

**Minutes of the meeting of Heddon-on-the-Wall Parish Council held on
Wednesday 8th November 2023 at 7:00 p.m. in Heddon Community Library**

PRESENT: Cllrs. D. Keller [DK]; (in the Chair); R. Adams [RA]; R. Oatway [RO]; K. Ince [KI]; M. Wilson [MW]; K. Dryden [KD]; L. Irving-Munro [LIM]

IN ATTENDANCE: L. Barton (Clerk); **Members of the public:** none present

- | Minute No. | Agenda item |
|-------------------|---|
| 1. | APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: RESOLVED: That an apology and reason for non-attendance shall be accepted from Cllr. Edwards. |
| 2. | DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: Cllr. Keller declared an interest in matters affecting Karbon Homes and Batson's Groundcare. Cllr. Wilson declared an interest in St Andrew's Church. |
| 3. | NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL:
Nothing to report |
| 4. | MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING: RESOLVED: To approve as a correct record and authorise the signing of the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 11 th October. |
| 5. | MATTERS ARISING & REVIEW OF ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The clerk has thanked Neil Jones (of Neil Jones Property Development) for carrying out the wall repairs on Chare Bank to such a high standard.• The loose handrail on the steps near Campus Martius has been reported to Northumberland County Council.• The tree work near to Blue Row will go ahead on 15th November. The work will be carried out by Newcastle Tree Services at the quoted price of £480. |
| 6. | TREE POLICY: Councillors reviewed and ratified the Tree Policy, which will be uploaded to the website. Cllr. Keller suggested, and councillors agreed , that Parish Council policies should be reviewed on a 3 yearly basis, with the exception of those policies which are reviewed at the Annual General Meeting. There may also be the occasion where there is a change in legislation or regulations which may result in policy review. |
| 7. | FINANCIAL MATTERS: RESOLVED <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To approve payment of invoices presented at the meeting. It was RESOLVED to pay the invoices presented (Library cleaning at an increased hourly rate and backpay total £117; Hire of PA system from NorthStar Audio Visual Ltd £200). The Income and Expenditure spreadsheet (shared with councillors by email prior to the meeting) was approved and signed.2. To consider any applications for grants or donations received at least 3 days before the meeting. None received.3. To consider information relating to Budget Monitoring, Year End and Internal / External Audit:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Councillors approved and accepted the AGAR with the Internal Audit report received from JC Accountants. The points of note raised in the report were discussed as follows:• Some invoices were missing in the 2022/ 2023 financial year and some transactions had not been recorded in the minutes. Councillors are confident that these points are being addressed now through the appointment of a clerk who will attend |

financial training provided by NALC. It was **agreed** that the full Parish Council will continue to have oversight of financial matters for the current financial year.

- The clerk explained the next steps in the audit process. Now that councillors have approved the AGAR with the internal audit report, it can be published on the Parish Council website and the period for the provision of public rights can begin. This will run from Friday 10th November up to and including Thursday 21st December. The clerk will publish the notice on the Parish Council website and the noticeboards on Taberna Close and in the library. The clerk will also send all the necessary paperwork to the external auditor.
 - Councillors **accepted** and **approved** the Quarter 2 Budget Monitoring spreadsheet, which had been shared with them by email prior to meeting. Cllr. Wilson pointed out an error regarding allotment rents, which the clerk will rectify on the spreadsheet.
 - The clerk and chair will now begin work on getting relevant information ready to support all councillors in preparing for discussions about setting the budget for next year. The precept needs to be requested in January 2024, so the budget must be approved at the January meeting.
4. To review and ratify the grants and donations policy – it was **agreed** to increase the donation and grant amount to £250. Cllr Wilson will update the policy and the clerk will upload the updated policy to the website.

5. Office 1 and 2:

Since the last meeting, the tenant in Offices 1 and 2 advised the Parish Council that they are closing their business and gave notice to quit their office. The tenant has vacated their offices, but has left behind some items. The office keys have not yet been returned to the clerk and there is some minor damage to a windowsill in the office. It was **AGREED** to photograph any damage and consider any repairs and cleaning needed; it was further **agreed** to detail an inventory of the items left in the office.

Cllr. Irving Munro pointed out the need to follow correct procedures and councillors discussed the next steps to take. It was **agreed** to seek advice from the solicitor to ensure that the correct procedures are being followed in terms of recovering the keys, dealing with the items left behind and potentially recovering the rent arrears owed. Councillors also discussed the need for more robust processes moving forwards, e.g., addressing rent arrears sooner. It was **agreed** to review the lease contract.

8.

MAINTAINING OUR VILLAGE FOR ALL:

The Asset Officer report was discussed:

- The damaged pane of glass in the library door has been repaired.
- The new noticeboards for Sustainable Heddon have been put up in the library and at the bus stop near the Three Tuns.
- Prior to the meeting, one of the allotment holders had notified the Parish Council that the water tank at the allotments looked as though it might split or burst. The Asset Officer and handyman inspected the water tank and have temporarily disconnected it from the water supply. Councillors discussed the best way forward; whether to replace the tank or whether there are other options such as just having a tap instead or encouraging the use of water butts. Cllr. Keller will visit allotment to look at the tank. The Asset Officer will meet with a representative from Nicholson Plastics to obtain a quote for replacement of the tank to give councillors an idea of the costs involved. It was **agreed** to consider different options.
- The Asset Officer report also mentioned the red Horse Chestnut tree near the library, which looks in poor condition. The tree was not mentioned on the recent tree survey, but Cllr. Keller suggested the tree should be inspected to check the condition of it.

