

THE PARISH COUNCIL OF WHITTON AND TOSSON

Minutes of the Virtual PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday 20th May 2021

Immediately after the Annual Parish Council Meeting at Zoom 847 5291 3529

Present: Hilary Dunn (HD -Chair), Peter Henry (PH), Fran Tait (FT), Alan Tait (AT)

In attendance: Alan Tait (AT- parish resident), Clerk: Garth Rhodes.

The meeting opened at 7.06 p.m.

1. **Apologies for absence:** None
2. **Minutes of the meeting held on the Thursday 22nd April 2021** were considered. (FT proposed, PH seconded, All in Favour). The minutes to be signed by the Chair.
3. **Matters arising from the minutes**
 - i) Actions following Temporary Traffic Regulation Order 120346154 C181 Carterside Road Newton: Northumbria Water (NW). Alan Winlow & AT had an on-site meeting with Stephen Thompson NW. Graham Bucknall, NCC Area Highways Manager (Northern), had been in attendance. They had discussed the issue of the problems at the Tosson Treatment Plant entrance. Stephen indicated that other means, other than HGV tankers, for delivering water to the site in emergencies were being considered. Stephen had agreed to make good the damage to the verge close to the site entrance. In addition, he was going to arrange for remedial works to be carried out under the JAH scheme for damage caused by vehicles parking on the soft verges close to the Forestry Commission car park entrance. Steve Thompson contacted AW on 19th May and confirmed a team would be on site at Tosson Treatment Plant to restore the verges there and along the road out towards Lordenshaws on Thursday 10th June.
 - ii) Coquet Riverbank Erosion. After a long delay and a great deal of effort on the part of Alan Winlow, the EA permit had eventually been received by Alan on 20th May. Work was to begin imminently, weather permitting.

New Matters

4. **Highways and Footways Report.** AT provided the following report:

Highways:

- There is a large pothole in Silverton Lane halfway between Whitton and the School.
- There are several potholes on the uphill side of Garleigh Bank on the Hexham road.
- The road surface on the Lordenshaw road where it crosses the Grain Syke/Lordenshaw road half a kilometre south of Lordenshaw is in a frightful state – first or second gear required to negotiate the badly damaged surface.
- There are several potholes in the Tosson to Lordenshaw road adjacent to the parish council seat.

Footpaths:

- No issues to report

Verges:

- The unofficial passing place close to the Tosson road junction has had kerbstones and a hard surface added. This caused the stone wall to collapse, but this was also rebuilt back on its foundations. A good quality job was completed by Highways.
- The verges of the Forestry Commission car park will be re-instated by Northumberland Water as part of their work on the verges near their reservoir on the Lordenshaw road.

Seats & Road Signs:

- The sign at the Lordenshaw road at the east end of Tosson have yet to be replaced with lettering on both sides.

Drains:

- All of the gullies and pipe entrances of note have been checked and are free from debris and obstructions.
- The gully at the side of Carterside road circa 50 yards west of the entrance to West Newtown Farm has been cleared and the pipe under the road towards the drainage channel cleared.
- The ditch parallel to the track from Weaver's Cottages to Wolves Haugh cleared by Andrew Turnbull recently was checked by a Northumberland Rivers Trust inspector. He remarked that this work is detrimental to the quality of the stream and the river downstream. He agreed to look into the possibility of piping this ditch so that no more clearing work would be needed. Awaiting his feedback.

5. Finance

- i) Notification of receipts since the last meeting. None
- ii) Approval of Clerk's salary, expenses, PAYE & NI and Other Payments since the last meeting. Approved

THE PARISH COUNCIL OF WHITTON AND TOSSON

20/05/2021	G Rhodes	Pay & Expenses (Apr-Jun)	100518	227.92
20/05/2021	HMRC	PAYE (Apr-Jun)	100519	53.00

- iii) Requests for donations. Power for the People – Local Electricity Bill. It was agreed not to make a donation.
- iv) Bank Reconciliation to Thursday 20th May 2021. Approved

Balance per bank statements				£
at 26th February 2021	Community account		1643.09	
	Business Saver		2007.02	
				3650.11
Less unpresented cheques	18/02/2021	Thropton PC	10.27	
	03/03/3021	Garth Rhodes	227.72	
	03/03/3021	HMRC	53.20	
	22/04/2021	NALC	134.46	
	20/05/2021	G Rhodes	227.92	
	20/05/2021	HMRC	53.00	
				706.57
Uncredited Deposits	07/04/2021	NCC	2125.00	
				2125.00
Balance				5068.54
Balance per cash book				5068.54

- v) Annual Governance and Accountability Return for 2020/21
 - a. To consider and agree any actions arising from the report of the internal auditor. The auditor had identified no issues with the PCs accounts and had signed off the AGAR Annual Internal Audit report.
 - b. To approve 2020/21 – Certificate of Exemption.
 - c. To approve Sections 1 - Annual Governance Statement.
 - d. To approve Section 2 - Accounting Statement; Explanation of Variances; Final End of Year Bank Reconciliation:

The Clerk presented documentation and provided an explanation for items 5 v) b, c, d with respect to the AGAR. At this point the item was suspended until the end of the meeting as the Council had received two emails of complaint from a member of the public which could have an impact on the agreement of the AGAR. This matter was to be discussed in camera at the end of the meeting, following which, discussion on items 5 v) b, c, d would resume.

