

# THIRSTON PARISH COUNCIL

At the Parish Council Meeting held at Northumberland Crematorium, Bockenfield on Thursday 19 December 2024.

**Present:** Cllrs L Clarehugh, J Day, E Davidson, D Green, P Hantman and J Marshall.  
The Parish Clerk in attendance – Mrs L Hamlin  
Four members of the Public

Cllr Marshall opened the meeting by stating since our last meeting we have lost 2 well-known residents. David Brown was a farmer who had lived in Thirston Parish all his life and was well known to all. It is sad news and condolences to be sent to his family and friends. Also we have lost Tony Hood, a life long resident of Felton. He made a significant contribution to Felton Parish Council for many years and worked with Thirston PC in a number of capacities. He was very popular and over 200 people attended his funeral today. Cllrs Davidson and Marshall attended his funeral on behalf of Thirston PC.

Cllr Marshall informed those present that this meeting is being filmed and recorded. Cllr Marshall stated that permission had not been sought from the Crematorium owners to video and requested that only audio be used however the member of public disagreed with this and stated if he could not be given permission to record here then the PC would have to find an alternative location. Cllr Marshall wanted to place on record his thanks to the Director of the Crematorium for allowing the PC to use this space and the only other potential space would be the airfield café.

**67 Apologies for Absence** –County Councillor Sanderson.

**68 Declarations of interest in items on the Agenda –**

Cllr Hantman – In relation to South High Moor Farm under item 79 Urgent Items

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

Q1 – The Joint Cemetery reserves have decreased significantly from 2023 and – what is TPC going to do about this – Cllr Marshall stated this would be discussed under Cemetery Report – item 73.

Q2 – Why did TPC and Newton on the Moor & Swarland PC attend and vote at the Cemetery meeting on 26 September when it was called with less than 3 days notice – Cllr Marshall stated this would be discussed under Cemetery Report – item 73.

**70 The minutes of the meeting 7 November 2024** were amended to change the uncontested election figure from 117 to 178.

**71 Matters Arising therefrom:**

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

- a) Field run off at Eshott Village – No works been undertaken to ditches. Clerk to chase up NCC. Clerk
- b) BOAT at Blackbrook Farm - no recent complaints – remove until another complaint made. Cllr Marshall stated that this should still be monitored as there have been situations of gate padlocks being removed and a stolen burnt-out car has been left adjacent to a PROW.
- c) Felton Cemetery Joint Committee – Policies and Procedures update – a request for this to be added to the Cemetery Agenda to progress. Clerk
- d) The Helm bus stop – Clerk to ask NCC where they are in relation to speaking to Highways England on this request. Clerk
- e) Land North East of Felmoor Caravan Park application – Approved at Committee.
- f) Verge cutting into West Thirston – Clerk still not found out who is cutting these verges. Clerk
- g) Traffic through Felton/West Thirston from A1 diversions – meeting held with Highways England – see items 72 and 73.
- h) Speeding camera – this has now been repaired and serviced.

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

- a) Repointing of stone wall on the Peth (14/12/23) – Still outstanding
- b) Water running down the Narrow Bank (14/12/23) – Still outstanding

**72 Report by County Councillor Sanderson** – My main issue is around our Budget as usual and the anxious wait to see if the government will assist with our biggest headache -the ever rising cost of

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adult and children social care which together have cost us an extra £5m or so over the past 5 years.

I am determined to protect our frontline services and continue our free town centre car parking along with our superschools building programme with new schools in Seaton Valley, Amble and Berwick.

Other things in my diary include the rolling out of Food Waste collection - we have had our trial and it will help our recycling rates but it is going to be very expensive.

We are mulling over the government plans for extra houses and the potential for the forced removal of some green space land which goes against our current Local Plan.

The new Northumberland Line opens for business on Sunday morning at 8 am and I will be there to see the first train leave.

We had a useful meeting with Highways England a week or two ago around the A1 detour issue - given it may be that dualling is parked for a considerable time it is right to see if we can get some measures agreed for both Felton and Thirston detours. It will not be easy to do I am told by our experts but I am arranging a follow up meeting with HE in January.

