

**Minutes of Allendale Parish Council Meeting
held on Thursday 5th September 2024 at 7pm
at Allendale Village Hall**

Present: Cllr Swaile (Chair), Beck, Bron, Coulson, Gray, Johnson, Kirk, Philipson, Simmonds, White and H Newsome (Clerk).

1) Apologies for absence and councillor news

Apologies were received from Co Cllr Colin Horncastle.

Cllr Kirk proposed, and Cllr Johnson seconded to extend the deadline for advertising the three councillor vacancies by co-option by two weeks, up until 20th September and the Council unanimously agreed.

2) Declarations of interest

See APC's website for a full list: <https://bit.ly/4cWwHHv>

3) Planning Committee – planning applications

24/02692/LBC - Old Town Farm House Catton

Cllr Kirk proposed **no objections** to the application with Cllr Johnson seconding this and the motion was unanimously carried by the Council.

24/02895/FUL & 24/02896/LBC - Old Wooley Cottage Allendale

Cllr Johnson proposed **no objections** to the application with Cllr White seconding this and the motion was unanimously carried by the Council.

4) Public participation

There were **three** members of the public in attendance.

5) Minutes of the previous meetings held on 1st August 2024

The Council agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 1st August 2024 be signed by the Chair as a correct record.

6) Matters arising

Allendale Estates felling works update.

The Council discussed the Forestry Commission's response to its complaint that it did not appear to have followed the correct process in consulting statutory bodies prior to the felling of woods in the parish. Cllr Swaile said that because Allendale Parish Council did not have a statutory role it did not have the right to demand any recourse. Councillors described the clear felling works that had taken place to date and said that it was alarming that so few trees had been left standing when there was meant to be islands of trees kept providing a corridor and refuge for red squirrels. They said that now, with so few trees left standing, and many of them already fallen or expected to as the weather worsens, they shared their concern for the red's survival. In its response to the Council's complaint the Forestry Commission had confirmed that responsibility for minimising the possible impact on red squirrels and other protected species had been discharged to GCS Grays who were responsible for the approved felling. Since clear felling works were expected to continue throughout the parish further removing the reds habitat, and as the community remained concerned, the Council agreed that the Clerk write to Grays to ask if it could provide some reassurance that it was taking positive steps to protect the reds, and to copy Joe Morris MP in on the email. Gavin Foster of Allen Valleys Red Squirrels said that residents could best help protect the reds by continuing to report sightings of grey squirrels that had pushed the reds up the valley.

County Councillor and Northumberland County Council update

Co Cllr Horncastle sent his apologies with the following update sent ahead of the meeting:

Latest on speed reduction proposals:

Catton - Work on signage and road markings delayed due to resurfacing work but I've asked for it to be done now otherwise it could have been April.

Station Road - Work on signage and speed humps (similar to bottom of Allendale road entering Hexham) with design team. Some extra signage may be going up soon extra to what design team are working.

Primary school - Unfortunately after survey it doesn't meet criteria for a crossing so requested some speed humps as granite setts don't seem to be of much use and generate too much noise.

Allendale Youth Club - £5k contribution to Youth club to enable them to carry out much needed work.

As explained previously all the traffic calming measures has to be paid for or contributed to from my Members Local Improvement Scheme (MLIS) money. I had hoped to have made my contribution to the much needed bus shelter many months ago before all the highways' projects were requested. We'll just have to see how much I have left!

As previously discussed, I will be attending West Allen Parish Council tonight, so I want to take this opportunity to thank Helen for all the hard work she has done on behalf of the community. She has been brilliant, and I'll miss her. On that note I look forward to meeting and working with the new Clerk.

Councillor Swaile (on behalf of the Council) took the opportunity to thank Helen for her service as Clerk. She cited the excellent work to connect the Council more with the local community through social media, publicising the Council's work to maintain and improve the Parish, for introducing more rigour and due diligence to the workings of the Council which has overall allowed the Council to be more visible, transparent and for the community to have clearer sight of how their precept is spent. She recognised the flexibility and patience with which Helen works and her enthusiasm for always wanting to do the best for the community. She also extended personal thanks for Helen's support as she moved into the role of Chair, for helping navigate some tricky issues and providing the background and knowledge required to answer all the annoying newbie questions. She concluded by saying how grateful the whole council were and how much Helen will be missed and wished her the best of luck in the future. The Council and members of the public all gave a round of applause.

