

Shincliffe Parish Council

Minutes of the Remote Meeting of Shincliffe Parish Council held online on Thursday 21st January, 2021 at 6.00pm

Present: County Councillor Stoker (Chair) Councillors Armstrong, Fradgley, Olechnowicz and Wright (Vice-Chairman).

In Attendance: Kevin Conroy, Dorothy Cowie, Ellen Cowie, Bill Clatworthy, Frank Curry, Ben and Alice Coombs, Gill Ellison, Linda Fairlamb, Richard Glass, Stephen Goodhart, Nigel Jackson, Mark Kinsey, Elizabeth Pexton, Daniel Roe, Caroline Walker, Christine Warburton, James Wilson and Jackie Wilmshurst.

Item		Action By
1.	Apologies for Absence There were no apologies for absence.	
2.	Declarations of Interest There were no declarations of interest.	
3.	Issues Raised by Members of the Public Closure of Shincliffe Play Park A resident delivered a presentation on behalf of children, parents, grandparents from the Parish, covering the following 3 areas: - The temporary closure of the park Evidence suggested the transmission risks associated with (1) outdoor spaces and (2) young children were markedly lower than in other contexts. Additionally, the County Council had carried out their monthly safety inspection of the park and deemed it to be safe and usable in line with the excellent COVID signage the Parish Council had installed. It was acknowledged that it was not the Parish Council's responsibility to police and enforce social distancing.	

The closure of the Park had meant that some had been forced into travelling to visit other similar facilities, such as the park in High Shincliffe, where Durham County Council were following the Government's advice.

Children had been thrown into disarray for large parts of the year and the park was one of the very few avenues the children had beyond private gardens, to burn off energy, and experience outdoor play and exploration.

The Parish Council were asked to:

- Take the points into consideration when considering any future temporary closures to the park.
- To utilise Durham County Council to provide the regular safety inspection and to help maintain compliance, but also to advise on best practice from across the county.
- To communicate so it was common knowledge, on what grounds the park could be subject to a temporary closure in the future. And if a temporary closure were deemed necessary, what the conditions for re-opening would be.
- Consult members of the Parish more widely should decisions need to be made; and
- should it be necessary to display signs it would help to provide clarity on who had issued these and also to provide contact details.

- **Address the longer-term future for the park**

The removal of any items from the park would be devastating for the children of the Village and the Parish.

The park was busy when it first opened, driven by an exciting new park and the fact it was Summer, but it was believed more so by the pandemic – with a number of other parks in the region being closed at that point,

- The plans for the park were shared widely sufficiently ahead of development.
- the park had been on that site since at least 1970s, and houses had been purchased in the vicinity by people despite this.
- Children did make noise as they played and that this should not be the key justification provided for the

