

Minutes of Meeting of Norham Parish Council held on 21st November 2022

Those present were George Straughen (GS), Jim Greenwood (JG), Jim Blythe (JB) John Grahamslaw (JJG), Sheelagh Hume (SH), Dougie Watkin (DW) and Alison Murphy (AM). Also in attendance were Gary Hilton (GH), Head, and Janet Young and Rob Kelsey, two of the governors, of Norham First School; Cllr Colin Hardy (CH) from Northumberland County Council (NCC); and PC Curtis Ritchie, Community Police Officer.

11.22.1 To accept apologies for absence

None

11.22.2 To make any Declaration of Interest

None

11.22.3 To confirm Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of 26th September were confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

11.22.4 Matters arising from Minutes

i Cllr Glen Sanderson

It was agreed that since Cllr Sanderson's visit to the last parish council meeting there had been a noted increase in communication with various departments within Northumberland County Council. It was agreed that VLC would write to thank him again for his time and help.

It was then agreed to re-arrange the agenda, as follows, for the convenience of the visitors.

11.22.6 Norham School – Education in Berwick Partnership Consultation

GS confirmed that a fact-finding meeting had been recently held with CH to establish the current position regarding the ongoing NCC consultation in relation to the future of education within Berwick and surrounding areas. The parish council (NPC) and Norham Development Trust Ltd (NDT) were keen to do whatever could be done to help ensure the future of Norham School, as it was seen as vital for the life of village.

GH confirmed in brief that if the current three tier system was chosen, Norham First School would close- the numbers in the school would render it unsustainable financially and educationally. If the two-tier system was chosen then Norham school would survive as a primary school-the pupil numbers and the structure would be viable. GH confirmed that the recent OFSTED report for Norham indicated that the school 'required improvement'. This did not come as a huge surprise bearing in mind the wholesale changes that have been going on over the past year or so. He confirmed he has a background in working in schools with challenges to be met. Norham was now federated with Berwick St Marys. As such Norham would stand alone, but have the benefit of sharing management of

administration, school meals etc which could provide financial savings. There has also been a restructure in staffing. All these steps have already been taken so the school is already on a better footing. The Diocese has also been very supportive. The recent chimney damage also resulted in Norham pupils having to be bussed to Berwick for several weeks – which has in fact has a positive outcome in that the pupils of Norham and St Marys have already got to know each other, which can only be a positive outcome. In the long term, because essentially of the falling birth rate in north Northumberland, it is likely that more and more schools will have to be amalgamated so it is important to strengthen the schools financially and provide good educational outcomes for the pupils. DW also pointed out that it would be very favourable for Norham School rolls if there was more affordable rented housing in Norham.

Berwick is unusual in Northumberland and indeed in the rest of the country in still having a three-tier system. It is however a very emotive subject and those in Berwick currently in the three-tier system will fight hard to keep it. However, it is important to remember that this is a consultation not a referendum and the ultimate decision will be a political one, taken at cabinet level within NCC. GH recommended that a public meeting be hosted by Governors in the New year (the consultation runs till March) so that people in Norham can understand the situation fully and be encouraged to get involved. The community voice will however still be important, and it would be very helpful if both NPC and NDT made representations, as should any other community group. GS confirmed he feared that the main danger would be complacency.

11.22.4.x Community Police Report

PC Curtis Ritchie was thanked for attending. He confirmed he and his colleague Dan Perrie covered the rural areas covered by the Berwick team. It is a very low crime area generally, and anti-social behaviour is generally very low too. There was a lengthy discussion re E-Scooters which were the current hot topic in Norham. In brief he confirmed that it was completely illegal to ride them on the public road or pavement, unless as part of a government backed scheme. They are also dangerous if ridden in the dark. If caught someone of any age riding an e-scooter could be liable to prosecution and could have the scooter confiscated.

GS reported vandalism, namely damage to the bus shelter on the green-he has had a quote of £130 plus VAT to replace the window. This will be formally reported to the police, and in Newsround.

Re speeding agreed there was an issue in the road past Birch hill, especially between 8-9am. He will encourage the speed watch team to visit more often if they can.

ii Proposed Joint Neighbourhood Plan

GS and VLC had attended a long meeting to discuss issues that might or might not be included in a Plan. GS indicted his view that possible advantages seemed to be getting fewer, but that NPC should continue to be involved at least for the time being. Some discussion as regards the pros and cons of a settlement boundary.

iii Play Areas

JJG continues to inspect. There is damage to one of barriers which has been reported to NCC as having been caused by grass cutting machine. NCC have been disingenuous in their response.... but it was agreed that collars would be put round the barrier poles to protect them (the play equipment itself already has metal collars). In addition, three poles opposite village hall have been damaged by Shunters whilst reversing -awaiting contact from them

iv Public Conveniences

In reasonably good order. Agreed that they should continue to be cleaned three times per week.

v Northumberland LED Street lighting/Undergrounding of cables

Still no response from Gavin Barlow-VLC will chase and copy in CH/Glen Sanderson. Noted that Alncom were putting up more overhead cables but were legally entitled to.

vi Village Map

Agreed to proceed on basis of most recent draft.

vii New Speed sign/limits

New 30mph signs on Castle Bank now up!

