Brinkburn and Hesleyhurst Parish Council

MINUTES OF MEETING

Meeting on:	**10th November 2026**
Meeting at:	Longframlington Memorial Hall
Meeting Time:	7.30 p.m.
Present:	Cllrs Mark Ahearne (MA), Lesley Hall (LH) – Chair, Mark Fenwick (MF), Jackie Scarpa (JS), Jamie Whicker (JW)
In attendance	Clerk.

The meeting opened at 7.34 p.m.

1) **Apologies for Absence.** Cllrs Steve Bray (SB), David Owen (DO).
2) **Table Urgent Business to be discussed in 20 below.** None received.
3) **Declaration of Interests.**
   a) Declaration from councillors of a personal interest they may have in any matters on the agenda. MA declared an interest in Item 9e and did not take part in discussion other than to clarify issues raised by members.
   b) Submission of Declaration of Pecuniary Interests. Those members who had not submitted their completed forms to the Clerk were asked to do so. **Action: Members**
4) **Gifts and Hospitality.** Declaration from councillors if any received. None.
5) **Police Update.** To receive a report from the Community Police**.** None received.
6) **County Councillors Report.** The Clerk reported that Councillor Glen Sanderson had submitted the following update:
   Councillor Sanderson (GS) advised that budget planning for Northumberland County Council for 2027 continues to be challenging. Following the initial rounds of budget discussions, a funding gap of approximately £12 million remains. He noted that securing funding for local government services continues to be increasingly difficult and expressed disappointment that financial constraints limit the ability to deliver further improvements across the County.
   GS reported that the recent Parish and Town Council Conference, attended by over 100 representatives, provided a valuable opportunity to discuss spending priorities and gather feedback from local councils. He further advised that he had recently completed a series of cluster meetings in Seaton Sluice, Prudhoe, Alnwick and Berwick, all of which were well attended and generated useful discussion.
   Councillor Sanderson stated that he remains committed to protecting frontline services whilst ensuring the Council continues to operate as efficiently as possible. He also expressed his appreciation for the work undertaken by Council staff across the wide range of services delivered by Northumberland County Council.
   An update was provided on the campaign to secure dualling of the A1. Councillor Sanderson advised that Northumberland County Council has produced additional evidence and data demonstrating that the economic benefits of the scheme are stronger than previously evidenced. He emphasised the importance of maintaining support for the campaign, particularly in light of ongoing road safety concerns and the number of fatalities that have occurred on the route.
   Councillor Sanderson concluded by encouraging councillors and residents to contact him should they require assistance with any Northumberland County Council service matters and stated that he would be pleased to provide support where possible.
   Resolved: That the report be received and noted.
7) **Minutes of Previous Meeting.** The minutes of **15th September 2026** were unanimously agreed as a true and accurate record (proposed by JS, seconded by MA; all in favour).
8) **Matters arising out of Minutes.** To receive updates on matters not appearing elsewhere on the agenda including:
   a) Wildlife Trust's successful purchase of the Rothbury Estate. The sale had been agreed, and the Wildlife Trust was now in the process of purchasing the land. At the last CC&B meeting it was agreed that Paul Barrett and/or Duncan Hutt be invited to its next meeting to discuss mutual biodiversity thinking and activity and to invite the Trust to become a member of the committee. Recognising that the Trust would be busy and working through its priorities, it had been agreed to allow a short time following the sale before approaching them.
   b) Quality of DAB reception in the Coquet Valley The Clerk reported that a response had been received from Northumberland County Council following concerns raised about poor DAB radio reception in the parish and wider Coquet Valley. The Council advised that responsibility for broadcasting infrastructure rests with Ofcom and commercial providers but suggested that affected communities undertake a reception survey to gather evidence of coverage issues.
      MA informed members that he had been investigating options to improve broadband connectivity for residents and highlighted Broadband for the Rural North (B4RN) as a useful source of information and support. Members noted that reliable broadband, Wi-Fi and DAB radio reception are important elements of community resilience and emergency planning.
      Members agreed that the issue was likely to affect a wider area and would benefit from discussion across the Coquetdale Cluster, potentially supported by a wider survey of local broadband and DAB reception.
      Resolved: That the issue of broadband and DAB radio reception in the Coquet Valley be placed on the agenda for the next Coquetdale Cluster meeting and that the discussion be widened to include all Cluster member councils. **Action: JS**
   c) Bus Stop Sign: New Houses B6344 Crossroads X14 Service. Still no news on this.
   d) Reinstatement of the bus shelter on the south side of the A697 at Weldon Bridge. This matter was deferred from last meeting. NCC had indicated that they would need to instigate traffic management if they were to do anything.
      Resolved: JW/Clerk to undertake a site visit to assess what needs to be done to access the shelter and to ascertain the extent of work needed. **Action: JW/Clerk**
   e) Hedging in the Playground. No invoice for hedge cutting has been received.