Finally I am still pressing for a 20 mph stretch near the Nursery and officers are working on this and a way for cars to turn round without doing so in the middle of the road using some of the nurseary car park possibly. As always please let me know if I can help and best wishes.

Cllr Marshall asked the Clerk to send on the Parish Councils festive best wishes.

Clerk

## 73 Report back from Meetings and Representations on behalf of TPC

- **Annual Joint Town & Parish Council Conference** – Cllrs Marshall and Hantman attended. It was well represented by both rural villages and large towns from across Northumberland. It was a good opportunity to learn more about the services on offer, especially from Highways and Planning. There was a session where CC Sanderson, Mr Murfin and Mr Snowdon from NCC made presentations followed by Q&As where a number of issues were raised which varied in focus depending on the areas being represented. TPC does not have issues with basic services like some other councils, ie road repairs and waste issues. Cllrs spoke at length about accelerated affordable housing. Mr Murfin stated a lot is being done and these questions are frequently raised. New housing is being addressed as well as bringing old empty properties back into use. It was a useful meeting and it was suggested other councillors attend the next session.
- **Highways/NCC meeting** – as cover above by CC Sanderson. This was well represented by Highways England (HE) with 7 employees. The NCC monitoring showed there were no signs of speeding through the villages however over the Bank Holiday there were 3.5k vehicles movements of which 280 were HGV compared to 500-600 on a normal day and 20-30 HGVs. Unfortunately HE do not take into account Bank Holiday traffic. It was also raised that two HGVs cannot pass each other through the villages which causes problems for traffic flow. CC Sanderson asked about HE providing financial support for traffic calming to deter HGVs coming through as HE are putting traffic onto NCC roads due to non-dualling of A1. HE to look into funding pots as already committed to March 2025. The finance people at HE and NCC will get together to discuss a potential way forward. It was agreed that Felton PC and Thirston PC should come up with suggestions to put to NCC for how to address the issues. This could also involve suggesting other areas of work if the dualling is not going ahead – eg turn into Bockenfield and rights turns from there onto A1
- **Cemetery Committee Meeting** – Cllr Davidson reported that the most important issues was the request to release the funds from the new land and the cherry tree ring fenced money to offset the reduction in income and increase in expenses for the Cemetery. A resolution has not yet been passed. The cherry tree reserves were for works which does not require undertaking and it was agreed these could be released. £10k has been allocated for the purchase of new land however due to the decrease in usage no new land would be required. Cllr Marshall stated it would be beneficial to see if anything can be found out about the original set up and if there were any criteria attached to enable the funds to be released to general reserves. The viability of the Cemetery continuing to be under PCs control needs to be investigated as it cannot be sustained in the long term financially. A strategy needs to be put in place if costs continue to rise with no potential increase in revenue. It was noted that the group does organize one of the best Remembrance Day services and the Cemetery is beautifully kept however the financial situation is a reflection of changing times and needs addressing. The Clerk is to request that an

Clerk

Clerk

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item is added to the Cemetery Agenda for January to discuss a strategy on going forward and for a proposal to be prepared in time for the TPC March meeting.

In relation to the issue of a meeting taking place without the required three days notice – the meeting was convened in an attempt to be helpful as it had been difficult to schedule a meeting. TPC was not aware that the notice period had not been adhered to - they were just keen to have the meeting taking place after the issues of trying to arrange a date. The meeting is set to take place again in January so any resolutions passed in September can be agreed.

