

Minutes of the Meeting of Norham Parish Council held on 4th November 2024

Those present were George Straughen (GS), Jim Greenwood (JG), Dougie Watkin (DW) and Sheila Johnson (SJ).

1.11.24 To Accept Apologies for Absence

Apologies accepted from Alison Murphy.

2.11.24 To Make any Declaration of Interest

No declarations of interest were made except a general declaration from all that they were residents and property owners in the parish.

3.11.24 Training Session on Neighbourhood Plans Led by Sarah Brannigan, Neighbourhood Planning Team, Northumberland County Council.

GS welcomed Sarah Brannigan (SB) and thanked her for attending. He confirmed that the putting together of the proposed Norham and Islandshire Joint Neighbourhood Plan (NIJNP) had proved, for a variety of reasons, including a few changes in personnel, and Covid, a long and sometimes tortuous process. He hoped that this meeting with SB might help clarify a number of matters and help concentrate minds on the best way forward.

SB confirmed that the concept of neighbourhood plans had been introduced in 2011, to give local communities more input into planning in their parishes. It is a legal planning document that can be prepared by a community to demonstrate how they want land to be used and developed in their area - it is not however mandatory to have one

As things stand, without a neighbourhood plan, any planning decisions are taken by NCC based on their current Local Plan. Once the plan has been drafted, based on local opinion, and evidence gathered, a referendum is held (organised by NCC) asking for approval of the draft plan. A Neighbourhood Plan once approved by referendum has legal importance, can introduce policies of its own but must not contradict strategic policies in the County Council Local Plan, or National planning policies. NCC can provide support in the process including technical support and advice on providing evidence to support the plan e.g. with housing assessments. The process can be difficult, and its success very much depends on the time and energy that can be given to that process.

There was then a general discussion on the process, how to simplify it and how NCC can be involved and advise. SB confirmed it was her view that NIJNP had become bogged down and needed to consider taking a simpler approach.

The current Steering Group has representatives on it from Ord, Norham, Horncliffe, Ancroft, Shoreswood, Kyloe and Duddo. It was noted however that two of the members of the current Steering Group had indicated they intended to stand down from their respective parish councils at the next elections in May 2025. This may lead to a different approach thereafter.

SB confirmed it would be possible for Norham to 'go it alone' if that was considered easier, but it should also be possible with some will and energy to produce a NIJNP by keeping the various planning topics covered more streamlined. One issue which concerned Norham (and this only affected Norham) was the settlement boundary. SB will research whether it would be possible for this to be effectively removed in a neighbourhood plan. She is also happy to provide some online training specifically on this subject if that would be useful.