f) Sewage Treatment Arrangements Serving Embleton Terrace The Clerk reported that documentation had now been received from the Environment Agency regarding the sewage treatment arrangements serving Embleton Terrace and had been circulated electronically to Members in a zipped file prior to the meeting. *Re Embleton Sewage EA Documentation MA 20261110.txt.* It was noted that Mark Ahearne had undertaken a detailed review of the documentation and had circulated his observations to Members. His review highlighted a number of matters requiring further clarification, including evidence relating to a confirmed pollution incident affecting Forest Burn, apparent inconsistencies in descriptions of the treatment system contained within Environment Agency records, the effectiveness of remedial measures implemented by Northumbrian Water, and the need for reassurance regarding the adequacy of maintenance and monitoring arrangements, particularly during periods of low river flow. Members noted that the documentation included references to a substantiated pollution incident and subsequent regulatory action, together with a later inspection which reportedly identified no non-compliances. It was agreed that further clarification should be sought regarding the evidence supporting the conclusion that the issues identified had been satisfactorily resolved and that the existing treatment arrangements provide adequate protection for Forest Burn. The meeting further noted that Jamie Day of CRAG had prepared a draft application to the Northumbrian Water Catchment Partnership Opportunity Fund relating to the Embleton Terrace Sewage Treatment Plant. Members were invited to scrutinise the draft proposal and provide comments to inform its development. Consideration would also be given to identifying specific issues arising from the Environment Agency documentation for inclusion in the Parish Council's ongoing dialogue with Northumbrian Water.

Resolved:

- To note the receipt of the Environment Agency documentation and the analysis undertaken by Mark Ahearne.
- That Members review both the Environment Agency documentation and the draft Catchment Partnership application and provide comments to the Clerk. **Action: Members**
- Issues arising from Members' review be collated and raised with Northumbrian Water as part of the Parish Council's continuing engagement on the operation and environmental impact of the Embleton Terrace sewage treatment works. **Action: ESTWG/Clerk**
- The Embleton Terrace Sewage Treatment Working Group (ESTWG) be established to oversee matters relating to the Embleton Terrace Sewage Treatment Plant, including review of the Environment Agency documentation, development of the Catchment Partnership application, and liaison with relevant agencies and stakeholders. **ESTWG/Clerk**
- That the membership of the Working Group to comprise JS, JW and MA, together with SB, should he be willing to serve on the group.
- The Working Group report back to the Parish Council with any findings, recommendations or proposed actions arising from its work. **Action: ESTWG**

g) Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) Funding for sustainable energy for homes. Ongoing.

h) Cleaning the millennium stone. DO had met with Jen Teulon and agreed a procedure for cleaning the engraving on the stone.

i) Cycling Repair Stations

Mark Ahearne reported that SCRUB Cycles, Rothbury had agreed to undertake maintenance of the proposed cycle repair stations on a cost-recovery basis. He further advised that funding had been secured for the installation of three repair stations, although only two locations had previously been approved by the Parish Council. Members reviewed the proposed locations for the repair stations and reconsidered the most appropriate sites. The locations discussed were:

1. Crossroads at The Lee
2. Lordenshaw Car Park
3. The Gate Public House

Members recognised the potential benefits of locating stations at key access points used by residents and visitors, whilst acknowledging that permissions would be required from the relevant landowners or site operators before any final decision could be taken.

Resolved:

- To note the availability of funding for three cycle repair stations and the maintenance arrangements proposed with SCRUB Cycles, Rothbury.
- That further enquiries be undertaken regarding the suitability and availability of the proposed locations.
- That Jamie Whicker contact both The Gate Public House and the Northumberland Wildlife Trust to determine whether they would be willing to accommodate the installation of a cycle repair station on their respective sites. **Action: JW**

That the matter be brought back to a future meeting once the outcomes of those discussions are known. **Action: Clerk**

9) Finance

a) Notification of receipts since the last meeting None.

b) Approval of Clerk's salary, expenses, PAYE & NI and approval of Other Payments. Noted.