7) The future of the Recreation Ground

The Chair and Treasurer of Allendale Village Hall, Chris Garner and Chris Bonsall presented information to the Council on the cost of managing the Recreation Ground that included approximately £3,000 for the caretaker and insurance costs, plus ongoing maintenance costs and replacement of equipment costs that they estimate to be around £15,000 over the next two years. They said that as the Recreation Ground raised no income, all the maintenance and repair costs were met from revenue raised by the hiring of the Village Hall. They acknowledged and thanked the Council for the £500 it paid each year towards the maintenance of the Recreation Ground, and for meeting the annual costs of the grass cutting and mole control and asked if it would consider increasing its contribution towards the annual maintenance costs and also contribute towards capital expenditure such as new play equipment and large outgoings such as the bark chippings. Cllr Swaile thanked the two Chris's for all the information that they presented and said that the Council's contribution was overdue for review and that the Council was supportive of their suggestions. After discussion, the Council agreed to make a bigger contribution towards the running costs and agreed for the Finance Committee to look at what this sum could be and what, if any, further commitments the Council was able to make towards capital expenditure and large outgoings.

8) Allotments Committee

There were no actions.

9) Cemetery Committee

Concrete strips for Allendale Cemetery update

The Council considered two estimates for work to install a concrete strip foundation for 45 headstones and agreed to accept the spec from Art of Stone who would install the strip below the surface with the turf put back so the strips could not be seen. To help meet the costs of the work which was £3,170 plus VAT the Council also agreed to raise the fees for installing a headstone by £70 to £220 per headstone. The Clerk to ask Art of Stone to go ahead with the work anytime between now and early Spring.

Request for woodland burial from residents living outside the parish.

The Council agreed to meet the applicants wishes for a woodland burial at parish resident rates as they had formerly lived in the parish for many years and had a strong connection with the parish.

10) Rights of Way & Access Committee

The Rights of Way & Access Committee agreed to review the draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) consultation and draft a response for consideration before the next full Council meeting.

11) Towns & Villages Committee

Allendale Market Place – white line for newly surfaced parking area

The Council agreed for the Clerk to ask Highways (and copy Cllr Horncastle in) to put in a solid white line on the edge of the newly surfaced parking area to show the boundary between the highway and the parking area.

Bus shelter update

Following on from the Council's July meeting the Towns & Villages Committee had researched and costed three options, installing the bespoke timber shelter and set about getting all the permissions in place including an application to DEFRA for S38 consent, installing an off the peg cantilever type bus shelter that would not encroach on the Village Green, or not having a bus shelter at all. Cllr Gray had presented the research and costs prior to the meeting, and, after discussion, the Council collectively agreed that not providing a shelter was not an option. The Council went on to discuss the pros and cons of both types of shelter. If Northumberland County Council owned and maintained the footpath adjacent to the Village Green, then S38 consent to fit an off the peg shelter may not be required and could be installed quicker than the timber one. However, planning permission would still be needed in the conservation area and in any case, it was the timber structure that had received unanimous support from the public consultation not an off the peg one. Cllr Kirk said that Jonah Maurice had indicated that he was unhappy with the delay to the project and that he would most likely need to review the original estimate provided and that it would be best to do this only when he had been given the go ahead to conduct the work. Cllr Kirk said that he had also endeavoured to get a quote for the installation of the concrete base from the White Brothers but not received one as yet. Cllr Philipson questioned the need for S38 consent and reasoned that since Allendale Parish Council had management control over Allendale Village Green, that the public consultation received unanimous support for the timber shelter, that the shelter would be installed on a narrow part of the Village Green that was not used for any recreational activities, and that the small scale development did not affect the amenity of the neighbouring land, and that not obtaining specific permission from DEFRA would not itself be illegal and there would be no consequences to the Parish Council in installing the bus shelter. Cllr Gray reminded everyone that the Clerk had now received confirmation from the Chair of the Northumbrian Association of Local Councils (NALC) and that Graeme Popay had confirmed that the actions of the Parish Council must be transparent and robust and now that we had planning permission, we now needed to get consent to construct works on common land. After further discussion Cllr Gray proposed, and Cllr Kirk seconded, that the Council prepares and applies to DEFRA for S38 consent for the erection of the timber shelter and the concrete base, and the motion was unanimously carried by the Council. Cllr Kirk agreed to begin the application process and obtain estimates for the concrete base from further afield, and, on behalf of the Council, to apologise to Jonah Maurice for the delays to the project and not keeping him informed of developments.

Catton road safety mirror update

Cllr Gray said that he and Patrick Thompson would be installing the mirror in the next week.