	<p>removal of three pieces of equipment, two of which were silent in their operation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Traffic and parking were an issue in the Village before the park was redeveloped and should not be blamed on the park. - research suggested that a great park in the Village was an asset that added to the value of living in Shincliffe and to house prices <p>Initial ideas were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To improve signage in the park to make it feel more personal and give a sense of ownership for example by asking the children to draw pictures and articulate in their words, a code for how the park should be used. - To put signs up along the property boundary to the north of the play park to ask people to keep their distance and some strategic tree-planting by the children could help. - Present petition in support of the park <p>A petition of 185 signatures from the parish had been produced. Those who had signed it were against the removal of any items from the park and 177 of these were against the temporary closure. This petition had been gathered in less than a week and was intended to give an indication only of the volume of support for the park.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the resident for the excellent and very informative presentation which was welcomed by the Parish Council, and commented that the PC had never considered removing any of the equipment. The Parish Council recognised the low risk of children and that social distancing of children was difficult to maintain, however were concerned about picnicking at the benches therefore agreed to temporarily take them away. As it was the intention to keep the park open as much as possible, only closure of ½ day was anticipated to remove the tables.</p> <p>Another resident commented that the Play Park was a special place for children of the Parish and that a balanced age range was necessary. The resident explained that the population in terms of young children had grown within the village and this was a valuable and joyous place for children and families.</p> <p>In relation to signage and code of behaviour for users of the Park, the group were fully supportive of assisting with signage and a voluntary code of behaviour, for example not toileting in</p>	
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<p>the park and trying where possible, to keep noise at a reasonable level.</p> <p>With regards to the temporary removal of the picnic benches, the resident commented that there were people who had disability issues and that the benches were therefore a valuable and safe place to enable them to sit down and take a rest, and therefore asked that they not be removed for any lengthy period of time.</p> <p>A further resident commented that whilst noise was an issue, the main issue was the antisocial behaviour within the park (including the abusive attack her husband had been subjected to) and that the toileting within the park which was against the fence of her property, was occurring several times a day with used toilet roll being left.</p> <p>The resident commented that in terms of the closure of the Park, her understanding was that this was to do with food and commented that there had been parties and picnics which had also increased the amount of litter.</p> <p>Some residents of Low Green had therefore suggested that some items be removed and moved to High Shincliffe Park to split the load between the two parks. At that time, they were not aware of ownership, in that DCC were responsible for High Shincliffe Park, and that despite this not being the type of equipment DCC installed, they were unlikely to refuse the offer.</p> <p>The resident went on to say that other parks ran by DCC had had items taken out due for COVID security measures, which was one of the reasons they had requested the removal of some pieces of equipment.</p> <p>The resident then referred to the previous weekend, commenting that the park was extremely busy with the road 'parked up', down to the park.</p> <p>Another resident commented that antisocial behaviour and people picnicking in park was more of an issue for police and not the Parish Council, and welcomed confirmation from the resident that the police had been involved.</p> <p>Referring to the issue of traffic, he went on to say that despite the park being temporarily closed, traffic was still an issue and therefore independent of the play park and commented that it was important to recognize the current national crisis.</p> <p>A final resident commented that he lived on Low Road and that parking was an issue before the park was redeveloped and that</p>	
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the acid test was the temporary closure of the park, whereby the parking issues were not alleviated at all, as people were parking and going for a walk.

In terms of noise and removing of equipment, the resident commented that during the development of the park, there had been a lot of consultation, including canvassing the opinions of children, and that the equipment was an excellent balance for children of various age groups. Therefore, removal of any pieces of equipment, would not alleviate the number of visitors to the park, or reduce any problems in terms of antisocial behaviour.

The resident went on to say that residents had put a lot of time and effort into raising money for the park, and that the removal of equipment could result in approximately £20,000 of lost funding, which was not legally or morally the right thing to do.

Councillor Fradgley welcomed the discussions which had taken place and commented that one of the issues to address, was how the Parish Council could communicate quickly with residents.

A resident commented that he was willing to volunteer communicating information via the email addresses he had been provided with as a result of the petition.

Litter in Shincliffe and Shincliffe Play Park

A resident commented that she had already lodged her complaint and photographs of the issue had been circulated to all Parish Councillors.

Accidents in Shincliffe

The Chair commented that there had been 3 accidents reported.

Disturbance (Shincliffe Park)

A resident commented that the police had been contacted.

Emergency Access to Recover a Horse

A resident had reported that emergency services could not access the field due to a visitor to the park causing an obstruction and that photographs had been forwarded to the Parish Council and the police had also been contacted.

Another resident reported that the emergency services could gain access and that parking was not an issue and was also not playground related.

