

The minutes of the Meeting of Acklington Parish Council held on 7.00pm on 7 November 2023 at Acklington Village Hall.

PRESENT: Cllrs L Craig, S George, S Ingleby, S Malone, T Mezza, J Newton (Chairman), S Thorpe.

Open Session

A member of the public attended to explain recent tree works on his property to the Parish Council. The tree in question was assessed by a tree surgeon as very rotten, and accordingly works were needed to ensure safety. The resident's initial plans were to remove the tree and to replant, but these were changed in light of the general preference to retain the tree, and instead a limb was removed to make the tree safe. There is no TPO in place on the tree and no planning restrictions. The resident feels responsible for public safety due to the position of the tree.

2023/51 Apologies for Absence

Cllr D Barras, County Cllr J Watson

2023/52 Disclosure of Interests

None.

2023/53 Minutes of Previous Meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 7 November 2023 were agreed as a true record.

2023/54 HMP Acklington Director

- a. The Director and Deputy Director of HMP Acklington attended the meeting at the Parish Council's invitation to discuss possible ways in which HMP Acklington can support and contribute to the community.
- b. HMP Acklington is in a radical period of change with ambitious plans for the next 12 months, including building community partnerships, with a focus on rehabilitation and reducing reoffending. HMP Acklington can provide community support by supplying planters and plants at low cost. The gardening department is very professional, with workers who are keen for social responsibility and rehabilitation.
- c. In normal times, workers would be released on temporary licence to carry out community projects but the current prison population has a reduced number of suitable candidates; this should change. The Director and Deputy Director stressed the high importance to prisoners of being able to contribute to the community by growing or making things, or by contributing to community work. These activities build skills and confidence and help to remove some of the fear prisoners may feel about returning to life outside the prison. The Parish Council noted that HMP Acklington had contributed to the Amble Sculpture Trail with prisoners working on this on temporary release for over a year. The Director and Deputy Director acknowledge that there is an important balance to strike between reassuring the community and helping prisoners to overcome their own anxiety about being in the community.
- d. HMP Acklington has a professional print shop staffed by prisoners and can help with the printing of, for example, flyers and posters.
- e. The engineering department has designed a new memorial for the RAF Airfield which will be installed by the roundabout in front of the prison gates.

2023/55 Report from County Councillor

County Cllr Watson sent his apologies for the meeting.

2023/56 Planning

- a. 22/02845/FUL – Land North of 18-14 Acklington Village and Former Acklington School. This has been refused by NCC Planning Officer and was not referred to committee, and appears to have been a result of applying policies rather than based on objections received.
- b. 23/3583/FUL – Land West of Barnhill Farm Cottages. The Parish Council noted that this development will replace buildings previously intended for agricultural use. The plans appear to show ducts leading to the cottages in the village but no consultation has taken place. The application cites “public benefit” but will mainly benefit housing belonging to the applicant. Initially, wood from the Storm Arwen windfalls can be used, but once this runs out material will need to be transported to the site which is not very environmentally friendly and puts strain on an already strained road infrastructure. The Parish Council questioned why this development needs to be located within the conservation area when there is a large estate on which it could be sited anywhere. The Parish Council will object.
- c. 23/01387/FUL and 23/01388/LBC – Land South of Magnolia Cottage, Guyzance Village. The Parish Council will object on the same basis as for the previous submission of this proposed development.
- d. 23/03608/VARYCO - Land West of Barnhill Farm Cottages. The proposed extension would bring the development right to the road edge. The Parish Council considered whether this would cause substantial harm to the conservation area.

2023/57 Noise from Campsite at Railway Inn

Noise is infrequent and is mainly an issue in the summer. The Parish Council will monitor the issue.

2023/58 Village Gateways

The Parish Council will meet with Highways to assess what is possible.

2023/59 Finance

- a. The financial summary, bank reconciliation and budget monitoring to 1 November 2023 was received. The Neighbourhood Plan Group is applying for a locality grant for the remainder of the available £10,000 funds (representing the unspent balance from the previous grant which had to be returned at year end under the terms of the grant). The Footpaths Working Group has received the grant from County Cllr Watson for the purchase of the new mower. The grass cutting by NCC has been an issue this year, which the Parish Council understands is due to bad weather and machine difficulties. The Clerk will ask if the cuttings can be removed from the football field.
- b. **RESOLVED** to authorise the following payments.

