



**Minutes of the proceedings of the ANNUAL TOWN MEETING  
of the Council held at 7 p.m. in the Parish Hall, Sedgefield,  
on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> May 2023**

**Cllr Mel Carr (Chair of the Town Council), Cllr Dave Jasper (Mayor),**  
Cllrs. Allan Blakemore, Mark Cant, Kelly Dickerson, Elizabeth Flanagan, Catherine Hart, Jenny  
Haworth, Dave Jasper, Julie Towler, Mavis Wayman and Stephen Winter

Clerk: Dr Jane Ayre

35 Residents

## **1 Welcome by the Chairman:**

Cllr Mel Carr welcomed everyone to the Council's Annual Town Meeting. He explained this meeting was in three parts, the first being the Annual Town Meeting itself when the Town Council and other organisations would report their activities over the previous financial year, the second part would see the Mayor present financial donations to his chosen charities and the third part would be the announcement of the Award for the Citizen of the Year 2022. Cllr Mel Carr informed those in attendance that copies of the meeting's agenda, previous minutes and the Council's 2022/23 Annual Report had already been distributed around the room for information. He informed residents in attendance that they would be able to ask questions and make comments under agenda item 7 of the Annual Town Meeting.

## **2 Apologies:**

Cllr David Brown

## **3 Chairman's Report 2022/23:**

Cllr Mel Carr said it had been an interesting year for him as Chairman with Sedgefield getting back to normal in most areas following the covid pandemic. The Town Council Offices and Parish Hall are back to usual operations again and the Parish Hall is continuing to be a popular venue. While unfortunately we said goodbye to some much-loved groups over the last few years, we have over the last welcomed new groups and continue to promote the Parish Hall's potential as a venue.

Citizen of the Year 2021 was awarded to Bobby Workman and the Young Citizen of the Year awarded to sisters, Maggie and Martha Edge.

Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee was celebrated in Sedgefield with a programme of events taking place in St Edmund's Church, Ceddesfeld Hall and grounds and local business decorated their windows to show their appreciation too.

Sadly, Queen Elizabeth II died on 8th September 2022 and while it was an upsetting time for all, the Chair was incredibly proud of the Town's response to her passing.

Tree work as recommended by the appointed tree officer took place to all Town Council trees in autumn last year.

The Town Council gardeners continued to work at the cemetery and throughout the town on the flower displays. Sedgefield in Bloom continue to give a great contribution to the appearance of the Town. At the Northumbria in Bloom Awards, Sedgefield won Gold for Small Towns.

There were two Honorary Freeman awards presented last year, to Councillor David Brown who joined the Town Council in 2003 and to the Town's gold medal wheelchair rugby Paralympian, Jack Smith MBE.

The Halloween Howler Pumpkin Competition, Fireworks Display and Snow Party were all successful events.

The Active Travel Project is progressing with a scheme approved at the brick bus shelter in the centre of the town for bike racks and associated minor work.

Section 106 money (developers contribution paid to Durham County Council to mitigate the impact of their development on the community) is still being monitored and may have some successful news shortly relating to our local play areas and Butterwick Road Cemetery's expansion.

Councillors Jimmy Seymour and Paul Heasman resigned last year and I thank them for their input on the Council. The Town Council welcomed Councillors Jenny Haworth and Kelly Dickerson to the Town Council and are pleased that they are enjoying their new role. More recently Councillor Elizabeth Flanagan has also joined and the Chair looked forward to working with her.

Cllr Mel Carr expressed his thanks to all the Town Councillors, the Town Clerk and all Council staff for their support over this last year.

Cllr Mel Carr took this opportunity to present a small token of thanks on behalf of the Town Council for Mrs Julia Jasper and Mrs Annette Lawson's work over 2022/23 as the Mayor of Sedgefield's Consorts.

#### **4 Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2022:**

The minutes from the Annual Town Council meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2022 were proposed by Cllr Mel Carr as being a true record and this was seconded by Cllr Stephen Winter. The minutes were then agreed as being a true record of the meeting.