	<p>A further resident commented that he had attended to the escaped horse incident, and that emergency access was not an issue. Houghall had been involved and the situation had been resolved.</p> <p>Overflowing Beck at High Shincliffe</p> <p>Councillor Olechnowicz had reported this to DCC.</p> <p>Oil Kiosk (Rear of Heathways)</p> <p>The Chair commented that this related to an industrial building at the rear of Heathways and that this had been reported to DCC.</p> <p>Signage in the Village</p> <p>To be discussed at the next meeting.</p>	
4.	<p>Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 10th December 2020</p> <p>RESOLVED that: the minutes of the meeting held on 10th December, 2020 be approved as a true record subject to the following amendments: - Field at bottom of Shincliffe Village – Paragraph 3 to refer to the fact that the resident had already been in contact with the Chapter Office.</p> <p>A resident commented that he believed that the reference made by a resident that ‘visitors were also accessing the park via Chapter cottages resulting in numerous parents and children passing by her property, increasing the amount of litter and also causing anti-social behaviour’ was untrue given that the access had been blocked for 1 year due to construction and felt that this was unfair and a false accusation which could be seen as relating to his family.</p>	
5.	<p>Matters Arising (Including Actions from Last Meeting)</p> <p>There were no matters arising.</p>	
6.	<p>Electronic and Written Correspondence</p> <p>The following correspondence had been previously circulated to all Councillors:</p> <p>Residents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporary Closure of Shincliffe Play Park – Emails received 4th, 5th, 7th, 7th, 10th, 10th, 10th, 10th 11th, 11th, 12th, 	

	<p>12th, 12th, 13th,13th,13th 14th, 15th 18th and 20th January 2021;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Litter in Shincliffe and Shincliffe Play Park - Emails received 28th December 2020, 8th, 12th and 17th January 2021 • Accidents in Shincliffe - Email received 28th December 2020 • Disturbance (Shincliffe Park) - Email received 24th December 2020 • Emergency Access to Recover a Horse - Email received 17th December 2020 • Oil Kiosk (Rear of Heathways) – Email received 6th January 2021 <p>Durham County Council and Others</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding Helps People Stay Connected During Pandemic Update of COVID-19 and the Council’s Response (11th, 18th December, 7th, 15th January 2021) • Neighbourhood Views (Durham Police December 2020) • Support for County Durham Businesses • Christmas Concerts go Virtual • Christmas & New Year Closures • Hundreds of Christmas Food Parcels Handed to Families • Sign up for 2021 Garden Waste Collections • Staff Spread Christmas Cheer by Creating Festive Grotto • Council Cabinet to be Updated on Multimillion Pound Funding Submission for Improvements • Views of Residents Sought Ahead of Funding Bid Submission • Partnership Supporting People Through Pandemic • Council Set to Invest £5m to Aid Business Recovery • Maximising the Value of Every County Durham Pound • Durham Volunteers Help Spread the Festive Cheer • Trace Ancestors Through New Family History Course • Managing Money Better Services Helps Disabled Pensioner Sort Out Energy Error <p>RESOLVED that: the correspondence had been received and noted.</p>				
7.	<p>Planning Applications</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%;">DM/20/03538 /FPA</td> <td style="width: 33%;">Land to the West of Poplar Tree Garden Centre Hall Lane Shincliffe</td> <td style="width: 33%;">Full planning application for siting of 4no. holiday accommodation units with associated parking and landscape at Land west of</td> </tr> </table>	DM/20/03538 /FPA	Land to the West of Poplar Tree Garden Centre Hall Lane Shincliffe	Full planning application for siting of 4no. holiday accommodation units with associated parking and landscape at Land west of	
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	<p style="text-align: center;">DH1 2NG Poplar Tree Garden Centre, Hall Lane, Shincliffe.</p>	
	<p>The Chair on introducing the item, explained that all residents, as with the Parish Council had the right to express their opinions to DCC in relation to the planning application, and that the decision would be taken by DCC and not the Parish Council.</p> <p>As the application required a deadline for submissions of 24th December, the Chairman had requested that this be 'called in' for consideration, in order to allow an appropriate timescale for consideration.</p> <p>75 responses had been received to date, and all residents were encouraged to submit their views.</p> <p>The applicant was invited to outline the proposal and in doing so, explained that 50 letters had been hand delivered to residents of the village, encouraging an open discussion, in order to explain the motivation and also allay any concerns. Unfortunately, however COVID may had affected the perception of the proposal and ability for residents to respond, in person.</p> <p>The applicant explained that he was passionate about the area and aimed to showcase the best of region in a sensitive and light touch way. The fundamental concept being to operate in a low density format, only across syndicated sites across County, a cumulative benefit to the wider region in a way in which no singular location would carry greater burden than that of others.</p> <p>Whilst traffic and access had been referenced in 80% of objections, the Applicant believed that there was a perceived issue of traffic and accepted that proposal would not improve this, but did not believe it would contribute negatively and that this had been acknowledged by the Highways Department. In addition, he felt that COVID was undoubtedly a contributing factor given that the village had access to beautiful countryside and walks, which was an attraction at the present time.</p> <p>In addition to this, 60% of objections referenced the play park, however the applicant felt that this was misidentified as being connected.</p> <p>In relation to concerns regarding the nature of access and in addition, concerns that the site would be used 24/7, the applicant refuted that this would be the case and that access outside of operational hours would only be granted to those guests using the 4 holiday units. A Site Management Plan was under review and had been submitted to DCC.</p>	

