

THIRSTON PARISH COUNCIL

At the Parish Council Meeting held via Zoom on Thursday 9 December 2021.

Present: Cllrs S Allan, , E Davidson, D Green, T Jackson and Cllr Marshall
The Parish Clerk in attendance – Mrs L Hamlin

77 Apologies for Absence – Cllr Clarehugh and County Councillor Sanderson

78 Declarations of interest in items on the Agenda – None

79 Public Questions (max 5 mins per person) - None

80 The minutes of the meeting 28 October 2021 were agreed as a true record.

81 Matters Arising

- Ditch on the Burgham Park Road blocked – still outstanding Clerk
- Street light request for East Thirston – Following a chase up by CC Sanderson NCC has responded stating “*We are doing some digging with Highways Development regards the light, which was removed, we need to find out who removed it and why and then see how easy it is going to be to replace and where it will be funded from.*” Clerk/CC Sanderson
- Replacement bus stop sign – still outstanding
- Directional sign, left over the bridge – the sign has been removed with posts remaining – whether this was due to the storm or NCC removing it the Clerk is unsure but will investigate. Clerk
- Stage 2 Complaint to NCC – The Clerk circulated the NCC response to Councillors again. The residents complaint has now being allocated an Ombudsman investigator. Clerk
- Noticeboard at Eshott – Cllr Green seeking an alternative quote from a local.
- Japanese Knotweed along Riverside – still outstanding Cllr Green
- Invitation to Council Leader or Cabinet Member – a request has been put forward to NCC for a Councillors with planning background with dates of meetings, awaiting a response. NCC has requested details of the PCs concerns. Clerk to respond stating Burgham Applications, Eshott Airfield and lodge applications at Eshottheugh and Felmoor. Clerk
- Speed strips in Eshott and on the Peth – The result of the speed strip analysis shows that the Peth meets the criteria for potential police enforcement and the data has been passed to them. The results from Eshott show that the average speed is 30mph.
- Path and steps leave removal – a request has been put into NCC however due to the storms this may be delayed. Clerk
- Tree Officer re checking of trees within the parish – a request has been put into the Tree Officer however since the storms have hit this may be a priority now for NCC once clear up works have been undertaken. Clerk
- Hole in steep bank pathway – This footpath is currently closed so the Clerk has not been able to assess to see if this work has been undertaken. Clerk

82 Report by County Councillor Sanderson –

My time has been taken up almost completely with the aftermath of the storm. I was away for the first few days so set up my office where I was which was better because we had no power like many until last Sunday.

It's been a very tough time for everyone - I personally received over 350 queries - all about Powergrid. As the days went on callers became increasingly angry and some were in tears. I am grateful to residents, volunteers, community groups, and the Council who put in a lot of effort.

I felt my role was to help people and support the emergency services rather than become politically interfering. All decisions were made by the emergency services there was no political input other than my being briefed regularly and bring in touch with officers sometimes hourly to help out.

The key point to make is we must have an Enquiry which should be held in public to allow anyone who suffered the chance to ask questions and challenge Powergrid.

The crews on the ground were brilliant but I'm not at all convinced by their management -

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why are there not generators sitting in a warehouse ready for an emergency like this? Is the system being properly maintained - are the poles and wires etc up to scratch?

What about levels of investment? And can we see settlements and villages have their own generator to allow a community building to be used to shelter those without power.

We had 5 days without power and I know how awful it is - but much worse for those who had longer to endure this. So I would like to ensure by having this enquiry we ensure that people do not have to suffer so much in future. I expect I may encounter some resistance to this idea but I think it must happen.

Meanwhile we are in the middle of the budget setting - I am very keen to try to avoid any cuts in frontline services.

And we've been very tied up with flooding and fallen trees so sorry for any delay in pothole filling.

I will try to make a future meeting and please let me know if there is anything I can help with.

83 **Report back from Meetings and Representations on behalf of TPC**

Recreation Field Meeting – tonight's meeting has been postponed. New swings are now in place and work has been undertaken on the drainage of the field and inspection chamber has been installed for jetting and rodding in the future.

Cemetery Committee Meeting – a debrief was held about Remembrance Day Service.

Meeting re diversions through Parish due to dualling – Cllr Allan attended a meeting with Costain and NCC to discuss the impact of diversions when they start the bridge works in relation to the duelling of the A1. They are now very much in tune with the disruption a diversion will cause and were discussing various mitigating circumstances. This included HGV diversion notices posted at both Morpeth and Berwick and as far north as Scotland. Highways to bring traffic up & down the A697. Speed reduction through the Parish and the potential of enforcement. What this enforcement will look like is in discussion. I had assurances that there will be no signage to turn right at the top of the Peth to pull traffic East then North however, there will be no physical deterrent should people wish to take this option. Notification of works will be given in plenty of time. Constain had two options available regarding communication either come to a Parish Council meeting to discuss plans then allow us to disseminate this information to our Parish or have an open forum / display of works in a public place like the Felton village hall. There will be some pre-works going on this includes installing of roadworks and the felling of some trees that can be done without any closure of the A1. The major works of laying a new carriageway will run parallel to the existing carriageway and again this will limit the amount of disruption. Environmental issues were discussed in relation to the disruption of and removal of trees and vegetation with a full environment impact assessments available to view if required. They will manage the site(s) for a further 50 years regarding trees and vegetation management. The bridge construction and installation will be the biggest single project the county has seen in many years and they have offered visits if any Councillors wish to attend once this process starts. I asked the question regarding the existing bridge in Felton and its robustness regarding increased flow of traffic and was assured by NCC that there would be no issues and it should hold its own. I reaffirmed our position as a parish regarding gaining support for our own projects (re-wilding, signage, bench seats) and they remained open to this and gave examples of projects they had supported in the past with parishes

