB said there are still vacant plots on site. The PC asked LB to email the OAA to ask if they will let vacant plots.

13. OPC WEBSITE HOST

The PC unanimously agreed that Parish Online will host the OPC Website. LB to contact them.

14. CLERK'S REPORT

PCC Consultation

The annual public precept survey has been launched to ask local residents how much they are prepared to pay towards local policing in County Durham and Darlington, through their council tax in the upcoming year. The Police and Crime Commissioners have a responsibility for setting the Force budget and determines the amount of council tax that goes towards policing for their area, called the policing precept. The PCC is seeking the views of the public and residents of County Durham and Darlington regarding the budget for Durham Constabulary for 2024/25, as she would like to know what people think is affordable and what their policing priorities are. There is also a section in the survey inviting views and comments from residents. The precept consultation survey, which will be running until Monday 8th January. PCC Allen is keen to cast the net widely in terms of trying to obtain views and opinions of residents of County Durham and Darlington especially hard to reach groups.
https://online1.snapsurveys.com/ynujmf

The PCC would ideally prefer residents to complete the survey online however, if you require hard copies, please contact them at General.EnquiriesPCC@durham-pcc.gov.uk.

Essential Gas Works

Northern Gas Networks (NGN), the gas distributor for the North of England, is carrying out essential work to ensure the continued safe and reliable supply of gas to customers in Ouston.

The ageing metal pipework is now being replaced by new, more durable plastic pipes, to ensure a safe and reliable supply of gas to customers now while getting the network ready to transport alternative greener fuels in the future.

The work is set to begin 3rd January and will take approximately 28 weeks to complete. They will begin work on St Benet's Way, Greenford Lane and Millbank Close. Due to the location of the gas main, they will have multi way traffic lights on Greenford Lane and Millbank Close for a number of weeks which will follow the work. This might cause some delays in the area, especially at commute times.

Signs be will displayed for motorists prior to work beginning.

Around the end of February, they will also need to close the junction of Conway Place near the Perkinsville Food Store. No vehicles will be able to access via Ouston lane for approximately three weeks. They will also have temporary traffic lights during this time which may cause some delays. There will however be a full diversion in place during this time. They will then have multi way lights causing delays on Greenford Lane at the junction of Aberfoyle and Cromarty.

Cllr Duncan said the volunteer litter picker collected commercial mayonnaise cartons that had been dumped on Ouston Bank.

The PCs and CCs said there have been a lot of complaints on social media from residents regarding the flooding on Gateshead side of the sewerage works road. The PC and CCs are concerned about flooding due to saturated land and the road is eroding. CC Batey said she has tried to liaise with Gateshead Council regarding flooding on the road. Mr Howlett the Flood Warden has contacted the Environment Agency and is waiting for a response.

The PC received an email from Legacy Youth Care who wanted to attend tonight's meeting. Unfortunately, the agenda had already been published when the request was sent. The PC would like to invite them to the next meeting to discuss their service, the shortage of child care placements in County Durham and a proposed residential home for children in DH2. LB to email invitation.

15. <u>FINANCIAL MATTERS OF THE COUNCIL</u>

15.1 Monthly Accounts & December Invoices

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

CC Batey said the cheque issued to the bugler was not accepted by the bank. LB said she would raise another cheque when she received the old one back. LB to check the bank statement.

16. Items to Follow Up for Next Meeting

The December monthly meeting agenda will include:

- Tree Planting on Ouston Bank
- Budget / Precept 2024/25 – OCA Donation & RBL Poppies
- Legacy Youth Care

The monthly meeting will be held on 18th January at 7.00pm. Business to discuss will be as per Agenda.

<u>The Parish Council meeting closed at 8.16pm hours.</u>

<u>APPENDIX ONE:</u> <u>CHEQUES SIGNED AT MEETING</u>

Cheque Nbr		Paid to	Description
102164		L Blondrage	December pay 5 weeks
102165		L Blondrage	Home working allowance
102166		D Johnston	December pay 5 weeks
102167		HMRC	PAYE December 5 weeks
102168		OCA	PC Meeting Room Hire 2023
102169		SE Harrison and Sons	2 x Christmas Trees
102170		CDALC	Finance & Budgets Training
102171		Hannah Watson - Bugler	Re-raised - Rem Service