

Minutes of Meeting of Norham Parish Council held on 24 March 2025

Those present were George Straughen (GS), Jim Greenwood (JG), Dougie Watkin (DW) Sheila Johnson (SJ) and Sheelagh Hume (SH). Several members of the public were also present, as was Cllr Colin Hardy (CH)

- 3.25.1 To accept apologies for absence
None
- 3.25.2 To make any Declaration of Interest
GS and JG both declared an interest in any items relating to Norham Development Trust (NDT), as directors of NDT, and to Norham Recreational Trust (NRT), which governs the Jubilee Field, as Trustees of NRT.
- 3.25.3 To confirm Minutes of previous meetings
The minutes of the meeting of 20 January were agreed and signed.
- 3.25.4 Matters arising from Minutes
 - i Proposed Joint Neighbourhood Plan
Nothing to report. Process is somewhat on hold pending Housing Needs Assessment being finalised, and outcome of May elections as a number of councillors who have been heavily involved over the last number of years have indicated they are standing down.
 - ii Public Conveniences
Now in good condition as GS has spent some considerable time over the last few weeks washing down and redecorating them inside and out. He was thanked for all his efforts which were very much above and beyond the call of duty. He confirmed that Norham was lucky still to have public toilets which were free and open 24/7 and generally without risk of vandalism.
 - iii Play Areas
The old slide has been refurbished and repainted by GS, who was thanked for all his efforts. A quote has recently been obtained from Sovereign Play Equipment for safety surfacing round the slide, which has been recommended by RoSPA. The area quoted for is bigger than necessary. After discussion agreed that a requote would be obtained but any decision would need to be made by the new parish council after the May elections.
 - iv Community Police Report
Report from Community Police Officer as follows:
Crimes and incidents – No crimes to report on this month. Incident wise the only thing of note was that last month there was a report of door-to-door sellers in the village. These were believed to be ex-prisoners who

were selling basic household products. Whilst this is not illegal such sellers do need to possess a council issued permit to be able to go selling door to door. In the future should they return to the village and go to any addresses then they should be asked to show their permit prior to anyone purchasing anything and if the occupant decides not to buy anything then they should politely decline and not feel pressured into a purchase.

Other matters – Third hand information received of reports of torches being shone into people's houses etc. The reason for this is unknown. Should this continue and anyone thinks it is suspicious then they should contact Police via 101, or 999 if they think an immediate response is required.

- v Underground of cables
Nothing to report
- vi Norham Development Trust
Little to report on Renewables project. Still awaiting information from GreenCat which had been requested at the Parish Meeting last November. Until that information is forthcoming there is no point having another community meeting.
Tower Cottages let a success. Newsround going from strength to strength. Website refresh still progressing.
- vii Jubilee Field
Boundary wall still needs pointing, which GS will deal with shortly.
- viii Traffic Calming
Awaiting suggestions from Robin McCartney at NCC, who has indicated he will have something for the meeting on 12th May. CH will chase.
- ix Land at Glebefield
As has previously been reported, a number of low-key preliminary discussions have taken place with the Diocese of Newcastle, which owns and controls the land, regarding the future of this site. It should be understood that neither Norham Church nor the parish council has any control as such over what happens but would like to try to at least influence the type of housing that might be built there. The Diocese has engaged an estate agent to establish what interest there might be from builders/developers – it would appear the site is too small for some, and too big for others. In addition, there are no longer government grants for Housing Associations to build developments such as the existing one at The Glebe. The Diocese has however suddenly indicated that they intend to put up a For Sale sign to see if this attracts any other interest.

Rev Rob Kelsey is of the view that the land should not be put up for sale unless the Diocese is certain that a high proportion of any development is for affordable housing.

There was then discussion as regards ARCH (the property company wholly owned by NCC) and the possibility that it might become involved. Any property built by them would be for rent and would never become holiday homes.

There was then discussion regarding the balance to be struck between the fact that as a charity the Diocese must be seen to be getting value for money, and the needs of the church and village. A meeting with representatives from the Diocese, Norham Church and the parish council is to be held shortly to discuss this further.

x **Lower Tweed Trail**
Awaiting developments from the Destination Tweed Project in the hope that this may have a positive effect. Philip Bradley, NCC Footpaths Officer, is well aware of the parish council's aspirations.

xi **Heat Pumps St Cuthberts Square**
Bernicia have carried out works to ground mount the heat pumps which were causing issues and it would appear that this has in the main solved the problems for residents. The resident who had originally raised the matter with the parish council has expressed his thanks.

xii **War Memorial**
Some work has been carried out to establish what can be done in response to the erosion of the wording in the memorial. Suggestions have been that the memorial could be steam cleaned and coated; a bronze panel could be made listing all the names and be installed on the back of the memorial, or on the ground next to it; or the original sandstone panel could be removed and a granite slab put in its place. Alternatively, a panel could be put in the church somewhere. This could take some years to resolve as the memorial is listed, and therefore planning permission would be required. It would also be expensive – the war memorial trust does not have funds, but it may be possible to obtain grants from elsewhere. Crowd funding might also be a possibility. In any event it was agreed that this was an issue that should be dealt with by the new parish council members.

xiii **Mobile Phone Signal**
NCC are investigating funding for the proposal by Vodafone that they put up what is in effect a booster to strengthen the mobile signal at least for their providers in the village. This would be a temporary

solution as the village really needs a new mast. CH confirmed that to strengthen their position the iNorthumberland team is asking residents all over the county to complete a survey on mobile signal issues. This is to be found at

https://haveyoursay.northumberland.gov.uk/information-services/mobile-coverage-in-northumberland/consultation/confirm_submit

xiv **Issues with Northumbrian Water/Sewage**
Awaiting a response to letter to Northumbrian Water re the sewage works. The residents who raised their issues with the parish council have also sent a formal letter of complaint. There is drop-in session being held by Northumbrian Water in Berwick on 1st April, 3.30-6.30pm Golden Square Community Hub.

xv **Resignation of Clerk**
Any new clerk will be appointed by the new parish council.