	<p>With regards to the design and Impact, the applicant believed that this was a subjective argument and that focus should be given to material consideration and also sustainability.</p> <p>Referring to the development on Green Belt land, the applicant explained that he had been sympathetic and that the policy was imperative, yet complex. He had been very aware of the importance to protect this space, whilst trying to achieve a balance, by mitigating harm, and also improving the site.</p> <p>The applicant commented that 60% of objections had referenced no economic benefit yet a significant number had commented that Garden Centre may benefit. In addition to this, he believed that other businesses, for example the 2 pubs, could also benefit.</p> <p>The applicant also believed that the proposal also protected the use of site for enjoyment of residents. In addition, no objections from County Ecologists, the Environmental Agency or the Local Flood Authority had been raised, with full support from Business Durham and Visit Co. Durham being recognised.</p> <p>In summary, the applicant felt that this was a balance in a sensitive way, of protecting and improving the site, believing that this was an improvement, with extremely limited harm, and also supporting local businesses.</p> <p>The Chairman thanked the applicant for his representation, and then asked 3 residents to speak in turn.</p> <p>The first speaker commented that as a resident, he was extremely proud of the village, and that the majority of houses were brick built and that any development which had subsequently taken place, had retained this character.</p> <p>Referring to the Heritage Report which stated that 'any developments should be in keeping with stone and brick buildings' he therefore did not feel that the proposal complied with this, or the character of the village and that 4 container units within Greenbelt Land, did not respect the National Planning Policy Framework.</p> <p>The resident explained that Shincliffe was a Conservation Area, on Green Belt Land and also on a flood plain. He therefore could not see any social, economic or environmental benefits to outweigh the harm, or a sustainability statement by Sustainability Specialist.</p> <p>As a result, he was unsure what social benefit the development would bring, with lack of evidence, and referred to the three</p>	
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	<p>examples of social benefit from the Church Hall, the WI Hut and also the recently refurbished Play Park.</p> <p>The resident explained that the proposed development would require 24 hour access, resulting in intrusive lighting and whilst the current application was for 'one bed' occupancy, this could be increased with the use of sofa beds etc.</p> <p>The second speaker was then invited to submit their comments and in doing so, commented that the access road to the proposed site was already hazardous and that any plans to increase volume of traffic would have a negative social impact on residents and visitors. The resident commented that this was a dangerous bend due to 'blind' parking on the corner.</p> <p>The resident referred to the Planning Statement suggesting that 600 cars used the road and believed that this was an understatement. As the National Planning Policy Framework said that planning decisions made, should be for healthy, inclusive and safe places, the resident believed that increasing traffic on this road was completely against this.</p> <p>The resident had undertaken a village survey, and commented that part of the village had already been earmarked as a potential hazard.</p> <p>The resident went on to say that she believed that there was little economic benefit and that this would not attract visitors, and that the introduction of jobs would only be short term.</p> <p>With regards to sustainability, the speaker felt that it was not sustainable and that cladding to shipping containers in wood, only added to carbon footprint. In addition, longevity was unproven and that building structures were on a flood plain.</p> <p>The resident referred to the wording from the Flood Report which stated that they 'they disagreed with statement that there would be no hazard to people' and commented that this was a double negative.</p> <p>The third speaker commented that there was very limited access next to the Play Park which increased the potential risk of an accident to a child.</p> <p>In addition, he felt that parking was an ongoing issue, with a road which had become a single carriage and also used by heavy vehicles. As a result, the issue of traffic, needed to be addressed.</p>	
