

THIRSTON PARISH COUNCIL

At the Annual Parish Council Meeting held at Felton Village Hall, Coquet Room on Monday 29 May 2025.

Present: Cllrs Carter, Cruden, Green, Hoyle and Royal
The Parish Clerk in attendance – Mrs L Hamlin
3 members of the public

- 1 **Election of Chair** – Cllr Hoyle proposed and Cllr Royal seconded Cllr Green as Chairman. This was agreed unanimously.
- 2 **Election of Vice Chair** - Cllr Green proposed and Cllr Royal seconded Cllr Day as Vice-Chairman. This was agreed unanimously.

Members signed their Declaration of Office and Complying with Code of Conduct forms.

Declaration of Interest forms were handed out to be completed and returned to the Clerk asap for Clerk to send to NCC before deadline date.

The Clerk asked if members agreed to have their contact details displayed in the noticeboard and contact details on the website. All Councillors agreed with the exception of Cllr Hoyle. Clerk

3 **Election and nominations of Members to Committees and Groups**

- a) Cemetery Committee Meeting – Cllr Day with Cllr Royal as Reserve
- b) Finance Group – Cllrs Day, Green and Hoyle.
- c) Complaints Committee – to be confirmed when required depending on the nature of the complaint.

4 **Apologies for Absence** – Councillor Day and CC Sanderson

5 **Declarations of interest in items on the Agenda** – None

6 **Public Questions (max 5 mins per person)** –

A member of the public raised an issue with parking at Pumpkin Pie in that residents adjacent to the nursery park on the road despite having a driveway which does not help the situation with traffic in the area. Cllr Hoyle stated that the residents do this as they find it difficult to reverse out of their driveway when the road is busy. Clerk to relay this to NCC to be part of the ongoing discussions with the nursery and residents. Clerk

7 **The minutes of the meeting 27 March 2025.** As only Cllr Green was at the March Meeting it was agreed to approve the Minutes based on the procedures followed by the Council in those attending the meeting approve the draft minutes before they are put into the public domain.

8 **Matters Arising therefrom:**

1) **Matters arising there from (excluding outstanding actions in relation to NCC)**

- a) Field run off at Eshott Village – Work have been undertaken by NCC and deep ditches have been dug.
- b) Felton Cemetery Joint Committee – Policies and Procedures update – to be covered under report back from meetings.
- c) The Helm bus stop – National Highways has stated *Unfortunately, due to CD 169 standards (the design of lay-bys, maintenance hardstanding's, rest areas, service areas and observation platforms), we cannot combine the layby to accommodate both vehicles stopping and a bus stop. This means that if we were to move the bus stops to the laybys, we would lose a layby for vehicles to use for a rest area. Constructing a new rest area would be very expensive and we currently do not have the funding available to do so.* The Parish Council has responded with a request for suitable stopping places for the buses on the A1. Cllr Green stated that in the last 6-7 weeks the bus is not stopping to pick up people who have been to the zoo on the Southbound route and he and his wife have taken three lots of people into Morpeth. Clerk to raise this with the bus company and also CC Sanderson, who is in discussions with Highways England on this and other issues, there is room to site an actual layby for a bus stop here. Clerk
- d) Damaged kerbstone opposite Pumpkin Pie – Works completed.
- e) Defib Pads – replacement of – these have now been replaced.
- f) Parking at Pumpkin Pie – parking buddies enquiry – NCC has not responded to state these have been provided, they are currently not being used by Pumpkin Pie if they have been.

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- g) Peth Railings – NCC undertook the repairs to the railings very quickly and the Clerk has sent an email of thanks to the NCC Team involved in this.
- h) National Rivers Authority – to ascertain if they are treating the Japanese Knotweed – Cllr Day to report back on this. Cllr Day
- i) Bockenfield Road Sign – Still awaiting one to be replaced and one to be moved.

2) Long-term Outstanding issues being addressed by NCC for information

- a) Repointing of stone wall on the Peth (14/12/23) – Works are now being undertaken on the whole of the wall up The Peth.

9 Report by County Councillor Sanderson

The only brief update I have is to say I am looking forward to working with the Parish Council again. We have formed a minority Conservative administration and I am very privileged to be voted leader of the Council again. This means that I will be unable to attend every Parish Council meeting in my new patch but I will always do my best to let you have a written update.

Now that the excitement of the election and all that has followed is past, I have asked for an update on the 20mph past the playgroup and on the Highways England progress on signage on the A1 to help reduce the rat run through Felton and Thirston.

I have also seen the email about the Surgery. I am not up to speed with that so I have asked for a briefing next week.

As always please give me a ring or write to me Lisa if anything crops up I can help with.