#### **5 Matters Arising:**

In relation to Item 7 of the previous minutes, Cllr Mel Carr wished to respond to issues made about community engagement and Section 106 monies. Cllr Mel Carr said Sedgefield Town Council does a huge amount to engage with local people and listen to local views. First and foremost, Town Councillors are from, and present in the community. They engage with other residents constantly through daily village life, and through local community events and activities. Individual town councillors are also formally members of other local community organisations and groups. This means that we stay in touch with views of these groups and these get reported back to the Town Council. This includes Neighbourhood Watch, School Governing Bodies, Sedgefield Bloomers, East Durham Rural AAP, County Durham Local Councils network and Sedgefield Community Association. The Town Council carries out formal consultation exercises in partnership with the AAP, local groups and neighbouring councils in relation to specific areas. The Active Travel work being a clear example of such. In relation to funds that the County Council receive for infrastructure relating to recent housing developments (so-called section 106), the County Council are responsible for community engagement on local use of allocations. Once this process is announced, we will work closely with our local county councillors to ensure residents are aware of the engagement arrangements.

#### **6 Reports:**

##### **6.1 Town Council Annual Report 2022/23:**

Cllr Mel Carr reminded all present that copies of the Town Council's Annual Report 2022/23 had already been circulated around the room and would be shared through the residents database, promoted on Twitter and placed on the Council's website from Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2023 as well as paper copies available in the Town Council Offices. Cllr Mel Carr informed all in attendance at the meeting that the Annual Report contained a Mayor's Report by Cllr Dave Jasper (pages 8-9), Policy & Resources Committee Report by Cllr Allan Blakemore (pages 11-12), Personnel Committee Report by Cllr Allan Blakemore (page 12), Community Development & Engagement Committee Report by Cllr Ann Carr (page 13), Environment Report by Cllr Stephen Winter (page 14), Community Chest Report by Cllr Julie Towler (page 15), Sedgefield Youth Club Report by Cllr Julie Towler (page 16-17), Allotments update (page 19), Sedgefield Extra/Twitter/Website Update (page 20), Review of Past Year by Clerk (pages 21-23) and financial information in the form of income and expenditure account plus consolidated balance sheet (pages 24-25).

## **6.2 Durham County Council Sedgefield Electoral Ward Councillors:**

County Cllr Chris Lines reflected over the previous financial year and whilst he could not speak directly for his fellow County Cllr David Brown, he confirmed that they work closely on matters relating to the electoral ward and both are part of the Joint Administration of Durham County Council. County Cllr Lines said there had been many interesting debates over the last year and lots of decisions needing to be made in the context of severe financial constraints, constraints which are likely to continue for some time. The County Council has addressed three high profile significant issues of note over 2022/23, namely the County Council's office accommodation, the DLI Museum and devolution. With regards to County Council office accommodation, County Cllr Lines reported that the controversial and expensive new build at The Sands in Durham, which had one road in and one road out in an area already experiencing the highest pollution levels in Durham City, had now been sold to Durham University to become their Business School. This sale had generated a surplus of several million pounds. The Joint Administration have now identified two sites at Aykley Heads where a small civic centre will be created along with office accommodation to assist the on-going use of hybrid working for staff. In addition to this some of the existing County Council's access sites around the County will be refurbished and space within them used for staff accommodation. County Hall will be demolished as the building is no longer fit for purpose, however, this work cannot commence until the new Heritage Centre at St Oswald's is open to allow the smooth transfer of the County Records Office's collection. With regards to the DLI Museum and Gallery, County Cllr Lines reminded all the site next to County Hall closed in 2016. The site had suffered from lack of maintenance, investment and saw declining numbers due to lack of variation in exhibitions displayed. Whilst the permanent home of the DLI collection will be the new Heritage Centre at St Oswald's, it is now the intention to re-open the DLI Museum site albeit work is still underway to determine how this is to be achieved in such a way as to make this viable and sustainable for the long-term. The re-opened Museum will have a café and more exhibition space but will always have DLI exhibitions on display. With regards to devolution, County Councillor Lines explained County Durham had needed to consider three options – County Durham devolution only, devolution by combining with the other six principles local authorities in the region or no devolution. Each had been considered carefully. Devolution in County Durham only would have resulted in putting all power solely into the hands of one person which it felt was not democratic and potentially dangerous for the County. Not exploring devolution would see County Durham miss out on potential opportunities. The Joint Administration for Durham County Council believes the best option for the County is to combine with the other six principles authorities as the "LA7" to progress devolution opportunities. At this point in time the Secretary of State has given provisional agreement for this to proceed. Beyond those three key work areas, County Cllr Lines confirmed that budget issues are ever present. County Cllr Lines

