

Brinkburn and Hesleyhurst Parish Council

MINUTES OF MEETING

Meeting on: 9th May 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), Lesley Hall (LH), David Owen (DO), Jackie Scarpa (JS) Jamie Whicker (JW)
In attendance: Sgt Darren Stapleton and PC Russell Stalker Clerk: Garth Rhodes.

The meeting opened at 7.32 p.m.

1. **Apologies for Absence.** Vincent Milburn (VM)
2. **Police Update.** Sgt Darren Stapleton and PC Russell Stalker attended the meeting and gave the following update:
 - a. No crimes reported between July and the date of the meeting, indicating that Brinkburn and Hesleyhurst was a safe place to live.
 - b. The Police were encouraging residents to sign up to the **Northumbria Connected** website which provided an up-to-date messaging service on email of issues/crimes of relevance. Members agreed to sign up to the site at the meeting. Individuals can sign up at: <https://northumbriacconnected.co.uk/>
 - c. The Community team covered a large area as far as Seahouses, Elsdon, Powburn and Weldon Bridge. The team had expanded and now had a Sergeant, five PCs and two PCSOs. PC Russell Stalker who had previously been a PCSO in the area had just joined the team as a PC and would cover the area from Brinkburn to Elsdon. PCSO Peter Johnston was responsible for community support to farms in the area.

The Chair thanked Sgt Stapleton and PC Russell Stalker for their attendance and stated that he looked forward to regular reports from the Police and attendance at meetings when appropriate.
3. **Minutes of Previous Meeting** - The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 9th May 2023 and the extraordinary meeting of 20th July 2023 were reviewed, unanimously approved as a true record and signed as such. (Proposed JW, Seconded VM, All in Favour).
4. **Matters arising out of Minutes.**
 - a. Proposal for new Gym and Swimming Pool in Rothbury. No further information at present.
 - b. Consultation on draft recommendations for division boundaries in Northumberland. Following the submission of our comments on the boundary changes, which included several comments from residents, the PC was awaiting the publication of the final recommendations to be published on 3rd October 2023, which would then to be approved by Parliament in due course.
5. **Parish protocol for the titles of officers** DO reminded members that Council had some years ago agreed that the use of titles would be gender neutral. This decision had been taken at a council meeting and the detail recorded in the minutes. As this was quite some time ago, it was agreed that it would be difficult to locate this decision. The Clerk agreed to draw up a Gender-Neutral policy for consideration and approval at the next meeting. **Action: Clerk**
6. **Finance**
 - a. Notification of receipts since the last meeting. Approved.

12/05/2023	HMRC	VTR Ref 0000186	11.99
02/06/2023	CAN	WWCF74 – Defib final payment	500.00
30/06/2023	CAN	WWCF101 – CC& B Information Event	341.00
30/06/2023	CAN	WWCF102 – Playground Fencing	415.00
06/09/2023	NCC Ref 5272870	Precept Second Half	2750.00
		Total	4017.99

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

02/07/2023	Garth Rhodes	Salary & Expenses (Apr-Jun)	554.11
02/07/2023	HMRC	PAYE (Apr-Jun)	134.60
02/07/2023	NCC 018647264744	Litter picking signs	127.20
17/07/2023	Colliedog computers	Extra Mailbox server annual fee	39.00
03/08/2023	Longfram Memorial Hall	Room Hire PC 2 meetings PC and CC&B	28.00
15/08/2023	Julie Ayre	Mowing Playing Field	270.00
04/09/2023	Longfram Memorial Hall	CC&B Meeting	17.00
04/09/2023	Northumberland Estates	Playground rent 2023/24	50.00
10/09/2023	Andrew Cockburn	Fencing Works Embleton Tce Playground	553.56
		Total	1773.47

- c. Requests for donations: Citizens Advice_Northumberland. This request to be considered at the end of the financial year along with any other requests.
 - d. Bank Reconciliation to 11th September 2023 Approved.

