

Elwick Parish Council

Minutes of the Meeting held at 7.00pm on Monday 25th January 2016 at Elwick School

Present: Cllr. H. Thompson (in the Chair), J. Hall, B Irving, R Musgrave, R Thompson,

In attendance: Ward Cllr B. Loynes, Mrs. M West (Clerk), CPSO Cath Jones & colleague

1. Apologies: Cllrs P. Hutchinson, A. Waugh – whose reasons for non-attendance were accepted

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

3. Declarations of interest: None

The Chair informed colleagues that main focus of the meeting was to be on Parish Council finances and, whilst not underestimating the importance of other matters, asked that members be brief in their reports.

The Chair then welcomed CPSO C. Jones and her colleague who gave a rundown on recent crime in the area, which comprised: 1 drink-drive offence, 1 concern for safety, 1 speeding offence, 1 other road-related offence and 1 poaching offence all in the rural area. Also 1 assault and 1 damage to property in other parts of Rural West Ward. Over all, it has been fairly quiet in our area. Cllr Hall asked about the recent assault in Manor Close, when a householder had challenged intruders. He was informed that the culprits had been apprehended and were on remand. The Chair thanked the officers for attending the meeting and updating the Parish Council. The officers left the meeting.

4. Minutes of the Meeting held on 30th November 2015: agreed as correct record – proposed by R.Musgrave, seconded by B. Irving, and **agreed.**

5. Matters Arising:

- a) **Mr Bedding's concerns.** The Chair asked if any Councillor had an update on this. As no-one had had further discourse on the issue with Mr Bedding, it was agreed that, as concerns had been aired, and there was now understanding on both sides, the matter could now be closed.
- b) **Manor Close sign:** Car owners appear to have taken notice of the new signs and no longer park on the land.
- c) **Awards for All:** The Clerk informed Councillors that the Lottery had agreed an extension to 28th February to allow the bench to be completed and placed in situ. The formal report to the Lottery will be submitted by the Clerk by this date.
- d) **Anti-dog waste stencil:** The stencil has still not been painted. Cllr. Loynes informed that this was due to the poor weather, and that it would be done as soon as the weather improved.
- e) **Refuse Collections:** Cllr Loynes informed that a site visit to Amerston Hill had been arranged with the Refuse and Health & Safety Officer officers, to take place on Wednesday 27th at 11.00am.
- f). **Bye Laws:** The Clerk informed that she was trying to gain information from the Department of Communities and Local Government on the issue of amending Bye-laws, but had not yet managed to achieve this.
- g) **Clerk's Appraisal:** Cllr H. Thompson informed that this would be completed by the end of

February.

6. Chairman's Report: Cllr. H. Thompson had attended the Parish Liaison meeting in place of Cllr. Hutchinson, who was recovering from a hip replacement operation. Issues she had raised included: Rural Waste Collections (see Minute 5e above); the pavements in North Lane and Martindale and Manor Closes, which are to be reviewed again by HBC engineers; potholes on the roads into the village and at the bottom of Church Bank. She had been informed that: (a) HBC had to make a further £18M in savings over the next three years; (b) The Council Tax is to be decided in February; (c) The Government wants all Local Authorities to be self-sufficient by 2020; (d) recycling was to be taken back 'in-house' by HBC in the new financial year. Concerns were expressed by Mrs. Ogden, Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods, as to the amount of contaminated waste put into the recycling bins e.g. pizza boxes, dirty food containers, etc. Each time something of this nature is found, the whole load has to go to land fill instead of being recycled.

7. Ward Councillor's Report: Cllr Loynes informed that: North Lane and other pavements are in hand; the blocked Char Beck has been cleared; drains around the village have been cleared. She had consulted officers with regard to the Licencing Laws, and it appears that provided the alcohol has been purchased on licensed premises it may be consumed anywhere. Councillors again raised concerns about the possibility of broken glass on the village green, which could leave the Parish Council open to insurance claims from anyone so injured. It was **agreed** that the Clerk write to the new publicans at the McOrville to inform them of the limit on the number of tables allowed on the green, and to ask them to serve drinks to be consumed outside in plastic containers. **Action:** Clerk to write to McOrville landlord. Cllr Loynes was thanked for her report.