02/10/2026	Collie Dog Computers	Annual 5 Gb exchange Mailbox annual fee	72.00
02/10/2026	HMRC	PAYE	410.00
02/10/2026	Garth Rhodes	Salary & Expenses	692.86
01/10/2026	Go Cardless HugoFoxltd-FXM3XNE	Website Bronze Package	11.99
08/10/2026	Go Cardless HugoFoxltd-FXM3XNE	Email.gov domain fee	2.99
03/11/2026	Go Cardless HugoFoxltd-FXM3XNE	Website Bronze Package	11.99

08/11/2026	Go Cardless HugoFoxltd-FXM3XNE	Email.gov domain fee	2.99
		Total	**1204.82**

c) Requests for donations. None.

d) Bank Reconciliation at 9th November 2026. Noted.

		£
Balance per e-bank statements on 09/11/2026		8362.27
Less unpresented cheques	0.00	0.00
Uncredited Deposits	0.00	0.00
Balance		8362.27
Balance per cash book		8362.27

e) Proposal to Modernise the Joint Parish Councils' Email Services and the Management and Governance of Online Parish Council Records. The Clerk presented a report entitled Proposal Joint PCs Email Services & Online Records_20261029.docx outlining proposals to modernise the Councils' email services, document management and information governance arrangements through migration from existing Microsoft 365 Personal arrangements to a shared Microsoft 365 Business environment for Brinkburn & Hesleyhurst, Longframlington and Whitton & Tosson Parish Councils, whilst maintaining each Council's separate identity and governance arrangements. The report explained that the project was intended to strengthen cyber security, improve records management, enhance business continuity and provide a more sustainable long-term solution for the management of Council information.

Members considered the six implementation options presented and noted that **Option 5 – Secure, Governed & Automated** had been recommended as the preferred solution on the basis that it provided the strongest balance between cost, security, governance, business continuity and long-term sustainability.

During discussion, members sought clarification regarding the proposed involvement of a serving councillor in elements of the work and whether the arrangement complied with the required governance and decision-making requirements. Members were advised that any relevant interests had been declared and that the proposal had been brought before the Council for consideration through the normal decision-making process. Members further considered whether the proposal met the Council's technical, information governance and security requirements and noted the safeguards contained within the report, including retention controls, compliance measures and requirements for Council approval before any records disposal activities could take place.

Members discussed value for money and considered the costs of the proposed arrangements alongside the security, governance and business continuity benefits identified within the report. Members expressed the view that the proposal represented a cost-effective solution for delivering the required improvements to the Council's digital infrastructure and records management arrangements.

Members noted that the costs presented related to the migration and implementation options only and that the costs of the proposed Phase 2 records review, rationalisation and clean-up programme had not yet been determined. It was noted that further work was required to identify the detailed work packages, resource requirements and associated costs for Phase 2.

Resolved:

- That the proposal to migrate to a shared Microsoft 365 Business environment be approved in principle.
- That **Option 5 – Secure, Governed & Automated** be approved as the preferred implementation model.
- That the Council is satisfied that the proposal met the required technical, governance, security and business continuity objectives and represented good value for money.
- That Mark Ahearne be requested to provide a detailed breakdown of the proposed Phase 2 records rationalisation work, including scope, estimated effort and costs, for consideration and approval by the Council before that phase proceeds.

Action: Clerk

f) Agree projects and funding for next financial year to be put into budget. Members were asked to consider any items which should be included in the budget. There were no additional items tabled.

g) Precept 2027-28. The documentation and data required to enable the Clerk to prepare the budget and precept had been received.

10) Action Plan November - December To address regular duties, prioritise initiatives, allocate resources, and track progress towards important goals not appearing elsewhere on the agenda.

a) Discuss and formulate next year's action plan. No action required at this time.

b) Review Internal Procedures and Regulations scheduled for review. Ongoing. **Action: Clerk**

c) Playground – Review condition and record equipment. **Action: JW**

11) Planning

a) To note and discuss any planning issues since previous meeting. There were currently no requests for consultation that had not already been commented on.

