

Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of **Shincliffe Parish Council** held in **Shincliffe Primary School, High Shincliffe, Durham** on **Tuesday 27th January 2015** at 7.00 pm.

Present: Councillor Olechnowicz (in the Chair) and Councillors Hudson, A Lee, G Lee and Lightley. There were no members of the public present.

149. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

150. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors Duell and Lovell.

151. Setting of the Precept 2015-2016

Traffic Regulation Order

At the start of the meeting the Chairman raised a few issues pertinent to the setting of the 2015/2016 precept.

Firstly that the £1,000 discussed at the last meeting of parish council to undertake a survey in relation to the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) had not yet been embarked upon and would not be until a decision had been made to pursue the TRO.

The Chairman referred to the legal advice forwarded from CDALC which had been circulated to all Councillors. The advice given was neither as the parish council imagined or as the Highways section had suggested. In summary the legal advice confirmed that a parish council *may contribute towards* any expenses if expenditure will be of benefit to the area. This would suggest that the council was not the only contributor and that the costs of consultation would be excluded. The advice went on to say that a TRO did not involve traffic signs therefore the council would not be able to use powers under this section. It was therefore felt that the council was being asked to fund DCC's responsibilities as highway authority. The council would therefore be required to balance the interests of the council tax payers who had contributed to the income against the interests of those who would benefit from the TRO. If the parish council did not properly consider the interests of all its local council tax payers before making a financial decision, it may have failed to take account of a relevant consideration.

The parish council acknowledged the differing opinions of residents in relation to traffic problems within the village during morning rush hour traffic. An email from a resident was discussed and the parish council noted the observations made. This resident did not deem traffic through the village to be a problem and suggested a detailed survey be undertaken. Some other residents however, did feel that whilst speeding was not an issue, the volume of traffic was.

Parish Councillors raised the issue that DCC had already confirmed that they did not have the money to fund a TRO and as the parish council did not either, almost a full year's precept would need to be raised to implement this.

In addition, the parish council noted the following throughout their discussions:

- Referring to the legal advice above in relation to balancing the interests of the tax payer against the interests of those who would benefit from the council's expenditure, the parish council felt that there was a current lack of evidence to suggest it would be of benefit.
- A clear position was required from the Highways Department following the above legal advice.
- The volume of traffic through the village was also high at other times of day due to people

visiting the garden centre, the church or the nursery.

- An informal meeting needed to take place with residents of Shincliffe Village to establish their views and ascertain whether traffic was a problem. This would also be used as an opportunity for the parish council to share information in relation to costs, outline proposals and the associated advantages and disadvantages of each and also assure residents that much time has been spent giving serious consideration to this issue.
- A sensible approach could be to advise the TRO support group about the meeting and ask them to communicate and canvass this to all residents with support from the parish council.
- Given the current lack of information and clarity, consideration of a TRO was currently too premature and as a result, this would not be taken into account when setting the precept.
- The £1,000 approved at the meeting on 20th January for undertaking a survey had been put on hold for the interim period pending further information from DCC and also the views of residents as part of a detailed review.
- That the parish council had given consideration to a TRO numerous times in the past.
- Details of previous surveys undertaken would be useful in providing facts and figures.

It was **resolved** that:

- (1) A clear position was required from the Highways and Legal Department;
- (2) If a TRO could not be implemented this would be communicated to residents; and
- (3) If a TRO could be implemented, an informal meeting would be held with residents of Shincliffe Village to listen to the views of the public and also enable the parish council to share the information they currently hold in relation to different proposals and also the associated costs.

Precept 2015-2016

The Clerk circulated the estimated expenditure for 2015-2016. This amounted to £14,237.52 and it was proposed that £6,000 of this budget, be specifically allocated to horticulture (which included £1,000 for a sustainable planting project).

The parish council acknowledged the benefits of the horticultural work which had been undertaken and the valuable asset that this was to the community. Thanks were extended to Marc Platts, the parish gardener for his excellent work.

A discussion then ensued in relation to S137 financial assistance and the Clerk circulated comparative allocations from other parish councils. At present £700 was proposed which equated to 4.5% of the overall budget. Parish Councillors agreed that once a budget had been set for this purpose, it should be regularly monitored to ensure that requests approved remained within budget. Any requests received which would be of great value to residents of Shincliffe, could be considered under exceptional circumstances and reserves used to provide financial assistance outside approved S137 budget.

Councillors then discussed costs to the parish council in addition to the estimated expenditure of £14,237.52 which included election costs (approx.£550 per annum), bench maintenance (approx.£250) and tree maintenance (approx. £250) and it was felt that the precept needed to be increased to cover these additional costs which amounted to £1050.00.

As a result a total precept of £15,300.00 was proposed and discussed which represented an 8% increase on the previous year.

It was **resolved** that: the 2015-2016 precept be raised by 8% to £15,300 to cover additional costs to the parish council in relation to election expenses, bench maintenance and tree maintenance.

The meeting terminated at 8.30pm