

Elwick Parish Council

Minutes of the Meeting held at 7.00pm on Monday 28th September at Elwick School

Present: Cllrs P Hutchinson (Chair), B Irving, R Musgrave, H Thompson, R Thompson,

In attendance: Mrs. M West (Clerk)

1. Apologies: Cllrs. J. Hall & A. Waugh, Ward Cllr B. Loynes, PC K. Robinson, CPSO C. Jones

2. Presentation: Lee Adams, Anesco was welcomed by the Chairman and invited to speak on the proposed Solar Farms at Blue House and Low Burntoft Farms, sites owned by the Durham Diocese. Mr. Adams informed Councillors about his company, its ethos and the specific plans for the Hartlepool sites. He answered questions about the quality of the agricultural land to be used (Grade 2), the length of term of the planning permissions sought (max 39 years), the type of panels to be used (residential), any ecological impact (virtually nil) and what the company would do to mitigate this (hedges/trees, bird boxes and close monitoring), as well as explaining the proposed investment in the local community. Mr. Adams was thanked by the Chairman and left the meeting at 7.40pm.

3. Public Forum: No members of the public present.

4. Declarations of interest: None

5. Minutes of the Meeting held on 27th July 2015 were agreed and signed.

6. Matters Arising:

a) **Church Bank Steps:** The Clerk reported that the refurbishment of the steps was due to be completed within the next couple of weeks; the delay was due to the higher specification required for the handrails. An initial payment of £9,000 had been made to the contractor. The Clerk reported that she had received several oral compliments on the new steps.

b) **Wildlife Garden:** The Clerk informed that the refurbishment had been completed as had the first maintenance visit. Sadly, some vandalism had occurred since, with the two young culprits filmed and names noted; the school had been asked to make children aware that this would not be tolerated. The Arts Project, funded by the Lottery, was to start on Thursday 1 October, with 7 children having already signed up to participate – more were expected.

c) **Paving around Notice Board/Bus Shelter and bench:** The Clerk reported that all these tasks had been undertaken and completed by Affordable Landscapes. The bus shelter would cost around £600 as the whole roof had proved rotten when inspected.

d) **Trees:** The Clerk informed that: (i) a man had been seen removing branches from the tree on the green outside Village Farm, despite the Council's decision not to allow this; as a result, a reminder had been given in Village Life that any work on trees on public land within the village requires the permission of the Parish Council, and that in particular, any work on trees within the Conservation Area also requires formal planning permission from the Local Authority. (ii) The tree specialist had been asked to assess the trees in Manor Close and deemed that neither was in need of pruning at this time. (iii) A branch had fallen from a large horse chestnut tree on the north side of the green, blocking the entrance to The Chantryes; the tree man had been called out and came within the hour to remove the branch. The Borough Council's Arboriculturalist had been contacted and came to inspect the tree – he gave permission for some further lightening of the canopy to be undertaken immediately and, as there was a potential H & S risk, he would not require planning permission in this instance; this work was undertaken immediately.

e) **Manor Close land/sign:** The sign has still not been replaced by the Borough Council. As private cars are now being regularly parked on the land, the Clerk was requested to send a letter to householder advising that use of the space was limited to medical and care staff or others authorised by the Parish Council only, and to place a temporary sign in the space. **Action:** Clerk to write letter and sign.

f) **Bin Collections:** It appears that, although we were informed by Cllr. Martin-Wells that the Notice has been rescinded, in practice householders along the A19 and Coal Lane are still being required to either transfer their waste into domestic white bags for collection by a smaller lorry, (said bags being totally unsuitable for storing refuse for several weeks where rodents and other vermin are rife) or to take their bins to the nearest main road with, in some cases, ludicrous reasons given as to why the refuse lorry cannot approach their premises. **Action:** Clerk to contact Paul Hurwood at the Borough Council and Ward Councillors about this issue again.

7. Draft Depreciation Policy: The Clerk presented a Draft Depreciation Policy, produced in response to a recommendation by the Internal Auditor. The Policy was **approved and adopted** without amendment.

8. Revised Job Description and Person Specification for the role of Clerk/RFO: The Clerk presented an updated version, in line with the requirements of the current role, responsibilities and legislation. Councillors commented on the the complexity of the role today; Cllr. H. Thompson stated that it was important to keep the Job Description and Person Specification up-to-date, so that when the time came to recruit a new Clerk, the Council would be well prepared. The revised documents were **unanimously agreed**.

9. Chairman's Report: The Chairman reported that he had removed a wasp's nest from the Playing Field over the summer.

10. Ward Councillor's Report: None received. The Clerk reported that she had made a request to Ward Councillors for advice as to whether the Borough Council would be willing to allow orange filters to be put into the lights around the Conservation Area, to replace the 'warm glow' of the old light bulbs – a suggestion made by Mrs. P. Heslop. **Cllr. Martin-Wells** had **agreed to investigate**.

11. Village Maintenance report: Cllr. Irving reported that: (a) the weeds had been removed from the entrance road up to the footpath to The Walk, by herself and Cllr Hall; (b) volunteers were needed to clear the cobbles around the green of weeds; (c) many flower tubs around the village were in need of painting before the winter; (d) the pond in the Wildlife Garden needs a beach making at one end to allow animals and reptiles to get out of the pond; (e) the bunting, left 'flapping about' after the EMA fête, was causing problems and needed to be removed urgently; (f) Mr. Gilhespie's bench will be placed imminently in the agreed place on the green. **Actions:** All to join a Working Party to be arranged ASAP to clear the cobbles and paint the flower tubs. Clerk to write to the Wildlife Gardener to request the installation of a beach. Cllr. R. Thompson to organise the removal of the bunting.

