

Minutes of Meeting of Norham Parish Council held on 20th November 2023

Those present were George Straughen (GS), Jim Greenwood (JG), Alison Murphy (AM), Jim Blythe (JB) Sheelagh Hume (SH) and Dougie Watkin (DW). Also in attendance Rev Rob Kelsey.

11.23.1 To accept apologies for absence.

Apologies accepted from John Grahamslaw (JJG)

11.23.2 To make any Declaration of Interest

None.

11.23.3 To confirm Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meetings of 18th September were confirmed as accurate records and signed.

11.23.4 Matters arising from Minutes.

- i Proposed Joint Neighbourhood Plan
Awaiting date for next meeting.
- ii Public Conveniences
In a reasonable state. Some minor antisocial behaviour has been reported and will be discussed with community police officer.
- iii Play Areas
GS continuing to inspect play equipment in JJG's absence. Noted that dog poo bin on Ubbanford Green is damaged. VLC will ask NCC to replace it, failing which it was agreed a replacement should be purchased.
- iv Community Police Report
No crimes affecting the wider community reported. Agreed after discussion that DW would meet with community police officer to discuss the anti-social behaviour ongoing especially around WCs, and a fire-raising matter which DW wishes to discuss. It is hoped that the community police officer will be able to attend a parish council meeting soon.
- v Norham School
Parish councillors have been invited to visit the school shortly to look round it, and discuss its plans for the future, for the possible expansion of its buildings and for the way the school interacts with the wider community.
- vi Undergrounning of cables
Nothing to report.
- vii Norham Development Trust
GS confirmed NDT still in discussion with the Church/PCC regarding the future use to which 1 Tower Cottages might be put, the proposal being that it

become an affordable let, owned by Church but managed by NDT. The PCC are awaiting some professional advice on the matter.

As regards the renewables project JG confirmed that GreenCat were currently in the process of preparing/obtaining information required for the planning application before it can be lodged (hopefully in early 2024). Their fees, plus VAT, together with possible survey and legal fees, and the fee payable to NCC for the application itself would total in the region of £80000 (this on top of the £115000 already received by way of grant funding. So further sources of grant funding being pursued, especially the new government Community Energy Fund which is believed will open for applications in mid-November. These grants are all non-refundable should the application for any reason be refused so parish council funds have not been used. It was planned to have a drop-in session for Norham residents in the new year, and a questionnaire would be sent out. JB urged NDT to ensure all figures for expenses were clearly set out should they be asked for at any drop-in meeting. After discussion it was agreed that all councillors present were still in favour of the scheme except AM who was of the view that it is the wrong project in the wrong place, and that it would be preferable to have a mix of hydro power, fewer solar panels and either a bigger turbine or more turbines in a different place. It was explained that GreenCat had at the outset of the exercise been given a blank sheet, had considered all options for the area and had recommended this scheme – accordingly NDT were relying on their expert advice in relation to small community projects.

viii

Jubilee Field

GS has carried out some works to the wall– the rest will be completed in the spring, but the wall is now safe. Some materials had been purchased and GS would be reimbursed.

ix

Parking in Castle Street

A design for chevron parking has been received from NCC. After discussion it was agreed that VLC try to arrange a meeting with Richard McKenzie of NCC to discuss in particular the hatched areas.

x

Proposed 20mph Speed limit

Robin McCartney had confirmed traffic survey had not yet been carried out. He has suggested that since the problem is not just the speed but also the size especially of modern agricultural vehicles that timing is important. Agreed that the survey should be carried out from early/mid-August, and preferably be a visual survey to note the size of vehicles and their speed, as well

measuring speed and quantity of traffic by using lines across the road. JB also confirmed that Speed Watch volunteers had been out in Norham recently.

xi **Approach to Diocese re Land at Glebefield**
GS reported that he had spoken again to clerk of The Diocese of Newcastle property committee. The proposal to release land for affordable housing is still under consideration.

xii **Tourism**
It was unanimously agreed that the parish council's policy, to pursue sustainable tourism, was the right policy at this time. The village, and its businesses, would benefit from more of this kind of tourist e.g. walkers, cyclists, anglers, birdwatchers.

xiii **Lower Tweed Trail**
A meeting had been arranged for all interested councils but had to be postponed because of very bad weather, it is hoped to arrange a new date before Christmas. Some of the path definitely needs work.

xiv **Sustrans – Declassification of National Cycle routes**
Agreed after discussion that VLC should contact Sustrans to thank them for the new signage, but to ask that they put up more such signs along the routes.

