

Minutes of Meeting of Norham Parish Council held on 25 November 2024

Those present were George Straughen (GS), John Grahamslaw (JJG), Dougie Watkin (DW) Sheila Johnson (SJ) and Sheelagh Hume (SH). Several members of the public were also present.

11.2.24.1 To accept apologies for absence

Apologies accepted from Jim Greenwood (JG). It was also noted that Alison Murphy (AM) had tendered a letter of resignation that morning, with immediate effect.

11.2.24.2 To make any Declaration of Interest

GS declared an interest in any items relating to Norham Development Trust (NDT), as a director of NDT, and to Norham Recreational Trust (NRT), which governs the Jubilee Field, as a Trustee of NRT. GS also reported that a complaint had been made against him, by Ken Wharton and five other signatories, to the Monitoring Officer of Northumberland County Council about his behaviour at the parish council meeting on 22 July. That complaint has very recently been dismissed by the Monitoring Officer. In addition, GS reported that a further complaint had been made by AM against him, containing allegations of bullying of her, at the parish council meeting on 22 July and at the parish council meeting on 23 September. Those complaints have also very recently been dismissed by the Monitoring Officer.

DW also reported he had been the subject of the same complaints by Ken Wharton et al, and AM, in relation to the meetings of 22 July and of 23 September, which had also been dismissed against him. SJ confirmed she had also been the subject of the complaint by AM, in relation to the meeting on 23 September, which has also been dismissed.

JJG declared an interest as a Trustee of NRT.

11.2.24.3 To confirm Minutes of previous meetings

The minutes of the meeting of 23 September and 4th November were agreed and signed.

11.2.24.4 Matters arising from Minutes

i Proposed Joint Neighbourhood Plan

As per the minutes of 4th November, a very useful meeting was held with Sarah brannigan from NCC on local neighbourhood plans, their advantages and disadvantages and the procedures involved. The current process which has been ongoing for many years encompasses seven parishes. It would be possible for Norham to proceed alone eventually if it wished. GS suggested that for the time being Norham carry on with the current process.

ii Public Conveniences

These are in reasonable order. EDF has just installed a smart electricity meter.

iii Play Areas

GS confirmed these are being regularly inspected. JJG and GS to inspect surfacing.

iv Community Police Report

PC Curtis Ritchie has confirmed nothing to report.

v Undergrounding of cables

Nothing to report.

vi Norham Development Trust

A Parish Meeting had been held on 20 November, during which there had been lengthy and worthwhile discussions around the renewables project - this project is currently on hold to enable the community to receive more information and have more opportunity to discuss the advantages and disadvantages.

GS confirmed the first tenant of 1 Tower Cottages had moved in that day. The delay had been caused by some legal paperwork having to be finalised.

NDT continue to run Newsround, and the website which is undergoing a refresh.

vii Jubilee Field

GS the field was in reasonably good order. Some pointing on the wall still required.

viii Parking in Castle Street

GS confirmed the plans had been widely disseminated in the Newsround, and the residents affected had all been spoken to, and none had objected to the plans. Some comments from the general public had been received. After lengthy discussion a vote was held. GS and DW in favour. JJG, SH and SJ against. Accordingly, the changes will not proceed.

ix Traffic Calming

Agreed after discussion to arrange a meeting with Robin McCartney of NCC to discuss the possibilities.

x Land at Glebefield

No further meetings have yet been held yet, though GS has been invited to a Zoom meeting on 29th November with Diocese representatives.

xi Lower Tweed Trail

Some work required which has been reported to Footpaths Officer. He is also to provide an update on the Destination Tweed project when he has more information.

xii Paton & Co Donations

Noted that to date there is an unspent balance of £1200.04 of the generous donations made by Paton & Co.

xiii Local Transport Plan Programme 2025-26

As agreed at meeting on 23 September, and now confirmed to NCC Highways Department as

- a) Resurfacing of Boathouse Lane,
 - b) Resurfacing of Lane between West Street and St Cuthberts Square
 - c) Traffic calming measures throughout the village
- No feedback yet.

xiv Heat Pumps St Cuthberts Square

As agreed at the September meeting VLC had contacted Bernicia – Susan Scott the Area Housing Officer had not heard of any of the problems and is looking into the matter.

xv War Memorial

Jim Gibson has kindly supplied some detailed photographs of the affected stone lettering on the war memorial which is need of repair. VLC reported she was having some technical difficulties with the website but hoped these would be resolved shortly. JGG suggested contacting <https://www.plastic-surgeon.co.uk> as they would inspect and produce a report free of charge.

xvi Mobile Phone Signal

A number of residents have responded to the request for information regarding a lack of signal, the majority from Castle Street. This has been reported to NCC. Vodaphone have offered to come to the village to walk about to test signals and then to hold a drop-in session at the village hall. This will probably take place in January – awaiting confirmation of a date.