confirmed that during the last year he had continued to provide a comprehensive written monthly report to the Town Council which he then subsequently shared with residents via the Town Council's residents database. County Cllr Lines said he was committed to open communications and community engagement. While acknowledging that the pace of action can sometimes be frustrating he was very pleased to now see the collaborative workings between the County Council, local AAP, Town Council and various community groups were coming fruition citing the examples of an active travel project in the centre of the Town for bus shelter refurbishment and bike racks installation as well as path improvements between Station Road and Hardwick Park. It was acknowledged that this work, and access to funding, could not be achieved without collaborative working. County Cllr Lines concluded by stating that both he and fellow County Cllr Brown are committed to serving the residents of the Sedgefield Electoral Ward and on a daily basis help residents and groups with their enquiries and issues.

### **6.3 Sedgefield Charities:**

Ms Anne Gladwin gave a report on the Sedgefield Charities and their work of 2022/23. Mrs Gladwin reminded all that the Charities comprised of "The Sedgefield District Relief In Need Charity" which comprises of 5 co-opted Trustees and 9 nominated Trustees and is administered by Ms Gladwin and Mr Simon Nott. The charity provides relief in need either directly to individuals or to other charitable bodies providing the same sort of help within the area of benefit, an area which broadly covers the present civil parishes of Bishop Middleham, Bradbury, Cornforth, Fishburn, Mordon, Sedgefield and Trimdon. Help can be given by gifts of money, by the provision of goods, equipment, either outright or on loan, or by providing services. Supports may be offered in cases of hardship, infirmity, disability or other handicap. In light of the economic pressures facing all, there was an increase of 22% in the value of grants made in 2022 when compared with those made in the previous year. Increased support was provided for relief in need to individuals and families and organisations and through educational grants to individuals. 16 relief in need grants were provided to individuals at an average of £325 per grant. Grants were also provided to four organisations – The Sedgefield Pop In Club for rent and supervisor costs (note: all Club activities are funded through the Club's own fund raising efforts), Citizen's Advice County Durham for support for individuals facing hardship, Marie Curie Cancer Care for support to patients who have a cancer diagnosis and Bishop Middleham Parish Church to contribute towards the cost of a new boiler. Relief In Need also offers help to students pursuing courses beyond A level but who fall outside the remit of Sedgefield Educational Foundation, often as they are over 25 years or outside the Foundation's area of benefit. Four educational grants

were funded in 2022 with a total values of £2100, a 75% increase compared to the previous year. Ms Gladwin then went on to speak about the Sedgefield Education Foundation which comprises of 3 co-opted Trustees and 4 nominated trustees and is again administered by Ms Gladwin and Mr Simon Nott. The Trustees are empowered to make grants to young people under the age of 25 years residing in the present civil parishes of Bradbury, Fishburn, Mordon and Sedgefield. Grants are made to young people following courses leading to qualifications higher than A level or its equivalent with the value being graded according to the resources of the family. An award may be renewed each year. Grants to a total of £5650 were awarded in 2022 comprising of 9 applications, 4 for renewals and 5 for new grants. Students who received grants are studying for a wide range of courses from automotive engineering and teacher training to veterinary physiotherapy.

#### **6.4 Sedgefield Development Trust:**

Mr Roger Clubley introduced himself as the Chairman of the Sedgefield Development Trust and reported the last 12 months had been a time for some reflection, renewal, consolidation and welcoming of new members. Mr Clubley was pleased to report the Trust has had a very busy 12 months and is financially sound. The Trust has undertaken an in-depth governance review and Mr Clubley expressed his thanks to Ms Tracy Emery of the Durham Community Action for her invaluable assistance in this work. This work has been very timely as new members have joined the Trust and brought with them new ideas resulting in wide ranging discussions about the Trust's future and ways of working. This work is not yet complete but the Trust is well on the way to incorporating governance revisions into their documentation and policies. Renewal and vitality have been key for 2022/23. Mr Clubley reported that Mrs Gloria Wills, a long standing member of the Trust, has now retired and he thanked her for her time and work. Mr Clubley expressed his thanks to Mrs Sandy Clubley who has been extremely active and dedicated a huge amount of time to the Sedgefield News and is now stepping away from this work to enjoy her own time. Mr Clubley explained Ms Janette Savage has taken on the role of leading the editorial team of the Sedgefield News whilst Ms Tamzin Lafford has taken on responsibility for advertising in the Sedgefield News. Mr Clubley reported the Days In Days Out (DIDO) group is now back up and running well under the leadership of Mrs Brenda O'Brien. Mrs Dorothy Anderson continues to lead the ever popular Sew Easy group. Mrs Lynne Dentith has now taken on responsibility for the Farmers Market as Mr Clubley has withdrawn from this role. The Friendly Fixers Repair Café continues to grow in popularity and its sessions held on the first Saturday in the month at Fishburn are seeing all kinds of items being lovingly brought back to life. The Bees of Hardwick project continues albeit the hives have recently been relocated to a new home and Mr Clubley was pleased to note they are settling well. The