Remembrance Day Service – over 200 people attended. It was proposed and agreed that in future a real wreath would be sought as opposed to a plastic one. Clerk to speak to Mrs Cruden to see if she can provide one.

84 **Potential Projects**

a) Footpaths/Rights of Way – All the good work Skill Mill had done has been decimated in the storm. The Councillors felt it was best for everyone to take some time and have patience with the clear up and then assess what needs to be done going forward.

b) Landscaping – Tree plaques have been installed for the Japanese Cherry Trees.

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- c) Councillors to suggest short term/medium term/long term projects – Put on hold until parish has recovered from the recent storm and then assess what is required in the parish as it maybe that issues arise as a result of the storm.

85 Planning:

To report on any planning decisions:

21/03098/FUL - Ivy Cottage West Thirston - Erection of a timber single storey granny annexe for ancillary use to the main dwelling – APPROVED

21/02354/FUL - Chaswell House Burgham Park - Single and two storey extensions - APPROVED

Planning applications pending:

20/02026/COU – Cottages at Burgham Park Golf Club – Change of use from holiday cottages to residential dwellings – No Objections

20/02094/FUL – Land NW of Burgham Park Golf Club - Remove green keepers compound and erection of 56 dwellings plus upgrade of access road, electric sub station, SUDs, domestic package treatment works and domestic gas storage. Changes appear to have been made following an initial legal letter being submitted by a resident but a subsequent legal letter still states that this application is not acceptable. CC Sanderson had stated this application to go to Committee due to the enabling development issue and Clerk to remind CC Sanderson of this. Clerk

20/04177/FUL - Land North East of Felmoor Caravan Park - Extension to existing holiday comprising 139 no. pitches for holiday lodges plus ancillary features including water feature, play area and vintage vehicle museum – objections based on Neighbourhood Plan

21/02064/FUL - Northumberland Country Zoo Animal house to include pool and on-show viewing area for the public – no objections

21/03090/FUL - Northumberland Country Zoo - Extend cafe to add a large indoor soft play facility to create an all year round attraction – no objections

21/02941/FUL - Dukes Cottage, West Thirston – Side extension and front porch – no objections

21/04084/FUL – Land W of Foxhemels – 2 storey residential dwelling – no objections

21/04280/FUL - Paintballing Site Eshott Heugh - Hybrid planning application consisting of a detailed application for 30no holiday lodges, storage barn, parking and access and an outline application with access and all other matters reserved for the associated leisure building (Use Class E) – Clerk also to ascertain the number for small scale development. Clerk

Planning Issues:

Eshott Airfield have breached current planning conditions with no action from NCC to date. The deadline for the draft Management Plan is due on 11 December. Clerk to contact Mr Murfin to ask where the plan is. Clerk

86 Requested Agenda Items:

Cemetery Committee decision – following an approach from Felton PC to take full control of the Cemetery this was discussed and it was felt that a long as Thirston Parish residents could continue to have the resident rate then the PC were happy to continue making the annual contribution as in the past but allow Felton PC to take on full management of the Cemetery with a management agreement in place. The Clerk to ascertain what the position is with Newton on the Moor & Swarland PC. Clerk

Recreation Field decision – A discussion was had with Felton PC for them to take full control of the Recreation Field Committee. As this is a sub-committee of Felton PC theoretically they already have full control. It was felt that the contribution towards the general maintenance of the field was too high when looking at the resident numbers who would potential use the field (ie West Thirston residents). It was agreed that an annual contribution towards the general maintenance would be appropriate and to give Felton control over the running of the recreation field. Cllr Allan to put these proposals to Felton PC. Cllr Marshall also said that Felton PC had raised the issues of looking at linking with Thirston PC for quotes for works/contracts to see if a better price can be sought. Cllr Allan
Clerk

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Draft Budget – The Clerk circulated the draft budget before the meeting and this was discussed in detail. Some amendments were made as per the recreation field proposals along with some other minor changes. Clerk to redraft the budget for circulation before the January meeting and to send to the auditor for his review. Clerk

