

Minutes of the Meeting of Hexhamshire Parish Council held on Thursday 9th February 2023
in the Malcolm Caisley Meeting Rooms, Whitley Chapel Parish Hall

- 12.1 Present –Nicola Matthews (Chair), Roger Rutherford, Greg Finch, Edward Parker, Davy Short, Hilary Kristensen, Ed Parker, Colin Horncastle (Councillor).
Clerk - Jonny White.
Apologies for Absence – Marge Rastall, Gill Whatmough.

The parish council are very sad to hear about the tragic passing of Alison Twedde and would like to thank her for her extensive service and contribution to the Shire and the Parish. The council will inquire with her husband, Norman to find out whether there was a particular spot that Alison liked, where a commemorative plaque or bench could be placed in her honour.

- 12.2 Minutes of the previous meeting of the Parish Council held on Thursday 12th January 2023

It was agreed the minutes were a true record of the meeting.

- 12.3 Declarations of interest – No Declarations of Interest.

- 12.4 Matters Arising

- Lauren Porteus is willing to join the council in place of Lee Riley who resigned in December. She will be formally invited before the next meeting. Following the sad passing of Alison, a second position is available, which will be advertised in the parish magazine.

- 12.5 Northern PowerGrid Grant

No information yet regarding the results of the updated application form.

- 12.6 Public Participation

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- 12.7 Matters for discussion with the Unitary Councillor

The County Council have started on the next stage of management restructure; a new Chief Executive has started, and the new Executive Directors are in place. This aims to make savings of £7 million this year. Firefighters appear to be getting a pay increase of 6 or 7%, hopefully avoiding a strike.

Budget comes before council on the 22nd of February. There will be a 4.7% rise on council tax (plus a small rebate). Largely due to the high inflation, the Council has had to make savings where it can, but there will be no cuts in front line services or to the highway budget.

Charges for things like births, deaths and marriages are going up.

The County Council is still involved for the foreseeable future in the Ukraine situation. Over 400 Ukrainians are currently being housed in Northumberland.

Police precept will be going up by £15 per household. This money will pay for a further 134 new front line officers to be brought to the area. No other noticeable reductions or changes to people's lives bar the council tax rise.

12.8 Correspondence

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12.9 Finance

- The invoice for the council's insurance, approved last month, was received and paid (£777.66).
- VAT reclaim has been calculated and sent away.

12.9.2 Balances as of 3rd February 2023

Treasurer's Account	£14,093.12
Sportsfield Account	£2,147.45
Dukesfield Account	£3,273.63
Wetlands Account	£516.46

12.10 Planning

- Embley: GRANTED
- Rowley Head: Tom Speight has investigated the quarry issue and found that they did have planning permission, under reference 22/02478/AGRGDO.
- Lee Nook Farm application. Green belt land, inappropriate unless an exceptional reason. Their reason is: essential need for a worker to live permanently at the site to tend to livestock. The council have no objections.
- The caravan park on Guards Lane has been approved by the council, despite there being 13 objections against it. Clerk will investigate the reason for this.

12.11 Highways, footpaths and BOATS

Footpaths: -

BOATS: Davy Short represented the Parish Council at another meeting about BOATS and the trashing of Slaley forest, largely caused by off-road bike activity. Members of the police, landowners, representatives for the Forestry Commission and Natural England, as well as an agent for Allendale estates, all attended.

A resulting steering group will attempt to raise money through grants to get number plate recognition technology installed around Slaley Forest. Previous attempts to place cameras in the forest have resulted in vandalism, so more protective measures will need to take place. The police also seized one motorbike last week. Within two years, the group hope that a TRO will be placed on the forest.

Roads: Colin informed us the council intend to stop the quick fix policy regarding pot holes, and look into more long term, permanent strategies for fixing roads. Clerk will contact Andy Olive and Glen Harrison, to organise work on specific sections. The parish council asks Colin to inquire whether inspectors are sent round to do random spot checks on contractors. There used to be a grit box located at the school in Whitley Chapel, however, it is no longer present. Additionally, there is considerable water flowing off the road into the school grounds, particularly the field. Andy Olive will also be notified of these issues.

12.12 Reports

Wetlands: The chair circulated a report from the woodland trust elaborating on where trees can be planted on the wetland. According to the report, only a thin section to the side of the site is appropriate. Permission is to be granted to the Porters to proceed with planting in the recommended area, for the 140 trees, pending the approval of neighbouring landowners.

Addendum: Following consultation with neighbours, permission has not been granted, as the number of trees is seen to be too copious for such a small space. A small number may be agreed upon, but it will be discussed in the next meeting.

Dukesfield Arches:

School:

Hall: Meeting room redecorated. The Hall Trustee's AGM takes place on the 14th March.

Sportsfield:

12.13 Any Other Business:

Meeting closed at 8:30pm.