

Minutes of the Meeting of Hexhamshire Parish Council held on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> September 2022  
in the Malcolm Caisley Meeting Rooms, Whitley Chapel Parish Hall

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

A minute's silence was held to mark the death of Her Majesty the Queen, and Reverend Andrew Patterson offered a prayer in her memory.

- 9.2 Minutes of the previous meeting of the Parish Council held on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> August 2022

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

- 9.3 Declarations of interest – No Declarations of Interest.

- 9.4 Matters Arising

- The framed photograph from the Platinum Jubilee has been ordered.
- The plaque for the ammunition shelter has been received and is due to be placed at a later date.
- Plans from the NCC were received regarding the proposed speed limits around Whitley Chapel. They plan to impose a 40mph speed limit, with a further 20mph 'when lights flash' area near the school. The council has requested that the speed limit be reduced further to 20mph for the whole area, or failing that, 30mph. Councillor Horncastle seconded these concerns and has also petitioned for a reduction to the limit.
- Concerns were once again raised about the diversions put in place due to the road closure at Eastgate. Although the NCC do seemed to have listened to previous requests (moving the diversion route away from Causey Hill), the new route is much longer. Councillor Horncastle defended the NCC's actions, stating that there were no alternatives available, but agreed to speak to them about it.
- The seat at the end of Leazes Lane has been placed by Trevor Golightly. Andrew Patterson advised that it is a traffic hazard, as it obstructs any potential passing place at the corner. Trevor will be asked to move it to a more appropriate position.
- Regarding the church path, Andrew Patterson informed the council that the diocese has accepted that the path must be remade, and the tree removed. A form to advise the public of the work will be in place for a month before the work is started. Further lighting will then be installed, and the path redone.
- It was agreed that more notice should be given in the future for volunteer days to rid our locality of invasive plant species such as Himalayan Balsam.
- Northern PowerGrid have allocated seven million pounds of funds to help local councils prepare their residents for potential future storms, in the wake of last year's devastating damage. Potential funds could provide the hall or school with the ability to be equipped with a generator, providing a safe haven for residents without heat or power. Austin Iliffe is investigating the possibility for solar panels on the hall. The church has also been surveyed and is suitable for panels. More information is needed as to who is liable, how the funding is allocated etc. However, in principle, the council unanimously approved applying for such a scheme. Andrew Patterson echoed these concerns and suggested the school could also be used as a warm hub.

## 9.5 Public Participation

- Christopher Porter attended on behalf of the Community Environment Group, in the interest of protecting verges. He would like more broadcasting to get the community involved. A workshop would be set up to teach the public about verges and wildflowers etc. Funding may be needed to pay for bibs with CEG on them. Local experts (Alistair Stevens and Monica Haigh) have been asked to do surveys. Christopher requested the council's permission to manage signs belonging to the council (loaned from NCC) through the CEG, or alternatively have the council's involvement. Verges will be assessed in the Shire, Slaley and Healey. The council agreed to give the CEG permission to use the signs as they wish.
- Secondly, Christopher proposed a new information board to be placed in Whitley Chapel, advertising everything that the Shire has to offer. Slaley's version could be used as a model, with QR codes linking to further information. Graphics and information will be needed, and a cost will obviously be accrued. A rough estimate is £2500 - £3500 based on last years proposal for similar signage at the wetlands site. Grants will also be investigated including the Community Chest. Christopher argued that the council funding would prove there was a high local interest, which would help with an application for funds. It was agreed by the council that this was a good idea. Using the existing notice board was discussed but it was decided that it was not suitable and that it should be a council led program. Christopher will pass on the three quotes from the wetland sign.
- Andrew informed the council that the church administers the Abraham Brown charity, which can give grants of on average £400 to people in need. He asked for the council to publicise this, and to contact him if anyone needed it.
- There is also a community grocery shop in Hexham, providing people with subsidised or even free food. It is located near the old middle school in east Hexham. Another option is Hexham food bank. Contact details of both organisations will be circulated with the next magazine.

