

Minutes of the Meeting of Hexhamshire Parish Council held on Thursday 8th June 2023
in the Malcolm Caisley Meeting Rooms, Whitley Chapel Parish Hall

6.1 Present –Marge Rastall (Chair), Hilary Kristensen, Lauren Porteus, John Austin, Nicola Matthews, Roger Rutherford, Gill Whatmough, Davy Short, Colin Horncastle (Councillor).
Clerk - Jonny White.

Apologies for Absence – Ed Parker, Greg Finch.

6.2 Minutes of the previous meeting of the Parish Council held on Thursday 11th May 2023

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

6.3 Declarations of Interest – No Declarations of Interest.

6.4 Matters Arising

- The parish council have advanced their ‘Stage One’ complaint over the county council’s enforcement office to ‘Stage Two’ and awaits further correspondence.
- Gill has spoken to Norman Twedde about the plaque for the late Alison and he is happy for us to put one on the bench up Lee Road. Appropriate wording to be decided upon.
- Discussion was had over the cutting of verges in the Shire and whether sections that had been marked for protecting the wildflowers by the Countryside Environment Group should be reduced, for safety reasons. Councillors expressed concerns about the fact that it is dangerous for walkers, horse riders and drivers, who may need to go onto the verge to avoid other traffic if they are not able to see what they are stepping/driving onto because the verges haven’t been cut. Colin Horncastle noted that the county council normally cut around junctions and a one-metre strip along roads, for safety reasons. It was argued that the areas around junctions and single-lane stretches in the Shire should be cut, even if they are within the demarcated areas. The CEG will be consulted, to see whether the protected verges can be altered, shortened, or removed entirely, or whether certain sections can be prioritised for protection over others.

6.5 Northern PowerGrid Grant

Tom Kristensen kindly travelled to North Yorkshire to pick-up the new generator for the parish hall. Installation works (and the necessary adaptations to the electrics) will hopefully begin in September.

6.6 Public Participation

There were no members of the public present.

6.7 Matters for discussion with the Unitary Councillor

In order to explain how council tax is spent, and to emphasise the county council’s stretched resources, Colin began with a list of what the council does, which included (but was not limited to): Education and school transport, highways (3500 miles of roads), social services, children in care, coastal management, housing, council houses, births, deaths and marriages; minerals, fire, police etc.; river quality, heritage assets and tax.

Colin also relayed the news that Defra is in the early stages of planning to offer every house in the country a food recycling service by 2025/6. Food recycling must be collected every

week, which would mean the usual rubbish and recycling bins would only be collected once every three weeks. The waste then goes to power biomass renewable electricity. New wagons will also be needed for food waste, as well as lockable containers to stop vermin. It is believed it will be up to the council/council taxpayer to foot the bill. Colin noted that this is still very early days, and so plans may change, adding that he is personally against the idea, noting that travelling the 3500 miles of roads in Northumberland in food waste wagons would use more energy than what the food waste would save via biomass.

Colin also gave an update on the county council's pothole policy. Currently, they must be filled in within 48 hours of the council receiving notification of their whereabouts. This results in a quick-fix repair, which never lasts. This policy is due to stop, with a trial taking place where a machine cuts a larger section of the road out, allowing for a more permanent repair to take place. However, because of this, each repair would require increased traffic management measures, leading to repairs taking perhaps months, rather than days.

Colin attended a meeting regarding Slaley Forest, with various concerned parties. He also spoke to the footpaths department who said there is work going on to repair footpaths and bridleways within the forest. One section currently being repaired will cost an estimated £400,000. Efforts are still being made to temporarily close the BOATS.

6.8 Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

6.9.1 Finance

6.9.2 Balances as of 2nd June 2023

Treasurer's Account	£15,757.87
Sportsfield Account	£2,078.10
Dukesfield Account	£4,991.22
Wetlands Account	£667.39
Resilience Account	£6,946.18

6.10 Planning

- 23/00564/FUL: Rowley Head Equestrian Arena; GRANTED
- The proposed caravan club near Guards Lane caused more discussion, particularly over whether the approval for the campsite had been given to the caravan club, or to the landowner, and whether or not they could still create a campsite in the future. Work had also been noted to have taken place at the sight. The county council will be informed.

6.11 Highways, footpaths and BOATS

Footpaths: - The broken boardwalk at Moss House is still there. Gill will email Duncan Lovatt of the county council again.

A footpath at Tenter House has been requested to be moved. The parish council has no objections.

BOATS: Nothing to report, other than that mentioned above.

Roads:

The county council sent a request for our top three priorities for highways as part of their local plan for 2023/4. The parish council decided that clearing roadside ditches and drains, particularly those at the Dipton Mill bank, should be a top priority. Blocked drains mean water has nowhere to go, leaving it to pool and damage the road surface. The recent work to clear out the ditch next to the graveyard is evidence enough that these endeavours help a great deal in reducing water on the road, and hence protect the road surface in the long run. A second priority also concerned roadsides, but rather maintaining the earthen banks and ensuring that soil and grass do not encroach too much, as this leads to cracking and disintegration at the sides of the road. In our area, we have a lot of narrow, single-track lanes, that cannot afford to become narrower.

Our third priority concerned the road outside Whitley Chapel First School, as it is in dire condition, with extremely large potholes. The entire stretch from the school junction down to Mollersteads should be re-tarmacked, with extra maintenance for the rest of the road leading through Whitley Mill.

The cattle grid near Westburnhope has still not been repaired. Clerk will follow up on this with the county council.

6.12 Reports

Wetlands: The fence between the bottom half of the wetland and the field next to Mire Meadows is rotten and leaning over. The parish council will inspect and review repairs. Derwent Gibson also wishes to move the fence along the track towards Moss House slightly, so he will be corresponded with.

Dukesfield Arches: No reports.

School: The school has received funding for a new septic tank. Work should take place in the October half-term. Gillian and Richard Thompson are both retiring after many years of dutiful service to the school, so the positions of secretary and caretaker will soon be advertised.

Hall: Marge was asked about whether the defibrillator has been registered online. It has.

Sportsfield: Mary Macklon asked about the white lines on the tennis court, as they need repainting. Matthew Hope will be asked to carry out these repairs.

6.13 Any Other Business:

The Parish Council would like to pass on their congratulations to the Hexhamshire Young Farmers, after they came first place in the NFYFC Performing Arts – Entertainment competition in Leamington Spa, a national event where they saw off other clubs representing entire counties.

They also achieved second place at the recent Cambo Rally, adding another impressive feat to an already remarkable year.

Meeting closed at 9:15pm.