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	<p>With regards to the flood risk, the resident commented that there was a risk, and also that facilities for fowl drainage were not clear.</p> <p>The resident explained that Shincliffe was a conservation area, and that any development should in accordance with planning policies and not of detriment to the heritage or landscape of village, with comments also being made in relation to the potential considerable risk to wildlife.</p> <p>With regards to employment, the resident commented that he failed to see benefits and likewise, any improvements being made to the landscape. Concerns were also expressed that what a development of 4 holiday units at the present time, that this could rapidly increase in the future.</p> <p>Another resident commented that he believed that this was a novel idea and fitting within the location, disagreeing that Shincliffe should have a single character of appearance, given that St. Mary's Close and also the WI Hut were both very different in style of architecture.</p> <p>The resident commented that whilst Shincliffe was a Conservation Area, he also felt that it should be evolving and developing, whilst being sensitive and sympathetic, but not a replication of what was there historically.</p> <p>With regards to the practical issues, the resident commented that whilst the bend was a problem, this was separate to the proposal of 4 holiday units and welcomed the survey (which had highlighted traffic problems), however commented that it was important that surveys reached all residents within the village.</p> <p>Councillor Olechnowicz referred to the comments that it was a small footprint at the present time, however asked for any assurance that this would not become a larger scale project and also questioned the public gain as opposed to the public loss.</p> <p>A final resident commented upon the contradictory argument in relation to the significant economical benefit and yet the no adverse effect in relation to traffic related problems and commented that the Ecological Report did not show a compelling argument for adopting these proposals.</p> <p>The Applicant responded by advising that had any concerns been raised by the Environmental Agency, this proposal would not have been pursued and that an immediate objection would have been raised.</p>	
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	<p>A private consultation had been undertaken with an Ecologist and an outcome was already in place in relation to the access road (size and scale), to ensure that impact would be minimal.</p> <p>The Applicant explained that in relation to the site being developed, no site expansion was proposed and that the vast majority of site was undevelopable.</p> <p>Finally, with regards to the longevity of the holiday homes, this was currently around 10 years, however the proposal to use wood cladding, extended this to around 100 years.</p> <p>The Applicant therefore believed that this was protecting a private piece of land and protecting the village.</p> <p>RESOLVED that: given the balance of the representations made, that an objection would be raised on behalf of the Parish Council.</p>	
8.	<p>Consideration of Precept 2021-2022</p> <p>The Vice Chairman advised that the proposed precept was made in light of suggested budget for 2021-2022 (as previously circulated).</p> <p>An increase of 10.37% was proposed, which represented a small increase of approximately £3.54 per household.</p> <p>Parish Councillors were advised that this did not meet the reserve position of 50% of expenditure, if this was to be adopted, it would result in a £8.91 increase per household.</p> <p>The Vice-Chair explained that there was some flexibility within the budget, in that there were earmarked reserves for the Sherburn House Planting/Traffic Calming Initiative (£2,000) however a contribution from, Sherburn House Charity, was currently unknown.</p> <p>In addition, there were costs in relation to the Clerks salary, insurance, forthcoming election costs, the tree survey, anticipated legal charges and play park inspections by DCC. Horticulture costs had been budgeted for (over numerous years) at £6,000.</p> <p>There was also an upcoming project of a sensory garden within Shincliffe Play Park, for which the Parish Council anticipated contributing £2,500.</p>	

