Brinkburn and Hesleyhurst Parish Council

MINUTES OF MEETING

Meeting on:	**15th September 2026**
Meeting at:	Longframlington Memorial Hall
Meeting Time:	7.30 p.m.
Present:	Cllrs Mark Ahearne (MA), Steve Bray (SB), David Owen (DO)- Chair, Jackie Scarpa (JS).
In attendance:	Clerk.

The meeting opened at 7.32 p.m.

1) **Apologies for Absence.** County Cllr Glen Sanderson (GS), Mark Fenwick (MF), Lesley Turnbull-Hall (LH), Jamie Whicker (JW).
2) **Welcome to new Councillor.** Mark Ahearne was welcomed to the Council by the Chair. The Declaration of Acceptance of Office was duly signed.
3) **Table Urgent Business to be discussed in 22 below.**
   a) Cleaning the millennium stone
4) **Declaration of Interests.**
   a) Declaration from councillors of a personal interest they may have in any matters on the agenda. None.
   b) Review and completion of Declarations of Pecuniary Interests. Following a regulatory change under which members' home addresses would no longer be made public through the declarations, NCC had asked members to complete and submit updated declarations. Hard copies were distributed at the meeting, and copies had previously been circulated online. Members were asked to return the completed forms to the Clerk by the next meeting. **Action: All**
5) **Gifts and Hospitality.** None.
6) **County Councillors Report.** Apologies were received from Glen Sanderson , County Councillor, who was unable to attend and offered assistance with any relevant matters.
   a) Waste and Recycling: The planned introduction of a new bin for the separate collection of paper, card and glass has been delayed because the Council's contractor, Suez, did not currently have sufficient processing capacity. Further plant capacity may need to be developed. The food-waste collection service would continue to be extended, with scope for further expansion. Overall, the Council's recycling rate was the third highest in the region.
   b) Road Safety: Work was continuing with the Police to explore bringing the static speed cameras in Longframlington and Longhorsley back into operation, together with the possible installation of average-speed cameras farther along the A697. Although enforcement cameras may be unpopular, they could reduce speeds and improve safety. Particular concern remained about additional traffic using the A697 to avoid the A1.
   c) Proposed Tourist Levy: Legislation was expected to enable mayors to introduce a tourist levy. The County Councillor reiterated the importance of tourism businesses to the county and stated that, if a levy is introduced, any proceeds should be reinvested in the areas where they are raised. It was noted that the levy could generate more than £8 million in Northumberland, although the detailed arrangements were not yet known.
   d) Budget and Council Matters: Preparations for the autumn budget-setting process were under way.

   The County Councillor invited members to raise any Northumberland County Council matters requiring assistance.
7) **Minutes of Previous Meeting.** The minutes of 14th July were unanimously agreed as a true and accurate record (proposed by JS, seconded by SB ; all in favour).
8) **Matters arising out of Minutes.** To receive updates on matters not appearing elsewhere on the agenda including:
   a) Update on the Wildlife Trust purchase of the Rothbury Estate. As of 14 September 2026, the appeal to acquire the remainder of the Rothbury Estate had raised more than £26 million, including pledges, leaving roughly £4 million still to find against the £30 million target. On 26 August 2026, the campaign announced a surge of £5.5 million in new pledges, describing the appeal as being "within touching distance" of its target. The official appeal page continued to state that more than £26 million had been raised, including pledges, and that the campaign would remain active until 30 September 2026. The charities had already secured the Simonside Hills and the western section of the estate. Current fundraising was for the purchase of the remaining land. A report published on 30 August noted that the charities had also agreed financing arrangements to help cover any remaining shortfall ahead of the final purchase completion date. It reported that the project page referred to a completion date at the end of October 2026, while the fundraising deadline remained 30 September 2026.
   b) Quality of DAB reception in the Coquet Valley. DO asked Clerk to follow this up with Cllr Sanderson again as the BBC advice was not helpful. **Action: Clerk**
   c) Bus Stop Sign: New Houses B6344 Crossroads X14 Service. NCC had informed the Clerk that the BSIP programme of works was agreed by the NEMSA Cabinet in March 2026. Following those approvals, NCC had been formalising the Grant Funding Agreement between NCC and NEMSA, which was the final step before works could commence. Although NCC did not yet have a definitive date for the reinstatement of the stops, it would work with the area teams to schedule the works.
   d) Hedging in the Playground. Deferred in JW's absence.
   e) Sewage treatment arrangements serving Embleton Terrace, ref. EIR2026/35010. The Clerk had written to the Environment Agency about this matter on 20 July. He received a message on 18 August stating that the Agency had not been able to gather the information. A response was received on 19 August but went into the spam folder. The Clerk had only just seen this communication, which said that the files would be available to download until 8 September, so he had missed the deadline. He had asked the Environment Agency whether it could make the information available again. The matter was deferred until the next meeting.

