

THE PARISH COUNCIL OF WHITTON AND TOSSON



Minutes of the PARISH COUNCIL MEETING 7.00 p.m. 15th May Thursday 2025 (following the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council) Parish Rooms, Rothbury

Present: Hilary Dunn (HD -Chair); Peter Henry (PH); Alan Tait (AT) Fran Tait (FT).
In attendance: Clerk.

The meeting opened at 7.06 p.m.

1. **Apologies for absence.** None.
2. **Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday 20th March 2025** were reviewed, unanimously approved as a true record and signed as such (Proposed PH, Seconded (FT), All in Favour).
3. **Matters arising from the minutes not included in the agenda.** None.
4. **Matters arising from the minutes not included in the agenda.** None.
5. **Police Report.** The Community Police had reported no issues that directly affected our parish. Northumbria Police had ceased to use Northumbria Connected to email crime and policing information directly to members. They intended to give updates on the Nextdoor social media system, but further information was awaited.
6. **Highways and Footways Report.** AT reported:

Highways:

- The pothole at the entrance to Tommy's Lonnen had been fixed just 2 days after the last PCC meeting.
- Two smaller potholes reported near Carterside Farm had been fixed.
- The potholes reported near Little Tosson had also been fixed.
- The passing places along Carterside Road needed attention. Andrew Turnbull had agreed to help with that work, but he later had surgery on his hip and was unable to help. This job was carried forward.

Footpaths:

- No issues with footpaths had been reported.

Verges:

- Verges on local roads had been much improved now that the wet weather had abated and the dry spell had dried them out.
- The vegetation was now growing strongly on the sharp corners and would soon need to be cut down (as last year) to improve visibility at junctions.
- The trees at the end of the bridge in Rothbury had now come into leaf and again causing a problem of visibility for vehicles turning into the Whitton Bank Road. The clerk was asked to write again to the County Council. **Action: Clerk**

Seats & Road Signs:

- The 2 new benches had been painted, and one had been installed in Whitton village. The other, to be placed on Whitton Bank to replace the old bench, needed a concrete base to be laid.

Drains

- As the weather had remained dry for some time it had not been necessary to check the drains and grips.

7. **Finance**

- i) Notification of receipts since the last meeting Approved.

08/04/2025	NCC	Precept 1st half	3375.00
06/05/2025	HMRC VTR	VAT repayment	32.65
		Total	3407.65

- ii) Approval of Clerk's salary, expenses, PAYE & NI and approval of Other Payments since the last meeting. Approved.

22/03/2025	Alan Tait (reimbursement)	Brewers: Sadolin & White spirit	58.98
22/03/2025	Rothbury DCC	Hire Parish Rooms	12.00
27/03/2025	HMRC PAYE	PAYE (Jan- Mar))	89.00
27/03/2025	G Rhodes	Pay & Expenses (Jan-Mar)	371.20
01/05/2025	NALC	Annual subs (68.14)/Website Fee (£75)	143.14
		Total	674.32

- iii) Requests for donations. None
 iv) VAT Return 2024-25 £ 32.65 repayment claimed and received.
 v) Bank Reconciliation to 13th May 2025. Approved.

Balance per e- bank statements at 13th May 2025		£
	Community account	4223.56
	Business Saver	2066.06

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			6289.62
Less unrepresented payments		0.00	
			0.00
Uncredited Deposits		0.00	
			0.00
Balance			6289.62
Balance per cash book			6289.62

- vi) Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for 2024/25
 - a. To consider and agree any actions arising from the report of the internal auditor. None.
 - b. To agree the 2024/25 Statement of Control. Agreed and signed.
 - c. To approve and sign Section 1 - Annual Governance Statement Approved and signed.
 - d. To approve Annual Accounts, Explanation of Variances, and Final End of Year Bank Reconciliation Agreed.
 - e. To approve and sign Section 2 - Accounting Statement Approved and signed.
 - f. To approve 2024/25 – Certificate of Exemption Approved and signed.
 - vii) To agree the period for the Exercise of Public Rights. Proposed dates 3rd June – 14th July 2025. Agreed.
 - viii) Annual Insurance. Awaiting information from NCC.
8. **Planning:** To consider any planning applications.