Meeting had been held with Robin McCartney of NCC to discuss possible reduction of speed limit to 20mph throughout the village. NCC had huge financial restraints -in brief it could be done but NPC would have to pay for the process - probably c£10000. After discussion it was agreed that this would be earmarked as a special project. CH would look favourably on the project and the opportunity to put some of his funds towards it in due course.

viii Norham Development Trust

JG reported that a lot of support had been received from NCC Climate Team, and a great deal of progress had been made. There had however been a very recent setback which was still under consideration and of some commercial sensitivity he did not wish to give further details at this point.

ix Jubilee Field

Work on wall should start by end November. Agreed oak tree should now be planted, perhaps with photo opportunity. Seats now refurbished. Agreed that information board

should be completed with possible contribution to cost. GS/VLC will meet with Peter Blood to discuss changes to draft.

xi Stackyard Lane

On hold

xii Dog Poo

Agreed strongly worded notices will be put up on Jubilee Field and put in Newsround.

11.22.5 Tourism

GS confirmed useful meeting (again facilitated by Glen Sanderson) with Nigel Walsh and others from NCC to discuss diversion of tourists from coastal hotspots inland. Agreed to add Norham to Visit Northumberland website, Draft wording from 20202 to be updated and posted.

11.22.7 Sustrans – Declassification of National Cycle routes

Noted that Sustrans was in process of country wide review of National Cycle routes and as part of that stretches of NCR68 and 1 which went through Norham had been declassified. This was apparently because the stretches were not suitable for inexperienced cyclists (namely a 12-year-old) for a variety of non-specified reasons. CH is pursuing this via NCC routes as this goes entirely against NCC plans to be a cycle and walker friendly county.

11.22.8 Tweed Valley Railway Campaign

Postponed to next meeting

11.22.9 Paton & Co Donations

A total of £1250 has so far been donated to NPC by Paton & Co through their scheme whereby every time they successfully market and sell a house in Norham they donate £250 to NPC. So far, a donation has been made by NPC to Norham in Bloom. Still £1000 to spend. Various suggestion including a finger post on village green, or new bus shelter. Consideration to be given to this by all councillors – to be discussed and decided at next meeting.

FINANCE

11.22.10 To review Payments and Receipts since last meeting

Paid: 3rd Oct S Broadbent (WCs) £150; 2nd Nov S Broadbent (WCs) £150; 2nd Nov V Craig (clerk's salary) £600; 21st Nov RBL Poppy Appeal (wreath) £30

Received: 29th Sept NCC (path works) £1700; 6th Oct Paton & Co £500; 6th Oct HMRC (VAT reclaim) £340

11.22.11 To look at Bank balances in Current and Deposit Account

As at 21st November Current Account stands at £13246.75, and Business Account £743.56

11.22.12 To review system of Internal Control including Internal Auditor and Insurance cover/risk assessment

Agreed as per drafts circulated.

11.22.13 To agree appointment of Internal Auditor for 2023-2024

Agreed to ask Roseanne Bennet of Greaves West Ayre.

11.22.14 To set a Budget and Precept for 2023-2024

After discussion agreed that the precept should remain at the same level as last year namely £5500. Other costs, donations/grants should stay at the same level. Path works would need to be considered but NCC unlikely to reimburse at a higher level than currently. Agreed GS/JB/AM would meet in due course to discuss what path works were required. The Jubilee Field would remain a special project for the time being. In addition, the plan to reduce speed limits in the village to 20mpg would be designated a special project though awaiting more precise estimate from NCC as to the likely cost of this.

11.22.15 To look at Planning Application decisions

1 Castle Street - Granted

The Victoria Hotel - Granted

11.22.16 To look at state of Roads and Pavements

GS and others had meeting with NCC highways dept and discussed several issues most of which have now been resolved or will be resolved subject to budget. Discussion however re whose responsibility the short stretch of road between Stackyard Lane and West Street is, as it is not an adopted highway.

11.22.17 Dates of Meetings 2023

23rd January

20th March

15th May

17th July

18th September

20th November

11.22.18 General Correspondence

Any Other Business (For information only)

As regards war memorial agreed that the shrubs withing the fence should be removed. Am confirmed one of the planks on bridge over the Mill Burn by Jubilee Field needed replacing.

JJG noted paving slabs between Foreman's and Village shop now in a very bad state. GS confirmed highways are aware.

Date of next meeting:

23rd January 2023