- **Eshott Airfield Meeting** – Cllrs Day and Hantman attended from TPC, two FPC representatives, CC's Sanderson and Thorne and Amanda Burns and Darren Davis from the Airfield. Mr Soulby from NCC Planning was due to attend but was ill. This meeting was arranged to discuss the Terms of Reference (ToR) and the Liaison Group. The purpose to allow two way communication between the PCs and the Airfield – it is not a route for complaints as there are already mechanisms in place for this. The ToR were discussed and agreed 2 Parish Councillors can attend but it does not have to be the same two and meetings will be held quarterly as a starting point with the ToR and how the Liaison Group is operating to be reviewed after 1 year. The Airfield Operators have taken on a 25-year lease so are looking at long term planning. There are immediate inherited issues to address – café and Ops Centre planning, waste treatment and road repairs. The Airfield has been audited several times since the change in ownership. Cllr Hantman raised the issue of complaints about particular pilots and how this was to be addressed and the Airfield stated it would come up with some wording to send to pilots and encourage them to be mindful of people in the area to avoid complaints. This is a starting point and will evolve over time. The new operators want to be cooperative and this is an improvement on the previous situation. The group does not address areas of planning conditions so need to make sure that NCC are aware of the situation and the lack of agreed Management Plan which was part of the planning conditions. It was agreed that the ToR need to be changed to make the purpose of it clearer including the role of the PCs. It has not included a section on publication of minutes etc as discussed at the meeting. It is important that there is an emphasis on “show me, don't tell me” when gaining assurance about the steps taken to avoid nuisance. Cllrs Day and Hantman to work on the ToR and circulate to Councillors before submitting to Airfield.
- **CRAGs Delegate Meeting** – CRAGs now has its own insurance. The Plan for 2025 is to continue with water quality testing and e-coli testing which is important to see if the river is safe for children to play in during the summer. River-fly kick tests will be undertaken using the methodology developed by anglers. A survey of invasive weeds will be undertaken and phased removal will take place. On 6 March developers will be at Swarland Village Hall to talk about biodiversity, net gain and SUDS and advise what should be included in Neighbourhood Plans going forward – this will be open to the public and advertised. There is continued spillage from Felton Sewerage Works – this is being worked on but the main problem being wipes blocking the system and capacity issue. This raised concerns due to contamination being released into a SSSI. Cllr Marshall asked if the PCs should be writing a letter to NWL/MPs about this issue and Cllr Day stated that he is not sure this is the right time.

## 74 Potential Projects

- a) Footpaths/Rights of Way – Recent flooding along the riverside footpath has led to more erosion. Clerk to contact NCC to request they look at this area again for safety reasons.
- b) Landscaping – There is the possibility of a donation of hundreds of bulbs and Cllr Day asked if NCC would need to be contact if being planted on their land. The Clerk recommended writing to the relevant Clerks who would seek approval from NCC – there should not be an issue as would not cause sight line issues however need to avoid planting where NCC might cut them down whilst undertaking grass cutting.
- c) Short term / Medium term / Long term projects
  - Village gateways – Cllr Marshall to speak to farmer about allowing planter on his land
  - Bus Shelters - Works will recommence in the Spring.

Clerk

## 75 Planning:

### To report on any planning decisions:

**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,

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play area and vintage vehicle museum – objections based on Neighbourhood Plan – re-consultation in progress – APPROVED at Committee

**24/01770/FUL** - Blackbrook Farm - Erection of new agricultural shed - APPROVED

**24/03737/PRUTPO** - Angus Lodge Stable Drive Eshott – TPO T1 - T2 Lime crown reduction and thinning of main tree - PERMITTED

## 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. **(23/04081/FUL)**

**24/03613/FUL** - The Club House Bockenfield Country Park - Retention of The Clubhouse to provide amenities for those at the site, including provision of refreshments such as food and drink, sale of ice cream, toiletries, basic food stuffs and cleaning materials

**24/04166/FUL** – Eshott Airfield - Retrospective Permission for a New Build Operations Building, along with car parking and landscaping – It was agreed to state to NCC that permission should have been sought first before the building had been built. Whilst the PC may well not have had an objection it is not acceptable to build and get retrospective permission.

Clerk

## Planning Issues:

Bockenfield Caravan Park – blue lights illuminating entrance

Felmoor Park – Entrance lighting and signage – Clerk to escalate within NCC planning since there has been no response to this.

Clerk

Felmoor Park – Not complying with planning approval for timber cabins – Clerk to escalate within NCC planning since there has been no response to this.

Clerk

## 76 Requested Agenda Items:

Draft Budget for 2025/26 – It was agreed to move to discuss under Finance.

Donation to Royal British Legion – It was agreed to move to discuss under Finance.