Reference	Address	Status	Parish Council Comments
4/04127/VARYCO	Rams Wood Whitton Northumberland Variation of Condition 2 (approved plans) pursuant to planning permission 23/03982/FUL (Creation of Single Detached Dwelling and Restoration of Historic Woodland Garden (self build)), in order to change the house design and layout and align previously approved plans and documents. Submission of details for conditions 7 (surface water drainage private land); 13 (Ground Gases); 20 (restoration of the garden); 24 (woodland management plan) and 26 (finished floor levels)	Application Registered	This application is for a historic site within the Whitton Conservation area. All developments within the site need to meet ecological regulations and be sympathetic to this conservation status. Comments on Variation Order: Whilst the Parish Council (the Council) has no objections to the amendments to this application, it has very serious concerns regarding the preservation/conservation of the existing flora and fauna within the site. The applicant has already carried out significant site clearance prior to the approval of the application. The Council is unsure as to whether this was permissible and has submitted its concerns to Planning Enforcement. This work seems to have been undertaken without any concern for existing wildlife within the site. The Council has received (and reported to Planning Enforcement) several complaints from members of the public who reported dead frogs and newts on the road adjacent to the site following the site clearance. It is noted that the contractor has advised that the existing pond be drained before further excavation and development. The Council is concerned that further loss of wildlife will occur without very clear and detailed planning conditions being imposed and adhered to. There appears to be no mention of preservation methods being employed within the application and its variations. Given the apparent total disregard for the protection of wildlife to date, the Council has no confidence that the applicant will adhere to future requirements for this.

9. **Community Flood Plan** including:
- i) Flood defence improvements at Ryehill. Due to the lack of rainfall, Alan Winlow (AW) had been watering the willow roughly twice a week since the spiling and planted the pollards were created. Malcolm Shaw, had kindly offered to take over watering and cutting the grass. The endurance willow elements in the spiling; both the weavers and the stakes were growing vigorously. The red pollards were also starting to come into leaf, even though the ground was much poorer.
 - ii) Flood Signage at Cow Haugh. Alan Winlow had met Carl Eungblut from the NCC on 6th May and agreed the location of the two drop-down sign sites either side of the Cow Haugh car park. The signs had now been installed.
10. **Rothbury JBC Report** HD reported that:
- The base for the shed was currently being laid.
 - Cemetery fees and charges were to be kept the same.
 - A new fee of £50 to scatter ashes was to be introduced.
11. **Coquetdale Cluster Report** AT/FT reported that there was very little to report from the last meeting. The police had not attended. The PC discussed the recent Northumbria Wildlife Trust Open Meeting where the sale of the Rothbury Estate was discussed. Their approach was very encouraging as they stated they wanted to work closely with the farming and local community over the next five years to evaluate the future of the estate.
12. **To consider amendments to Standing Orders following recent amendments to NALC’s Model Standing Orders**. NALC had recently updated the Model Standing Order to comply with new procurement legislation and ensure consistency with their Model Financial Regulations. and to better reflect Code of Conduct requirements. They had also changed the language in the document to gender-neutral terms to align with the policy and the Civility and Respect Project. It was agreed that Clerk would review the PCs Standing Orders and present them for consideration towards the end of the year. **Action: Clerk**
13. **To receive information on requirement for a new website platform with .gov address and .gov email address for the Clerk of each Council to comply with changes coming into effect on 1st April 2026**. To comply with the changes coming into effect on 1st April 2026, NALC were working with an IT company to provide a new website platform for each Council they presently supported. The website would have a .gov address . They were also investigating providing a .gov email address for each Parish Clerk. NALC were to provide a projected timeline and costs for the changes, to allow Councils to budget accordingly. The amount of work involved in the changes and the impact on the day to day running of the Council was yet unknown. Watching Brief was agreed. **Action: Clerk**
14. **Any Other Business**
- i) Clerk’s salary. FT asked if it would be possible to review the clerk’s salary due to the apparent significant increase in his workload. It was agreed that the Clerk monitor his workload and to review the hours (which could be backdated) when the annual pay award was announced. **Action: Clerk**
15. **To agree dates of Parish Council Meetings for the forthcoming year:** All Thursdays at 7. 30 p.m.
- 17 July 2025
 - 18 September 2025
 - 20th November 2025
 - 15th January 2026
 - 19th March 2026
 - 14th May 2026

Meeting closed at 8.10 p.m.

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