

Minutes of Meeting of Norham Parish Council held on 18th September 2023

Those present were George Straughen (GS), Jim Greenwood (JG), Alison Murphy (AM), and Dougie Watkin (DW). Also in attendance were Cllr Colin Hardy (CH),

9.23.1 To accept apologies for absence.

Apologies accepted from Jim Blythe (JB)

9.23.2 To make any Declaration of Interest

None.

9.23.3 To confirm Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meetings of 17th July and 18th August were confirmed as accurate records and signed.

9.23.4 Matters arising from Minutes.

i Proposed Joint Neighbourhood Plan

Awaiting progress.

ii Public Conveniences

In a reasonable state though could probably benefit from a refresh when time allows.

iii Play Areas

GS will inspect play equipment in JG's absence. VLC to check Playdale guarantee on new play equipment.

iv Community Police Report

No crime to report though police are aware of ongoing petty vandalism. Discussion regarding recent arson attack on high stack of bales on way to Shoreswood. DW confirmed there is an ongoing police investigation. CH also confirmed there is a strong possibility that Berwick Police Station will be scaled down even further or closed. NCC will strongly oppose this and has invited the Police commissioner to come up to discuss the situation.

v Norham School

GS is waiting to hear from The Head who had suggested a meeting to discuss how to increase connection/communication between the school and the community. DW confirmed school numbers are up. He also suggested that at some point the parish council could perhaps hold one of its meetings in the school.

vi Undergrounding of cables

Nothing to report.

vii

Norham Development Trust

As regards the renewables project some councillors attended a meeting at the invitation of NDT in part to report on the meeting with local MP, at her request, to discuss the project -s he was very interested and supportive. It was also reported that NDT had been awarded £35000 from RCEF and have therefore secured the essential grid connection. JG had also prepared financial information to demonstrate the possible build-up of a community fund depending on different models – the outcomes were unpredictable and depended on a number of factors at any given time, including electricity prices, interest rates, cost of construction etc. AM confirmed she would not support the project as she was of the view there were better options available. Other councillors present supported the project.

Community support and support from the parish council were essential. CH confirmed that NCC would undoubtedly be supportive in view of their declaration of a climate emergency. It was noted with disappointment that Matt Baker had now left NCC, but NDT are still in contact with him and he has offered assistance should it be required.

NDT is also still in discussion with PCC regarding the future of 1 Tower Cottages, in the hope that it could become an affordable let rather than be sold and possibly become a holiday let. DW suggested that if matters made progress consideration should be given to the involvement of Bernicia to run/manage the let.

viii

Jubilee Field

GS will carry out the works to the wall in due course – DW offered his assistance in JJG's absence. GS had also been in contact with NCC Footpath Officer re the state of the bridge over the Mill Burn -NCC will supply timber for repairs to take place shortly.

ix

Parking in Castle Street

Whilst a design for chevron parking had still not been received from NCC, Robin McKenzie had confirmed that work on it had begun and he hoped to have information for the November meeting. Discussion generally re parking in Castle Street which caused traffic to slow down but no real congestion. It was suggested that more locals are using North Lane because of this. Residents should be encouraged to use their own parking spaces at the back of their properties where possible.

x

Proposed 20mph Speed limit

Robin McCartney had confirmed that 20mph would not be appropriate but had offered a number of possible traffic calming measures with a price list.

Agreed it was not just the question of vehicles keeping to the legal speed limit but the size of the vehicles not driving to conditions. After discussion agreed that a request would be made for a traffic survey at all access points to the village.

xi

Approach to Diocese re Land at Glebefield

GS reported that he had spoken to clerk of The Diocese of Newcastle property committee that day. He had confirmed that the committee had been impressed with the site and the ambitions for it but they had a great deal of matters to consider if any progress were to be made e.g. the church has to show value for money, and to liaise with NCC regarding the types of housing which would be appropriate. It may be a long process.

xii

Tourism

There had been a suggestion at the last meeting that the parish council were pursuing an increase of visitors to the village against the wishes and interests of the community. After discussion whilst it was agreed that the number of holiday houses may be increasing there was nothing that the parish council could do – regulation of this was a matter for central government/NCC. CH confirmed that NCC were considering a 100% increase in council tax for holiday homes. Also agreed however that visitors were needed to help keep local businesses alive and thriving. The only two industries successfully thriving in North Northumberland are agriculture and hospitality.

xiii

Lower Tweed Trail

There has been a complaint sent to Berwick Tourist Information regarding the state of the path near East Ord. NCC Footpaths officer has also recently walked it and will arrange for some remedial works to be carried out soon. It was noted that the path through the Castle Woods was also in a poor state and that hopefully once the Destination Tweed project takes off some funds will be forthcoming for more major improvements.

xiv

Sustrans – Declassification of National Cycle routes

VLC had requested as agreed that Sustrans double check their vehicle counts as reported at the last meeting, and the method of counting as they seemed inaccurate. No response as yet.

xv

Paton & Co Donations

GS had received a quotation from Ian Simpson for cladding of bus shelter. It was pointed out that if over £500 two quotations were required. GS will try to find someone else suitable to quote – though the intention was that the new shelter should match the style and workmanship of the board for the new map also created by Ian Simpson.

xvi

Dogs

NCC had confirmed that it would be for PCC to put up any signs in the graveyard re dogs. VLC will report this to PCC.

9.23.5

Trees on Castle Street

Complaints received from residents and businesses re the honeydew falling from the sycamore trees. After discussion agreed that GS will contact NCC Trees Officer to ask him to visit to discuss the options.

9.23.6

Review of Clerks Salary

After discussion outwith the presence of the clerk it was agreed to increase the salary to £13.50 per hour with immediate effect.

9.23.7

War Memorial

Agreed after discussion to remove the bushes which were now too big from their position and replace with smaller version.

9.23.8

Hire of Disabled Toilet For Norham Castle Event

Agreed that the Nixon Hire invoice for £143.88 for the hire of this for the event in Norham Castle would be paid from the Castle Account

FINANCE

9.23.9

To confirm completion of Audit

Confirmed that the Declaration of Exemption from Audit had been accepted and the accounts for 2022-2023 were therefore finalised

9.23.10

To review Payments and Receipts since last meeting

Payments from Current Account

1 Aug GWA Audit fee £228; S Broadbent WCs £174

9 Sept S Broadbent WCs £215.47

Receipts into Current Account

29 Aug NCC WCs £2000

8 Sept NCC Precept £2750

Payments from Business account

None

Receipts into Business Account

4 Sept interest £2

9.23.11

To look at Bank balances in Current and Deposit Accounts

Current Account £13767.35

Business Account £748.44

9.23.12

To look at Planning Applications and decisions

Masons Arms 16 West Street: Granted

14 Castle Street: Appealed

10 Pedwell Way: Granted

41 West Street: Granted

Re Salutation Caravan Park an objection on behalf of the parish council has been lodged as discussed at meeting on 18 August

9.23.13 To look at state of Roads and Pavements

VLC has used Fix My Street to report degraded road surface by the school. Complaints have been received re the building site in South Lane -GS will speak to owner.

9.23.14 General Correspondence

None

Any Other Business (For information only)

Date of next meeting: 20 November