

**Minutes of the meeting of Heddon-on-the-Wall Parish Council held on
Wednesday 10th April 2024 at 7:00 p.m. in Heddon Community Library**

PRESENT: Cllrs. P. Edwards; (in the Chair); R. Oatway [RO]; R. Adams [RA]; M. Wilson [MW]; D. Matthews [DM]; K. Edwards [KE]

IN ATTENDANCE: L. Barton (Clerk); **Members of the public: 2 were present at the meeting**

- | Minute No. | Agenda item |
|-------------------|---|
| 1. | APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: RESOLVED: That an apology and reason for non-attendance shall be accepted from Cllrs. Keller, Dryden and Irving-Munro. |
| 2. | DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: Cllr. Wilson declared an interest in St Andrew's Church and Heddon Education Training Trust, Cllr. Edwards declared an interest in the Knott Hall. |
| 3. | NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL (NCC):
Nothing to report from NCC |
| 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 20 th March 2024. |
| 5. | MATTERS ARISING & REVIEW OF ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING:
Covered elsewhere in the minutes |

Allotment rent increases:

Two allotment holders attended the Parish Council meeting and were given permission to speak by the Chair. They wanted to query the increase in allotment rent. They explained that they had attended a meeting held on Wednesday 6th March organised by the Parish Council to discuss the water tank at the allotments. They were concerned that the increases in rent were too high and that allotment holders had not been consulted or given sufficient notice of the new rental rate. Cllr. Edwards explained that the increases were to cover rising costs in water as well as repairs needed e.g. fencing and maintenance of allotments e.g. tree pruning, in addition to the replacement of the water tank with a similar sized tank to the current tank in situ.

The allotment holders asked whether the costs could be spread over 3 – 4 years, so that the increase in rent would be more gradual. Cllr. Edwards explained that the Parish Council has to consider spending precept money to benefit the majority of village residents. The allotment holders explained that they do not expect the PC to subsidise the allotments. They asked about Income and expenditure relating to the allotments over 10 years and whether there is some money from rental income over this period.

They explained that the allotments and water tank were originally gifted to the PC from Castle Morpeth Council. They explained that the deterioration of the tank was pointed out to the PC over a year ago. It could potentially have been saved and lasted a little longer if action had been taken sooner. They also pointed out that water tanks can be sourced for £600 or so; some allotment holders have their own building businesses and have Public Liability insurance so could carry out the work of replacing the tank at a lower cost, thus saving the PC money and reducing rent. Cllr. Edwards explained that councillors had chosen to use a company to carry out the work for Health and Safety reasons. He also explained that public liability insurance may not cover work undertaken on a voluntary basis.

The allotment holders also pointed out that according to the Tenancy agreement 3 months' notice in writing should be given of any increase in rent. Cllr. Wilson pointed out that notice of a significant increase in rent was given in last year's invoices. This was before the water tank needed to be replaced.

Finally, the allotment holders explained that £40 - £120 represents a 300% increase. Many allotment holders have allotments for pleasure; these costs make it unviable. They questioned how the Parish Council had calculated the figures.

6. FINANCIAL MATTERS: RESOLVED

1. To approve payment of invoices presented at the meeting.

The Income and Expenditure spreadsheet (shared with councillors by email prior to the meeting) was approved and signed.

It was **RESOLVED** to pay the following invoices presented at the meeting:

Library cleaning £60.50

Batson's £414 Grounds Maintenance

Managing Assets Course £10

Mid-term audit fee from JC Accountants (carried out in November / December) £300

Office renovation costs £2,283.30

Window cleaning £33

Heddon Gossip £120

Selman Park rates £230.54

Clerk reimbursement £30.15 (Flowers £26 and printer paper £4.15)

2. To consider any applications for grants or donations received at least 3 days before the meeting.

3. Vacant offices 1, 2 and 4: The Asset Officer has shown a potential tenant around Office 4. The new tenant will take up occupancy of Offices 1 and 2 on 1st May. Renovation works have been completed to a high standard in Office 1 and 2.

4. Budget Monitoring Quarter 4: moved to May meeting

7. MAINTAINING OUR VILLAGE FOR ALL:

The Asset Officer report was discussed. The damaged tennis net box was discussed, the nets had been taken out of the box and tangled up. They have now been removed for safekeeping. Cllr. Ince suggested repairing the box; Cllr. Wilson mentioned considering it as part of the Welfare Field Enhancement project in terms of either repairing or replacing the box. It was **agreed** to leave the box for the time being.

Councillors also discussed the library hourly cleaning rate, which, it was **agreed**, will be increased to £11.82ph from April 2024.