Reference	Address	Status	Parish Council Comments
26/01927/LBC	The Barn 6 Brinkburn Lodge Cottages:	Application Registered	Support the application

b) NCC Consultation: Town and Parish Council Engagement – Housing .The Clerk reported that Northumberland County Council had launched a consultation with town and parish councils as part of the preparation of the new Local Plan. The consultation sought views on future housing development, including potential locations for growth, housing need, infrastructure requirements and design considerations. Members noted that the consultation was supported by the publication of the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA), which identified land that may have potential for future development. It was emphasised that the HELAA did not allocate sites for development nor determine where future housing growth would take place. The Council noted that no proposed housing development sites had been identified within the Parish. Whilst Northumberland County Council had indicated that some level of development may occur across all parishes during the plan period, Members considered that there were no specific sites within the Parish for the Council to comment upon at this stage.

Resolved:

- To note the consultation and the accompanying HELAA documentation.
- To note that no proposed housing development sites have been identified within the parish.
- That, in the absence of any proposed sites requiring consideration or comment, no further action be taken at this time.
- That the Parish Council continue to monitor future stages of the Local Plan process and consider any matters affecting the parish should they arise.

12) Highways.

a) Highways and Footpaths Report.

i) Condition of public right-of-way, Lee Siding south-westerly towards The Crook. Ongoing **Action: JS**

ii) Traffic Calming at Todstead and on Villa Lane. Members considered concerns raised regarding vehicle speeds through Todstead and the use of Villa Lane as a route for through traffic. LH reported that local residents remained concerned about speeding traffic on both the B6334 and Villa Lane. It was noted that three families with young children had recently moved into Todstead and that residents considered the current situation to present a significant road safety risk. Particular concern was expressed regarding the speed of vehicles travelling through the village and the increasing use of Villa Lane as a "rat run". Members discussed the matter and noted that concerns had been reported to Northumberland County Council Highways on a number of occasions. Members expressed disappointment that little progress had been made in addressing the issues or introducing measures to improve safety.

Resolved:

- To note the concerns raised by residents regarding speeding traffic at Todstead and the use of Villa Lane as a rat run.
- To request the support of the local County Councillor, Councillor Glen Sanderson, in pursuing the matter with Northumberland County Council Highways.
- That the Clerk write to Councillor Glen Sanderson seeking a site meeting to discuss the issues and potential traffic-calming measures.
- That the proposed site meeting be attended by LH and the Clerk, with outcomes and any recommendations to be reported back to a future meeting of the Parish Council. **Action: Clerk/LH**

b) Condition of the B6344 between Weldon Bridge and Brinkburn. LH reported that a section of the B6344 between Weldon Bridge and Brinkburn, which had recently been subject to extensive repair works, appeared to have subsided. Members expressed concern regarding the condition of the carriageway and agreed that the matter should be reported to Northumberland County Council Highways for investigation.

Resolved:

- That LH submit a report through the FixMyStreet reporting system regarding the apparent subsidence of the recently repaired section of road.
- That the Clerk follow up the matter directly with Northumberland County Council Highways by email, requesting that the defect be inspected and any necessary remedial action undertaken.
- That progress on the matter be monitored and reported back to a future meeting. **Action: Clerk/LH**

13) Wingates Wind Farm Community Fund.

a) Report. There had been n*o* meeting of the Windfarm since our last meeting.

b) Notice boards at Todsteads & Weldon Bridge application. JW had drafted an email to be sent to Highways to ask them for their guidance on siting the notice boards. **Action: JW**

14) Climate Change & Biodiversity Committee Report. The Council received the notes of the meeting of the Climate Change & Biodiversity Committee held on 27 October 2026 and noted the wide-ranging discussions on biodiversity enhancement, river health, water quality, invasive species, wastewater infrastructure and future environmental projects. The Committee also considered the potential implications of the proposed acquisition of the Rothbury Estate by the Wildlife Trust and opportunities for collaborative working. Members noted the Committee's view that closer partnership working with environmental organisations would be beneficial in developing a coordinated strategy for biodiversity, river management and nature recovery initiatives within the parish and the wider Coquet Valley.

Resolved:

- To note the report of the Climate Change & Biodiversity Committee.
- That Jamie Day (CRAG) and representatives of the Northumberland Wildlife Trust be invited to attend the next meeting of the Committee to assist in developing a joint strategy for biodiversity, river health and environmental initiatives.

- That discussions take place with the Northumberland Wildlife Trust regarding whether it would wish to nominate a representative to serve as a member of the Committee in order to strengthen collaborative working and partnership arrangements.