3.25.5 Emergency Contingency Planning
After discussion agreed that one of the lessons to be learned from the events of Storm Eowyn, when part of the village had a power cut for several days, in the main unbeknownst to the other parts of the village, is that Norham Craic is NOT an effective way to try to bring issues to the attention of the Parish Council, the village hall or the church. Agreed after discussion that important contact numbers will be included in this month's Newsround. It was also noted that 105 is the national emergency contact number for electricity suppliers, whichever supplier you are with, and that if you are elderly/vulnerable/ have medical issues which means that you are reliant on equipment powered by electricity you should register with your supplier. CH noted however that Norham had fared a great deal better at the time of Storm Eowyn than many other similar villages because of its strong community spirit and the fact that both pubs and the shops had also been of huge help. RK also noted his impression from Norham Craic was positive and that people had risen to the occasion well.

3.25.6 Register of Assets
Agreed that the register of assets was accurate, with one change to the whereabouts of the Tommy Perspex silhouettes which are now in the Council store by the WCs.

3.25.7 BT Phone Box

BT have again given notice that they wish to remove the phone box. On previous occasions the parish council has objected on the basis that until such time as the mobile signal is improved the landline in the phone box should be kept. It could be vital in particular in connection with the defibrillator. Agreed unanimously that a simpler objection would be made this time.

3.25.8 Flower Festival

Agreed after discussion that all councillors and Clerk would donate £10 from their personal funds for sponsorship for this festival.

3.25.9 Request by Parochial Church Council for increase in Graveyard Maintenance Grant

A request has been received from PCC Treasurer for a possible increase in the annual grant provided for maintenance of the graveyard. It was clarified that the old graveyard is maintained by NCC, and the new part by PCC. The current grant is £150 and has been for some time. Agreed after discussion that as this is normally paid out in May this matter should be discussed and agreed by the new council after the elections.

FINANCE

3.25.10 To review Payments and Receipts since last meeting

Current Account Payments:

28 Jan	N&DPCC	£750
1 Feb	S Broadbent	£206.88
2 March	S Broadbent	£150
3 March	G Straughen	£153.62
3 March	G Straughen	£56.20
11 March	G Straughen	£18.70
14 March	G Straughen	£37.28
21 March	G Straughen	£33.61

Current Account Receipts:

23 Jan	Paton & Co	£750
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Business Account Payments:

Nil

Business Account Receipts:

3 March	Interest	£2.18
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3.25.11 To look at Bank balances in Current and Deposit Account

As at 24 March 2025

Current Account: £8060.29

Business Account: £618.19

3.25.12 To look at Planning Application decisions

None

3.25.13 To look at state of Roads and Pavements

The footpath round the village hall will be upgraded this week, with the help of funding from Cllr Hardt's small schemes fund. He was thanked for his assistance with this. Thanks had also been received by the council for work done to the footpath from Birchill up to the Station junction. In fact that work had been done, and well done, by Go Fibre. Discussion re dropped kerbs -CH confirmed that white line painting is normally done in after winter so this work should be done soon.

3.25.14 General Correspondence

None

3.25.15 Parish Council Elections

Elections will be held on 1st May. All councillors present confirmed that they did not intend to stand. That means that is 6 or fewer people stand they will become councillors unopposed. If more than 6 stand there will be an election. If 3 or more stand they are quorate and can then co-opt others to fill vacancies. If fewer than 3 stand the council will be inquorate and cannot conduct any business. In those circumstances NCC would then arrange another election (probably in June) which would be paid for by the parish council. It was recognised that those standing down probably represented around 100 years of experience which may be hard to replace – but it was also recognised that new ideas/fresh blood could lead to improvement/change for the good of the village. CH confirmed that he represented about 12 parish councils in North Northumberland. In his experience Norham Parish Council has always been an example to the others in how to get things down, how to communicate with NCC officers effectively, and how to conduct themselves properly and represent their village. RK indicated that he had been vicar for nearly 15 years and that he tries to attend most parish council meetings in Norham and other villages. He has always been very impressed that Norham has always been more proactive rather than solely reactive. Much of its work is non -showy and below the radar and was generally literally a thankless task – if things go right nobody notices but if things go badly there is a lot of flak to be taken. He

expressed his gratitude for all the work that those present had done in some cases over many years. The councillors were also thanked by other members of the public present. For the record GS has been on the parish council for nearly 40 years, SH for c 25 years, DW c 20 years, JG 13 years, and SJ 1 year.

Any Other Business (For information only)

SH confirmed the Tractor Run on 22 March had been a great success. They had 40 tractors involved and raised £1350 - £450 Parkinson's Uk, £450 to Hospice North Northumberland and £450 to Jack berry Trust (a charity which cares for young jockeys).

DW reported that school numbers are doing well -now over 30 – which is a sign of the health of the village.

Watch this Space.....

Date of next meeting: 12th May 2025 (Annual Meeting)