Cllr Hoyle raised the question as to whether satnavs could be set to ensure people are not diverted off the A1 as appears to be the case through Woosington where satnav directs traffic to the airport to avoid Woosington and she wondered if the people of Woosington had said they don't want traffic going through their village and they have been taken off the satnav route and wondered if it was possible for Felton and Thirston to do the same. Cllr Cruden stated that generally satnavs try to avoid 20mph zones however if there are a large number of vehicles stationary on a major road google maps gets so many pings from drivers phones they direct drivers to other routes so even if there was a 20mph zone there is no guarantee that traffic will not be diverted through the villages. Clerk to look into this further. Clerk

10 Report back from Meetings and Representations on behalf of TPC

AGAR meeting – Clerk attended this virtual meeting with the auditors and NALC. There are not many changes taking place in relation to auditing however from 2026 Councils are required to have a .gov email and it is recommended Councillors also have one. It was raised with NALC that this is very costly for Parish Council and NALC are currently speaking to the relevant parties to see if a discounted rate can be achieved.

Cemetery Committee Meeting - There were a number of initiatives that people were going to investigate to reduce costs and increase income:

- Cllr Walton is looking at a number of other cemeteries to see how they increase their income
- Based on this Cllr Walton plans to draft a strategic plan for the cemetery
- Cllr Day agreed to look at the finances of another cemetery to work out if our cemetery costs are higher than expected

It was agreed that handing the cemetery to NCC was a very last resort and all other options should be looked at first.

It was agreed that the current cost sheet should be published but that it needed to be improved urgently so that it could be used as a marketing document

The Terms of Reference and Financial Regulations were reviewed and TPC are awaiting an amended version for the PC to then approve.

11 Potential Projects

- a) Footpaths/Rights of Way – None
- b) Landscaping –
- c) Short term / Medium term / Long term projects –
 - Village gateways – Awaiting a response from NCC as to whether gateways can be installed at two locations into West Thirston

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- Bus shelters – Most plants have been planted now and there will be a bit of ongoing planting. Once the swallows have left the bus shelter the WI will be looking to repaint the bus stop. The Clerk asked that she be informed asap so that NCC can come out and pressure wash the inside first. The WI then stated that it is up to the PC as to what they want in the bus stop ie, noticeboard to include timetable, taxi numbers, hostelrys etc.

ALL

12 To report on any planning decisions:

- 25/00675/FUL** - 1 Beech Avenue, Burgham Gardens – extension to new build property as per approval 24/02501/VARYCO for similar property at this site – APPROVED
- 25/00134/FUL** - Northumberland Woodland Burial and Crematorium - Proposed new building to house ancillary accommodation for existing Crematorium facilities - APPROVED
- 25/00672/VARYCO** - Burgham Park Golf Club, Burgham Park - Variation of Condition 2 (Approved Plans) on approved planning application 20/02093/FUL in order to submit alternative elevation and site plans relating to the approved clubhouse extension - APPROVED
- 25/00727/FUL** - Shothaugh Farm High Cottage - Removal of 3 No. existing rooflights and single story extension and internal alterations - APPROVED

Planning applications pending:

24/01531/VARYCO - Eshott Heugh Paintballing Site – variation to a number of conditions following detailed drainage report

24/02540/FUL - High Park Farm – Resubmission of plans for Change of use of agricultural building to a facility to dry paper pulp to produce animal bedding to include feeder, drum, burner, stack installation and control room. Due to go to Committee.

25/00765/LBC - Thirston New House Farm - LBC for internal works to include addition of ensuite bathroom (and associated SVP), thermal upgrades to roof and general redecoration works. Replacement of 4no. conservation rooflights.

25/00992/LBC - Old Farm House, West Thirston - Like for like replacement of roof tiles, stone coping and chimney stacks due to weather damage

25/01075/VARYCO - Burgham Park Golf Club - Variation of Condition 19 (Boundary Treatment) on approved application 23/04075/VARYCO - in order to utilise drawing 120267/8011 Rev H as the approved Boundary Treatment Plan

25/01400/LBC - The Forge 3 East Thirston Farm Steading - Listed Building Consent for one additional conservation style rooflight to comply with fire escape provision regulations

25/01854/ADE - Pumpkin Pie – Retrospective application for signage and fencing. Clerk to circulate.

Clerk

25/01523/REM - Eshott Heugh, Paintballing Site (known as Cheviot View) - Leisure Complex – this is a reserved matters application for when you already have outline planning permission but need to submit more detailed plans for approval. Clerk to circulate.

Clerk

Planning Issues:

Felmoor Park – Entrance lighting and signage

It was agreed that the Clerk would circulate information in relation to planning applications and how these are assessed by PCs – ie material considerations etc.