Local Transport Plan priorities for 2025/2026

The Council agreed the following **three priorities** for the 2025/2026 Local Transport Plan:

- 1) A speed limit of 20mph through Catton
- 2) Installing double yellow lines to prevent parking on one side of the road through Catton
- 3) A speed limit of 30mph from Catton Junction to Thornley Gate and along to the Peth.

The Clerk to ask Cllr Horncastle to ask Highways to consider installing solid double white lines down the middle of the road to indicate no overtaking along Station Road as part of the overall scheme for that stretch of road.

RoSPA annual inspections update

Cllr Kirk proposed, and Cllr Coulson seconded to accept the estimates from Mark Armstrong to conduct essential maintenance work at the play areas at Allenfields (£245) and Denefields (£145).

Traffic safety along Station Road update

See Co Cllr Horncastle update above.

Village tidying update.

Cllr Gray said that Northumberland County Council had conducted weed spraying in and around the Village and returned two weeks later to remove the dead growth but only from the centre of the village and nowhere else. The Clerk to find out whether this was intentional.

12) Correspondence

Jenny Fairless – The Council considered all the suggestions for improving road safety in the parish over the previous 18 months, including Jenny's, and agreed its three priorities for the 2025/2026 Local Transport Plan (see 11 above).

Paul Webster, Forestry Commission – see Matters Arising at 6 above.

Neil Easton, Public Transport Manager – On behalf of the Council, Cllr Gray agreed to put in an application for funding to NCC's Strategic Transport Team to help meet the costs of the new bus shelter.

Valeria Dunn – The Clerk confirmed that Andy Lees of North Pennines National Landscape (NPNL) had written to Valeria to confirm that consolidation and repair works on the Smelt Mill Flues at Frolar Meadows was being done as part of the new Land of Lead and Silver project developed and run by the North Pennines National Landscape and funded by National Lottery Heritage Fund. He explained that it had been some time since Tom Gledhill from Historic England had led a meeting at Allendale Village Hall about the flues and the proposed works that had just started, and that the aim was to consolidate the ruin and stop the flues collapsing further. He said that all the consolidation and repair work designs and amendments had been given scheduled monument consent and signed off by the Department of Culture, Media, and Sport. Andy said that NPNL's Comms team had been short staffed which was why it had not shared information about the project until now.

Jayne Ford – Cllr White confirmed that the septic tank at Allenheads had now been emptied although it looked like there was a fracture to the pipe before it entered the water that was continuing to cause foul smells.

Andy Marr – The Council agreed that the Clerk advise Andy that his group would be fine to park anywhere in and around the Market Place although it was best to avoid the areas outside the Co-op and St Cuthbert's Church.

Joe Morris MP – See Matters arising at 6 above.

13) Finance Committee

Accounts for payment/bank reconciliation

Cllr Kirk proposed that the accounts for payment, seconded by Cllr Beck.

Treasurer's Account bank balance as of 31st August 2024.

£ 6,551.84

Business 30-Day Notice Account bank balance as of 31st August 2024

£10,940.39

External audit report 2023/2024

The Clerk confirmed that she had received the external audit report from Mazars Accountants that had confirmed that the Annual Governance & Accountability was in accordance with proper practices except that the Clerk had overlooked signing page five of the AGAR before submitting it for an external review. The Clerk said that she would be publishing the notice of conclusion and certificate of audit on the website in the next week or two.

Grant applications

The Council considered applications from **nine** organisations and agreed unanimously that the following awards were granted. The Council decided not to award a grant to Tynedale Sport as its activities did not specifically benefit parish residents.

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| Allendale Football Club | £480 |
| Allendale Lions Club | £100 |
| Allen Valleys Red Squirrels | £100 |
| Allendale Parish Floral & Horticulture Society | £100 |
| Allendale Youth Ambition | £400 |
| Allen Valley Bowling Club | £100 |
| Miscreations | £200 |
| St Cuthbert's Church | £400 |
| Total | £1,880 |

Review the capabilities of Lloyds bank signatories.

Following on from the announcement from Lloyds Bank that full access users would shortly be able to close current and savings accounts and order debit and credit cards online, the Council unanimously agreed to amend access user levels so that signatories are unable to do any of these things online.

14) Matters for 3rd October 2024 agenda.

Data Protection

Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) consultation response

15) Confidential agenda item (for Council only)

There was one item.

16) Date of next Parish Council

The next monthly Parish Council meeting would take place on **3rd October 2024** at 7pm at **Allendale Village Hall**.

[The meeting ended at 22:20](#)

Signed: Chair