xv **Paton & Co Donations**
A further £500 has been received from Patons who were to be thanked for their generosity. GS had received a quotation from Ian Simpson for cladding of bus shelter. A second slightly higher quote had been received. It was unanimously agreed to proceed with Ian Simpson. GS also indicated he was trying to find the supplier/manufacturer of the original bus shelter to more easily buy the right size, shape and thickness of Perspex to replace the existing panels.

xvi **Dogs**
Continuing reports of uncollected dog poo in various locations. Agreed another notice will be put in Newsround and on FB.

xvii **Trees on Castle Street**
NCC Tree Officer is being pursued by GS/VLC as there have been requests for work on trees in Castle Street and also on Cow Holme. AM confirmed that the Tree Officer had previously confirmed that the sycamore on Cow Holme required work and that that NCC would carry it out, but that was at least a year ago and had still not been done.

xviii **War Memorial**
As previously agreed, the bushes had been removed and replaced with smaller box plants. Michael Carr thanked for his assistance. GS to be

reimbursed for materials. Agreed that the memorial had looked very tidy for Remembrance Sunday. Payment to be made for the parish council wreath. After discussion agreed that two planters would be purchased to replace the battered no parking cones which are intended to protect the corner of the grass round the memorial.

11.23.5

Mobile Phone Signal

It was noted that BT (and other suppliers) in tended to do away with traditional land lines. This was a problem in a village like Norham where the mobile phone signal is non-existent in some areas. After discussion it was agreed that VLC should contact local MP and copy in the County Councillor to ask what proposals there were to improve the signal (it should be noted that the replacement 'digital home phones' proposed by BT do not work if there is a power cut so 999 calls cannot be made so a mobile signal is still important). JB also pointed out that it was also likely that the phone box would eventually be removed – he requested that a red phone box be purchased in its stead. JG also reported problems with Alncom in that despite original expectations Alncom had until very recently been saying that they could not and would not be supplying a line along Boathouse Lane. However, they had just indicated that this might now be possible by March next year. He will monitor the situation.

FINANCE

11.23.6

To review Payments and Receipts since last meeting

Payments from Current Account:

2 Oct S Broadbent £170.00

31 Oct D Gibson Tree and Forestry Services Ltd £2040

1 Nov V Craig £600

1 Nov S Broadbent £150

Receipts into Current Account:

16 Oct NCC £1700

6 Nov Paton & Co £500

7 Nov HMRC £497.67

Payments from Business account:

2 Oct John Nixon Ltd £143.88

Receipts into Business Account:

None

11.23.7

To look at Bank balances in Current and Deposit Accounts

Current Account £13504.03.

Business Account £604.56

11.23.8 **To review system of Internal Control including Internal Auditor and Insurance cover/risk assessment.**
After discussion these documents were agreed as per the attached

11.23.9 **To agree appointment of Internal Auditor for 2024-2025**
Agreed after discussion to ask Roseanne Bennet/Greaves West Ayres to act as internal auditor.

11.23.10 **To set a Budget and Precept for 2024-2025**
After discussion agreed that the Precept for 2024-25 would be £5800, a 5% increase on that for 2023-24 and therefore in line with inflation.
Other budget items were discussed and agreed as per the attached.

11.23.11 **To look at Planning Application decisions**
Building Plot land East of South Croft, South Lane – Refused
The Old Chapel, South Lane - Granted

11.23.12 **To look at state of Roads and Pavements**
There was discussion regarding a request that North Lane (and other roads that are left untreated) be included in the gritting programme. It would appear that it is very unlikely that local drivers could be used for this purpose. SH confirmed that NCC had an emergency number for contacting them when conditions were extreme so this should be publicised. In addition, NCC would be asked to ensure that all grit bins were kept well stocked so that able bodied residents could help.
JB also asked if NCC could be asked to put up more 'pass cyclists safely' signs similar to the one near Longridge.
DW expressed concern at the state of the stonework on the bridge. Agreed VLC should contact NCC on this and noting that the pillar on the right of the bridge seemed to be moving away from the wall.

11.23.14 **Proposed Dates of Meetings 2024**
Agreed as:
22nd January
25th March
20th May (Annual Meeting)
22nd July
23rd September
25th November

11.23.15 **General Correspondence**
None

Any Other Business (For information only)

Agreed that GS should source a Christmas tree. The Living Nativity would be held on 23rd December, and the lowly cattle shed would be erected on 16th December, when tree should also go up.

Date of next meeting: 22 January