

Brinkburn and Hesleyhurst Parish Council

MINUTES OF MEETING

Meeting on: 14th November 2023
Meeting at: Longframlington Memorial Hall
Meeting Time: 7.30 p.m. following the Annual Parish Council Meeting
Present: Cllrs: Steven Bray (SB); Mark Fenwick (MF), David Owen - Chair (DO), Vincent Milburn (VM), Jackie Scarpa (JS) Jamie Whicker (JW)
In attendance: Clerk: Garth Rhodes.

The meeting opened at 7.32 p.m.

1. **Apologies for Absence.** Lesley Hall (LH),
2. **Minutes of Previous Meeting** - The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 12th September 2023 were reviewed, unanimously approved as a true record and signed as such. (Proposed JS, Seconded VM, All in Favour).
3. **Matters arising out of Minutes.** None.
4. **Police Update** There were no crimes that had been reported that would provide any obvious concerns to the community in the Brinkburn & Hesleyhurst area between 20/09/23 – 11/11/23.
5. **Finance**

- a. Notification of receipts since the last meeting Approved,

22/09/2023	CAN (for WWCF)	WWCF 108- Initial Grant Payment	868.00
22/09/2023	CAN (for WWCF)	WWCF 109- Initial Grant Payment	440.00
22/09/2023	CAN (for WWCF)	WWCF 107- Initial Grant Payment	3034.00
22/09/2023	CAN (for WWCF)	WWCF 102 - Final Payment	46.30
19/10/2023	CAN (for WWCF)	WWCF 101 - Final Payment	114.00
		Total	4502.30

- b. Approval of Clerk's salary, expenses, PAYE & NI and approval of Other Payments since the last meeting. Approved.

13/09/2023	Garth Rhodes reimbursement	Kingfisher Direct Ltd - Dog Bin	175.02
18/09/2023	Rothbury JBC	JBC payment second half	267.50
01/10/2023	Roger Powell reimbursement	Bird box materials	326.83
01/10/2023	Garth Rhodes	Salary & Expenses (Jul-Sep)	553.91
01/10/2023	HMRC	PAYE (Jul-Sep)	134.80
05/10/2023	Julie Ayre	Strimming wildflowers Playing Field	20.00
09/10/2023	B & K Wharf Farming	Supply of Meadow seed mix	60.00
13/10/2023	B K Barker	Production & materials logo design	25.00
15/10/2023	Jackie Scarpa Reimbursement	Climate Change Action Event	20.98
23/10/2023	Colliedog computers	UPGRADE Mailbox server annual fee	28.00
23/10/2023	Roger Powell reimbursement	Bird box construction	625.00
06/11/2023	Longfram Memorial Hall	CC&B Meeting 18/10/2023	12.00
09/11/2023	NCC 018647272037	PC Insurance 2023/24	239.24
09/11/2023	Julie Ayre	Mowing Aug - Oct	315.00
		Total	2803.28

- c. Requests for donations: Great North Air Ambulance. To be considered with any other requests at the end of the financial year.
 d. Bank Reconciliation to 11th November 2023. Approved.

Balance per bank statements at 1st November 2023				<u>7803.82</u>
Less unrepresented payments	06/11/2023	Longfram Mem Hall	12.00	
	09/11/2023	NCC 018647272037	239.24	
	09/11/2023	Julie Ayre	315.00	
				<u>-566.24</u>
Uncredited Deposits -				<u>0.00</u>
Balance per cash book				7237.58
Balance per cash book				7237.58

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6. **To review the effectiveness of mechanisms by which the Council communicates with its residents.** To continue discussions from last meeting where it had been recognised that other than the Parish Council Webpage, there was no clear agreed process to communicate with residents and that recently there had been a number of important issues where the Council needed to communicate and consult. Several people had asked how communication between the Council and residents could be improved. The members had suggested possible ways which included a newsletter, use of social media and letters to residents. It was acknowledged that the main priority to address was the urgent need to consult its residents on the recommendations of the Boundary Commission to move both Brinkburn and Hesleyhurst into the Longhorsley Division and to encourage everyone to sign the BHPC petition. It was agreed that a letter be sent to all residents explaining the need for them to support the petition opposing the proposed boundary changes DO to draft the letter. Clerk to ascertain the date the Order is to be discussed in Parliament and provide list of addresses of residents. Members to share the responsibility of delivering the letters

