

**THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
CASTLE EDEN PARISH COUNCIL  
HELD ON THURSDAY 19 MARCH 2015**

**Present:**

Councillor Mrs M Wilmer (Chair)  
Councillors M Colborn, D Martin, B Robertson, Mrs V Robertson and B Turnbull

**Also Present:**

Mrs A Moon – ACE, County Councillors Crute and Pounder, PCSO Kinghorn, Mr & Mrs McKenzie, Mr Leonard, Mrs Martin

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor B Nutter.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. POLICE REPORT**

PCSO Kinghorn advised that there had been 19 incidents since the last meeting, 1 ASB, 1 burglary, 1 vehicle crime and 9 incidents related to the A19. There had been patrols in the Dene area and a community speedwatch on Stockton Road on 27 February. 33 vehicles went through the speedwatch, 3 of which were over the limit and letters would be sent to offenders. Incidents were down 16%, ASB down 43%. Further patrols had been undertaken at the turning circle and there had been no further reports or recent activity.

Councillor Mrs Robertson explained that she had telephoned the Police and given the full licence number of the white van that had been acting suspiciously when the oil was stolen in the area. PCSO Kinghorn advised that she would check the records and provide an update.

**RESOLVED** that the information given be noted.

**4. TREE MAINTENANCE IN THE VILLAGE**

Mr Jones, Tree Officer, Durham County Council was in attendance to discuss tree maintenance throughout the village.

Mr Jones advised that the Highway Authority had a duty of care to ensure that the highways were free of danger from overhanging or damaged trees. Throughout the County, 600 trees had been identified as requiring attention, 300 of which were on private land. Castle Eden had been inspected and private owners contacted. A tree surgeon had inspected the trees of concern and had advised that two trees needed to be felled. Replanting had been discussed but the owner did not want to take on further liability of new trees.

Members explained that they were concerned when they saw red markings on the trees and it was reassuring to learn that they would not be removed.

Mrs Moon queried if there was any control in place to ensure that trees were not over cut. Mr Jones explained that a lot of land owners tried to take the tree down altogether. The County Council could only advise on what they deemed to be the best solution for the trees. Where trees on DCCs land needed attention, then traffic management must be put in place to ensure the public's safety.

The Chair thanked Mr Jones for his attendance.

5. **NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

Mr Lowe and Mr Wood, Spatial Policy Officers, Durham County Council were in attendance to provide an overview on Neighbourhood Planning.

Mr Lowe advised that the Localism Act gave Parish Council's the power to establish a Neighbourhood Plan. Once the neighbourhood planning process was initiated, DCC would support any group in its establishment. Neighbourhood plans were prepared by a Neighbourhood Forum. The Parish Council would qualify as a Forum. A plan could cover a whole Parish, a group of neighbouring parishes working jointly or a smaller area of the parish. It would be a formal process with public consultation, an examination by an independent person and a referendum to seek local support.

Neighbourhood Plans could guide new housing development, support/protect businesses or their expansion, seek to bring vacant or derelict land back into use, promote transport and access proposals, protect and propose community facilities, protect important local green spaces, protect important local buildings and historic assets and promote small renewable energy projects.

Neighbourhood Plans could not block development, they must conform with strategic policies of the County Durham Plan/ Saved local plans and they could not ignore local and national planning policies or other law.

Local issues need to be established before starting on a Neighbourhood Plan, then a decision on if the issues needed to be tackled through the planning process, consider whether the strategic policies addressed the issues and if there were any gaps and consider if gaps could be met by a parish plan.

Parish Council's could bid for up to £7000 from CLG's Localities fund to help fund their costs. Applications can be submitted once a Neighbourhood Area has been designated.

DCC would provide guidance and assist in ensuring the plan was consistent with strategic local and national policies.

The Chair thanked the Officers for their attendance.

**RESOLVED** that the information given be noted.

6. **THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** held on **19 FEBRUARY 2015**, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member were approved and signed by the Chair.

7. **COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT**

Councillor Crute advised that he had met with the North East Ambulance Service regarding the defibrillator. The funding forms had been completed and submitted.