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Balance per e-bank statement at 10th September 2023			6092.12
Less unpresented payments			
10/09/2023	Andrew Cockburn	553.56	
			553.56
Uncredited Deposits			0.00
Balance			5538.56
Balance per cash book			5538.56

7. Climate Change & Biodiversity (CC&BC)

- a. To receive reports and approve actions agreed from recent meetings of the Climate Change & Biodiversity Committee.
- Very successful information day held on 24th June where CC&BC was able to showcase its work and local biodiversity activities. Event fund by WWFCF.
 - Litter picking programme in abeyance until vegetation dies back.
 - Two very successful farm visits to Thistleyhaugh & Healey Farm which had established a very strong working relationship with the landowner.
 - Agreed to instigate a baseline habitat survey of flora and eventually fauna. Successful Bid to WWFCF (yet to be confirmed in writing) for hardware to manage the digital surveying software.
 - Areas to plant wildflower areas had been identified. Agreement from NCC and landowners underway prior to commencement of the project
 - Successful bid to WWFCF (yet to be confirmed in writing) for hedge laying project on the playing field. Contractor to be instructed to lay the hedge over the winter.
 - Successful bid to WWFCF (yet to be confirmed in writing) for the production of bird boxes which will be sited over the autumn/winter.
 - Meeting to be set up with landowners to investigate ways of working together on biodiversity project.
 - Initial gathering of evidence of nature of River Coquet and its tributaries and the agencies involved had been undertaken by MF. Dr Claire Walsh, National Green Infrastructure Facility, Newcastle University to be approached to request a digital water monitoring kit and request that her team undertake a monitoring of the river.
 - Sue Whicker agreed to take on role of information dissemination and to produce information flyers and articles to FramNews and Over the Bridges. PC agreed that all information to be disseminated to be approved by the Chair of the CC&BC and its logo to be used. Reasonable dissemination costs to be funded by the Council. **Action: JW**
 - As there were a considerable number of active matters in progress ,the CC&BC proposed that additional meetings of the committee would be needed, particularly during the first year of operation. The next meeting was to take place on Wednesday 18th October 2023. BHPC agreed up to six meetings per year. The Chair asked the Committee to ensure that it did not overextend its activities as there was a danger that key members became burned out. **Action: JW/Clerk**
- b. Coquetdale Cluster Climate Action Plan. Katie Scott, Co-ordinator of Rothbury's Climate Action Group: Rothbury CAN attended the recent Coquetdale Cluster to explore the possibility of making a joint Climate Change Action Plan - joining our parishes together in terms of co-ordinating our climate action activities. She had asked that Parish Councils choose one or more Cllrs to be the link Cllr(s) for the Coquetdale Climate Action Group. The CC&BC agreed that JW and Judith Baker (CC&BC) would represent BHPC & the CC&BC on the group.
- c. North Northumberland Environmental Network. A wide range of community-based climate, environmental and sustainability groups had been invited to an event on 23rd September to create a 'North Northumberland Environmental Network' (working title) which would provide a means to share information, identify opportunities for collaboration and provide a platform to address common issues. JS and Judith Baker (CC&BC) to attend to represent the BHPC CC&BC.
- d. Verge Cutting around Embleton Terrace. At the beginning of June, NCC Highways cut the verges around Embleton Terrace which meant that a number of important wild species were cut before seeding. We wrote to NCC to ask to put this on the register of areas to be protected from cutting. We received a reply they could not do this for health and safety reasons. They did, however, have a register of protected areas and if we provided maps and location details, they would reconsider this. This detail has yet to be presented to NCC. There were implications for other proposed wildflower areas in the Parish. It was agreed to present NCC with a detailed list of proposed areas with location and species details and perhaps to ask to have a site meeting. **Action JS**

8. **Planning** – To note and discuss any planning issues since previous meeting. There were currently no requests for consultation that have not already been commented on.

Reference	Address	Type	BHPC Comment
22/01568/LBC	Cockshot Farmhouse	Permitted	See previous minutes for comments

9. Highways

- a. Highways and Footpaths Report. No major issues to report. The temporary repairs to the style on the footpath adjacent Embleton Terrace did not appear to be sturdy and to be reported to NCC. **Action: JS**
- b. Report on any issues raised/ to raise with Highways Department.
- Following a series of requests to NCC including the Leader of the Council, they had eventually agreed to put access and speeding restrictions on Villa Rd during the repairs on the B6344 at Todstead. This had proved successful except for delivery vans who were continuing to use the road, driving at high speed.

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- ii. All of the planned hotbox work was now complete. This would be further improved later in this financial year when the next phase of resurfacing was implemented. NCC had agreed to make an additional inspection of the Lonning to B6342 and any identified actionable defects would be programmed for repair.
- iii. Due to the increase in road repairs especially on the B6344, there was an increased use of the C188 by heavy vehicles and those not used to driving on country roads. There had been a number of accidents and near-misses by people driving at speed. Agreed to ask Highways if they could place signage at the caravan site advising the road was unsuitable for heavy vehicles and also safety warnings at appropriate points along the C188. **Action: Clerk**

c. LTP priorities 2024/25 had been submitted.