Auditor - future arrangements – Clerk will circulate JPAG information to Councillors which gives information on what the auditor is required to do and the PC's responsibilities. Clerk
There is now clear guidance on the reporting of Joint funds which will affect the PC in relation to the Joint Cemetery funds so accounts will have to be changed and potentially restated for 1 year which will mean revisiting last years audited accounts. The Clerk to check this with the auditor. The auditor has also provided a check list to ensure that all sections of the audit are completed to assist the Clerk. This will also be circulated to Councillors for information. Finally the Auditor proposes that it is minuted that the bank reconciliation check is undertaken at each meeting which will be a comparison on the bank statement against the financial summary that is circulated to Councillors at each meeting. Clerk

List of repairs in the Parish for NCC – Cllr Marshall declared an interest as Mrs Marshall is a non-executive director of Northern Powergrid

- Electricity substation and adjacent damage – this is being worked on
- Signage – Give Way at Bockenfield has been snapped at the post
- Damaged light at East Thirston – this has been reported and repaired
- Railing on the narrow bank damaged by tree
- Clerk to put out a request on facebook to report any damage in the Parish Clerk

Cllr Jackson stated that the resources provided by Northern Powergrid are not up to standard. Trees should not be near substations. The lack of cellular communications is not acceptable, how can people contact Powergrid or other agencies when even mobile phones were not working due to the storm. The infrastructure should be reviewed ie put in concrete poles if there is a chance a wooden pole may fail.

87 Correspondence:

- NCC Parish Precept Request – deadline 28 January 2022
- NCC – Electoral Register forms – the Clerk has requested and received an up to date electoral register forms.
- NCC – Riverside works information – start date 16 December
- Email reporting blocked drain and collapsed manhole cover – these have been reported to NCC. If Councillor Allan could keep Clerk updated so if works not completed Clerk can chase NCC. Clerk
- Email re recycling point off A1 – A large rubbish bin and a skip have been added to the site which is encouraging fly tipping. The Clerk has highlighted this to NCC and asked why a large bin has been installed but there has been no response. There is currently a soft in the skip along with a lot of other flytipping. Clerk will report again to NCC. Clerk
- Email Felton CAN request for areas to plant trees – Felton CAN have approached to PC to ask if they have any suitable land which could benefit the community & environment from the addition of some (singles or rows or copses) trees? Have the Council any suggestions of potential sites within the Parish, or are aware of any residents/landowners who may be interested in this venture? Public access would be preferable, and therefore more beneficial to the wider community. However to benefit wildlife, the environment & help temper climate change we would be interested in accessing & improving any local site, and hopefully our input & help may encourage private landowners to undertake such ventures. Felton CAN are always happy to listen to and discuss any offers & proposals. It was agreed that Councillors would think about potential locations however as the Parish Council does not own land it is difficult to identify potential areas. Cllr Jackson suggested the golf course may be interested especially along the holes by the A1. Clerk to relay to Felton CAN. Clerk
- Email request for Field of Hope to be cut back – the Clerk requested that this be cut back by Mr Ryle and he kindly undertook this cutting back, the Clerk thanked Mr Ryle and also received an email of thanks from a resident.

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- Email re leaf blowing at the War Memorial – a complaint was received about the noise of this. The Clerk passed this to Felton PC as it is their responsibility.
- Email re HGV movement at airfield at 4.45am and plane taking off at 8,45am. Both of these are in breach of planning conditions and took place on 22 and 23 November. NCC stated they would investigate and report back and no response to date. Clerk
- 3 x emails re Chinook non-emergency refuelling – this was reported to NCC as this breached current planning conditions and NCC stated they would investigate and report back. This was on 22 November and no response from NCC. Clerk
- Email re low flying over Eshott village – a copy complaint has been received about aircraft flying very low over Eshott village.
- Request re extra green bin collections after storm – following the storms this request was put to NCC however as they prepare the schedules and staffing rotas well in advance this was not possible
- Emails from NALC – circulated including Model Letters re Remote Meetings – it was agreed to draw up remote meetings letters based on the model letters however as they stand they are not appropriate for Thirston just to send as is. Clerk

88 Finance

- (a) **Financial Summary** was reviewed with no issues and the current balance stands at £14,522.06. This balance was reconciled with the bank statement and agreed by the Councillors.
- (b) **Payments** - The following list was put before members and was approved:

Payments this meeting:		
IB130	L Hamlin Salary and Expenses 24 hours at £15.50 (£372.00) NALC Training (£5.00) 1 x zoom (£14.39) 1 x home working allowance (£11.19)	£402.58
IB131	Cllr S Allan – Thank you gift for support on parish clear up	£60.00

- (c) **Income** – None

- 89 Urgent Items** – An item to be put in the next Bridge Newsletter thanking those who helped out to clear up after the storm. Clerk
- 90 Items for next agenda** –
Finalise Budget

91 Resolution to exclude public and press

The Parish Council passed a resolution under Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 to exclude public and press due to the confidential nature of the business to be discussed, which includes discussion of personal data.

It was agreed to increase the Clerk’s weekly hours from 4 hours per week to 5 hours per week. The Clerk’s contract to be updated to show this change. Clerk

Chairman closed the meeting at 21.20pm
Date of Next meeting: 20 January 2022