

***draft* Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting and Parish Council Meeting**
held on Thursday 6th June 2024 at 7pm
at High Forest Community Centre, Sinderhope

Present: Cllr Swaile (Chair), Beck, Bron, Gray, Howard, Kirk, Philipson, White, Co Cllr Horncastle and H Newsome (Clerk).

Annual Parish Meeting

The Clerk had uploaded the annual reports to the website prior to the meeting:

<https://northumberlandparishes.uk/allendale/documents/other>

1) Apologies for absence and signing of declarations

Apologies were received from Cllrs Coulson, Graham, Johnson, Simmonds and Villiers-Stewart. Cllr Bron signed her declaration of acceptance and confirmed her appointment to the following committees: Allotments, Cemetery and Environment & Climate Change.

2) Declarations of interest

See APC's website for a full list: <https://bit.ly/4ea77QN> Cllr White declared an interest in Allenheads Community Benefits Society.

3) Planning Committee – planning applications

24/01143/FUL - Lonkley Head Farm Lonkley Head Allendale

Cllr Gray declared an interest and left the room. The Council discussed the application and agreed that whilst the reduced height of the turbine meant that only the very tip of it would be seen from Allendale Market Square, it remained concerned about the location, that was a long way from the house and immediately adjacent to a public footpath. Cllr Beck proposed **to object** to the application with Cllr Kirk seconding this as it was not in keeping with **Allendale Neighbourhood Development Plan (ANDP) Policy 10: Small Scale Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Schemes** bullet point two, which states that “the energy generating infrastructure is located as close as practicable and is in proportion to the scale of the existing buildings or proposed development it is intended to serve” and the motion was unanimously carried by the Council. The Council also agreed that it would be prepared to remove its objection if the turbine was moved closer to the house it would be serving and away from the footpath.

4) Public participation

There was **one** member of the public in attendance. A resident of Station Road asked for an update on the scheme to reduce the speed limit to 30mph along Station Road that was meant to have been carried out in May. He asked if the residents would get the chance to meet with Highways officials to hear how they envisaged the scheme would be enforced. Co Cllr Horncastle said that residents could not meet with the Highways staff and that the installation of the 30mph scheme was imminent, and once it was in place he would be pushing for additional measures, such as physical barriers (for example cushion tops) to be installed to help slow down traffic. The Station Road resident asked if Highways would consider installing an average speed camera that measured average speed from Catton through to Deneholme corner, but Cllr Horncastle said that the cost, at £70k + was too prohibitive. Cllr Horncastle said that the residents of Station Road were right to be concerned and that he would be following up on his former commitment to meet representatives of both Highways and Allendale Parish Council once the 30mph scheme had been installed, to discuss what further measures to take to improve road safety, and in the meantime keep residents up to date with developments through the Clerk.

5) Minutes of the previous meetings held on 2nd May 2024

Cllr Philipson agreed, and Cllr Howard seconded that the minutes of the meeting held on 2nd May 2024 be signed by the Chair as a correct record.

6) Matters Arising

Allendale estates felling works

The Council discussed the recent correspondence from the Forestry Commission's Paul Webster in response to the Council's request for further information about Allendale Estate's Woodland Management Plan and its consultation process. Cllr Philipson said that whilst nobody was against the commercial felling of trees there remained great concern for the red squirrel population and the hundreds of bats that were known to inhabit the woods whilst felling was taking place at pace in May. Whilst the Council acknowledged that parish councils were not statutory consultees, and it was down to Northumberland County Council (which is a statutory consultee) to notify relevant parish councils of such consultations, it agreed to the following actions following on from Paul Webster's correspondence:

- a) The Clerk to directly notify Allendale Estate of the official address of Allendale Parish Council where all future correspondence should be referred to,
- b) The Clerk to inform Paul Webster that Allendale Parish Council found the tone of his correspondence insensitive, and to point out that the Council takes its responsibilities seriously and that if a councillor was no longer able to fulfil the role any correspondence received by the Clerk would be reallocated to another councillor. However, this was dependent on the relevant organisations and bodies following standard procedures in sending all correspondence to the Clerk via the official contact email address for the parish council rather than choosing an individual councillor to send it to.
- c) Following on from further concerns raised by local people about the pace of the tree felling that was being carried out within the breeding season of protected species (March to September), the Clerk to request from the Forestry Commission, information on how the activity of the red squirrel and bat populations were being managed and request copies of the most recent reports on both species.

