

# Brinkburn and Hesleyhurst Parish Council

## MINUTES OF MEETING

**Meeting on:** 9<sup>th</sup> January 2024  
**Meeting at:** Longframlington Memorial Hall  
**Meeting Time:** 7.30 p.m.  
**Present:** Cllrs: Steven Bray (SB); Mark Fenwick (MF), Lesley Hall (LH), David Owen - Chair (DO), Jackie Scarpa (JS) Jamie Whicker (JW)  
**In attendance:** Clerk: Garth Rhodes.

The meeting opened at 7.34 p.m.

1. **Apologies for Absence.** Vincent Milburn (VM)
2. **Minutes of Previous Meeting** - The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> November 2023 were reviewed, unanimously approved as a true record and signed as such. (Proposed DO, Seconded JS, All in Favour).
3. **Matters arising out of Minutes.**
  - a. Sale of the Rothbury Estate & nominations for Community Assets update. Rothly and Hollinghill had decided to pause the process of the Gate community asset application. It had turned out to be a much bigger endeavour than they had first thought. They were still concerned about the issue and planned to monitor the situation and consider the possibility of doing something further in the future. DO stated that it now looked unlikely for a nomination for a community asset for the Gate to be pursued. Whilst there was much rumour about the sale of the Rothbury Estate nothing had been confirmed, and there wasn't anything further BHPC could do at this time. The positive outcome of the sale of the estate was that there was now the potential for the Council to acquire the playground.
  - b. Parish Boundary Commission proposals update. As previously reported, there was nothing that our MP was able to do to promote our campaign and affect the outcome, as the proposals were not to be discussed in Parliament and the next stage in the approval process was merely a paper exercise. Once the process was completed, the Parishes of Brinkburn & Hesleyhurst would be in the Longhorsley Division, and Glen Sanderson would be our County Councillor. Therefore, the petition, which had a significant role in our appeal to the Boundary Commission, had been closed. A report to this effect had been published on our website. It would be helpful to know when the Boundary Commission's proposals were/are to be approved by Parliament and what the official notification process would be. **Action: Clerk**
  - c. NCC Open space survey. DO had submitted the report on the PC's behalf. He confirmed that he had included information about the importance of dark skies to our residents and visitors to the area. DO to provide members with detail of the content of the response. **Action: DO**
4. **Police Report.** None. It was agreed to place information on and link to Northumbria Connected onto the PC webpage. **Action: Clerk**

**Item 15 To review the regularity of Parish Council Meetings.** Members agreed, due to its importance, to bring this matter forward in the agenda. They had asked this be placed on the agenda due to the increasing workload of the Council, resulting in meetings finishing late with numerous matters having to be deferred. DO proposed that an additional meeting in July be added into the annual meeting schedule forthwith and that meetings to start at 7.30 with a guillotine at 9.30 p.m. If members wished to pursue any items after the deadline, then a proposal would need to be made before 9.30 p.m. and approved by a majority of those attending. Clerk to arrange dates for the additional July meetings and inform members. This would mean that there would henceforth be six PC meetings per year. All in Favour. **Action: Clerk**

5. **Finance**
  - a. To accept the 2023/24 Local Government Services Pay Agreement. The National Pay Award had been agreed in November. The Clerk was currently on SCP 14 and the hourly rate had increased from £13.21 to £14.21. The rise and backdated pay was reflected in the salary payment below.
  - b. Notification of receipts since the last meeting. None
  - c. Approval of Clerk's salary, expenses, PAYE & NI and approval of Other Payments since the last meeting. Approved.

|            |                            |                                     |                |
|------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| 13/11/2023 | PC Warehouse UK Ltd        | Panasonic Toughbook CF-20           | 700.00         |
| 19/12/2023 | Garth Rhodes reimbursement | Cartridge People - x1 printer toner | 44.90          |
| 30/12/2023 | Garth Rhodes               | Salary & Expenses (Oct- Dec)        | 739.77         |
| 30/12/2023 | HMRC                       | PAYE (Oct-Dec)                      | 181.20         |
|            |                            | <b>Total</b>                        | <b>1665.87</b> |

- d. Requests for donations. None.