Cemetery update

## 77 Correspondence:

- NCC - Planning website questionnaire – Completed by the Clerk. Councillors found the website easy to use and could not see how any improvements could to be made.
- North East Mayor Survey – Transport within the North East – circulated to councillors for completion and put into The Bridge for residents to complete.
- Pharmacy Needs Survey – Completed by the Clerk.
- Lloyds Bank Changes to Community Account – Lloyds will be charging £4.25 per month if there are less than 100 transactions per year for the Community Account. The Clerk has looked into alternative accounts however Lloyds is still the cheapest. These charges have been incorporated into the budget.
- Email re inaccuracy of draft November meeting minutes - circulated
- Email request for copy of Airfield Terms of Reference for Liaison Group – a copy was provided.
- Emails – copied into a number of complaints to Eshott Airfield from one individual - circulated.
- Email with questions to be raised at the Airfield meeting on 11 December (received after meeting) but circulated.
- Airfield – updated Terms of Reference – It was agreed as per item 73 that more work is required on the ToR.
- Email from Felton and Thirston WI – email stated that the WI are aware there has been little contact with Thirston PC however the Clerk stated joint works are being done on bus shelters. It was also stated that there is no link from the website to the WI and the Clerk confirmed that the link is on the site under “links” along with other organization.
- Email from resident re website – complaint received that the website contacts are out of date and the Clerk confirmed that this was being worked on and the information would also be passed to Felton Parish Council to avoid duplicated work. It was also suggested that bus timetables and back issues of The Bridge – however the The Bridge is not produced in a digital copy so not in the correct format and bus timetables are easily available online.

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- Email re path clearing down The Peth and damaged kerb stone opp Pumpkin Pie – these issues have been reported to NCC. Clerk
- Air Ambulance donation request – it was agreed to donate £50 as per the budget. Clerk
- Copy of Email to NCC re High Park Farm and Air Quality Assessment – for information
- Groundworks UK newsletter - Circulated
- Northumbria Connect email alerts
- NALC News - Circulated
- CAN News - Circulated

## 78 Finance

- (a) **Financial Summary** was reviewed with no issues and the current balance stands at £14,444.90 TPC funds and £3,106.33 FCJC Funds totaling £17,551.23. The balance was reconciled with the bank statement and Cllr Clarehugh signed the statement to confirm this.
- (b) **Payments** - The following list was put before members and was approved:

Payments this meeting:		
IB203	L Hamlin Salary and Expenses 30 hours at £19.66 (£589.90) Home working allowance of 6 weeks (£6.00) Remembrance Day Wreath (£30.00) Auditors Gift (10.49)	£636.39
IB204	HMRC - Employers NIC for November Salary	£10.36
IB205	British Legion Donation	£30.00
IB206	Great North Air Ambulance Donation	£50.00
IB207	Food Bank Donation	£25.00

- (c) **Income** - None
- (d) **Donation** to Royal British Legion – – It was agreed to donate £30 as per the budget.
- (e) **Draft Budget for 2025/26** – The budget was reviewed and it was agreed that the precept rise by £250 to £10,750 and the Clerk to submit this to NCC. Clerk
- During the discussion about the budget questions were raised in relation to the defib machine costs and the Clerk confirmed that the costs are electricity and pad replacements which are required every two years. Cllr Marshall stated he was very grateful to the resident who monitors the machine and the resident who allowed the defib machine to be sited at his property and linked to his electricity supply. Cllr Clarehugh stated there is a defib at the Crematorium and it was agreed that there should be some information on the website and The Bridge the locations of the defib machines in the parish. Clerk

## 79 Urgent Items –

24/04147/NONMAT South High Moor Farm – The Clerk has received three emails from concerned residents about this non-material change to previously approved application. The Clerk raised these concerns with NCC and this has subsequently been withdrawn and a variation to conditions will be submitted which means residents and the PC will be consulted as this is actually a considerable change to the original application. It was agreed a site visit would be undertaken when the application is received. Clerk

Clerk to request an update from Felton PC as to the situation with regards to Felton Surgery. Clerk

## 80 Items for next agenda –

Cemetery Feedback  
Update of Felton Surgery

The Chairman thanked the Councillors and Clerk for all their work during the year – it is not just a case of attending the Parish Council meetings, there are other meetings and paperwork to deal with – Councillors volunteer their time on behalf of Thirston Parish residents. More generally he wishes Councillors and members of the public a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Chairman closed the meeting at 9.10pm

Date of Next meeting: 6 February 2025