	<p>A resident commented that she believed that the Play Park should not be at a cost to the Parish Council, and was advised that a new service level agreement was being undertaken with DCC given that many of their services had been withdrawn, and as a result, there would be a cost to the Parish Council.</p> <p>RESOLVED that: the Precept for 2021/2022 be set at £27,079.46 representing an increase of approximately 10.37% (c £3.54 per household, per annum), which was an increase from £24,535.60 (2020/2021). The Clerk agreed to complete the necessary paperwork and submit the precept request to the billing authority (DCC).</p>	Clerk
9.	<p>Authorised Bank Account Signatories</p> <p>RESOLVED that: Councillors Fradgley and Armstrong would become authorised signatories on the Parish Council bank accounts. The Clerk would complete the necessary paperwork.</p>	Clerk
10.	<p>Requests for Financial Assistance</p> <p>The following two requests had been received:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Mayor's Appeal (Firefighter's Charity) • Great North Air Ambulance <p>RESOLVED that: £250.00 be donated to each of the above organisations.</p>	
11.	<p>Results from Shincliffe Village Survey</p> <p>A resident from the village commented that she had undertaken a survey and that the findings had been forwarded to the Parish Council.</p> <p>She advised that the purpose of the survey was to include all residents of the village, including the elderly (who may not have access to technology) and hence why the survey had been sent to all households within the village, other than those attending the last Parish Council meeting or empty properties, and commented that she was extremely concerned about the 'dangerous corner' and that it was important to share these views.</p>	
12.	<p>Horticultural Committee Update (Standing Item)</p> <p>Councillor Wright advised that:</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The daffodils planted around Sherburn House were appearing; • The new bench had been installed at St. Mary's Close (Lower Close); • The next stage in relation to the Playpark was the planting of the whips (Hornbeam and Beech). It was anticipated that 400-500 would be planted in February (as per planning permission); • Thanks were given to East Grange Farm and Ian Bell for the provision of the Christmas Trees and also the Children in High Shincliffe, the Knit and Knatter Group, and residents from Shincliffe Village, for decorating the trees; • The path renewal project for High Street (SV) was currently at the appraisal stage; and • The Sensory garden funding was currently being considered by the AAP. 																					
13.	<p>Sherburn House Planting Initiative (Standing Item)</p> <p>As mentioned above, the bulbs were showing an appearance and further discussions needed to take place with Sherburn House Charity.</p>																					
14.	<p>Current Accounts for Approval</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Payable to</th> <th>Amount</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>K Kirton (January Salary)</td> <td>£373.40</td> </tr> <tr> <td>HMRC Income Tax (January)</td> <td>£93.20</td> </tr> <tr> <td>K Kirton Reimbursement Zoom (31st January)</td> <td>£14.39</td> </tr> <tr> <td>M Platts (Horticulture)</td> <td>£416.50</td> </tr> <tr> <td>M Platts (Horticulture)</td> <td>£393.17</td> </tr> <tr> <td>M Platts (Horticulture)</td> <td>£393.17</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mazars (External Audit)</td> <td>£360.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Came and Company (Insurance)</td> <td>£90.22</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ian Bell (Installation of Christmas Trees) – Re-issued</td> <td>£55.00</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>RESOLVED that: the above accounts be paid.</p>	Payable to	Amount	K Kirton (January Salary)	£373.40	HMRC Income Tax (January)	£93.20	K Kirton Reimbursement Zoom (31 st January)	£14.39	M Platts (Horticulture)	£416.50	M Platts (Horticulture)	£393.17	M Platts (Horticulture)	£393.17	Mazars (External Audit)	£360.00	Came and Company (Insurance)	£90.22	Ian Bell (Installation of Christmas Trees) – Re-issued	£55.00	
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15.	<p>Parish Clerk Vacancy</p> <p>The Chair advised that there was a Parish Clerk vacancy, and that the current Clerk would be in place until the end of March, 2021.</p>																					

16.	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>Thursday 25th February, 2021 at 6.00pm.</p>	
17.	<p>Any Other Business – Councillors</p> <p>The Chair commented that on behalf of the Parish Council, that he was incredibly grateful to former Councillor Ferries for the immense amount of work and time he had dedicated to the redevelopment of Shincliffe Village Play Park, and also the Parish Council over the years. The Parish Council, as with many residents of the village, were incredibly grateful to Peter for his dedication.</p>	

Meeting Terminated at 8.15 pm