# Brinkburn and Hesleyhurst Parish Council

e. Bank Reconciliation to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023 Approved.

| Bank Reconciliation at 3rd January 2024          |            |              |        | £       |
|--|------------|--------------|--------|---------|
| Balance per bank statements at 3rd December 2023 |            |              |        | 6537.58 |
| Less unrepresented payments                      | 19/12/2023 | Garth Rhodes | 44.90  |         |
|  | 30/12/2023 | Garth Rhodes | 739.77 |         |
|  | 30/12/2023 | HMRC         | 181.20 |         |
|  |            |              |        | 965.87  |
| Uncredited Deposits -                            |            |              |        | 0.00    |
| Balance per cash book                            |            |              |        | 5571.71 |
| Balance per cash book                            |            |              |        | 5571.71 |

f. To agree the Budget 2024/25 and to set the Annual Precept 2024/25. To keep the c/f at the end of 24/25 similar to last year and the Clerk recommended to raise the precept by £1k to £6500. This would mean increases for:

|                                    |         |                         |                           |
|------------------------------------|---------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Brinkburn households (at Band D)   | £53.24  | 16.8% increase = £7.60  | Monthly increase of £0.64 |
| Hesleyhurst households (at Band D) | £106.89 | 18.8% increase = £16.44 | Monthly increase of £1.37 |

Keeping the precept at the current year's level would put the Council under some financial difficulty, as currently reserves were very low, with no contingency in the event of a Parish Council election, sudden rise in inflation or unpredicted expenditure.

Whilst as a percentage the rise per household looked large, in real terms the actual amounts of increase were quite small. The budget was agreed and a Precept of £6500 for 2024 – 2025 was approved.

**Action: Clerk**

6. **To discuss Emergency Planning in respect to the recent Flood Warnings for the River Coquet at Brinkburn and Weldon.** The recurring flooding of the River Coquet was a great challenge. Any emergency plans that were put into action would need to be very localised. Many of the issues were caused by lack of maintenance. One way to address problems in times of flooding and to alleviate problems in advance would, as in the past, be by using groups of local volunteers who had past knowledge of flooding issues. JW reported that at the recent Cluster Meeting Whitton and Tosson PC (WTPC) had talked about their efforts in this arena and in particular their ideas to consult their residents on how to address emergency issues and develop a risk analysis of properties and the Parish's environmental infrastructure. It was agreed that a request be made to WTPC for them to share their methodology with the Council.

**Action: Clerk**

7. **To consider a motion to approve the inclusion of the Gender-Neutral Policy in Standing Orders.** DO placed the following motion before members:

**Motion: This Parish Council will adopt a Gender-Neutral Policy which will be included in its Standing Orders.**

Following a lively debate, the motion was carried by a majority decision; 4 in favour and 2 against. The Policy, which had been presented to Council at the last meeting was adopted and was to be included in the PC's Standing Orders and published on the Parish Council's website. The Chair asked that it be recorded that there was strong opposition to this motion from some members, as their view was that the current trend to redefine words and titles because of their link to gender was dangerous and disabling of the English language.

**Action: Clerk**

8. **To review the effectiveness of mechanisms by which the Council communicates with its residents.** DO apologised that the letter to residents had not been forthcoming, but its publication had been affected by the information received regarding the Boundary Commission's review. It was agreed that a New-Year's letter to residents should be sent out which provided key information of the work of the Council including information on the boundary changes, the sale of the Rothbury estate and good news stories on our Climate Change and Biodiversity work. JW agreed to produce a draft which was to be sent to members, who would then have two weeks to make comment. Following which the letter would be distributed before the end of January. It was also agreed that the Parish Council would in future inform people of its activities through regular reports in local parish magazines including: Over the Bridges, FramNews and the Longhorsley Tree. The Climate Change & Biodiversity Committee to be asked to produce the first report for the Spring editions.

**Action: JW/ALL**

9. **Climate Change & Biodiversity (CC&B).** JW reported that:

- The hedge laying course had been postponed because of the inclement weather and the instructor having to renew his First Aid qualification. It was hoped that the course would take place by the end of January. **Action: JW**
- Base Line Study. The Toughbook tablet had now been purchased and training for users underway.
- Bird Boxes. 17 boxes were now in place on one farm and discussions with another landowner were taking place for further boxes to be installed.
- WWCF Presentation. JW had made a short presentation to the WWCF committee on our funded projects which had been well received. Julia Plinston was working with JW to produce an article on our WWCF funded CC&B work for the local press.
- Northumberland Green Hub and Coquetdale Green Network. CC & B members had joined these two networking groups whose purpose was to share information and expertise, which was proving to be very effective. MF had been in consultation with the River Coquet group. Volunteers from other organisations were already involved in testing the water between Rothbury and the mouth of the Coquet. The Environment Agency had provided the testing kits. It was hoped that

# Brinkburn and Hesleyhurst Parish Council

data collected would be shared nationally through a standardized data gathering process which was being planned. It was hoped eventually to test the Coquet from source to sea within a 4 hour time slot, to gather an effective picture of the health of the river.

