



## THE PARISH COUNCIL OF WHITTON AND TOSSON

Minutes of the PARISH COUNCIL MEETING  
7.00 p.m. Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> January 2024  
Parish Rooms, Rothbury

**Present:** Hilary Dunn (HD -Chair), Peter Henry (PH), Fran Tait (FT), Alan Tait (AT),  
**In attendance:** PCSOs Peter Johnson (PJ) & Sophie Young, Clerk.

*The meeting opened at 7.00 p.m.*

**1. Apologies for absence.** None.

**2. Police Report.**

There were no issues with a community impact for the Parish. PJ was unaware of the recent theft of a generator at the Little Tosson telephone mast development and agreed to follow up on this. Residents were encouraged to sign up to Northumbria Connected and it was agreed to place the information and links to this on the Parish Webpage. Residents were also encouraged to report suspicious vehicles to the Police, particularly around farm properties. Issues within Rothbury had been dealt with by the Police. **Action: Clerk**

**3. Minutes of the Parish Council held on Thursday 23 November 2023** were reviewed, unanimously approved as a true record and signed as such (proposed FT, seconded (AT), All in Favour).

**4. Matters arising from the minutes not included in the agenda**

- i) Notice board on Whitton Bank. Ongoing. Work being held up by inclement weather
- ii) Leakage at top of Whitton Bank. Northumbria Water had sampled the water, and confirmed it was spring water. The leak being caused by an overflow from the trough due to the water table being so high this year. The water ran along a pipe and released further along the wall which then ran onto the road. AT agreed to speak to Highways regarding a solution. As a temporary measure it was agreed to install sand bags to divert the water into the gully. **Action: AT**

**5. Highways and Footways Report** AT reported that:

Highways Inspection:

- A meeting was held with Graham Bucknall to discuss road conditions and drains.
- I asked about the additional funding that the government has announced for fixing potholes. Graham said the NCC have been allocated £2.7M for this year, the same for next year and then £180M over the subsequent 8 years. Although this is an important funding increase there is a significant backlog of repairs needed across the county, so we must prioritise the issues we flag up to NCC.
- We discussed the general condition of Carterside Road, but most of the potholes are still too shallow to be “actionable”. However, the condition of the road between the Simonside Car Park and the Lordenshaw Car Park is atrocious, with the road edges being washed away by the floods and the tree felling adding damage from the large vehicles. There are also several very deep potholes which could cause damage to cars. Graham agreed to get these roads inspected and was confident that the Lordenshaw road could, at least, be temporarily improved by putting stone down in the worst areas. I said I would be happy to meet with the inspector to discuss the options. **Action: AT**
- I also told Graham that the road between Ryehill and Little Tosson was in poor condition with some large potholes which have been reported via the “Fix My Street” app.
- The significant pothole in Whitton village was highlighted and I was able to show him the photograph of the problem. Other residents of the area have also reported this pothole with one describing it as a “crater”!
- Graham confirmed that the drainage ditches at the side of the roads are the responsibility of the landowner, so I will try to recruit the help of local farmers to get these cleared. **Action: AT**
- Graham did agree that the drains and buried pipework were the responsibility of the NCC. I told him of the blocked drains at Ryehill and down the U4061 lane towards Weavers Cottage, and along Carterside Road east of Newtown. He agreed to get these inspected.
- I mentioned that NCC have mapped all the drains in this area and asked if it would be possible to get a copy of these maps. Alan Winlow pointed out to me that local knowledge of all the drains is being lost as there is no longer a team who regularly work on the drains. I also told him of our plans to try to get residents of each of the hamlets to help us report issues and possibly help with the clearance of problems.
- We also considered the possibility of local Parsh Councils keeping a supply of sand bags to help in times of severe flooding.
- I have contacted Alex MacLennan again about the potholes in the Simonside Car Park entrance and when he checked with his works team they said it was scheduled for the end of March or beginning of April, so it should be completed this spring.

Footpaths:

- I have reported the poor condition of the footpath signpost at the junction of Carterside Road and the U4016 using the “Fix My Street” app. As Tony Derbyshire is no longer responsible for footpaths.

Verges:

- The pothole on Carterside Road just east of the Newtown just past the Water Authority shed has still not been fixed.
- The culvert at the side of Carterside Road needs to be dug out further to prevent any debris blocking the pipes.
- The grips on the Lordenshaw Road and the drain gullies near Ryehill have been checked and cleared by Alan Winlow.

Seats & Road Signs:

- Alan Winlow has agreed to repair the seat on Lordenshaw Road, but it was agreed that it was in such poor condition that we should replace it with new. I will arrange to get one from Hulme Park Timber Yard and Peter agreed to pick it up in his van. **Action: AT/PH**
- Peter Henry has already agreed to replace the seat half way up Whitton Bank with a brand-new bench which will be sited once the weather improves.

Members approved the purchase of a new seat to replace the one on Lordenshaw Road and the purchase of hessian sand bags and sand. **Action: AT/Clerk**

**6. Finance**

- i) To accept the 2023/24 Local Government Services Pay Agreement. The National Pay Award had been agreed in November. The Clerk was currently on SCP 12 and the hourly rate had increased from £12.73 to £13.73. The rise and backdated pay was reflected in the salary payment below.
- ii) Notification of receipts since the last meeting. None
- iii) Approval of Clerk's salary, expenses, PAYE & NI and approval of Other Payments since the last meeting. Approved.