Action: DO/Clerk/All

It was also agreed that:

- the Community Page on the Parish Webpage should be populated with community information. DO agreed to take responsibility for this with the support of the Clerk. Members were asked to provide relevant material for the Community Page. **Action: DO/Clerk/All**
- MF to provide a more attractive photo for the Parish Website **Action: MF**
- A regular Parish Council report be published in Over the Bridges. Clerk to make a request to the editor **Action: Clerk**
- This matter to be further discussed at the next meeting.

7. Climate Change & Biodiversity

I. To receive reports and approve actions agreed from recent meetings of the Climate Change & Biodiversity Committee:

Update on current applications to Wingates Windfarm Community Fund (WWCF). The following funded projects were now complete. Final reports had been submitted to, and final funding received from WWCF

- WWCF 102 - Playing field fence and barrier
- WWCF 101 - Information Event

The following projects recently approved had recently been approved:

- WWCF 107 Playing field pilot hedge laying project £4053.00
- WWCF 108 Nest Box Scheme £1158.00
- WWCF 109 Geographic biodiversity database £585.98

II. Issues concerning Purchasing, Invoicing and Tendering. There had been a numbering of teething problems that had come to light with respect to the finances of the projects. The Clerk had briefed the Committee on financial regulations:

- VAT should not be included in grant applications as BHPC reclaim VAT from HM Revenue.
- Orders/Tenders. The committee must be very careful in the way it agreed and awarded work, and must adhere to the regulations set down in the Brinkburn & Hesleyhurst Parish Council's Standing Orders, as all money was considered to be public once it came into the PC account. All orders and contracts which required quotations would need approval by the Council. Order arrangements to be discussed with Clerk prior to purchase. Orders for values from £500 to £2000 currently required a minimum of two quotations. While the Council was not obliged to accept the lowest quotation the reasons for accepting the quotation would need to be justified and recorded. Where work was to be carried out by a member of the council/committee it must be demonstrated that the work had been awarded fairly and without favour. Whilst there had been no conscious breaches of procedures it was important that as a public body, we were seen to carry out our financial procedures in a wholly correct manner. The Clerk had investigated with NALC who had stated that it would be possible for the PC to increase the £500 threshold. However this would require a motion to be carried by the PC and our Standing Orders amended. Members felt that it would be logical and beneficial to increase the upper threshold level at the same time. The Council passed a motion ((subject to the Clerk ensuring that this was permissible) to raise the threshold levels for purchases/ work requiring a minimum of two quotations to £1000 and increase the level at which three quotations were required to £4,000 (Proposed DO, seconded MF, All in Favour). Once the Clerk had ascertained this was permissible Standing orders to be amended thus:

5.7.2. Orders for values from £1000 to £4000 require a minimum of two quotations; for values above £2000 three quotations are required. Contracts exceeding £50,000 require additional safeguards and will follow Proper Practice.

Action: Clerk

- Submission of Documentation. The CC& B Committee had also confirmed that all official documentation including grant applications/ orders/grant reports would be submitted through and by the Clerk. In order not to cause delay. Deadlines needed to be adhered to.

III. Clerk's Workload. The Committee were concerned that 2 hrs per month allocated to the Clerk by the Parish Council for CC& B Committee work, was inadequate. He was currently working significantly more hours on this work. The Council agreed to increase the hours to 4 hours per month, effective from the start of the current payment period. The Committee were asked to review its budget in light of this increase. This would then be reflected in the PC budget for setting the 2024- 25 Precept.

Action: Clerk

IV. Strand & Project Reports

- Recognition and maintenance of the scenic beauty of the landscape: Due to roadworks on B6334 it was agreed litter picking here at present was not required. JW to speak to PW re alternative site
- Wild-Flower Areas: B& K Wharf Farming had been very generous with supply of wild seed and there was a significant amount available for those people who wanted to establish a wild flower area. Record of those to whom seed was distributed to be kept and they be asked to keep photographic record and ask to contribute to bailing the hay at end of

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season. JW agreed to build hand bailer. Participants to be informed through WhatsApp. Flower displays of native species to the area in first years may not be spectacular. Additional bright flowers seed to be considered.