## 9.6 Matters for discussion with the Unitary Councillor

Colin Horncastle reported that the NCC has struggled over the last six months with energy prices, as it occupies several buildings which all need supplying. The cost of materials, for example, tar, has also shot up. He did confirm that there would be no compulsory redundancies, nor will any vacant posts be filled. An extra £2.5 million was allocated to the highways earlier in the year, which won't be touched. Certain projects, however, have been put on the back burner due to funding issues. Colin is trying to get the council to get rid of a lot of unused buildings, to try and save revenue. A program has also been put forward for voluntary redundancies.

In terms of the cost of living related to the potential for future storms, the council had an inquiry into Northern PowerGrid and Northumbrian Water, as well as an inquiry into how the council itself fared. Helen Hines is sending someone to Slaley to see whether their village hall is ready and equipped for a generator. Colin suggests people in rural areas should have a camping stove, in case of electricity cut outs.

Council meetings will be postponed for 12 days due to the death of the Queen.

## 9.7 Correspondence

An email advertising another free tree scheme from the County Council. Information was passed onto the magazine.

Updated plans for the proposed speed limits were received. See above.

Notice of Revocation of Tree Preservation Order relating to Low Raw Green. Dated 10<sup>th</sup> August 2022. The order states that as the trees are no longer present at Low Raw Green, they cannot be preserved. Unclear whether further action will take place. The council determined that the trees have been gone for perhaps 20 years; the order presumably came to light as the property has recently been sold.

Woodland trust contacted the Chair, Marge Rastall, about the 30 saplings for the wetlands to say they will come in early November.

## 9.8 Finance

### 9.8.1 Precept has been received.

£206 for seat to be placed on Leazes Lane.

£36 for Parish Online renewal.

£50 for Jubilee photo.

£40 for WW2 Shelter plaque.

### 9.8.2 Balances as of 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2022

Treasurer's Account	£14,879.71
Sportsfield Account	£1,793.62
Dukesfield Account	£2,890.46
Wetlands Account	£996.41

## 9.9 Planning

Alex Campbell was contacted about recent concerns regarding Rushwood. Photos were sent to Ms Campbell, who has since opened a new enforcement case against the site (22/00957/ENDEVT). More activity is occurring than ever, with lots of work being done. The council is deeply unhappy that the hoggins was lain and ditches dug, despite several prior protestations. Fires have also been reported.

## 9.10 Highways, footpaths and BOATS

**TTRO 130313257** (Closure of Eastgate). As noted earlier, the closure of Eastgate has gone ahead, despite the council's protestations to the NCC. A change was later made to the diversion route, which allows for easier access to Hexham for large vehicles, though the route is a lot longer.

### **Footpaths:**

A complaint was received about two sections of footpath:

- Steel, which was merely overgrown with weeds.
- Moss House, the wooden path with metal grating over the top is damaged and has been for some time. It also poses a dangerous slipping hazard in winter. The path was created by the footpath authority, but it doesn't match up with the map. Duncan Lovett is going to reorganise the footpath and put it where it is meant to be. Duncan is also to be contacted regarding who is responsible for stiles and gates on footpaths.

**BOATS:** Large amount of rubbish seen in forests. Bikers still using the BOATS, despite the gates being in place.

9.11 Reports

Wetlands:

Matthew Ford has agreed to take a look at the hide foundation and steps. Awaiting a response. Chase John Dent about paint.

Dukesfield Arches:

Greg received the cheque from The Smith (Haltwhistle and District) Charitable Trust. He has also sent a letter of thanks to the Trust on the council's behalf.

School:

A new headmistress, Karen North, has started at the school.

Hall:

The Christmas fair will take place on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> dec.

Sportsfield

No word yet from Mathew Hope regarding his repairs to the Playground. He is also to be chased about redoing the lines on the tennis court.

9.12 Any Other Business:

No other business.

*Meeting closed at 9:10pm*