Following on from the Forestry Commission confirming that it was down to the local authority's planning department to notify relevant parish councils of the consultation, the Clerk said that she had written to Northumberland County Council to ask if it had been consulted on the Allenheads Estate Woodland Management Plan and to ask what factors it considered when determining whether a parish council should be informed of such a consultation. Also, since the statutory consultation process included a requirement to publish felling proposals on a public register for 28 days for comment before approving them, she had also asked where the public register could be viewed. Co Cllr Horncastle said that he would also follow up on this.

Former First School update

Northumberland County Council's Estates office had notified the Council that it had now exchanged contracts with the buyers of the former First School, and that the purchaser would soon be submitting his planning application, and that the contract would be complete once planning approval was granted. As Northumberland County Council retained responsibility for the maintenance of the building up until completion, and because Allendale Parish Council has continued to receive complaints about the very poor condition of the property, Co Cllr Horncastle agreed to request that NCC carry out some maintenance work.

Norah Handcock Memorial bench

Cllr Philipson confirmed that the Norah Handcock memorial bench that would mark the start of the Isaac's Tea Trail that was being gifted to the parish would be delivered on 12th June and that it would remain in storage until the Towns & Villages Committee together with Valeria Dunn agreed on a precise location for it. The Clerk to then arrange for Neighbourhood Services to move the salt bin away from the Well.

7) County Councillor and Northumberland County Council update

Co Cllr Horncastle attended the meeting with the following update:

Whitfield road closure

Co Cllr Horncastle said that the landslide and road closure at Whitfield was causing serious disruption with people having to make a seven to twelve mile detour to go about their normal business. He said that lots of ground investigation work would be carried out before a design was agreed on and that it was going to be a big job that would be given priority.

Road repairs

Co Cllr Horncastle said that work to repair the roads was now well underway with teams working overtime to get around them all, that included some resurfacing around Thornley Gate and the road from Allenheads to Coalclough.

8) Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2023/24

The Internal Auditor Alan Blair had completed the audit procedure and he agreed that the objectives of internal control were being achieved by the Council. Cllr Philipson proposed, seconded by Cllr Kirk, and the Council agreed unanimously to approve the annual governance statement, the draft annual accounts for 2023/24, and the accounting statement and explanation of variances.

9) Affordable Housing Committee

Co Cllr Horncastle confirmed that useful meetings were taking place between the Council and those representing Allendale Parish Council with the objective of getting a new affordable housing scheme off the ground in the parish. Cllr Horncastle agreed to keep the Council up to date with new developments. See also Correspondence below.

10) Allotments Committee

Cllr Kirk proposed, and Cllr Beck seconded to accept the estimate for £620 from Mark Armstrong to replace the fence on the long side of the allotments, and the Council unanimously agreed to this.

The Council also agreed for the Clerk to ask Matty Robson to cut back the hedge along the path running up from Shield Street.

11) Cemetery Committee

Concrete strips for Allendale Cemetery

Cllrs Howard and Philipson and the Clerk had met with Mark Topping of JB Colman's on 14th May for a more detailed discussion about the proposed concrete strip foundation that was being considered to provide stability for the next row of around 60 headstones. Mark had previously provided an estimate of £3,600 that included hardcore base, concrete, rebar reinforcement and shuttering, labour and plant that worked out at around £60 per headstone (see March 2024 minutes). The Council discussed the benefits of installing the concrete strip that would prevent subsidence as the headstones would be anchored to prevent them from leaning/falling and all the graves would be measured out and be an equal distance apart. At the site meeting it was agreed that the concrete strip foundation should be installed below the surface with the turf put back so the strips could not be seen, and that that strip should extend only as far as the land was flat and before it fell away on the far side of the cemetery. After further discussion the Council agreed to ask JB Colman's for a revised quote for the shorter strip and to also get an additional quote in order to meet with the Council's financial regulations.

Stone wall

Cllr Howard had asked Alan Murray to look at the corner of the Cemetery wall where it had partially collapsed.

12) Environment & Climate Change Committee

There were no actions.

13) Rights of Way & Access Committee

There were no actions.

