

Gainford & Langton

MINUTES OF PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

WEDNESDAY 10 JANUARY 2024

COUNCILLORS: Wilkinson, Platten, Jackson & Van Mourik.

Visitors:

Beaudene Kilty, Northern Gas Network & Teesdale Mercury.

Public Participation

No public present.

1. Acceptance, or otherwise of apologies

Cllr Hannan submitted her apologies.

Resolved – That the submitted apologies be approved.

2. Declarations of Interest:

Members are asked to consider whether they might have a personal or a pecuniary interest in any matter included on the agenda for this meeting. If so, it is requested that any such interest be declared now. If subsequently during the consideration of any matter, it becomes apparent to any member that he/she does, indeed, have an interest, it should then be declared immediately.

Resolved – No personal or pecuniary declarations were made.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the ordinary Council meeting held on 10 December 2023.

Resolved - That the minutes of the ordinary Council Meeting of the 10 December 2023 be approved.

4. Clerks Report

The Clerk updated members on:

- Damaged paving slab on steps to Low Green has been repaired. Further pointing on the steps will take place.
- GAP lease moving forward – draft lease with the councils' solicitors; grant acceptance paperwork completed and returned; awaiting response from Diocese on access options during development works.

5. Gas Governor replacement - Balmer Hill

Beaudene Kilty from Northern Gas Network was in attendance at the request of the parish council to discuss the options for the replacement Gas Governor, located at Balmer Hill.

Summary - Northern gas networks (NGN) have a gas governor buried in the corner of Balmer Hill green, by the junction. The reduces the network pressure from medium pressure to low (domestic) pressure and has reached the end of its life. Without a functioning governor, gas supplies cannot be maintained.

Design and equipment standards have changed a lot over the intervening years and there is no option to replace like with like. Current standards include:

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- above ground access to equipment
- vehicular access is required for maintenance.
- maintenance needs are typically annual.
- a glass fibre cabinet needs to be placed over the equipment, which cannot be sub-surface and is about 7' high.
- it has to be 2 m from the highway for safety protection from vehicles.

NGN wishes are to install on the corner roughly where the existing governor is. This would be very visible, as the hedge along North Lane is kept low for visibility reasons at the Balmer Hill junction.

Following Mr Kilty going through why the Governor needs replacing, and the subsequent discussions with members it was agreed:

Resolved – (a) That council offer NGN a site opposite Adamson Court for the re-siting of the new Gas Governor; (b) That NGN communicate with local residents (in area) to advise them of the work; and (c) That prior to that any communication going out the parish council have site of it.

6. Finance

6.1 January reconciliation and invoices for approval (submitted).

Resolved – That the January reconciliation and payments be approved.

6.2 Annual Budget & Precept setting 2024/25 (**Appendix A**)

Received – 2024/25 budget recommendations.

Resolved – That the Gainford & Langton Parish Council budget for 2024/25 be set at £37,363 with the LCTRS grant of £719 deducted, giving a precept payable of £36,644 (£73.72 pa on Band D property).

6.3 Santa's Sleigh

Cllr Jackson on behalf of the organisers of Santa's Sleigh expressed their thanks for the contribution given by the parish council to the event on Christmas Eve. The evening went well. It was noted the unused selection boxes were taken and donated to the children's ward at Darlington Memorial hospital.

Resolved – That the information be received and noted.

7. Village Issues/Maintenance

7.1 Cllr Wilkinson referred to the fire engine driving over the green to put out the van fire. It had been reported the engine had left track marks on the green.

Members felt that no action was required, and the green would recover.

7.2 The Christmas tree on the green requires removal.

7.3 It was referred that the gully clearance was reported to Durham County Council.

7.4 Pot holes at the Barnard Castle end of the village returning.

7.5 Bus shelter by the island full of leaves.

8. GAP Development

This item was covered at item 4.

9. Correspondence

Submitted – Details of correspondence received.

Teesdale Action Partnership	Notice of board meeting
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Resolved – That the information be noted.

10. Planning

None

Applications can be viewed online via Durham County Council's Planning Application System: <http://publicaccess.durham.gov.uk/online-applications/>

11. Royal Garden Parties 2024

Each year the county association (CDALC) is normally offered two tickets (a councillor plus guest) for a Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace. Although no dates have been confirmed for 2024 it is usual at this time to ask Parish Council's across the county to put forward any nominees to go into a draw.

Resolved – That Cllr's Wilkinson and Jackson are put forward to be entered in to the draw.

12. Date & time of next meeting

Wednesday 7 February 2024, 7pm

Meeting closed.

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BUDGET 2024/25 – REPORT

Introduction

This report considers the 2024/25 budget as a whole to enable recommendations to be formulated at this meeting, including the recommended precept figure.

Clerk/Broadband/Mobile

No increase from current rates.

Insurance

The insurance cover for the council is recommended to increase by 5% following conversations with the current provider. Actual figure for 2023 was £1,147.70.

Recommendation is £1,206.

Audit Fees

Audit fees in 2023 were £360 and the recommendation is for this to remain unchanged.

Bank Charges

The charges placed on the council account are averaged at £11 per month @£132 annually. **Recommendation £132.**

General Admin/Sundries

This represents consumables such as printer ink, paper, postage. Previously this heading has included fees and annual subscriptions which have now been separated into its own budgetary header. **Recommended to reduce to £100 from £150.**

Subscriptions – CDALC/ICO/Microsoft 365

As referred to above these annual subscriptions have been separated into a separate budget heading. **This is recommended to remain at £300.**

Rents – Spa & Recreation field

The council pays Raby Estates an annual rent for both the Spa and Recreation field. **Recommended no increase for 2024/25 and set at £850.**

Website

This is the annual hosting fee for the revised website at £20 per month.