Cllr. Adams asked that Selman Park be included on the Asset Officer checklist in future. It was **agreed** to feed back to the Asset Officer.

8. IMPROVING OUR VILLAGE FOR ALL:

8. Cllr. Wilson fed back on a Proludic webinar he had attended regarding play spaces, engagement with the community and consideration of Health and Safety. This will inform planning of the Welfare Field Enhancement project.

Cllr. Edwards suggested that the Welfare Field and Memorial Park projects could be separate items on the agenda in the coming months.

9. **REPORTS:** Cllr. Edwards reported back to councillors on the Knott Hall AGM he attended on behalf of the Parish Council. The Knott Hall committee have a marginal surplus up to the end of the previous financial year. They thanked the Parish Council for reimbursing them for the cost of the guttering repairs. They will need to repair or replace their curtains. This will be a major expenditure and may come from bequest money.

10. **PLANNING:**

Planning consultations:

24/01099/FUL 72 Trajan Walk extension – no comments or objections

Planning decisions:

24/00216/FUL 22 Marius permission **GRANTED** for single storey extension

24/00078/LBC The Bothy West Heddon permission **GRANTED** for construction of additional car parking spaces and changes to paint colour

Cllrs. also discussed a proposed music event at Burnside Farm in May. Concerns have been received from a resident regarding noise, single track access and impact on livestock nearby. These will be forwarded to NCC Planning Enforcement Team along with concerns from the Parish Council.

11. **CORRESPONDENCE:**

One resident contacted the Parish Council about a proposed music event at Burnside Farm. It was **agreed** to contact NCC Planning Enforcement about this.

Several allotment holders had contacted the Parish Council about the increases in this year's rent. Two allotment holders also attended the Parish Council meeting to discuss this further. Cllr. Edwards proposed that a list of the main points raised by allotment holders (by email or at tonight's meeting) would be compiled by the clerk and sent to the Chair of the Parish Council (Cllr. Keller) for consideration.

One resident had contacted the Parish Council about the land at the side of their property which belongs to the Parish Council. They wanted to discuss the possibility of cultivating the land or buying it from the Parish Council. It was **agreed** that this would be discussed in more detail at a future meeting.

12. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS:** Cllr. Oatway mentioned that there are some seeds left over from the Sustainable Heddon Seed Swap held at the library on Saturday 30th March. This will be explained in the Heddon Gossip so that residents may take seeds from the library during opening hours. Cllr. Adams mentioned that the resident who creates the Heddon Gossip has retired. Cllr. Ince mentioned the litter pick which is due to take place on 27th April. Cllr. Ince will not be able to co-ordinate it at that time. It was **agreed** to postpone the event and to inform residents.

13. **NEXT MEETING: RESOLVED:** That the date of the next meeting shall be Wednesday 8th May 2024 at 6.30pm followed by the Annual Elector Meeting at 7.30pm.

CONCLUSION OF MEETING: The meeting closed at 8.35 pm.

Income and Expenditure from 20th March to 10th April:

Account 1 (Precept) Expenditure:

Ikea drawer unit reimbursement	£45	21-Mar-24
Donation to Carpet Bowls Group	£250	21-Mar-24
Knott Hall guttering	£1400	21-Mar-24
Selman Park rent quarter 4	£350	21-Mar-24
Locksmith (Business centre doors)	£312	21-Mar-24
Replacement part for rocker play equipment	£195.15	21-Mar-24
Feb grounds maintenance	£414	21-Mar-24
Stamps	£5	21-Mar-24
NALC Audit training for clerk	£30	21-Mar-24
Flowers	£26	21-Mar-24

Account 1 (Precept) Income:

Allotment rent £360 up to 10th April

Precept £42,638

Account 2 (Library) Expenditure:

24/7 Call out charge internet	£204	21-Mar-24
BT set up Broadband	£141.30	21-Mar-24
Fire Alarm	£18.43	25-Mar-24
Burglar Alarm	£56.04	25-Mar-24
EDF Gas	£478.05	27-Mar-24
CCTV	£43.20	28-Mar-24
Electricity Library	£139.45	02-Apr-24
Electricity Selman Park	£21	10-Apr-24

Account 2 (Library) Income:

Rental income: £300 March

Invoices for Approval at the meeting:

See Financial Matters 6a

APPENDIX

MAINTAINING OUR VILLAGE FOR ALL:

ACTIONS:

LT report to cover Selman Park
Research solutions to the tennis net box

IMPROVING OUR VILLAGE FOR ALL:

ACTIONS:

FINANCE AND ASSETS:

ACTIONS:

OTHER:

ACTIONS: