



## Minutes of the extraordinary meeting

23 June 2025, 7pm – 8pm, Birtley Village Hall

Present: Sarah Crone (Chair), David Burn, Bill White, Marilyn Bell, Paul Andrew, Anne Lowes,

Minute taker: Mel Bramley ( Parish Clerk)

In attendance: Bob Neilson ( member of the public and local resident)

1. Apologies for absence

None. Mel noted that County Cllr Azocar-Nevin had not been invited to this meeting as the matters on the agenda related to Parish Council finances only.

2. Accounts for 2024/25 ( table attached)

Mel had previously circulated a breakdown of the end of year accounts. It was noted that the end of year balance on March 31 2025 stood at £226.68. Expenditure for the year totalled £4115.00 and income for 2024-2025 was £4181.51. This raised cause for concern and requires urgent attention.

On closer inspection, the bulk of expenditure related to the grass cutting (including maintenance and service of the lawnmowers, petrol and oil and insurance of the 2 mowers.) The total costs per year related to approximately 50% of the annual precept. It was agreed to investigate costs for an external contractor to cut the grassed areas so that a comparison could be made. At present the grassed areas are cut to a very high standard by Roger Bell on a voluntary basis. Parish Councillors expressed their gratitude for Roger carrying out this work and if funding could be sought elsewhere to assist in maintenance etc of the lawnmowers this would be preferable. Sarah asked if it would be possible for the Windfarm to help with a replacement mower if needed, but not for recurrent expenditure.



ACTION: Mel agreed to contact a couple of local contractors to get a ballpark cost for grass cutting. These costs would be shared at the next meeting to help decide on how to provide a cost-effective service in the longer term.

3. Internal audit report

Ian Roy, local resident had kindly offered his support in checking the end of year accounts. The accounts were now complete and signed by Ian. A number of matters need to be actioned to ensure that the Parish Council adheres to its financial responsibilities. Mel circulated a report highlighting issues that need to be addressed (see attached).

ACTION: Mel will ensure that the areas of financial responsibility as identified on the records are addressed as a priority. They will be brought to the next meeting for further discussion.

4. Asset register

Mel circulated a list of all assets held by the Parish Council. Councillors reviewed the list and made amendments.

ACTION: Mel will update the list and circulate to all. She will ensure that all items are covered in the PC insurance policy. A copy of the agreed asset register will be displayed on the website.

5. Approval and signing of accounts for external auditor

The AGAR forms were now ready to be sent to the external auditors. All present agreed to these records being an accurate record and signed off by Mel ( as Financial Officer) and Cllr Crone (Chair of the PC)

6. Bank signatory update

After some toing and froing, the new bank mandate is now almost completed. Ernest has now signed the relevant paperwork to state he is no longer a signatory and Mel will take this to Lloyds bank as soon as possible. All other previous signatories are now removed from the account.

Cheque signatories for 2025/26 are Sarah Crone, David Burn and Mel Bramley. All payment approvals will require two signatories.



7. Outstanding invoices

A number of invoices require payment as soon as possible. When Lloyds bank have set up the new signatories, Mel will circulate a list of all due payments for approval. In future, all payments will be formally approved and minuted at Parish council meetings.

8. Zurich Insurance

Mel stated that the insurance both for Public Liability and Motor insurance for lawnmowers appeared to be excessive.

ACTION: Mel will speak with Zurich and compare costs with other insurance companies to ensure the PC is being offered the best prices possible. She will feedback at the next meeting.

9. Anticipated expenditure for 2025/26 (over £400)

Given the small amount of reserves held by the PC it is important that Councillors consider future financial planning. Both short- and long-term goals, and a strategy implemented to achieve those goals is important if the PC is to meet its obligations, save money, and build on funds towards a secure future.

ACTION: Mel will place this on August's agenda for discussion.

10. Potential income streams/grant applications

Further planning needs to be put in place once there is a clear idea on anticipated expenditure for 2025/26 to allow for clear financial regulations and strategies.

ACTION: Mel will check that all existing policies are up to date and that any new or missing policies are provided to ensure an effective oversight of financial activities, helping maintain transparency, accountability, and efficiency in the PC's financial operations. She will report back at the next meeting.

11. A.O.B.

It was agreed by all that by way of thanks for Ian Roy's assistance, Mel will arrange to purchase a bottle of wine.



Cllr Crone stated that Iris Leadbitter had given thanks for the gift of flowers for her work as Parish Clerk.

**ACTION:** Cllr Crone will forward the receipt to Mel for her to arrange reimbursement.

Mel will check to see if the playground Health and Safety inspection had taken place. She will ask for a copy of the report and circulate to all.

In the meantime, it was agreed that a group of volunteers would clean the playground equipment. A number of Councillors agreed to help and encourage other residents to assist. The date for the clean-up will be 20/7/2025 in the afternoon.

Cllr Crone stated that a local resident had enquired to the cleaning of the memorial. **ACTION:** Mel will seek costs for this and feedback in August.

Bob Neilson pointed out that the extraordinary meeting had not been publicised to local residents. Cllr Crone apologised for this oversight and agreed to ensure all future meetings would be placed both on the website and notice board.

**The meeting ended at 8pm.**

Mel and Cllr Crone agreed to stay after the meeting so Cllr Andrew could demonstrate the new website and show how to upload information etc.