- Habitat Survey: Agreement in principle to purchase refurbished Panasonic Toughpad FZ-G1 mk 3 with retro installation of Windows 11 in order to start the work on the habitat survey.
 - Improving Biodiversity: Hedge laying had begun. 17 people signed up to the training programme. Dates for the training had not yet been set. Hedge layer/trainer had confirmed that insurance/ first aid/equipment arrangements for the training were covered.
 - Partnership Working/Improve Organic Landscape: Agreement that this was a long-term project which required sensitivity. The start was building the relationship with farmers/landowners, to get their permissions and to get them engaged with the agenda through building on the positives. The habitat survey would help in this as it would provide evidence for improvements and be useful to help develop and obtain funding for land management schemes. It was estimated that we would have significant data within 18mths – 2 yrs. to assist landowners/farmers. The Strand to develop five-year plan for discussion at the next meeting regarding the proposed three areas identified by BHPC for potential biodiversity projects (Nature Recovery Networks): the Disused Railway line, Biodiversity/ Rewilding Corridor linking Hepple Wilds and Thistleyhaugh Estate & Wards.
 - River Coquet Ecology: Recent information received indicated that there was already a significant body of knowledge and conservation activity along the river and it was important that the CC&B dovetailed into this. It was important that this was followed up prior to engagement with Newcastle University.
 - Enhance bird breeding populations : Construction and painting of bird boxes almost complete. Action agreed to follow up on landowner permission and discussion to take place with local gamekeepers for their support for the erection of the boxes in the areas of Maglan Burn & Forest Burn.
- V. Volunteers. As the CC&B committee moved to the to implementation stage of its projects it was calling on volunteers to assist. The committee was aware that it needed to develop procedures and documentation to keep volunteers informed and safeguarded.
- VI. Management and Monitoring of commitments. The Committee had agreed that no further projects were to be considered at the present time and Strand leads were to re-visit their elements of the 5-yr plan to ensure a realistic programme of action.
- VII. Request from Rothbury Parish Council: JW had agreed to attend a future RPC meeting to advise/inform them about our Climate Change Plan and bio-diversity projects.
- VIII. Coquetdale Cluster Climate Action Plan update. The first meeting of the group had taken place where it was agreed not to go forward with yet another action plan but rather to set up a communication network: Coquetdale Green Network (CGN) with the aim to create an effective network for the sharing of knowledge, understanding and resources between organisations, groups and individuals with an interest in climate action across Coquetdale - in order to help combat climate change and support nature. It was proposed by the CGN that it works as a sub-hub of the North Northumberland Network.
- IX. North Northumberland Environmental Network. An event had taken place to establish a network to facilitate communication and collaboration' between the numerous environmental grassroots organisations in North Northumberland by way of online and face to face communication. The network had established a number of What's App social media groups. The next meeting to take place on 2nd December 2023.
- X. Verge Cutting around Embleton Terrace update – identified wild flower areas information for NCC. Ongoing
8. **Planning** – To note and discuss any planning issues since previous meeting. There were currently no requests for consultation that had not already been commented on.
9. **Highways**
- a. Highways and Footpaths Report Stile steps on footpath adjacent Embleton Terrace not yet repaired but on the NCC's schedule.
 - b. Report on any issues raised/ to raise with Highways Department
 - i. Current issues. No further information received from NCC Highways
 - ii. Overflowing Drain from manhole between Lee School House NE65 8JG and Suers Hill NE65 8JG. A request to BHPC for assistance from three residents had been received. They had tried to resolve this matter over several years. Storm water had lifted a manhole cover on the verge and water had been cascading out. The heavy flow of water was running down the road for about 100 yds before it ran into a stream. The problem stemmed from a blocked culvert under the road. There has been several visits from Highways in the past, but no action had been taken to unblock/repair the culvert. The overflow had caused excessive damage to the road surface, although it appeared to have been repaired several times. Agreed to contact Highways to set up a site meeting to discuss how this problem could be resolved. **Action: Clerk/JW**
10. **Wingates Wind Farm Community Fund**
- a. Update on current and recently completed reports. (see **ITEM 7 (a) I.** above)
 - b. Issues for WWCF
 - i. SB to ask if JW could attend the next meeting to provide update on Climate Change and Biodiversity projects
 - ii. SB to request if it would be possible to include administrative costs within project applications to WWCF **Action: SB**
11. **Coquetdale Cluster Meeting**
- a. Items to discuss from the last Cluster Meeting. No meeting since the last BHPC meeting.
 - b. Items for next Cluster Meeting Agenda
 - i. Update on Climate Change & Biodiversity issues
12. **Cemetery & Joint Burial Committee Reports**
- a. Longframlington Cemetery. Still awaiting confirmation of the registration of the cemetery extension by Land Registry which was holding up the consecration of the land. The perimeter for consecration land had been defined by installation of posts. The perimeter to be planted with indigenous hedging and the internal area to be planted with wild flowers.