f) Retention-based rationalisation of the Council's email and online documentation. The Clerk had not had time to follow up on this matter. It was agreed that MA and the Clerk would meet to discuss how to take the matter forward. **Action: MA/Clerk**

9) Police Update. To following report was received from the Community Police**:**

'There is nothing to report at present. However, thefts from farms have restarted in the Alnwick area, so any suspicious activity should be reported while it is happening. If there is anything you need from us, just let me know.'
PC Peter Johnson 4187

10) Finance.

a) Notification of receipts since the last meeting. Noted.

27/07/2026	DE WELCH GP RHODES	CAB donation from Wannie event	20.00
27/07/2026	Royal Soc Wildlife Trusts	Rothbury appeal	500.00
08/09/2026	NCC Ref 7106591	Precept Second half	5000.00
		Total	**5520.00**

b) Approval of Clerk's salary, expenses, PAYE & NI and approval of Other Payments. Noted.

26/07/2026	Northumberland CAB	Donation from Wannie event	20.00
27/07/2026	Royal Society Wildlife Trusts	Rothbury Appeal Donation	500.00
09/08/2027	Longframlington Memorial Hall	Room & Screen Hire (various)	163.00
09/08/2026	Julie Ayre	Mowing June/July	250.00
27/08/2026	Wingates Village Institute	Room Hire	150.00
27/08/2026	Tteesof10thduke	Annual rent playground	75.00
27/08/2026	HMRC	PAYE outstanding tax 2025/26	26.37
08/07/2026	Go Cardless HugoFoxltd-FXM3XNE	Email.gov domain fee	2.99
10/08/2026	Go Cardless HugoFoxltd-FXM3XNE	Email.gov domain fee	2.99
08/09/2026	Go Cardless HugoFoxltd-FXM3XNE	Email.gov domain fee	2.99
		Total	**1193.34**

c) Requests for donations. None.

d) Bank Reconciliation. Noted.

	£
Balance per e-bank statements	9567.09
Less unpresented cheques	0.00
Uncredited Deposits -	0.00
Balance	9567.09
Balance per cash book	9567.09

e) 2026/2027 Pay Award and Salary Review.

i) Annual Pay Award. The National Joint Council for Local Government had reached an agreement on rates of pay applicable from 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2027. Employers were encouraged to implement the pay award as soon as possible. The new rate for the Clerk at the current spinal point 17 would be £16.61 per hour, an increase of £0.53 per hour. The Council approved the award.

ii) The annual incremental pay review for 2024/25 for the Clerk. At the previous incremental pay review, it was agreed that the Clerk's employment contract and salary would be reviewed before the next incremental rise was due to be considered in June 2026. Unfortunately, because of time constraints and personal circumstances, the Clerk had been unable to undertake a full review. However, he had investigated whether it was permissible for the Council to award increments at LC2. Having taken advice on the current employment contract, it was evident that LC2 formed part of the available salary range for the Clerk's post. However, the Council retained discretion over whether and when to award increments within that range. The PC could award one or more increments in any year, but it had to ensure that it could clearly justify its decision. The Council was asked to consider an incremental pay rise, backdated to June 2026, in line with the Local Government Services Pay Agreement 2026/27, at which point the Clerk left the room. The PC agreed to award an increment at the 2026/27 rate for LC2 point 20: £17.45 per hour, backdated to the anniversary of appointment in June. The acceleration to point 20 was approved in recognition and appreciation of the work undertaken by the Clerk over and above his contracted duties.