Woodland and Wildlife group continues to thrive and volunteers have now listed and identified all species at their site including some of which are on the red list for conservation. The Woodland and Wildlife group's area of land is due to be formally named soon after a consultation exercise with local residents. The Bike and Active Travel (BATS) group have been part of the collaboration working with Durham County Council, Sedgefield Town Council and the local AAP to progress a number of active travel matters in the Town including a public consultation which will help to influence future work priorities. Mr Clubley requested that if anyone is interested in volunteering in any of the Development Trust's projects to please speak to him after the meeting.

### **6.5 Durham Constabulary:**

Sgt Daniel Lake of Durham Constabulary's Local Police Team thanked the Town Council for the opportunity to be involved in this meeting. Sgt Lake reported the following crime statistics for 2022 in the local area. There had been 1523 calls for general police assistance and 431 crimes with a resolve rate of 16% which mirrors the national average. Within the Parish Sgt Lake confirmed there have been 8 residential burglaries, 9 commercial burglaries, 9 vehicle thefts, 11 thefts from vehicles, 16 instances of criminal damage to dwellings, 13 instances of criminal damage to vehicles, 3 arsons and 3 racially aggravated crimes. Sgt Lake reported that Durham Constabulary have been involved in a very successful rural policing scheme which linked with forces from Lancashire to South Yorkshire and up to Northumberland in relation to poaching. In terms of general policing issues in the Town there were issues at Hardwick Park during the light nights of 2022 and ongoing issues at Eden Drive. While the Hardwick Park issues stopped during the dark nights it is possible these could resume over the coming months. Work is ongoing in relation to Eden Drive. The Local Police Team are actively engaging with local schools and in addition to this funding is being sought for a "mini-police" project with younger aged school children relating to matters such as stranger danger. The Local Police Team are administering a £2500 Crime Prevention Fund whereby certain facilities can be provided to the most vulnerable by providing items that can make them feel safer in their homes. At a senior level in the Durham Constabulary the force is trying to obtain funding to improve CCTV across Sedgefield and Fishburn.

### **7 Any Other Business:**

The Chairman, Cllr Mel Carr, asked members of the public if they had any comments they wished to make or questions for the Town Council, County Cllr, Sedgefield Charities, Sedgefield Development Trust and/or the Police representative.

Mrs Julia Bowles said that she did not agree with the Town Council's views on its community engagement and reiterated the points that she had raised at the Annual Town Meeting one year

ago, i.e. could the Town Council hold quarterly open public meetings, and she said that lots of people felt this would be a good idea. Mrs Bowles said the Development Trust had said last year they would be happy to assist with such. Mrs Bowles noted there had been no mention of Section 106 monies which had been allocated to mitigate the effects on the Town of recent developments. Mrs Bowles said assurances had been given by the Planning Inspector and Local Planning Authority that the local community would be consulted. Mrs Bowles said she raises this at every meeting she attends and whilst she understands this is the responsibility of Durham County Council and the local AAP she wanted the Town Council to also be aware of her concerns. The AAP had told Mrs Bowles there would be a paper based consultation event as well as an in person event in the Parish Hall and she urged residents to attend. Cllr Allan Blakemore said this was misinformation and replied reminding all present that for many years the Town Council operated a system of Councillor surgeries whereby residents could meet with Councillors 30 minutes prior to the start of Council meetings to raise any issues they wished. These surgeries were well advertised in a number of ways and ran for some considerable time but were not well attended and the surgeries stopped. This system was re-introduced in more recent times and again not well attended as residents either go directly to the Town Council offices when they require assistance, as detailed in the Annual Report, or contact Town Councillors directly. Cllr Blakemore said that he is frequently approached by residents and this is the case for the majority of Cllrs who are all easily accessible. Cllr Blakemore said the Town Council is very proactive in seeking the views of the public and felt it was doing all that it could to do so. The Town Council has a range of ways in which it promotes its work and has spent considerable time over recent years strengthening and expanding such. The Town Council listens to the public and debates all issues raised by them and felt that comments to say it does not engage with the community was misinformation. Cllr Stephen Winter stated public participation is a standing agenda item at all Council meetings open to the public and members of the public do attend when they have issues and concerns to raise. He also said that such meetings are promoted extensively around the Town making it clear members of the public are welcome to attend and participate. Cllr Mel Carr said when there are contentious issues or matters of concern or enquiry that members of the public do attend Council meetings and speak up, if indeed they don't already go directly to the Town Council offices for assistance. Cllr Mel Carr said that people were aware of how they could get involved.