With regard to the fly tipping cameras, local Members and Parish Council's could contribute to purchase CCTV within their villages. Hotspot areas would need to be identified in order to assess the need for cameras.

**RESOLVED** that the information given be noted.

## 8. **VILLAGE MATTERS**

### **The future of St James Church building**

Members agreed that this item could be discussed earlier in the agenda.

Mr Leonard advised that at the public meeting held recently by the Church, the challenges that they were facing were explained, questions were answered, and views expressed by those attending. The PCC had made the difficult decision to recommend closure of St James church building, facing significant challenges in terms of the building, finance and volunteers. This recommendation had started the process to consult on closing the church, starting with the public meeting. The PCC had met with the Arch Deacon and taken advice before its recommendations. The Diocese would lead the consultation with interested parties, and have asked the PCC for various technical reports. The Diocese Committee would meet in June and consider all the feedback from the consultation. If after the local consultation it was felt that St James should close, then it would be referred to the Church Commissioners, a national body who would then commence their consultation process as it had to be locally and geographically independent. Any final decision would be taken nationally and may not be made until the end of the year. The church would remain the responsibility of the PCC until such time as a decision was made. The PCC would be attempting to raise funding in the interim, as a revenue shortfall was forecast, and most reserves had to be committed to fell a number of dangerous trees. He advised trustees were personally liable for any debt. If the church closed then the Diocese would take responsibility for the church building, and look to market it for appropriate uses.

In that event there would be a new single parish formed incorporating Blackhall, Castle Eden and Hesleden. St Andrews, Blackhall would be the 'mother' church for the parish offering all normal services. New forms of worship would be explored at the Village Hall, Castle Eden to complement the traditional worship available at St Andrews.

Mr McKenzie raised a number of queries and asked if any steps had been taken to apply for grants for example, Heritage Lottery Funding. Mr Leonard explained that fundraising had been looked at to enable the PCC the necessary time to access such funding streams but this had become unfeasible in terms of scale and time. An income of £15k was required on an annual basis, and the church faced an immediate revenue shortfall. All funding applications to the roofing fund included a statement that had to be signed by the Arch Deacon stating that the church was not at threat of being closed, so prevented an application going forward.

**RESOLVED** that the information given be noted and further updates be welcomed.

## 9. **CORRESPONDENCE**

There was no correspondence to report.

## 10. **PLANNING PROPOSALS**

Consideration was given to the following planning applications:

- a) DM/15/00205/TCA Various works to 12 no. trees at Court House, Stockton Road, Castle Eden for Mr Hanson

The Clerk explained that the application was a notice to carryout various tree works to 12no trees located within the curtilage of Court House which was within the Castle Eden Conservation Area and therefore a notice was required prior to any works being undertaken.

The TCA notice gave the Council an opportunity to consider whether a Tree Preservation Order should be made and an assessment of the works proposed was carried out by the Councils Tree Officers. The process did not require a formal consultation.

- b) DM/15/00409/FPA Proposed portal frame stables/machinery store building at Bankside House, Stockton Road, Castle Eden for Mr Maddison

Concern was expressed regarding the size of the building and felt it wasn't sustainable for the size of the area in question and wished to object on the grounds of its size, design, scale and overdevelopment of the site.

**RESOLVED** that an objection be made on the grounds of size, design, scale and overdevelopment of the site.

11. **RISK ASSESSMENT**

The Clerk advised that the Risk Assessment had been reviewed and there were no amendments. All risks were being managed effectively by the Council.

**RESOLVED** that the Risk Assessment be accepted with no amendments.

12. **DONATIONS POLICY**

Consideration was given to the draft Donations Policy, a copy of which had been circulated.

**RESOLVED** that the Donations Policy be agreed and adopted.

13. **FINANCE REPORT**

Balance at Bank as at 19 February 2015	£8116.50
Interest	<u>£0.31</u>
Balance at Bank	<u>£8116.81</u>

14. **VILLAGE MATTERS**

- (i) **ACE Report**  
Amanda Moon circulated the key points from the last ACE meeting and gave an update on progress
- (ii) **The future of St James Church building**  
This was discussed earlier in the agenda.