f) Clerk@brinburn.net email. An invoice for £72 had been received from Colliedog for the 5 GB Exchange Basic mailbox for 'clerk@brinkburn.net', which was due for renewal on 9 October 2026. The Clerk was still receiving important emails through this account. As he had not yet addressed the retention-based rationalisation of the Council's email and online

documentation, he asked the Council to approve this expenditure. MA informed the meeting that a procedure was available to transfer the Clerk@brinburn.net email data to the new .gov account, so retaining the Colliedog account would not be necessary. MA and the Clerk would follow up on this matter. **Action: MA/Clerk**

11) Action Plan SEPTEMBER – OCTOBER. To address regular duties, prioritize initiatives, allocate resources, and track progress towards important goals not appearing elsewhere on the agenda.

a) Consider Playground Maintenance contract for following year for grass cutting and maintenance. **Action: Clerk**

b) General Service review and assessment - Ensure asset register is up to date with transfers and purchases. Archive and remove out of date on-line and hard copy data/documentation. **Action: Clerk**

c) Review community engagement – how PC are doing it rather than the results from it. Deferred to next meeting.

d) Review preparations for winter Check the provision and conditions of grit bins; bus shelters; waste bins . Cllrs were asked to report back at the next meeting. **Action: All**

e) Annual Inspection of Biodiversity Tools and Equipment Confirm that the full complement of equipment is present and in full working order, and replace any faulty items. **Action: JW**

f) Arrange/Confirm Internal Auditor **Action: DO**

g) Review Internal Procedures and Regulations scheduled for review Ongoing **Action: Clerk**

12) Planning

a) To note and discuss any planning issues since previous meeting. *There are currently no requests for consultation that have not already been commented on.*

Reference	Address	Status	Parish Council Comments
26/01927/LBC	The Barn 6 Brinkburn Lodge Cottages:	Application Registered	Support the application

b) Northumberland Local Plan Update: Noted.

13) Highways.

a) Highways and Footpaths Report.

i) Condition of public right of way from Lee Siding south-west towards The Crook. A walker reported that the public right of way runs south-west from Lee Siding towards The Crook and crosses the Bog Burn via a footbridge. The descent to the footbridge was perilously steep, particularly because a fallen tree lay across the path. On the equally steep ascent from the footbridge on the other bank, there was very little evidence of the path on the ground. The walker had alerted Northumberland County Council to the problems and reminded it of its legal duties. JS agreed to follow this up. **Action: JS**

b) Report on any issues raised/ to raise with NCC Highways

i) Todstead drainage inspection and flood-risk monitoring. LH and the Clerk had spent a significant amount of time, including on a site visit and numerous emails to NCC Highways, ensuring that the drainage had been fully repaired. In an email, Tony Bell, Interim Northern Area Manager, confirmed that the drainage assets at Todstead would be added to the cyclical drainage inspection programme and that details would be passed to the relevant operational teams for ongoing observation during routine activities. This would help to ensure that developing issues were identified and addressed where necessary. He asked that any flooding, blocked gullies or other drainage-related concerns observed between scheduled inspections be reported through the Council's FixMyStreet reporting system. This would allow issues to be logged directly and allocated to the appropriate team for investigation and action.

ii) Reinstatement of the bus shelter on the south side of the A697 at Weldon Bridge. The Clerk had asked NCC Local Services to clear the foliage adjacent to the shelter so that it could be inspected. NCC replied that traffic management would need to be installed before the work could take place. It was agreed to defer the matter until the next meeting.

14) Wingates Wind Farm Community Fund.

a) Report. The last meeting had been cancelled as there were no applications. Currently there was c£60k in the fund.

b) Notice boards at Todsteads & Weldon Bridge application. Deferred. **Action: JW/LH**

15) Climate Change & Biodiversity Committee Report. There had not been a meeting since the last PC meeting.

a) BHPC representation on CRAG. CRAG had asked the PC to confirm its two representatives for the forthcoming year. MF had agreed to stand, and it was agreed that Virginia Kennedy, a BHPC CRAG water-testing volunteer, would also be asked to represent the PC. She was now on the CRAG committee and had a special interest in culture and the arts. **Action: Clerk**

b) Date of Next CC &B Meeting: Tuesday 13 October at 7.00 pm at 13 Embleton Terrace.