10. Wingates Wind Farm Community Fund

- a. Report from WWFCF meetings SB reported that the three BHPC requests for funding: hedge laying, nest boxes and hardware to manage the digital surveying software were the only submissions considered at the recent WWCF meeting and all were approved.
- b. Parish procedure for applying for grants and financial assistance There had been some confusion due to communication difficulties with the WWFCF administration regarding past and present projects and applications for grants. The procedure for applying to the Windfarm trust for the funding of Parish projects was that the application was to come from the Chair for PC projects, an applications from the CC&B Committee to come through its Chair. The Clerk would present all applications on our behalf. DO/SB to be kept abreast of all applications prior to and after their submissions. All correspondence between WWFCF (other than communication with SB as WWFCF member) were to go through the Clerk and that he be named as the principal contact on all grant applications. DO/Clerk to write to WWCF to clarify the process. **Action: DO/Clerk**

11. Coquetdale Cluster Meeting

- a. Items to discuss from the last Cluster Meeting. The main issue that the group were pursuing currently was the impact of the change to a fully digital telephone system by 2025. The winners of the contract for this work for Coquetdale were deemed to be unprepared for the extent and cost of the work. It had become apparent that due to legislation a cut-off of vulnerable people would not be permitted and that a copper wire system could be maintained through the valley for those unable to go digital.
- b. Items for next Cluster Meeting Agenda.
 - i. Update on Proposal for new Gym and Swimming Pool in Rothbury.
 - ii. Consideration of impact on other highways during road closures and the need for additional speed and safety signage in these areas.

12. Cemetery & Joint Burial Committee Reports

- a. Longframlington Cemetery. Longframlington PC (LPC) were still awaiting confirmation of the transfer of land ownership of the cemetery. LPC had decided to include the making of the cemetery extension into a wildflower meadow as part of its Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Plan, until the land was required for burials which would be some years from now.
- b. Rothbury JBC. The diversion of the stream to allow more space for burials was on hold until the sale of the Rothbury estate had gone through.

13. To report on matters relating to the sale of the Rothbury Estate & nominations for Community Assets and to agree next steps with respect to actions agreed at the extraordinary meeting held 20th July 2023.

This whole business continued to be a bit of a muddle. There has been a lot of misinformation given which has caused something of a panic about what should be done. We were under the impression that we only had six weeks to put in a nomination but after gaining some valuable advice from Iain Hedley at NCC it was clear this was not the case. NCC had not (at time of writing) received a nomination from any nominator for any community asset in the Rothbury estate, so as yet there was nothing for them to consider and 'no clocks were ticking'. Nominations could be made at any time, regardless of who owns the asset. If the asset was appraised as valid NCC would write to the owner within 5 working days, who then has two weeks to comment. NCC then have a further 5 weeks to consider the nomination and the owner's comments (an 8 week process in total). If the nomination meets the threshold for community value, it will be approved, added to the List and the owner will be informed. The asset may already be on the market, in which case it is in the owner's interests to inform NCC immediately in writing that they wish to dispose of the property. If the nomination is approved the nominators need to be ready for the interim moratorium (the six-month period) to be triggered, as they would only have 6 weeks to inform NCC in writing of their intention to bid to purchase. If they do, then the full moratorium will be in place which is 6 months (minus the 6 weeks) for the community interest to demonstrate that they have the money to bid. The owner can ignore the bid.

The Gate Pub, Forestburn Gate. With respect to a nomination for the Gate (or other residencies/land), nominators are not bound by any specific deadline. However, the estate could be sold at any time. This would have no impact upon the process of nominating an asset and if approved would be listed as a community asset (for 5 years). However, if there is concern that a new landlord would change the use of the asset, the quicker the nomination is made the better. Iain Hedley had informed the Council that a nomination should come from a single parish although the nominations would be strengthened by letters of support from neighbouring parishes. The Clerk had been in consultation with the Rothley with Hollinghill PC (RwHPC) and agreed that it be proposed to BHPC (at this meeting) that RwHPC submit the nomination to NCC and BHPC send the letter of support. A nomination from Rothbury PC for the Gate would not be allowed as they are not a neighbouring parish. Iain Hedley also advised that a nomination for the Simonside Show site was unlikely to be successful. The Parish Council gave its unanimous agreement to the proposal that Brinkburn & Hesleyhurst Parish Council submit a letter of support to Northumberland County Council with respect to the Nomination as a Community Asset of the Gate Pub, Forestburn Gate, NE61 4PT to be made by Rothley with Hollinghill Parish Council.

