

Minutes of the Meeting of Hexhamshire Parish Council held on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> February 2024  
in the Malcolm Caisley Meeting Rooms, Whitley Chapel Parish Hall

- 2.1 Present –Marge Rastall (Chair), Greg Finch, Nicola Matthews, John Austin, Roger Rutherford, Gill Whatmough, Ed Parker, Lauren Porteus; Jonny White (Clerk)

Apologies for Absence –Hilary Kristensen, Davy Short; Colin Horncastle (County Councillor).

- 2.2 Minutes of the previous meeting of the Parish Council held on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> January 2024

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

- 2.3 Declarations of Interest – None.

- 2.4 Matters Arising

Stephen Weatherly of Windy Hill Farm attended the meeting, to address the recent concerns expressed by the parish council over the volume of Teward lorries delivering spoilage. He informed the PC that he had full planning permission to raise the level of land for a shed to be built on top, as well as an adjoining slurry store. He has also acquired the appropriate licensing from the Environment Agency and went to great lengths to ensure everything was above board. The spoilage is sourced from a waterwork treatment plant at Horsely and comprises of nothing but clay, which is then compacted in order to level out an area in preparation for said shed and slurry store. He also consulted with Stephen Dunn from the neighbouring Shield Green to let him know that the lorries would not go past his property.

Stephen emphasised that the council was incorrect in believing that the proper licensing hadn't been acquired, or that the spoilage was being dumped in a dene and possibly polluting a waterway. Such information, Stephen told the PC, was completely false. He also felt saddened that the PC had not contacted him directly, though acknowledged that he did not contact the PC prior to this meeting either.

As far as the condition of the road is concerned, Stephen believes the issues stem from the potholes that pre-date the lorries on the road, though admits that said lorries have caused the potholes to increase in size and number. However, he argued that the issue was made worse by water being spread onto the road from the ditches that had not been cleaned out. BT had previously lain cables in the ditches, which would make clearing them very difficult. These issues relate to a wider issue of the county council's inaction on this road. Stephen hasn't heard anything himself from the county council in relation to these issues. John Austin questioned why the highways department isn't consulted automatically whenever a large job such as this is due to take place. The Clerk will enquire with the council to see if communication can be improved.

The parish council also agreed to endeavour to improve communications between itself and the wider community, whenever an issue such as this occurs, and to only act on facts, not speculation. The parish council would like to apologise to Stephen, and his family, for acting on erroneous information, and for not contacting him directly to verify the facts of the matter. The parish council were glad to know that the correct procedures had been followed.

- 2.5 Resilience Hub

Tom Kristensen enquired with the clerk to see if there were still funds available to carry out the rest of the work required, which there was. The purchase of sundry items will be left until after Tom has completed the work.

- 2.6 Public Participation

Stephen Weatherly and his wife attended. See above.

## 2.7 Matters for discussion with the Unitary Councillor

Colin was not present this month.

## 2.8 Correspondence

The parish council received an email from Stella Douglas, Chair of Slaley Show, asking whether the PC could make a small donation after the show had encountered some funding issues. Sadly, the PC is not in a position to make any charitable donations this year. Recommendations of other funding sources were shared with Stella, including the suggestion of setting up a GoFundMe page. If something were in place, we would be happy to advertise it in the Parish magazine.

### 2.9.1 Finance

- Rent for Sportsfield for 2023 and 2024 (£750 x 2) (2148 in the account). Approved.

### 2.9.2 Balances as of 4<sup>th</sup> February 2024

Treasurer's Account	£14,785.35
Sportsfield Account	£2,093.09
Dukesfield Account	£5,135.05
Wetlands Account	£1,187.43
Resilience Account	£6,997.35

### 2.10 Planning

- Remodelling of rear two-storey extension; erection of single-storey side extensions; removal of front conservatory; and remodelling of front porch at: Linnel Dene Hexham Northumberland NE46 1SE. No objections.
- Agricultural Building, Land East of Shawwood Farm Guards Lane Hexham Northumberland NE46 1YB.

The Parish Council strongly objects to this application. We believe there are numerous falsehoods in the report, which acknowledges that it is not being submitted under agricultural determination yet tries to justify the application through agricultural means.

The size of the proposed shed is very large for the limited amount of stock the land can accommodate. The applicant claims he will use the site to keep bees and sheep, but also states the agricultural building will be used to house a lawn mower. Surely a lawn mower would be unnecessary with sheep on site. The 'makeshift and open' shed will also be of no use for the bees. Furthermore, the council believes the applicant has no prior involvement or connection to agriculture whatsoever.

Additionally, the council understands that this application concerns the same plot of land as another recent application (which was also strongly objected to by the Parish Council and others) for a caravan site. There is no mention of this plan at all. There is

a caravan there already which hasn't moved in months. There is also a building there already, with a solar panel, one which had no prior approval. We believe it to be a ruse to get a house there.

The council believe this application may be an attempt to circumvent restrictions against building houses in open countryside, and a green belt area. It has no confidence in this application and strongly recommends caution against it.

## 2.11 Highways, footpaths and BOATS

### **Footpaths/BOATS:**

#### **Roads:**

- Windy Hill

See Matters Arising. The clerk has contacted the county council to see how they will address the issues regarding the state of the road.

We understand the transport of spoil is coming to an end, so we expect the council to take action thereafter to fix it.

- Dipton Mill Road

Northumbrian Water, their contractors United Living and NCC Highways/streetworks representatives met Greg and John to discuss options for the water main replacement works from Black House crossroads to Dalton in order to minimise full road closure, originally forecast at 14 weeks. NWL and United Living are very receptive to exploring how their work can be reorganised to accommodate single-lane lights-controlled road operation as far as possible. We have offered to help them arrange a public meeting at the Parish Hall before any full road closure. A revised plan is awaited, and we should not assume a satisfactory outcome yet. We have been invited to a follow-up meeting at County Hall in Morpeth on 14th Feb, which John and Nicki will attend. Another section of works will take place around July time between Barker House and Dalton Crossroads.

The trees have been cut back up the Dipton Mill bank. These were mainly Ash trees, which were removed due to the risk of Ash Die-back disease.

## 2.12 Reports

Wetlands: The Parish Council wish to identify the people needed for a working group to discuss the verges, as was agreed last year. We would like the area and policy on verges reviewed and agreed upon to avoid any disagreement going forward.

Dukesfield Arches: No reports

Hall: Battery backups for the solar panels can't be put in the roof space as originally planned as it is too far from the electricity point where it comes into the building. A small cabinet will be built in the supper room, under the metres. The work needs to be completed by the end of March.

Grit bin: we have requested to buy one. The PC will cover the costs.

Sportsfield: No reports.

School: Headteacher from Wark is coming in two days a week to help supervise the school.

2.13 Any Other Business:

20mph road sign west of Whitley Chapel still isn't working, despite being reported multiple times. Clerk will follow up and also ask the county council for priority signs on the Dalton bridge.

*Meeting closed at 9:15pm.*