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- b. Rothbury JBC. Due to the uncertainty of the sale of the Rothbury estate the matter of the diversion of the watercourse to enable an extension of the cemetery had been put on hold.
13. **To receive update and agree any further action regarding the Council's opposition to the proposed changes to the division boundaries affecting Brinkburn & Hesleyhurst.** BHPC had received confirmation that Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP would support the parishes in their opposition to the proposed Boundary changes and actively represent them when the Order was laid before the House. Still awaiting confirmation of the date when this will go to Parliament. Currently there were 71 people who had signed the petition. The Biodiversity Committee had strong views about Brinkburn & Hesleyhurst being separated from the rest of Coquetdale. As reported in **Item 6** It was agreed that a letter be sent to all residents explaining the need for them to support the petition opposing the proposed boundary changes.
14. **To report on matters relating to the sale of the Rothbury Estate & nominations for Community Assets .** There was little further to report at this time. No information of a definite sale had been received. The Council was not aware of any nominations for community assets other than one submitted from Rothley with Hollinghill (RHPC) for the Gate. NCC had advised that in its current format this nomination would not be approved. RHPC to discuss at their next meeting. Agreed that BHPC would send in their letter of support once the RHPC nomination had been submitted. **Action: DO/Clerk**
15. **To discuss Emergency Planning in respect to the recent Flood Warnings for the River Coquet at Brinkburn and Weldon.** The flooding of the River Coquet, during the recent storms, was a matter of concern. Whilst no local parish council Emergency Plans were put into action, flood warnings and flood control procedures were activated along the Coquet. It was reported some residents at Weldon Bridge had to leave their properties during the floods. At least one other PC on the Coquet was to consider flood risk assessment of properties within its parish. Flooding of the Coquet left many residents in B&H virtually cut-off. The PC agreed to defer this matter until the next meeting where it would be placed early on the agenda because of its importance. **Action: Clerk**
16. **To consider draft Brinkburn & Hesleyhurst Gender Neutral Policy.** There were diverging views, and it was agreed to defer this matter until the next meeting
17. **To receive report on the recent Annual Joint Town & Parish Council Conference County Hall.** Deferred.
18. **Any Other Business.** None.
19. **Items for Next Meeting**
- To agree the Budget 2024/25 and to set the annual Precept 2024/25
 - To discuss Emergency Planning in respect to the recent Flood Warnings for the River Coquet at Brinkburn and Weldon.
 - To further review the effectiveness of mechanisms by which the Council communicates with its residents
 - To consider a motion to approve the inclusion of the Gender-Neutral Policy in Standing Orders
 - To receive report on the recent Annual Joint Town & Parish Council Conference County Hall.
 - To review the regularity of Parish Council Meetings
20. **Date of Next Meeting:** **Tuesday 9th January 2024 at 7.30 p.m.in the Longframlington Memorial Hall**

The meeting closed at 10.00.p.m.

Garth Rhodes, Clerk, 5 Wardle Terrace, Longframlington, NE65 8AB, Tel: 01665 570347, Email: Clerk@Brinkburn.net