16) Emergency Planning including:

a) Update of Longframlington Emergency Action Plan (LEAP) LEAP had been updated (mostly contact detail changes) and the revised edition had been sent out to Members.

b) Check and oil flood warning signs. **Action: JW**

c) Test emergency two- way radios. Radios had been tested in the summer.

d) Defibrillator status. All in good order. **Action: JW**

17) Coquetdale Cluster Meeting.

a) Items to discuss from the latest Cluster Meeting. Ian Hedley of NCC had been appointed as liaison officer with town and parish councils, which would hopefully improve communication with NCC. The Wildlife Trust would attend the next meeting, when it would be able to provide a full update following completion of the sale of the Rothbury Estate.

b) Items for next Cluster Meeting Agenda. Members were asked to submit items for the agenda to JS. DO asked that the issue of DAB in the Coquet valley be added to the agenda **Action: JS/All**

18) Cemetery & Joint Burial Committee Reports.

a) Longframlington Cemetery. No issues to report.

b) Rothbury JBC. No report available.

19) Community Governance Review: Common Parish Grouping Arrangements — Brinkburn and Hesleyhurst. When the PC considered the status of Brinkburn and Hesleyhurst Parish Council during the recent consultation, it did not appear that becoming a single parish was an option. Over the summer, Annie Howlitson (AH) of the Elections Office had contacted the Clerk, and it now appeared that this option could be considered. The Clerk informed AH that the PC would probably wish to discuss it. The PC did not need to decide at this meeting, as there would be a timely opportunity to consider the matter. AH was to report to the Cross-Working Group that Brinkburn and Hesleyhurst would consider whether to change the status of the parishes. It was agreed to defer further discussion until the next meeting.

20) Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ): potential funding for sustainable energy for homes. MA reported that the funding outcome for this sustainable energy programme was looking favourable and that there would be a final decision by the end of September. This would enable homeowners to access up to £15,000 for sustainable energy products. The funding would be available until 31 March 2027. Several homes in the parish were scheduled to benefit, with Embleton Terrace being a focus of the project. A further fund for insulation, radiator reflectors, LED lighting and emergency lighting was also being made available.

21) Information Updates

a) NCC Joint Town and Parish Council Conference Thursday 8th October 2026. The NALC AGM was now being held during the County Conference. Clerk informed the meeting that information and advice from Northumberland ALC was spasmodic and little that wasn't provided by NALC nationally. The service received from the current Chief Officer was nowhere near the level offered by the previous incumbent. JS agreed that she would attend the conference and NALC AGM. **Action: JS**

b) Northumbrian Water, community information event on Monday 21 September at Longframlington Memorial Hall between 3.00pm and 6.00pm. Noted.

c) Consultation on Proposed Countywide Alcohol Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) Noted.

d) Northumberland National Park Authority Meeting Wednesday 23rd September 2026 Noted.

22) Any Urgent Business.

a) Cleaning the millennium stone. Jen Teulon had offered to clean the inscription on the stone. Members agreed that she could do so, provided that only the inscription was cleaned and that natural cleaning products were used in accordance with the stonemason's instructions. DO would speak to Jen about this. **Action: DO**

b) Cycling Repair Stations. MA said that funding was available for three bicycle repair stations, which could be placed at suitable locations across the parish. MA would speak to the cycle shop in Rothbury about the best locations for the stations and ask whether it would be willing to maintain them. **Action: MA**

23) Items for Next Meeting.

a) Sewage treatment arrangements serving Embleton Terrace

b) Review community engagement – how PC are doing it rather than the results from it.

c) Reinstatement of the bus stop shelter on the south side of A697 at Weldon Bridge.

d) Community Governance Update Review: - Common Parish Grouping Arrangements - Brinkburn and Hesleyhurst.

e) Cycling Repair Stations.

24) Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday 10th November 2026 at 7.30 p.m. in the Memorial Hall, Rothbury Road, Longframlington.

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