15) Emergency Planning including:

a) Flood Resilience: Flood Wardens Celebration Event. SB/Clerk attended the event which was very successful and included a very interesting visit to the Morpeth Flood Defences. The key concern for discussion was the withdrawal of the insurance cover for volunteer wardens by the Environment Agency. The Clerk was able to inform attendees of the insurance arrangements for volunteers through the Parish Councils Insurance schemes. The Clerk had collected a supply of flood warden vests, which were distributed at the event, if anyone required one.

b) Update of Longframlington Emergency Action Plan (LEAP). Representatives of Brinkburn and Hesleyhurst Parish Council attended a review meeting of the Longframlington Emergency Action Plan (LEAP) on 21st October 2026, led by Northumberland County Council's Civil Contingencies Officer. Particular discussion took place regarding arrangements for residents of Brinkburn and Hesleyhurst should they be unable to access Longframlington Memorial Hall during an emergency. It was agreed that the LEAP should be updated to include alternative emergency accommodation within the parish. Offers of emergency accommodation were confirmed at Todsteads Farm (Brinkburn) and 13 Embleton Terrace (Hesleyhurst), with these arrangements to be recorded within the Plan and reviewed annually. Other actions arising from the meeting included strengthening volunteer arrangements, improving emergency communications, reviewing emergency food supplies and enhancing community resilience measures.

c) Check and oil flood warning signs. **Action: JW**

d) Test emergency two- way radios. JW to set up test. **Action: JW/MF/JS/Clerk**

e) Defibrillator status. No issues.

16) Coquetdale Cluster Meeting.

a) Items to discuss from the latest Cluster Meeting. The Cluster group had not met since the last meeting.

b) Items for next Cluster Meeting Agenda. Noted that the Wildlife Trust was due to attend the next meeting.

i) Broadband and DAB radio reception in the Coquet Valley.

17) Cemetery & Joint Burial Committee Reports.

a) Longframlington Cemetery. Longframlington Parish Council had recently undertaken an inspection of the cemetery and was currently developing a Health and Safety Risk Assessment procedure. The inspection identified a number of concerns which were currently being addressed:

i) Uneven Footpath: Footpath to be power washed to remove algae. Quotations were being sought for resurfacing of the path.

ii) Undulations in the burial site.

iii) Mole eradication.

iv) Health & Safety and Directional signage was under production.

b) Rothbury JBC. JW reported that:

i) RJBC had purchased equipment to shore up graves during their excavation.

ii) The search for new land for burial sites in the parish had been unsuccessful. It had been agreed to suspend further investigation. This left a large reserve which had been allocated for land purchase. The JBC was to consider a reduction in the JBC precept request from parishes as a means to reduce this reserve. Parish Councils would be informed in sufficient time prior to their 2027-28 budget preparations.

18) Community Governance Review: Common Parish Grouping Arrangements — Brinkburn and Hesleyhurst Members considered Northumberland County Council's consultation on the emerging Local Plan, including the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA). It was noted that there are currently no sites identified for housing development within the parish and that the HELAA does not allocate land for development. Members were advised that even though no sites had been identified for consideration within the Parish, the Council could still submit comments to the consultation.

Resolved: That, as no development sites have been identified within the parish and the Parish Council has no HELAA submission to make, no further action be taken at this time.

19) Information Updates

a) Feedback from NCC Joint Town and Parish Council Conference and Cluster Meeting. The following were noted:

i) Northumberland Local Plan Update

ii) Environment & Transport Update (08/10/2026)

iii) Environment & Transport Who's Who

b) Consultation on School Admission Arrangements and Review of Free Transport on the Grounds of Religion or Belief. Noted.

c) Regenerating Rothbury Event Friday 6th November. The event discussed the setting up a Regeneration Trust for Rothbury which would channel ideas, energy and vision for Rothbury and surrounding area to secure up to £3 million Borderlands and other funding to enable regeneration.

d) NORA: AI-powered NALC assistant. Noted.

20) Any Urgent Business. None

21) Items for Next Meeting.

22) Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday 12th January 2027 at 7.30 p.m. in the Memorial Hall, Rothbury Road, Longframlington.

The meeting closed at 10.14 p.m.

Garth Rhodes, Clerk, 5 Wardle Terrace, Longframlington, NE65 8AB, Tel: 01665 570347, Email: Clerk@Brinkburn-pc.gov.uk