- The Asset Officer had questioned who owned the wooden fingerposts in the village. Cllr. Adams confirmed that these belong to the Parish Council, so the proposed work of cleaning and varnishing them can go ahead.
- Cllr. Oatway queried who insures the library buildings. The clerk will look into this for the next meeting.

9. IMPROVING OUR VILLAGE FOR ALL:

- Cllr. Keller proposed hiring a PA system through NorthStar AudioVisual Ltd at a quoted cost of £200 for use at the Remembrance service in the Memorial Park. Councillors **agreed** to this proposal. If the system is successful, councillors **agreed** to consider purchasing a PA system for the benefit of the village for e.g., Remembrance Services; Culture Festival, Village show.
- Cllr. Ince reported back on the litter pick; no residents attended on this occasion, but Cllr. Dryden pointed out that village residents pick up litter around the village anyway. Cllr. Wilson proposed thanking residents in the Heddon Gossip.
- Councillors discussed the new project form. This is to be used for all projects moving forwards to ensure a consistent approach on how the Parish Council plan, deliver and future proof projects. Cllr Keller and Cllr Wilson will trial use of the form with wild flower area project near Leigh's Nursery, the Welfare Field Enhancement project and Memorial Park Enhancement project - Phase 2.

10. REPORTS:

Selman Park:

Cllr. Wilson and the clerk visited the landowner on the 24th October 2023 and the new addendum to the lease was signed and witnessed. This will be in place for 12 months.

A smaller area of Selman Park field is now being rented from the landowner, which has resulted in a decrease in rent.

The landowner will now reposition the entrance gate to Selman Park. Councillors **agreed** that a new sign was needed for the Selman Park facility which will provide contact details. The landowner will provide a sign for the entrance gate.

Cllr Wilson discussed the wording to be used in the Heddon Gossip to inform residents of the changes. Cllr Oatway questioned the wording in one sentence and proposed amended wording, which will be shared with councillors by email and agreed.

It was agreed that the Parish Council will subsidise the costs of local groups hiring Selman Park for the next 12 months. Residents will be informed of this in the Heddon Gossip article.

Cllr. Keller thanked the Selman Park working group for their hard work.

11. PLANNING:

Planning Consultations: 23/03885/FUL Heddon Steads Cottages extension – no objections

Planning Decisions: 23/03330/FUL 24 Remus Avenue – permission granted for the removal of a monopitch roof and replacement with a hipped roof.

12. CORRESPONDENCE:

The clerk shared details of correspondence received from residents over the past month:

A resident from Heddon banks had made the council aware of overgrown hedges which are scratching cars. Councillors asked for photographs of the hedges.

A resident enquired when the tree work near Blue Row will take place and the clerk supplied the date.

A resident contacted the Parish Council about the water tank at the allotments.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

Cllr. Irving Munro raised the issue of heavy rains causing flooding on certain roads around the village. It was **agreed** to contact Northumberland County Council again about this issue and to consider paying for draining cleaning.

Cllr. Wilson informed councillors that the work near the entrance to the Memorial Park Entrance has begun. Contractors have lifted the paving slabs to find that about half of the slabs are damaged and

cannot be reused. Contractors have proposed using aggregate or granite instead. Councillors **agreed** to this approach.

Cllr. Wilson mentioned the Pay Award for local council staff. Details of this had been received by the clerk the previous day and shared with councillors by email for their consideration. The pay award needed to be approved or not at the meeting. Councillors **agreed** to this pay award. The clerk will inform Northumberland County Council.

Cllr Wilson asked that the strategic business plan be discussed at the December meeting with a view to removing the lower cemetery from the plan as well as reviewing and updating initiatives.

Cllr. Ince clarified what is to be included in the next issue of the Heddon Gossip.

Cllr Adams informed councillors that he will put up lights in the Memorial Park and on the trees for Christmas. Cllr Keller will put up ribbons on the lampposts.

Cllr Adams asked about the carol service at St Andrew's Church on Christmas Eve. It is now held at 3pm. Could it be rotated year on year, so Heddon could have a later service some years? Cllr. Keller will discuss this with the church.

Cllr Irving – Munro requested a copy of the allotment waiting list from the clerk so that she can contact people on the list about plans for the Butterfly Garden.

- 14. NEXT MEETING: RESOLVED:** That the date of the next meeting shall be Wednesday 13th December 2023 at 7pm.

CONCLUSION OF MEETING: The meeting closed at 9.03 pm.

APPENDIX

MAINTAINING OUR VILLAGE FOR ALL:

ACTIONS:

DK to visit allotment re water tank
LT to meet with rep from Nicholson Plastics
LB to chase NCC to double check library is insured for buildings with NCC
LB to check Tree report re red horse chestnut tree near library
LB to contact Martin in Highways at NCC re drain clearing

IMPROVING OUR VILLAGE FOR ALL:

ACTIONS:

MW to liaise with William Binks and Tracy Atkin re Walk to school Scheme
DK to contact Shell Garage re litter from garage blowing into the Memorial Park

FINANCE AND ASSETS:

ACTIONS:

PE to provide contact for Bradley Hall
LB to contact solicitor for advice regarding Office 1 and 2
LB to email RO tenancy agreement
LB to calculate new quarterly rent payment to Selman Park
LB to collect paperwork from auditors and drop off paperwork for mid-term audit
LB to send year end paperwork to external auditor along with internal audit report
LB to publish AGAR and Provision of Period of Public Rights Notice on noticeboards and website
LB / DK to begin work on budget and precept setting
LB to liaise with NCC re staff pay award

OTHER:

ACTIONS:

MW to update Grants and donation policy and clerk to upload to website
MW to compile information about Selman Park for the Heddon Gossip
DK to contact Rev Scheffer re carol service at St Andrew's Church