11.2.24.5 Parish Meeting

The parish meeting on 20 November was well attended lengthy and good discussions took place. AM and JGG be thanked for convening the meeting.

11.2.24.6 Path by Village Hall

The bad state of repair of the path by the village hall was noted during the village inspection with Graham Bracknell some time ago. After discussions it would seem that the costs of repair might

be borne by our local County Councillor's small scheme fund.
Agreed a formal request would be made.

11.2.24.7 Issues with Northumbrian Water/Sewage

Two residents have highlighted their own, and the village's problems with sewage. After heavy rain a great deal of sewage comes up drains into their garden, and the problem is exacerbated by large quantities surface water. The whole village has a combined system meaning that sewage and surface water go through the same drains. Norham sewage works is the worst offender locally for discharges of sewage into the Tweed because the treatment works cannot cope. Northumbrian Water have indicated that the sewage works in Norham are at over capacity and could not cope with any new development at Glebefield, nor even the current development at Galagate or the school. (JJG queried whether a clean water system would be more appropriate at the school.). DW pointed out Northumbrian Water have a legal duty to provide appropriate sewage works, and under NCC Local Plan they must adapt to cope with development, rather than development being adapted so that Northumbrian Water can cope. Whilst the cost to replace the whole sewage system in Norham would be very high that is for Northumbrian Water to deal with.

It was noted that neither SEPA nor Ofwat have yet been contacted/involved.

After discussion it was agreed that, notwithstanding that its powers were limited, the parish council would do what it could to help and would start with contacting NCC/Northumbrian Water.

FINANCE

11.2.24.8 To review Payments and Receipts since last meeting

Payments from Current Account:

3 Oct

S Broadbent

£216.68

WCs

7 Oct

NCC	£2757.95	By Election Costs
8 Oct		
J Short	£130	Grass cutting
5 Nov		
V Craig	£648	Clerk salary
S Broadbent	£166.62	WCs
14 Nov		
Royal British Legion	£30	Poppy Wreath

Receipts Into Current Account:

16 Oct

HMRC	£1071.20	VAT Reclaim
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Payments from Business Account:

Nil

Receipts into Business account

Nil

- 11.2.24.9 To look at Bank balances in Current and Deposit Accounts**
As at 25 November bank balances are
Current Account: £9071.72
Business Account: £613.71
- 11.2.24.10 To review system of Internal Control including Internal Auditor and Insurance cover/Risk assessment**
Reviewed and agreed.
- 11.2.24.11 To agree appointment of Internal Auditor for 2025-2026**
Agreed to ask Greaves West & Ayres to act.
- 11.2.24.12 To set a Budget and Precept for 2025-2026**
After lengthy discussion agreed that most expenditure would be similar next year and agreed that donations and support payments would stay at the same level. The one unpredictable variable was the cost of elections/by elections and the possibility of a parish poll. It was prudent to keep reserves to

cover those costs rather than go into the red. (It was confirmed that in theory if the parish council were to go into debt, a loan could be negotiated from NCC, but the costs of that would have to be recovered through the following years' precepts). After further discussion agreed the precept would be increased to £6800 (estimated at c£3 more per household).

- 11.2.24.13** **To look at Planning Application decisions**
25 Ubbanford - Installation of Solar Panels: Withdrawn
Land North West of Galagate - Variation of Materials: Refused
Land North West of Galagate -Street Naming Consultation:
Agreed – Galagate Barns
- 11.2.24.14** **To look at state of Roads and Pavements**
There was continuing concern regarding repeated flooding at
Norham Bridge. Graham Bracknell will be contacted. A grit bin
appears to have been removed from beside the school fence.
NCC will be contacted. JJG was still concerned regarding the
damage to railings at East Newbiggin which needs to be
rectified. GS and JJG will inspect.
- 11.2.24.15** **Dates of Meetings 2025**
Proposed dates agreed as
20th January
24th March
12th May (Annual Meeting)
21st July
22nd September
24th November
- 11.2.24.16** **General Correspondence**
Letter from Wag & Co North East Friendship Dogs

Any Other Business (For information only)

GS had attended an open meeting at the school, which was held to explain
how the school would progress from being a first school in a three-tier system

to a primary school in a two-tier system. It was interesting and the feeling was that the school was in safe hands. DW confirmed numbers were rising. The federation of the school with St Marys in Berwick meant there was more flexibility with staff. The Ofsted report had been 'Good', and the inspector had been complimentary.

GS will get new bulb for the Millenium Clock.

GS will approach Ladykirk Estates for a Christmas tree.

SJ asked that thanks be noted to the volunteers who decorate the village for Remembrance Sunday, and in advance to those who will do the same for Christmas. These things can sometimes be taken for granted.

Date of next meeting: 20 January 2025