8. Village Maintenance report: Cllr Irving noted that 2 salt bins on the main green have split and are in urgent need of replacement. Cllr Loynes agreed to request their replacement, together with the placement of a new bin at the Hartlepool end of the village green. Cllr Irving also reported that a rusty bin and other refuse had been left beside the beck in North Lane; the Clerk informed her that the Fly Tipping team had already been informed of this. Cllr. Hall suggested a new, antique style, signpost on the green to point visitors to the Wildlife Garden.

9. Village Design Statement: Cllr. H. Thompson reported that this was in progress.

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

Income:	£	Expenditure:	£
Way-leaves	<u>10.00</u>	Broadband Line	47.88
		Bus	1,232.00
		Trees	<u>500.00</u>
Total	10.00	Total	1,779.88

The Clerk asked for advice on the current balance in the A4A Computer Club Account, which would have to be returned if not fully spent. Suggestions included membership of a genealogy site, some new hardware, such as graphics tablets or control sticks, and some further tutor support, if an appropriate tutor could be found (Cllr. R. Thompson agreed to make enquiries of the Retired Men's Forum). It was agreed that a small working party made up of Councillors H. and R. Thompson and the Clerk should discuss the options and decide.

The Clerk then informed that, under the new Audit rules, covered by the Transparency Law, small Councils with a turnover of less than £25,000 would, from the financial year 2017/18, not need an External Audit, but would have to place their Internally Audited Receipts and Payments Account on their website. Further, should a small council in any one year exceed the £25,000 limit, a full External Audit would be required. A Sector Led Body had been set up to identify appropriately qualified auditors in all areas of England. Should a PC opt out of this, then the financial burden of identifying 5 independent members of the parish to undertake the recruitment and selection

process would fall on the Council itself. It was unanimously **agreed** to opt in to the Sector Led Body for Local Councils Audits. No action required.

The Clerk presented the completed Transparency Fund Application – this covered: costings for the purchase of a laptop, scanner and broadband line as well as training in website design. Councillors **agreed** unanimously to this being formally submitted.

11. Budget 2016/17: The Clerk presented several options for consideration. These took into account the previous suggestions made by Councillors and the likely financial costs. It was clear that, with the Borough Council finances under extreme pressure, it was unlikely that an increase of more than 2% in the Concurrent payment would be achieved. This meant that the Parish itself would have to bear the burden of any new work – indeed, without an increase in the precept, the Council would be unable to meet its current commitments.

Following a thorough discussion on the various financial outturns forecast, Cllr. R. Thompson proposed, and Cllr. Irving seconded, a proposal to increase the precept by 25%. Cllr Hall proposed an amendment, seconded by Cllr Musgrave, that the increase should be 20%. A vote was taken on the Amendment: with 2 in favour and 3 against. The amendment was therefore lost and the substantive motion was put to the vote. This was carried by a majority and the precept demand would therefore be for an overall increase of 25% - approximately £3.30 per annum per household.

It was noted that, under the Transparency Law, from the financial year 2017/18, any increase in the precept over what was deemed to be a reasonable percentage (likely to be approx 2%), would need to go to a Referendum of electors in the parish.

It was also **agreed** that a 3-5-year plan should be developed and presented to the Annual Parish Meeting in May for approval.

12. Correspondence:

- a) An open letter from Prof. B. Footitt commending the Parish Council (and generous benefactor) for the new steps up to the church;
- b) Request from K. Shaw for a copy of the November minutes – specifically the issue of cars parking across the pavement in North Lane. Agreed: Clerk to write letter to all the households, acknowledging the problem and suggesting that 'Private Parking' be painted on the road, to deter non-residents, who are the main cause of the problem.

13. Planning:

- H/2015/0528 – Object on the grounds of increased traffic through the village.
- H/2016/0004 – No objection.

14. Matters of concern to Councillors: Cllr. Musgrave had been advised that a tree opposite No. 42 The Green needed attention.

15. Date of Next Meeting: 25th February 2016 at Elwick School.