

Draft Minutes of Meeting of Norham Parish Council held on 28 April 2025

Those present were George Straughen (GS), Jim Greenwood (JG), John Grahamslaw (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)

4.25.1 To accept apologies for absence

None

4.25.2 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. JG also declared an interest as a Trustee of NRT.

4.25.3 To confirm Minutes of previous meetings

The minutes of the meeting of 24 March were agreed and signed.

4.25.4 Matters arising from Minutes

i Parish Council Elections

The parish council would be inquorate after 5th May for an as yet undetermined period as no-one had put themselves forward. Accordingly, the council will be unable to conduct any business. This is unprecedented in Norham. NCC will make arrangements for a new election. If more than 7 people stand there will be an election on 12th June. If between 3 and 7 people stand they will become parish councillors unopposed. If fewer than 3 people stand the parish council will remain inquorate. If that happens NCC will make arrangement for a second election. If there is still no progress thereafter it is likely that NCC will take over the parish council's obligations.

ii Proposed Joint Neighbourhood Plan

Nothing to report. Process is somewhat on hold pending the outcome of elections, though the Housing Needs Assessment has been issued in draft and commented on.

- iii **Public Conveniences**
After discussion agreed, in order to keep the WCs open and in good condition whilst the council is inquorate, to pay the cleaner 6 months in advance.
- iv **Play Areas**
After discussion agreed to pay for plastic caps to cover nuts on equipment. Also agreed after discussion to proceed with 20 sq. metres grasslock round the old slide. GS will contact the providers to discuss and to ask for urgent invoice. Confirmed that RoSPA will be asked to proceed with their annual inspection in June and will be paid in advance. GS confirmed he will continue to inspect the play equipment weekly on an informal basis until a new council is in place.
- v **Community Police Report**
Report from Community Police Officer as follows:
No crimes of note since the last meeting and no incidents to advise on either. Certainly nothing which will impact on the vulnerability of anyone in the village. nothing to pass on from any of the surrounding areas which I think might cause concern either.
There was discussion regarding the difference between what appears in Community Police reports and the information which appears on the police crime website. Agreed VLC will contact PC Ritchie for further explanation, would like more specific information about recorded crimes.
- vi **Norham Development Trust**
Nothing to report on Renewables project. Still awaiting information from GreenCat. Once the information is received it will be passed on to the community.
- vii **Jubilee Field**
GS in process of pointing the wall. Agreed an invoice for materials would be paid.

viii **Land at Glebefield**
Nothing further to report except that a For Sale sign may appear at the site, as the Diocese wish to flush out any possible interest from developers. It was confirmed again that neither the parish council nor Norham Church has any control over what happens on the site.

ix **Mobile Phone Signal/BT Phone Box**
NCC have contacted BT in support of the parish council's objection to removal of the phone box. This has also been supported by the new local MP. A suggestion has also been received from the Civil Contingencies Officer, Northumberland Fire and Rescue, (referred by NCC) that StarLink, a satellite communication system might be useful in rural areas, and has offered a demonstration. Agreed that this interesting possibility should be left for any new council to pursue.

x **Issues with Northumbrian Water/Sewage**
Further contact had been made with Northumbrian Water including a meeting last week. They are clearly aware of the issues, they confirmed that Norham is high on their list of priorities because of the sensitive issue of discharges into the Tweed. The issues are caused by excess surface water entering the sewage system -they are looking for solutions as a matter of urgency.

xi **Resignation of Clerk**
VLC will leave post officially on 5th May. She will remain a point of contact as required. Any new clerk will be appointed by the new parish council.

FINANCE

4.25.5 To review Payments and Receipts since last meeting

Current Account Payments:

25 March	S Broadbent	£174.56
25 April	NALC	£154.49
25 April	S Broadbent	£223.74

Current Account Receipts:

8 April NCC (Precept) £3400

Business Account Payments:

Nil

Business Account Receipts:

Nil

4.25.6 To look at Bank balances in Current and Deposit Account

As at 28 April 2025

Current Account: £11285.73

Business Account: £618.19

4.25.7 Annual Governance and Accountability Return for 2024/2025

- i To consider and agree any actions arising from the report of the internal auditor
The internal audit report was received and considered. No actions required. Confirmed an invoice from GWA had been received and would be paid immediately.
- ii To consider and approve the draft annual accounts for 2024/2025
Considered and approved.
- iii To consider and approve the Annual Governance Statement
Considered and approved.
- iv To consider and approve the Accounting Statement and Explanation of Variances
Considered and approved.
- v To confirm and approve the Certification of Exemption
Confirmed and approved.
- vi To complete agree and sign relevant Annual Return sections
Completed agreed and signed accordingly.
- vii To accept Bank Reconciliation
Considered and accepted.

4.25.8 **To renew insurance**
After discussion agreed to proceed with renewal albeit one month in advance.

4.25.9 **To look at Planning Application decision**
Four Shepherd Huts, Land West Of Newbiggin Farm - Granted

4.25.10 **Footpaths, Roads and Pavements**
CH thanked for his help in using his small capital allowance to re-lay the path round the village hall. After lengthy discussion agreed, as regards cutting of paths, that D Gibson would be paid in advance for one cut – which would normally be done in June. As regards a second cut – usually in August – this could be paid for if a new parish council is in place, be carried out by NCC or not done at all.

Any Other Business (For information only)

DW thanked GS for his chairmanship over the years, and also confirmed that he was now to become a parish councillor in Ord. SJ indicated that her requests to have dropped kerb in South Lane painted still had not been completed. She will persevere. SJ queried the position as regards the 3 Trustees of NRT. GS conformed they were trustees because they were parish councillors but had agreed to continue in post as Trustees until a new parish council has been established, at which they would pass the responsibility on to new councillors. GS confirmed he had drafted a Chair's Report, but this should be presented at the first meeting of any new council, Councillors had seen the draft and were happy with it. CH commented that the parish council was to be commended as they had tied up as many loose ends as they could at this point, by way of damage control, when many would simply have walked away.

Date of next meeting: TBC