Supplier	Reason	Amount	Payment Ref
C Lewis/HMRC	Salary (Aug-Nov)	£431.32	23/24.24
Robson & Cowan	Footpaths Working Group – purchase of ride on mower	£5,785.20	23/24.21
NCC	Grass Cutting	£1,799.12	23/24.23
Acklington Village Hall	Room Hire for Neighbourhood Plan – paid with credit	£11.66	23/24.22
S Malone – reimbursement	Footpaths Working Group	£34.63	23/24.25
T Mezza – reimbursement	Footpaths Working Group	£12.45	23/24.26

c. The following receipts were noted.

Date	Payee	Reason	Amount
8/9/23	NCC	Precept	£4,880.00
11/9/23	Lloyds	Interest	£11.33
6/10/23	NCC	Members Small Schemes Grant – Footpaths Working Group	£4,475.00
9/10/23	Lloyds	Interest	£11.18
20/10/23	Groundworks UK	Neighbourhood Plan Locality Grant	£3,290.00

2023/60 Neighbourhood Plan

The Neighbourhood Plan is no further forward as the Steering Group is still awaiting maps from NCC to complete the document. These were provided in August after some delay but were incorrect and need to be re-done. The maps must be provided by NCC; it is not possible for the Steering Group to produce these. The Parish Council noted that there will be balance to pay to the consultant which is not covered by the Locality Grant.

2023/61 Verge Damage in front of Southfields

The verge has been repaired but is still in poor condition. This is an ongoing issue. A new grit bin has appeared. There is a dip in the road by the verge which fills with water. The Clerk will report this.

2023/62 Road Slip at Guyzance

The road at Guyzance has fallen away to the river, thought to be caused by heavy haulage and flooding. The road has been cordoned off but it is not clear what will be done to repair the damage. The passing places which were a requirement of planning permission are not useable, for example because they are being used to store logs. This should be referred to NCC Planning Enforcement and Highways. The Clerk will ask NCC what is planned for the repairs to the road.

2023/63 Footpaths Working Group Update

- a. The yellow topped poles along Footpath No 10 are having their intended effect, enabling contract tractor drivers to avoid ploughing out the footpath. Regular mowing by volunteers has further enhanced the walking experience.
- b. Cllr Mezza has led a team of volunteers to install safety rails at Acton Dene, with thanks to Mrs Ferguson for access, and to NCC and Guyzance Estate for donating the materials.
- c. Tons of debris have been cleared by volunteers from Footpath No 8 and NCC have collected this for disposal. There are still obstructions placed on the land which are blocking the footpath.
- d. The rear churchyard has been cleared of overgrowth by volunteers.
- e. The new ride on mower has arrived and will enable the routine mowing of 10.5km of footpaths.
- f. Next year the focus will be Rake Lane.
- g. The Parish Council noted that a volunteer's mower has been damaged while carrying out Footpaths Working Group activities.

RESOLVED to make a one-off payment of £100 towards the cost of repairs as a discretionary gesture of goodwill. This cannot be repeated due to budget constraints and volunteers concerned about using their own equipment should use that belonging to the Working Group.

2023/64 Tree Survey

The Parish Council considered how trees can be protected. The Parish Council noted that some trees do need pruning to keep them safe and/or healthy, which is the responsibility of the landowner. The Parish Council will see whether NCC can review the trees to assess if any should be protected by a TPO.

2023/65 Streetlights

No action required until construction completed on the non-working streetlight. The Parish Council noted there is no street-lighting between the station and the village along the road.

2023/66 Noticeboard

Mr Knox is ready to install the noticeboard after a period of reduced working for personal reasons.

2023/67 Bins

The Clerk is waiting to hear from NCC about the installation of the new bins.

2023/68 Airfields Memorial

Deferred until HMP Acklington have installed their memorial at the gates.

2023/69 Items for the Next Agenda

- - Road out of Broomhill, surface deteriorating
- - Budget
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2023/70 Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 9 January 2024 at 7:00pm, Acklington Village Hall.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 9:05pm.