

Minutes of the Meeting of Hexhamshire Parish Council held on Monday 13th March 2023
in the Malcolm Caisley Meeting Rooms, Whitley Chapel Parish Hall

- 3.1 Present –Marge Rastall (Chair), Nicola Matthews, Roger Rutherford, Davy Short, Hilary Kristensen, Ed Parker, Gill Whatmough, Lauren Porteus.
Clerk - Jonny White.

Apologies for Absence – Greg Finch, Colin Horncastle (Councillor).

This month's meeting was originally scheduled for the 9th of March 2023, but was postponed due to bad weather.

The council extend their welcome to Lauren Porteus.

- 3.2 Minutes of the previous meeting of the Parish Council held on Thursday 9th February 2023

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

- 3.3 Declarations of Interest – No Declarations of Interest.

- 3.4 Matters Arising

- Gill is to speak to Norman Tweddle, to see what the most appropriate way is to memorialise Alison's contributions to the Shire.
- Both John Austin and Ed Stephenson have expressed an interest in joining the council in place of the late Alison. The elections team from Northumberland County Council indicated that a 'Notice of Vacancy' must be advertised for 14 days (up till the 27th of March), to ensure the public has enough time to put their name forward for election before someone can be co-opted. Should no election be necessary, it was decided that John Austin would be co-opted to join, as his previous experience in business and management would prove of value to the functioning of the council. *Addendum:* No election was needed, as no one else contacted the county council to declare an interest. Hence, John Austin has been contacted and asked to join.
- The parish council have received fresh reports regarding the potential burning of rubbish at Rushwood, as well as other forms of environmental degradation on the site. The clerk has been asked by the parish council to write a formal letter of complaint to the county council, emphasising the need for more stringent enforcement, and to lament the lacklustre attempts at enforcement that have been made thus far.
- The cherry tree on the corner of Whitley Chapel has been righted. However, due to extensive root damage and overly saturated ground, it is still deemed to be unsafe. Marge will tell the WI that it should be taken down.

- 3.5 Northern PowerGrid Grant

The Parish Council has been successful in its application for a grant from Northern Powergrid for the purpose of increasing the area's energy resilience. A sum of £17,485.28 will be paid to the council upon the signing and return of the Grant Agreement. A separate account will need to be set up so that the funds can be properly and accurately managed. Once this has taken place, the council can begin to use the money to buy the necessary equipment and supplies for turning the parish hall into a resilience hub, as well as providing the neediest in the area with items to be used in an emergency, such as camp stoves and wind-up torches.

3.6 Public Participation

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3.7 Matters for discussion with the Unitary Councillor

Due to the meeting being postponed, Colin could not attend this month.

3.8 Correspondence

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3.9 Finance

- The VAT reclaim came back, totalling £1927.59.

3.9.2 Balances as of 5th March 2023*

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

*Note: Balances shown include the VAT rebate but were taken before the money was reallocated to the various accounts; hence the larger amount in the Treasurer's account.

3.10 Planning

- Tom Speight emailed on the 21st of February, to say that the county council have received a planning application regarding the equestrian arena at Rowley Head, however, due to insufficient documentation the application was invalid. They have been given three weeks to send the appropriate documentation. This extension will expire on the 14th of March.
Addendum: A new retrospective planning application was submitted on the 14th.
- Questions remain as to the circumstances through which the caravan park on Guard's Lane, which received 13 objections, was passed with no objection. The clerk will continue to investigate this with the planning department of the county council.

3.11 Highways, footpaths and BOATS

Footpaths: -

BOATS:

More disturbances have been reported in Slaley forest. One woman was apparently threatened and intimidated by two men on quad bikes. Police have been several times to investigate. Fundraising is continuing in order to buy number plate recognition cameras.

Roads:

A speed limit has begun to be installed at Whitley Chapel: poles were put in during February half-term week for 40mph signs. They were due to rebook to put the flashing 20mph school signs in, but Northern Electric had already booked the slot to do work at the church, and

only one set of works can take place at a time. They are due to return on the 27th of March. I have emailed Andy Olive to request the limit be changed to 30mph.

The council received news of a serious car crash at the Yarridge Road crossroads, in which a member of the Shire was very badly hurt. An urgent request will be sent to the county council to fix this area of road, with new signs and road markings, to try and ensure this does not happen again.

A complaint was also made against the unnecessary dispersal of grit heaps around the area. Huge piles of grit seem to have been dumped on the roadside throughout the Shire, often on stretches of road that get gritted the traditional way anyway, while none can be found on the roads that really need it. The county council will be notified.

The county council will be contacted again to address the dire state of many roads in the Shire, foremost the Dipton Mill road, which has degraded into a dangerous condition.

3.12 Reports

Wetlands: The Alders have been dispersed among the area.

Dukesfield Arches:

School:

Hall: The AGM takes place on Tuesday 14th March. An anonymous letter was received complaining about the lights being left on. New sensors had been installed, as well as a new light at the bins, and in the process, the lights failed to turn off automatically.

Sportsfield: The tennis court net is to be replaced, free of charge, due to a donation. The big storage container belongs to the parish council so it could be used for storing the Powergrid equipment.

3.13 Any Other Business:

Meeting closed at 9:00pm.