14) Towns & Villages Committee

Bus shelter update

Cllr Philipson said that the Northumberland County Council's Planning department had confirmed that it could proceed with the determination. Cllr Beck said that she would discuss the timescales for installing the bus shelter with the designer, Jonah Maurice. The Clerk to write to Co Cllr Horncastle in order that he could instigate making the financial contribution he had formally agreed to make.

New equipment for grass cutting

The Council discussed the current arrangements for grass cutting now that the older faulty mower had been repaired, and some councillors queried the need for two ride-on mowers and wondered whether other grass cutting machinery might be more useful and cheaper such as self-propelled mowers. Cllrs Philipson and Howard supported the continued use of two ride on mowers as there was often a short window of opportunity to cut grass when the weather was dry, and that it was too big a job for one person. After discussion, the Council agreed for the Towns & Villages Committee to look at the grass cutting needs of the parish in more detail, and that it should involve the people who were doing the work.

Storage of lawn mower trailer

Cllrs Philipson and Howard had met with the Clerk to consider alternative places to store the lawn mower trailer and they had approached Shirley Brown of St Cuthbert's Church to ask if it could be stored in the Church grounds at the back of Gowlands Garage. If so, the Council would offer to arrange for the area to be levelled and tidied up in exchange.

Surfacing works in Allendale

Cllr Kirk to ask Coulson Contracting for provisional dates in July when the re-surfacing work was likely be carried out, subject to the weather. In the meantime, he would talk to the residents of Allen House about moving their vehicles away from the village green so that the work could be done. The Clerk to inform local residents of the forthcoming work through distributing leaflets on vehicles and regular and timely messages on Facebook.

Village tidying

The Clerk to put Cllr Gray in touch with Hilton Graham so that he could discuss priorities for tidying up the centre of Allendale.

Payphone kiosk

The Clerk to work with Valeria Dunn and convey to the Payphone Team the maintenance requirements for the payphone kiosk in Allendale.

Towns & Villages Committee meeting

Cllr Gray to convene the next Towns & Villages Committee meeting.

15) Correspondence

Philippa Storey, Arnison House – Cllr Kirk confirmed that Allendale Parish Council was not responsible for the area of land where there was a pothole, and the Clerk confirmed that a repair had been carried out following on from Co Cllr Horncastle requesting this from NCC staff.

Jayne Curtis, Chair Catton Village Hall – The Council agreed for Catton Summer Fair to take place on Saturday, 29th June.

Zoe Bell, The Forge Café - The Council agreed for the Forge Café to put up a small tent outside the Forge for an open mic session as part of the Allen Valleys Folk Festival on Saturday 28th September.

Allendale Tea Rooms – Cllrs Gray and Kirk had advised the tenants to contact their landlord to request that they carry out maintenance to the downpipe and guttering and reseal the cobbles to prevent water ingress.

Paul Webster, Forestry Commission – see 6) Allendale estates felling works above.

Valeria Dunn – The Council agreed to support Valeria Dunn’s proposal to ask Northumberland County Council to refurbish the Library’s listed railings and remove the sycamore seedlings. Cllr Kirk to talk to the residents of Allen House about removing the rubbish from the yard at the back of the Hearse House. See also Payphone kiosk at 14) above.

Kate Jackson and Jordan Bailey – Co Cllr Horncastle to check the eligibility criteria for Karbon Homes ‘right to buy scheme’ so the Clerk could pass the information on to Kate and Jordan.

16) Finance Committee

Accounts for payment/bank reconciliation

Cllr White proposed that the accounts for payment, seconded by Cllr Philipson.

Treasurer’s Account bank balance as of 31 st May 2024.	£18,269.66
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Business 30-Day Notice Account bank balance as of 31 st May 2024	£10,905.87
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Public sector Deposit Fund of CCL bank balance as of 31 st May 2024	£60,000.00
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Grass cutting fees – Cllr Kirk proposed to increase the hourly grass cutting rate to £14/hour with effect from 1st June 2024, seconded by Cllr White and this was unanimously agreed by the Council.

The **Finance Committee** to meet on 11th June at High Forest Community Centre.

17) Matters for 4th July 2024 agenda.

None as yet.

18) Confidential agenda item (*for Council only*)

There were no items.

19) Date of next Parish Council

The Annual Parish Meeting and next monthly Parish Council meeting would take place on **4th July 2024** at 7pm at **Allendale Village Hall**.

[The meeting ended at 22:04](#)