The Community Playing Field, Embleton Terrace. At the Rothbury PC extraordinary meeting it was agreed that they would put forward a nomination for the playing field (and the gate and whole estate. MF informed the RPC after the meeting (as he was not able to speak) that BHPC had decided not to submit a nomination for the field at this time as the landowner had decided not to include it in the sale. Not sure what has happened to the RPC nomination on this.

Key Areas of Interest. The CC&BC had been informed of the decision of the key areas in the Parish of particular interest with respect to Climate Change and Biodiversity that it would like to pursue and would be actively following up on these:

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- a. The Disused Railway line through the Parish as a biodiversity corridor and public right of way
 - b. Biodiversity/ Rewilding Corridor linking Hepple Wilds and Thistleyhaugh Estate (in conjunction with other PCs)
 - c. Wards Hill with a particular emphasis on the improvement of the organic landscape and the protection of our fauna and flora.
- The Clerk had not formally made any approaches as yet to NCC as yet on these areas. The CC&BC were in contact with NCC officers on a number of matters and so the process of consultation was underway. These areas of interest will be included in the agenda for its next meeting on 18th October. Clerk had informed Rothbury, Whitton & Tosson, Rothley with Hollinghill PCs of BHPC's decision on the Rothbury estate and invited them to work with us. Whilst he had received a number of communications from RWHPC he had not received a formal response from RPC. He had also written to the Northumberland National Park Authority and Forestry England to ask what action (if any) and position they are taking with respect to the sale of the Rothbury Estate. The following responses had been received:

'Forestry England does not have a position and the sale will proceed on the open market and if there is sale then afterwards Forestry England would work with the new landowner for Simonside as Forestry England have a lease on some of the area being sold. Forestry England being a Government Dept organisation does not take a view on such matters or also planning applications for such items as say utility infrastructure.'

'Northumberland National Park Authority has noted with interest the sale of Rothbury Estate. A significant portion of the estate lies within the Northumberland National Park and the Authority therefore has an interest in its future ownership. On that part of the estate within Northumberland National Park there are significant areas of natural and historic interest, as well as areas heavily used for public recreation. The Authority has over the past years invested heavily in maintaining the path network over Simonside and providing visit or facilities for the public. Whilst the Authority would have an interest in the ownership or management of parts of the Estate within the National Park, we do not have the resources to purchase the Estate or part of it at this time. The Authority therefore has an interest in ensuring that any future owner is aware of and sensitive to the significant local and national interests represented within the Rothbury Estate. The National Park Authority has and continues to hold discussions with Northumberland County Council and other like-minded organisations as to possible options for securing natural and historic environment and wider community interests within the Rothbury estate. We would be interested to discuss with your Parish Council your views on community interests on the Estate and any other aspects you feel would be of mutual interest.'

It was agreed that the Council would need to make a response to the National park indue course.

- 14. To review the effectiveness of mechanisms by which the Council communicates with its residents.** This was an issue raised in earlier meetings and it was agreed to discuss this matter at this meeting. Currently. Other than the Parish Council Webpage, there was no clear agreed process to communicate with residents. 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. Possible ways include:

- i. Newsletter: regular or as required
- ii. Social Media
- iii. Letter (hand delivered or posted)

All of these would require additional resource.

Members made a number of suggestions as to ways to improve our communication. It was felt that more general information did eventually filter through the community but that there needed to be a more effective mechanism for dissemination and consultation on important matters such as the Boundary Commission boundary changes and the sale of the Rothbury Estate. It was felt that community events such as the Climate Change & Biodiversity event were a good way for people to get to know more about and to get involved in parish issues and activity. Mailshots were a good way for people to hear about the work of the Parish Council. It was agreed that this matter should be deferred until the next meeting to be placed early in the agenda in order to enable a fuller discussion on this matter.

Action: Clerk

- 15. Annual Joint Town & Parish Council Conference County Hall, Morpeth, on Thursday 5th October 2-6pm.** There were two places available. DO agreed to attend. **Action: Clerk**

16. Any Other Business

- a. Dog Bin at Weldon Bridge. The lid on the bin was broken again. It was agreed to replace the lid if possible or if not to replace the bin. The Council agreed to allocate up to £200 for a replacement bin. JW agreed to site the new bin on receipt. **Action: Clerk/JW**

17. Items for Next Meeting:

- a. To review the effectiveness of mechanisms by which the Council communicates with its residents.

- 18. Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday 14th November 2023 at 7.30 p.m.in the Longframlington Memorial Hall**

The meeting closed at 9.40 p.m.

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