27/11/2023	Rothbury DCC	Parish Church Room Hire	12.00
27/11/2023	Great North Air Ambulance	Donation	100.00
30/12/2023	G Rhodes	Pay & Expenses (Jul-Sep))	317.12
30/12/2023	HMRC	PAYE (Jul-Sep)	75.40
		<b>Total</b>	<b>504.52</b>

- iv) Requests for donations. None.

- v) Bank Reconciliation. Approved.

Bank Reconciliation at 4th January 2024				£
Balance per bank statements at 30th November 2023				
	Community account			1877.15
	Business Saver			2021.24
				3898.39
Less unpresented cheques	30/12/2023	G Rhodes	317.12	
	30/12/2023	HMRC	75.40	
				392.52
Uncredited Deposits				0.00
Balance				3505.87
Balance per cash book				3505.87

- vi) To agree the Budget 2024/25 and to set the Annual Precept 2024/25. To keep the c/f at the end of 24/25 to £300 less than the b/f for current year, in order to maintain a sufficiency in our reserves for unexpected expenditure e.g. election costs, the Clerk recommended raising the precept by £805 to £5500. This would mean an 16.52% increase of £11.88 for households at Band D, their yearly contribution rising to £83.79, which is a monthly increase of just £0.99. Of this the JBC contribution made up 51% of the expected expenditure and admin costs 27%. The Budget and Precept was approved. **Action: Clerk**

**7. Planning:** To consider any planning applications.

- i) NCC Applications

Reference	Address	Type	Status
23/03950/FUL	Carterside Farmhouse Whitton	Application	Permitted
23/03982/FUL	Rams Wood The Pele Tower Whitton	Application	Registered

ii) Northumberland National Park Planning Applications:

<b>Application Reference Number</b>	23NP0123
<b>Application Valid Date</b>	13/12/2023
<b>Description</b>	Approval of details reserved by condition 5 (Soft Landscaping Management Plan) of planning permission 23NP0066). Proposed 25.0m high 5SH tower and associated ancillary works.
<b>Site Address</b>	Little Tosson Farm, Thropton, Morpeth, NE65 7NQ

Parish Council Comment: No objection. Request that any soil movements be undertaken when the weather is more clement to mitigate further disturbance to the land and landowner.

**8. Emergency Planning**

- i) To consider the draft letter to residents. Members agreed some minor amendments to the letter. It was agreed that once these were made a final draft would be circulated for comment by members and then the letter be circulated to residents by hand. Clerk to provide a list of resident addresses. FT/AT to pick up printed letters from Clerk and give out to members for distribution  
**Action: Clerk/FT/AT/All**
- ii) Outcomes of the meeting with NCC Highways regarding solutions to the flooding issues at Ryehill. This meeting was scheduled for later in the month.
- iii) Replacing overhead power lines in rural Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty with new underground cables. AW had forwarded a copy of Northern Powergrid's latest information email which stated that they had replaced more than 100km of overhead power lines in rural Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty with new underground networks to improve the landscape and network resilience. He had suggested that the PC write to NP with a request that they consider placing our power lines underground. Decision on this matter was deferred until the next meeting but that the Clerk investigate the current state of the Northern Power Emergency Resilience Grant Funding programme for the next meeting.  
**Action: Clerk**

**9. Rothbury JBC Report.** HD Reported:

Plans to build a store for grass cutting equipment and to purchase new grass cutting equipment were progressing.

**10. Coquetdale Cluster.** AT/FT reported:

- i) Police Report: There had been a spate of thefts of quad bikes around the area and graffiti in Rothbury Town. Advice was to keep vehicles and machinery secure.
- ii) Installation of Fibre Network. Go Fibre was the company who would supply the fibre network to Coquetdale with a variety of suppliers offering broadband services. There were 4000 premises in the area which would have fibre supplied to their doors. Copper supplies would not be switched off without a suitable fibre alternative being in place. Vulnerable people would still be able to keep their copper lines and EE would provide battery back-ups for those in need. A Telecare Systems Toolkit was available to Parish Councils and AT would make this available to members.  
**Action: AT**  
Monitors to be attached to bin lorries which would identify the strength of mobile signals across the area.
- iii) Climate Action Plan. A number of councillors in Coquetdale were now involved with the Coquetdale Green Network which was set up to support and inform climate change and biodiversity groups within the valley. There was an increasing concern about flooding in the valley. Cluster members were interested to hear about WTPC emergency planning proposals and Brinkburn & Hesleyhurst asked if they could have access to this information, once available. Members were very supportive of this request. Hepple were also experiencing problems with culvert and drain collapses. Members were concerned that our Emergency Planning representative on the Rothbury Emergency Planning Group had not received any recent information about the Rothbury Emergency Plan. Clerk was asked to follow up on this.  
**Action: Clerk.**

**11. NCC Town and Parish Council Spring Conference Thursday 14th March 2024.** NCC holding another Town and Parish Council Spring Conference on Thursday 14th March at County Hall. More details to be circulated.

**12. Any Other Business** None.

**13. Date for the next Parish Council Meeting:** **Thursday 21 March 2024 at 7.00 p.m. in the Parish Rooms, Rothbury**

*The meeting closed at 8.24 p.m.*

Garth Rhodes, Parish Clerk, 5 Wardle Terrace, Longframlington, NE65 8AB  
Tel: 01665 570347 Email: [whittonandtossontparishcouncil@gmail.com](mailto:whittonandtossontparishcouncil@gmail.com)