- e. The period for the Exercise of Public Rights. As recommended by the External Auditor publication commencing on Monday 14 June 2021 and ending on Friday 23 July 2021 was approved. Notices to be posted on the webpage and noticeboard no later than Sunday 13th June 2021.
- 6. **Correspondence:** All key correspondence had been included within the agenda. Important correspondence had been circulated along with the Correspondence list.
- 7. **Planning:** To consider any planning applications and planning matters

Reference	Address	Type	Status	PC Comment
21/00894/FUL	Juniper Whitton NE65 7RL	Application	Permitted	No Comment

- 8. **Police Report.** This had not been requested due to having two meetings in the one evening.
- 9. **Rothbury JBC-** There had been no meetings since the last WTPC meeting. There were issues regarding RJBC which would be discussed later within the in-camera item.
- 10. **Northumberland Respect Campaign** Details of the campaign the aim of which was to encourage visitors to Northumberland to respect the environment and conduct themselves in a safe manner was shared with members.
- 11. **Great British Spring Clean 2021** The PC had been contacted by Keep Britain Tidy requesting our involvement in the Great British Spring clean. Details of the campaign were discussed. It was agreed that the PC would not formally take part in the campaign this year, as it was already engaged in a number of other community improvement projects and it was agreed that there was insufficient capacity to take on another project at this time. Clerk to inform the organisers of this.

Action: Clerk

THE PARISH COUNCIL OF WHITTON AND TOSSON

12. Any Other Business

- a. NALC County Committee Vacancy. No members wished to be nominated.
- b. Invitation to Coquetdale Lunch Club Summer Garden Party 15th July 2021 No members wished to attend.
Action: Clerk
- c. Proposal with respect to the decisions made at the Annual Parish Council Meeting 20th May 2021 and Parish Council Meeting 20th May 2021. The Chair tabled the following proposal: In order to avoid any doubt all the decisions made at the Annual Meeting of WTPC and the WTPC meeting held on 20th May 2021 to be ratified at the next full meeting of the WTPC Council. The proposal was seconded by FT. All in Favour.

13. **Proposal under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960**. The Chair tabled the following proposal: To propose a resolution under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 to consider a matter, that has come to our attention within the last 48 hrs which may result in litigation against the parish council and for this reason to be held in-camera, where the public and press will not be allowed to observe the procedure or process. The proposal was seconded by PH. All in Favour.

14. **Email Complaints received from a member of the Public**. The Council then discussed two emails which had been received by the Clerk, from one member of the public, within 48 hrs of the meeting, which addressed three areas of complaint:

- i. Conduct of meetings 1. The Council was challenged that it had acted unlawfully in conducting its Annual Parish Council Meeting and Parish Council meeting virtually in contravention of the Law and that this matter should be made known to the internal auditor and reported within the AGAR. The Council agreed that it had at the time of taking the decision to hold the meeting on-line, undertaken extensive consultation, risk analysis and had acted upon the advice of NALC. In addition, it had unanimously agreed in order to avoid any doubt that all the decisions made at the Annual Meeting of WTPC and the WTPC meeting held on 20th May 2021 would be ratified at the next full meeting of the WTPC Council. The Council was of the opinion that there was no further case to answer on this matter.
- ii. Conduct of meetings 2. The Council was further challenged that resolutions taken earlier in the year were not in the opinion of the complainant put to vote by the Council in accordance with the 1972 Local Government Act and that again this should be reported to the internal and external auditor. The Council unanimously agreed that it had already fully addressed this matter by ratifying all decisions taken at the meeting in question at the subsequent meeting of the full council. The Council was of the opinion that there was no further case to answer on this matter.
- iii. The Rothbury Joint Burial Committee. The complainant made numerous allegations about the conduct of the RJBC and Rothbury Parish Council with respect to the financial management of the Cemetery and the possible proposed dissolution of the RJBC and that as the RJBC was a committee of the WTPC that these matters be brought to the attention of the WTPC Internal Auditor and External Auditor through the AGAR. The Council were unanimously agreed that these were indeed just allegations at this point in time and WTPC were not in a position to make any judgement on these matters without further investigation. All members agreed that the matters that were brought to their attention did not impact upon the sound management of its own finances but that these issues should be highlighted within the AGAR Explanation of Variances. It also agreed that the matters raised by the complainant regarding the RJBC were sufficient to warrant further discussion and that this matter would be included in the agenda for the next full meeting of the council to be held on 22nd July 2021.

It was noted that the name given on the emails of complaint does not appear on the electoral role of the Parish of Whitton and Tosson and so may not be eligible to make a complaint to the internal or external auditor.

Action: HD/Clerk

Resumption of Item 5 v)

- b. To approve 2020/21 – Certificate of Exemption. Approved.
- c. To approve Sections 1 - Annual Governance Statement. Approved.
- d. To approve Section 2 - Accounting Statement; Explanation of Variances; Final End of Year Bank Reconciliation. Approved.

15. **Date of and Venue for next meetings: Thursday 22nd July at 7.00 p.m. Venue to be confirmed.**

The meeting closed at 8.15 p.m.

Garth Rhodes, Parish Clerk,

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