12. Financial Report: The Clerk presented the reports, which were accepted.

Income:	£	Expenditure:	£
Contributions for bus	1,400.00	Broadband Line (2 months)	47.05
VAT Refund	2,464.85	Bus	3,080.00
Way-leave	8.05	Clerk's salary & Manual (3 months)	425.50
Total	3,872.90	General Maintenance	58.06
		Grass Cutting & strimming	1,105.80
		ICO	35.00
		Installation of Broadband Box	150.00
		Major works	9,000.00
		Room Hire	20.00
		Tutor fees – Computer Club	300.00
		Total	14,221.41

The Clerk reported that the government was making funds available to Parish Councils with a turnover of less than £25,000 to allow them to meet the requirements of the Transparency Code, which came into effect this year. She requested permission to apply to the Fund, which was unanimously **agreed**. **Action:** Clerk to apply for funding.

13. Rural Plan: Cllr H. Thompson informed that the Rural Plan Working Group were in the final stages of collating responses to the latest consultation and incorporating these as appropriate, with the aim of going to the Inspector by the end of the year, and out to formal Referendum early in the New Year.

14. Correspondence:

(a) CPSO C. Jones report on incidents within the parish since the last meeting – noted.

(b) Mr. R. Coleman had provided a copy of a letter he had sent to our Grass cutting contractors in relation to a claim for damage by them to a window – noted.

(c) A 'Thank you' card had been received from Mr. & Mrs. Moses – the Clerk reported that she had sent a card and bouquet to the couple on behalf of the Council in recognition of their Golden Wedding; Councillors were pleased that this had been done, but recognised that they had no policy at present to cover such events. It was **agreed** therefore that in future the Parish Council would recognise, for residents in the civil parish, events such as Gold, Diamond and Platinum Wedding Anniversaries (with a card and bouquet to a maximum of £20) and significant birthdays such as 90 and 100 (with a card). It was further agreed that this should be publicised in Village Life. **Action:** Clerk to amend the Financial Regulations and write piece for Village Life.

(d) Mrs. S. Dobbie – thanking the Council for the refurbishment of Church Bank steps.

(e) Mrs. S. Dobbie – raising concern in regard to the number of dogs seen on the green without leads and the fouling of her garden; Cllr Hall had also raised concerns about the level of dog fouling he was seeing in the Ghyll. Councillors **agreed** that these issues should be raised with the Dog Wardens at the Borough Council and that a notice should be placed at the entrance to the Ghyll reminding dog walkers to clean up after their dogs. **Action:** Clerk to contact the Dog Wardens and to produce a notice for the Ghyll.

(f) Mr. & Mrs. Banks had sent photographs of the entrance to The Walk before and after Parish Councillors had weeded the area in 2014; Mr. Banks was now able to maintain the area with the judicious application of weed killer and they expressed their thanks for a job well done – noted.

(g) Safer Hartlepool Partnership – notice of the annual meeting to be held in the Council Chamber from 6-7.45 pm on Tuesday 13 October – noted.

(h) TVRCC Rural News and notification of AGM and new CEO – noted.

(i) Several letters raising concern about the proliferation of tables and large advertising umbrellas outside the pubs, and advertising signs on the green, particularly near the main road. Several Councillors stated that they had also received complaints about these over the summer. The Clerk informed Councillors that it was only in recent years that permission to place up to 3 tables on the green had been given to the landlord of the McOrville by the then Chairman, providing they were moved for the grasscutters; before that, neither the pubs nor shop were allowed use of the green. It was **agreed** that, whilst the Parish Council wished to support and encourage these businesses, this could best be done by maintaining the pleasant look of the village, and that therefore each public house should be asked to restrict the number of tables to three, and only have them on the green between 1 April and 30 October; all three businesses also to be asked to limit advertising signs to their own properties.

(j) Several complaints about parked cars blocking the access route down the mid-section on the south side of the green, and cars parking on the green to the north side. Councillors were aware that some householders had no other space to park, but were clear that the road must be kept open for use by emergency vehicles and that the rule on no parking on the green must be upheld. The Clerk was requested to write to all householders along the green asking them to please park with consideration for emergency vehicle access, and to alert those new to the village that there was a no parking Bye Law. **Action:** Clerk to write letter.

(k) Red Cross – appeal for volunteers/funding for project to provide support to people who live alone, on discharge from hospital. **Agreed** to refer to Village Life editors. **Action:** Clerk to forward to editors of Village Life.

15. Planning Applications:

H/2015/0351: Appeal won by developer

H/2015/0357: Elwick House – no objection

H/2015/0315: Temporary Solar Farm, land north of Wolviston, and

H/2015/0316: ditto, Blue House Farm – no objections but concern over possible glare of sun on panels affecting drivers on nearby roads.

H/2015/0386: 68 dwellings at Wynyard Woods – no comment

H/2015/0360: variation on plans at Wynyard Woods – no comment

H/2014/0513 – Home Farm, Hart, notice of Appeal – noted.

16. Matters of Concern to Councillors: Already covered elsewhere on the agenda. Mention was made of the wonderful wild flower displays along the main roads into Hartlepool and a query as to whether this could be extended next year to the villages too. **Action:** Clerk to raise with HBC officers and Ward Councillors.

17. Date of Next Meeting: 26th October 2015 at Elwick WI Hall.