

Minutes of the meeting of Hexhamshire Parish Council held on Thursday February 11th 2016 at 7:30 pm in the Malcolm Caisley Meeting Room, Whitley Chapel Parish Hall

2.1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Andrew Nixon and Mandy Charlton

Councillors present: Gill Whatmough, Alastair Stevens, Austin Iliffe, Alison Tweddle, Marge Rastall, Davy Short, Hilary Kristensen, Edward Parker, Greg Finch

2.2 Minutes of the meeting held on 14th January

The minutes were agreed to be an accurate record of the last meeting.

2.3 Declaration of interests

Gill Whatmough declared an interest in the planning matters at Chapel House which adjoins her property, and in discussions about the wetland, which is visible from her property

2.4 Matters Arising

2.4.1 The outstanding grant aid for the football equipment has now been paid by the Housing Developer Fund.

2.4.2 Gill Whatmough is pursuing grant aid for the new parish website.

2.4.3 There have been two more applications for funding from local organisations. It was agreed the budget for this year was already fully committed and the new applications would be turned down.

2.5 Public Participation

2.5.1 Monica Haigh attended the meeting to support the case for retaining the Quakers Hole hut. She explained that the willow bed is being actively managed by herself and a group of other enthusiasts who produce craft items from the harvested produce. Donations have recently been made to the parish from the sale of the craftwork. There is interest in establishing a southern branch of the Northumberland Basketry Group and there may be LEADER funding for this. There is potential for further sale of produce in the future and the activity has generated interest from others who would like to be involved. Willow weaving workshops were being considered, possibly in May.

2.5.2 Monica would like to retain the hut and toilet to provide shelter and possibly workshop facilities for the willow enterprise. John Haigh, Monica's husband, has agreed to carry out maintenance works to the hut at no expense to the parish. The willow weavers would be responsible for their own insurance.

2.5.3 The council's main concern had been the potential liability of maintaining the hut which has been little used in recent years. In view of the willow enthusiasts commitment backed up by their recent activity and the potential for expansion of their interests, members agreed the hut and toilet should be retained. This was on the understanding that a formal association of willow harvesters would be set up to manage the site, and Monica agreed to attend a future PC meeting to report on progress with this.

2.5.4 It was agreed that Northumberland CC Estates Dept should ask Juliet Rogers to remove her cattle which are badly poaching the site.

2.6 Correspondence

2.6.1 The Childrens Foundation of the RVI and Northumberland CVA have both asked for donations from parish funds. It was agreed the budget was already fully committed but we would consider their requests next year.

2.6.2 A confirmation letter from NCC that a footpath at Chapel House was now legally diverted. No action.

2.6.3 A letter from Geoff Paul of NCC announcing the creation of a Community Regeneration Team. This amalgamates community, local growth and social enterprise functions and there will be resulting changes in management and personnel. The next Liaison Group meeting will discuss new ways of working. No action.

2.6.4 Enviroplay have offered to inspect the playground equipment for £70. No action.

2.6.5 A letter from NCC seeking donations for the retirement of D.Francis. No action.

2.6.6 A document from the NHS called "Unlocking Integrated Care" concerning the various functions of the County's hospitals. No action.

2.7 Financial Report

2.7.1 The account balances are:

Current £9236

Savings £6767.32

Wetland £157.75

2.7.2 It was agreed that donations to local groups could now be made in accordance with the minutes of the January meeting. Bank details will be sought for all of these groups to allow for electronic transfer.

2.7.3 Most of the remaining balance in the current account will be paid into the savings account. The annual precept is due in April.

2.8 Planning

2.8.1 An application for pruning works to two ash trees at Ordley was considered. Members agreed to accept the findings of the NCC tree officer for this specialised work.

2.8.2 The garage at Chapel House is currently being constructed and several members advised the visual impact is greater than expected. It was agreed the planning consent be checked to confirm there was no variation from the approved plans. The planning conditions are understood to prevent future change of use to a dwelling.

2.9 Parish website

2.9.1 Peter McKendrick is preparing a section for church matters.

2.9.2 There will be a feature about the website in the March edition of the Hexhamshire magazine.

2.10 Matters for discussion with the unitary councillor

2.10.1 As Colin Horncastle was not present, there was no discussion on this item.

2.11 Smelting Arches

2.11.1 Greg Finch reported that the Allendale Estate has agreed in principle to transfer the lease to the parish council. They are considering the matter in more detail and will continue discussions with Greg. Some legal work will be needed to effect the transfer and this would be by the lowest cost option. The earliest start date could be 1st April to coincide with the commencement of the insurance year.

2.11.2 Friends of the North Pennines have agreed that the Parish Council can manage future sales of the project book 'Images of Industry' and take over the funds of approx. £10,000 for maintenance of the site. The YFC may possibly carry out the maintenance; Peter Jackson has offered to oversee the maintenance programme.

2.12 Broadband sub committee report

2.12.1 Austin Iliffe reported the new phone mast at Lightside will be commissioned on 31st March. It is available to all networks and testing is currently taking place.

2.12.2 Austin, Andrew Nixon and David Flatman met with Daneco on Jan 28th. The meeting concluded that the fixed wireless access system is the best long term option for the parish as it will provide comprehensive coverage and a more sustained performance than the alternatives. This is confirmed by recent Cybermoor trials elsewhere. Daneco are still interested in providing a service subject to funding being available and the subcommittee are considering funding options. There has also been contact with potential users in Slaley and Healey who have not benefitted from the recent BT line upgrade.

2.13 Highways and footpaths

2.13.1 Austin Iliffe asked for information on potholes so he can submit a report to the Highways department.

2.13.2 The winter gales have left a number of dangerous trees close to highways. Reports of these will also be forwarded to the County.

2.13.3 A dangerous stile was reported near Moss House. This will be reported to the County footpaths officer.

2.14 BOATS

2.14.1 Davy Short reported increased four wheel drive activity on BOATS, possibly attracted by the very wet conditions.

2.15 Reports

2.15.1 School

The planning application for the playground was invalid as there was insufficient information

2.15.2 Parish Hall

Austin Iliffe advised that the kitchen refurbishment fund has reached £14,500, close enough to the £16,000 target to obtain estimates. This includes £1,000 from the leek club, £1,500 from the Joicey foundation and £4,500 from the County thanks to Colin Horncastle. A further contribution will be made by the YFC following their drama production and pledge auction on 12th March. Applications for funding have also been made to the Henry Bell Trust and Community Chest.

User groups such as the WI will be consulted about the design.

Once the kitchen is complete, there are plans to improve the toilets and redecorate.

It is hoped work on the kitchen will start in May.

2.15.3 Sportsfield

Football matches have restarted following a long period of waterlogged pitches. The season is likely to extend into May as a result.

2.15.4 Wetland

It was agreed to engage Derwent Gibson to act for the PC in negotiations for the lease of the whole site. It is understood he will charge about £500. The Council are to be asked for information on liabilities.

2.16 AOB

2.16.1 A shed has been relocated from a site between Whitley Chapel and Dalton following enforcement action by the planners.

2.16.2 Alison Tweddle stated the planned 6 week closure of Hexham railway bridge will cause significant disruption to Hexhamshire residents.

2.16.3 There has been no further enforcement action so far at Rushwood.

2.16.4 There have been reports of lamping in the parish; the police advise any incidents should be reported to them.

2.16.5 David Trotter has unearthed minutes of parish council meetings between 1930 and 1980.

As there was no further business the meeting was declared closed.