## 10. Planning

- a. **23/04408/FUL | Demolition of existing rear and side extension and construction of new rear extension to dwelling The Old School House Longframlington Morpeth Northumberland NE65 8HY.** Clerk had checked the Planning website and found the above application listed. We had not received a request for comments for this and the consultation period had now elapsed. Clerk had written to Planning to ask if it was still possible for the Parish Council to make comment, but no response had been received. The Council agreed to consider the application, and the comment was submitted to the Planning Website during the meeting item.

| Reference    | Address                                       | Type                   | Parish Council Comment |
|--------------|---|------------------------|------------------------|
| 23/04408/FUL | The Old School House Longframlington NE65 8HY | Application Registered | No Objection           |

- b. **Ref. No: 22/03682/FUL The Log Cabin Maglin Woods Longhorsley.** JW brought this to the attention of the Council, as the development bordered directly onto our Parish. The Clerk confirmed that BHPC had not been consulted on this matter which was unusual as Planning would normally submit such applications for consideration by neighbouring parishes.

Clerk to write to Planning to ask why the PC had not been notified of these two applications and inform them that this was not the first time this had occurred. **Action: Clerk**

## 11. Highways

- a. Highways and Footpaths Report JW reported that the work to repair the style near Embleton Terrace was still outstanding but was on the NCC's schedule. Tony Derbyshire the Footpaths Officer had moved to a different role and footpath issues should now be reported through Fix My Street
- b. Report on any issues raised/ to raise with Highways Department including:
- Overflowing drain from manhole between Lee School House and Suers Hill. JW had met with the Highways inspector on site. Following the meeting a machine was brought in to clear the culvert, but it was found to be collapsed and needed to be replaced. Highways had put this on the schedule of works for completion. The Inspector advised that the runoff from the neighbouring fields was a major contributing factor to the road flooding, and that the landlord should be asked to undertake some remedial action. Agreed that a letter be sent to the Duke's estate. **Action: JW/Clerk**
  - C165 Lee Farm – Embleton Terrace. The state of the road was a very serious concern as it was becoming extremely dangerous particularly now that motorists unfamiliar with the area were driving at high speed on this stretch of road. Whilst this had been previously reported no action had yet been taken. Clerk to write to Highways. **Action: Clerk**
  - B6344 New Houses -Todstead. The single-track road down Villa Lane was being used by heavy lorries to get to the roadworks at Todstead and there was still much debris on the B6334. Clerk to write to Highways. **Action: Clerk**
  - Fix My Street. Members and residents were encouraged to report any highways issues by Fix My Street.

## 12. Wingates Wind Farm Community Fund. SB reported

- JW's report on CC & B projects had been very impressive. There were now other parishes and organisations following the BHPC approach to submitting bids for similar biodiversity projects.
- The Fund currently had £90k in its budget. It was agreed that an item be included in the next agenda to discuss potential future project funding requests.

## 13. Coquetdale Cluster Meeting. JS reported:

- Items to discuss from the last Cluster Meeting. The main issue discussed was that more information was now available for people regarding the updating of the telecoms service in Coquetdale. Everyone will be offered Broadband and provision will be made to ensure that everyone, particularly the vulnerable will always have access to a phone line. Parishes were asked to assist to identify those who wish to maintain copper technology.
- Items for next Cluster Meeting Agenda
  - Update on roadworks on B6344 at Todstead.

## 14. Cemetery & Joint Burial Committee Reports

- Longframlington Cemetery. Due to the length of time it was taking the Land Registry to formally register the ownership of the cemetery extension, a request had been submitted to the Bishop that the land be allowed to be consecrated prior to LR registration. The area for consecration had been marked out and plans were well advanced to make this a wild flower area.
- Rothbury JBC. Deferred.

## 16. To receive report on the recent Annual Joint Town & Parish Council Conference County Hall. Deferred.

---

# Brinkburn and Hesleyhurst Parish Council

---

17. **Town and Parish Council Spring Conference Thursday 14th March.** NCC were holding another Town and Parish Council Spring Conference on Thursday 14th March at County Hall. MF indicated he might be able to attend. Details to be forwarded on receipt. **Action: Clerk**
18. **Longframlington Emergency Action Plan (LEAP) update.** The Plan had been updated and already circulated to members.
19. **Any Other Business.** None
20. **Items for Next Meeting**
- a. Review of Structure and contents of the Parish Council Meeting Agenda
  - b. Review of GDPR procedures
  - c. Potential projects to be funded by WWFCF

21. **Date of Next Meeting:** **Tuesday 12th March 2024 at 7.30 p.m.in the Longframlington Memorial Hall**

*The meeting closed at 9.30.p.m.*

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