Recommendation for 2024/25 is £240.00 an increase of £40.

Donations under S137

This budget has generally not been used in the previous 2 years and given the council having grant aid and community support written into its overall budget I am recommending this budget going forward is **NIL**.

Chairs Fund

This figure is recommended to remain as 2023/24 - **£200**.

Litter Picking

This figure is recommended to increase by 4%. **Recommendation is a rise from £75.00 to £78.00 for 2024/25.**

Grass Cutting

The budget set for 2023/24 was set at £5,300 but as the Millenium Green was requested not to be cut this reduced the outlay in 2023. It is anticipated the green will be cut in 2024, and the football field grass removal at each cut to see the costs return to the level expected. Given the surplus from this year's budget (£1200) would go into General Reserves, I am recommending the 2024/25 budget remain **unchanged**. Any additional expenditure would come from the reserves.

Recreation Field Maintenance

This budget header is to cover the cost of the annual 2 x fertiliser spreads across the area. In addition the anticipated costs of repairs to the boundary fencing and gates. I am recommending this budget heading remain **unchanged** as deemed sufficient.

Floral Displays

This is recommended to remain **unchanged** in 2024/25 at **£1,750** as it is anticipated there will be an underspend of around £800 from 2023/24. Any underspend placed in a reserve to cover work planned with Blooming Gainford (item 6.4/November/23 refers)

Village Repairs and Maintenance

This is recommended to reduce for 2024/25 due to an anticipated underspend in 2023/24. **Recommendation is £3,000**

GAP

It is expected that the budget set for GAP to cover legal fees on the new lease will be spent by the end of year. Going forward a similar budget should be in place to cover incidentals associated with the redeveloped play area. **The recommendation is this budget for 2024/25 be £2,000 (unchanged).**

Community Events

This has been broken down into known events the council support or manage annually:

Gainfest - £750 (increase of £100)

Bonfire/Fireworks - £2900 (increase of £400)

Christmas - £1,200 (unchanged)

Community Support (Grant Aid)

The budget for 2023/24 was approved at £1,000.

The budget was then increased in June 2023 by £2,000 – this being the general budget contingency reserve.

The council wishes to support local groups and projects, either through grant applications, under the approved policy, or regular support to established community groups, such as Gainford toddler group. The council need to work within the approved budget, so I am recommending the Community Support budget be **£3,500 for 2024/25 (increase of £2,500)**

Budget Header	Recommendation
Council Administration	See below
Clerk/broadband/mobile	£9,329
Insurance	£1,206
Audit Fees	£360
Bank Charges	£132
General Admin/sundries	£100
Subscriptions – CDALC/ICO/Microsoft 365	£300
Rents – Spa & Recreation field	£850
Website	£240
S137 Donations	£NIL
Chairs Fund	£200
Total	£12,717
Maintenance	See below
Litter picking	£936
Grass Cutting	£5,300
Floral Displays	£1,750
Recreation field maintenance	£3,310
Village Repairs/Maintenance	£3,000
GAP	£2,000
Total	£16,296
Community Events	See below

Budget Header	Recommendation
Gainford Fun Day	£750
Bonfire/fireworks	£2,900
Christmas inc electric	£1,200
Total	£4,850
Community Support (Grant aid)	£3,500
Total	£37,363

1. Factors taken into Consideration.

- 1.1 Anticipated carry over as 31 March 2024 will be in the region of £50,000*. This figure will reduce by at least the £12,000 set aside for GAP.
- 1.2 The council tax base upon which the precept is calculated is 497.1 for 2024/25, a small decrease of 2 on the 2023/24 figures.
- 1.3 The Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) grant payable to the parish council in 2023/24 was £703, for the 2024/25 financial year it will be £719.

2. Conclusion

- 2.1 For 2024/25 I have continued to make recommendation that better reflect the council's work over the next financial year. Its aspirations with regards GAP, supporting community events, and community groups while still maintaining good levels of services for what the council is responsible for.

As can be seen from **Appendix A**, if all the budgetary items recommended are approved, the total 2024/25 demand on Durham County Council would be £37,363 minus LCTRS Grant of £719 with the precept demand being **£36,644**. This would result in a small decrease in the parish council element of the council tax.

I recommend the budget to the council, and a precept request of **£36,644 at £73.72 for a Band D property**.

Appendix A

	2023/24 £	2024/25 £
Council Administration	12,941	12,717
Maintenance	18,260	16,296
Community Events	4,850	4,850
Community Support	1,500	3,500
Total	37,551	37,363
LCTRS Grant	703	719
Precept Request	36,848	36,644

23/24 Band D £73.82

24/25 Band D £73.72

Ear marked reserves.

Parish Environment Improvement - £10,000

Future planning (sports and recreation improvements) £5,000

GAP Development – This reserve stands at £12,000 but is expected to be used by 31 March 2024. With a potential shortfall in grants for the redevelopment of GAP it is recommended a further **£10,000** for 2024/25 is ring fenced and would come from a reduction in the Future Planning EMR (-£5,000) and the closure of the Children & Young People EMR which stood at £5,000. The GAP development is future planning and for young people so make sense to use these.

Allotments (ring fenced) - £3,952 (inc rent from 2023)

General reserves 2024/25 - £14,000