Mr Peter Hind said he had been back in the Town for a couple of years and was impressed by the information featuring in the Sedgefield News. He had also attended a recent meeting in Ceddesfeld Hall which had been "packed" as residents expressed their concerns regarding lack of visible policing in the Town and felt this was a key issue. Mr Hind had noted from that meeting that it was unknown if the Town's CCTV system was working and what it did and did not record. Sgt Daniel Lake confirmed the system in operation is run by Durham County



Council via its Chilton base and is a very old system. The issue of CCTV system suitability is one being discussed at a higher level across the County as it is made more complicated by coverage spanning different AAP boundaries and MP boundaries. The Police & Crime Commissioner, Ms Joy Allen, is trying hard to overcome this problem. Currently a new system is being tested in Newton Aycliffe and it is hoped that evidence of the success of this can be gathered then it may be spread across other areas of the County. Mr Hind then asked for clarification regarding when the Police Station in Sedgefield is staffed as he believed that if such times were promoted then many residents would call into the station to raise issues to get them resolved quickly. Sgt Lake explained general hours but this did depend upon incidents and where resources needed to be deployed but he confirmed that regardless of whether or not staff were on site there was a telephone which linked directly to Police Control 24/7.

County Cllr Chris Lines provided additional information regarding the Section 106 monies representing the community pot from the large scale development of Eden Drive. He stated that Sedgefield is an unusual example as the process employed by Durham County Council for allocating Section 106 monies rarely involved public consultation in County Durham. However, due to pressure from lots of sources in Sedgefield, including Mrs Bowles, residents and the Town Council as well as both County Cllrs, Durham County Council has made the decision to involve the community in making the decision on how such is spent. County Cllr Lines said that public consultation will happen soon and will be in the form of on-line consultation as well as an in person event within the Town which will feature some capital projects which have already submitted expressions of interest for funding.

The Chairman thanked the public for their participation.

## **8 Presentations:**

The presentations and various awards were during the second part of the Annual Town Meeting beginning at 7.54pm.

### **a) Presentation of Cheques from the Mayor's Charity:**

The Mayor, Cllr Dave Jasper, said he had enjoyed his term of office and was delighted to present cheques to the following charities and local groups: -

- Cancer Research UK
- Sedgefield Explorer Scouts
- Sedgefield Players
- SPYS
- Sedgefield In Bloom
- U3A

- Memory Café
- Sedgefield Youth Club
- Sedgefield Village Veterans
- Sedgefield Methodist Church
- St Edmund's Church Christmas Tree Festival
- St John Fisher RC Church
- 1<sup>st</sup> Sedgefield Guides
- DIDO
- Sew Easy
- Pop In Club

**b) Citizen of the Year 2022 (sponsored by Sedgefield Development Trust, Sedgefield Rotary Club and Sedgefield Town Council):**

Mr Mel Carr (Sedgefield Rotary) and Mr Roger Clubley (Sedgefield Development Trust) announced that Mrs Wendy Rowley was the Citizen of the Year 2022. Speeches were then made in recognition of her considerable services to Sedgefield over many years followed by a presentation of certificate and gifts presented by the Mayor Cllr Dave Jasper, Mr Mel Carr and Mr Roger Clubley.

The Chairman, Cllr Mel Carr thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 8.32pm.