Clerk

13 Requested Agenda Items:

BOAT (Byway Open to All Traffic) road closure – U6002 Eshott Heugh Jct-Blackbrook Fm Jct - the ongoing issue of this BOAT is being addressed by a temporary traffic order. It will be in place due to sections which runs alongside river has been severely damaged by 4x4 vehicles and land is starting to slip and give way along with damaged vehicle parts and diesel spillage. These issues have potential to cause a high likelihood of danger to the public.

It is expected that the road will be closed 05/02/2025 to 05/08/2025.

Access will remain for equestrians, residents and farm vehicles.

14 Correspondence:

- NCC – Copy of letter informing residents of footpath works – circulated for information
- NCC – Election notices to state in quorate – circulated

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- NCC – Love Northumberland Awards - Community groups, schools and individuals can enter their environmental projects and initiatives for this annual celebration of activities which help to keep the county clean and green. Closing date 1 June.
- Email & verbal concerns raised by a member of public re situation following PC being inquorate – the member of public thought the Clerk would be looking to co-opt the vacancies but was informed this is not the process that is followed and a second election process would take place.
- Northumbrian Water - community outreach event Tuesday 22 April – circulated and put on facebook
- Zurich - Insurance renewal notice – Authorisation between meetings was given to renew the insurance.
- Email requesting advice on extending driveway dropped kerb – The Clerk informed the residents who to contact at NCC as the PC could not give permission for this. NCC have arranged a meeting with the residents.
- Email re new signage at Pumpkin Pie – Concerns were raised about the new signage on the side of Pumpkin Pie building – the Clerk informed NCC and NCC has confirmed that planning permission is required for this signage.
- Email re Microsoft Subscription – Authorisation between meetings was given to make this payment.
- Email enclosing NALC subscription - Authorisation between meetings was given to make this payment.
- Email – University of Portsmouth fraud study – Clerk completed the study.
- Email x 2 - Felton Archaeology Project Meeting - Wednesday 16th April update – Circulated for information and authorization between meetings was given to make the donation of £100.
- Emails re Airfield Liaison Group Meeting – NCC were not aware that this meeting had been cancelled due to Airfield staff leaving until querying with the Clerk. NCC are aware that this is a requirement of the planning approval and are liaising with the Airfield to address this issue.
- Email regarding attendees and statements made in March meeting – circulated and noted.
- 12 x emails – copied into complaints to Eshott Airfield in relation to low flying/overflying/dangerous flying – all emails were circulated and noted.
- Email in relation to Director of Eshott Airfield resigning raising concerns about who is taking over operation management and legal responsibilities – circulated and noted.
- Email requesting copies of Airfield Newsletter as not receiving direct from Airfield – Clerk confirmed due to staff leaving no more newsletters had been received.
- Emails requesting details of internal auditor under FOI – Circulated and responded to stating the PC are not required to provide the name of the auditor but it was made clear in the PC meeting that we are continuing with last years' auditor. Also the internal auditor would not respond to any correspondence or queries from anyone other than the Parish Council.
- Emails x 4 in relation to concerns over supplier VAT and bank account details – circulated and noted.
- Emails x 3 in relation to legislation following an Election detail – circulated and noted.
- Email requesting details of a Thirston Resident – the Clerk refused this request.
- Email copied in re breaches at Eshott Airfield– circulated and noted.
- Groundworks Newsletter - Circulated
- CAN News - Circulated
- NALC News - Circulated

15 Finance

- (a) **Financial Summary** was reviewed with no issues and the current balance stands at £14,229.43 TPC funds and £3,106.33 FCJC totaling £17,335.76. The balance was reconciled with the bank statement and Cllr Cruden signed the statement to confirm this
- (b) **Payments** - The following list was put before members since the last meeting due to the Council being inquorate and unable to make payments after 5 May:

Payments approved and made before this meeting:		
IB215	Felton Village Hall Hire	£15.00
SC	Lloyds Bank Service Charge	£4.25
IB216	Felton & District History Society Donation	£100.00

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IB217	Zurich Insurance	£419.19
IB218	NALC – Subscription and Website fee	£250.44
IB219	L Hamlin Salary and Expenses 25 hours at £20.02 (£500.50) Home working allowance of 5 weeks (£5.00) Microsoft Office Licence (£104.99) Defib Pads (£78.18)	£685.67

Payments this meeting:		
SC	Lloyds Bank Service Charge	£4.25
IB220	L Hamlin Salary and Expenses 20 hours at £20.02 (400.40) Home working allowance of 4 weeks (£4.00) Stationery (72.01)	£476.41

(c) **Income** – NCC Precept £5,375.00

(d) **Certificate of Exemption** – it was agreed that TPC submit a Certificate of Exemption to the external auditors as gross income and gross expenditure did not exceed £25,000. This was duly signed and will be sent to the external auditors.

Clerk

16 Urgent Items - None

17 Items for next agenda –
Year end accounts

Chairman closed the meeting at 8.35pm

Date of Next meeting: 31 July 2025