**ELWICK PARISH COUNCIL**

**Minutes of Meeting held at 7.00 pm on Monday 29th November 2021**

**at Elwick WI Hall**

*(Social Distancing was observed throughout)*

**Present:**Cllrs. H. Thompson, P. Hutchinson, B. Irving, R. Musgrave, Cllr R. Thompson from 7.08pm.

**In Attendance:** M. Ireland, Clerk, Mrs. Diane Atkins, Chair, Wynyard Residents Association

1. **Apologies:** ParishCllr Woodward, out of the country for work – apology accepted.
2. **Public Forum:** No issues raised.
3. **Declarations of Interest:** Nonedeclared.
4. **Police Report:**  No apologies or report received.
5. **Minutes of 25th October 2021**: One amendment was requested: In Item 8 – the year stated should read 2022, not 2002. With this amendment made, it was **resolved** to accept the minutes as a true record.

1. **Matters Arising: (a) Church Bank** – Cllr R. Thompson informed that the footpath down Church Bank had now been fully resurfaced with tarmac.

**(b) Trees** – The Clerk reported that the tree surgeon had been informed that his quote for the pruning and removal of trees had been accepted and that Affordable Landscapes had agreed to reduce the two trees behind The Walk by 30%.

**(c) Village greens protection –** The Clerk informed that Affordable Landscapes had been requested to undertake the installation of the new stones and moving of other stones as soon as possible.

1. **Revised Parish Plan:** The Clerk apologised that she had not yet completed the revision due to having been ill, but would have it done for the next meeting. Apology accepted. **Action:** Clerk to have revised Parish Plan available for next meeting.
2. **War Memorial**: The Clerk informed that two residents had asked if it would be possible to have a War Memorial on the village green as, although there was a memorial window in the church, it was felt to be insufficient to mark the death of those residents over the years who had died in service to their country. She, herself, felt that any such memorial should include not only soldiers, but members of other armed forces and civilians, such as firefighters, police officers and others who lost their lives in the line of duty. The issue before Councillors today was to decide on the principle, not on the detail, of such a Memorial, though she had undertaken some research into potential styles and costs of such memorials. After some considerable discussion, all Councillors present were in favour, provided that could be funded from sources other than the precept. The Clerk was requested to investigate further.

**Action:** Clerk to investigate options & issues around a war memorial on the village green.

1. **Ward Councillors’ Reports**: The Clerk reported no reports received. Councillors expressed their disappointment that yet again residents of the rural community had been left with no information on Borough Council activity nor the opportunity to raise issues with their Ward Councillors.
2. **Chairman’s Report**: The Chairman reported as follows:

* The rural Parish Council Chairmen had met privately with MP, Jill Mortimer, to discuss their concerns about the Borough Council’s attitude to Parish Councils and rural area issues. Mrs. Mortimer had agreed to mediate between them and the Leader & MD of HBC by asking all to attend a meeting with her.
* She had been disturbed to hear yet again, that the persons responsible for shoddy and over-priced roofing/building work being carried out in the village, had been in the village again, even though the police and Trading Standards had been appraised of the Parish Council’s concerns. She requested the Clerk inform the police and Trading Standards again. **Action**: Clerk to inform police and Trading Standards.

1. **Red Gap Projects:** The Clerk reported that the final claim for the repair to the village road would be submitted later that week; the Tipi Carousel had been installed but was missing its top frame. The contractor had apologised and would be installing this as soon as possible – until this was completed, she could not complete the report or claim the grant. Affordable Landscapes had cleared the bark from the soft fall area – this had taken 2 full days. Once cleared, it could be seen that there was no stone surface under the bark and this would therefore have to be installed before the rubber mulch could be laid. The total cost for the preparation of the site would be £2,170, should Councillors agree to go ahead with this. As yet she had not signed a contract with the mulch supplier – and noted there was a minimum 6-week lead time for the mulch, which could not be laid in bad weather such as snow. Councillors unanimously **agreed** to go ahead with the installation of the stone base and the contract for the rubber mulch.
2. **Social Activities Committee Report:** Cllr R. Thompson reported that the Christmas Fayre had taken place the previous Friday, despite all attempts by the weather to prevent it. 16 stalls had been recruited and, despite the severe weather forecast, which had resulted in the event being moved to the Spotted Cow, most had attended. A small marquee had been erected to the side of The Cow Shed behind the pub, and stalls placed both in the restaurant, in the Cow Shed and the marquee. Santa had been a great success and a £50 donation had been made to him for his favoured charity, the Great North Air Ambulance Service. Thanks were expressed to the wonderful team of volunteers who had helped in setting up, staffing and clearing up afterwards. Particular mention was made of Barry Smithson and Alan Hull, as well as Zoe Woodward, who helped the Social Activities members throughout the event. It was disappointing that HBC did not switch on the Christmas Tree lights, nor provide access to electricity as promised, with no explanation. On the whole the event had been surprisingly successful, given that Storm Arwen arrived during the event, which wound up early due to blizzard conditions. Special commendation was made by Councillors, to Jamie Thompson who, single-handedly removed the marquee cover at 1.00am on Saturday morning in 90mph winds! The only damage incurred was to two marquee frame corners, which will need to be replaced. The next planned events would be the ‘Carols Around the Tree’ at 6.30pm on Christmas Eve and the Children’s Christmas Party on 29th December at the WI Hall.
3. **Village Maintenance Group Report**: Cllr Irving spoke to her tabled report.

**Tasks completed**

* Pavements in North Lane repaired apart from area around Home Farm.
* Footpath down Church bank tarmacked.
* Carousel base installed – awaiting top.
* Mesh fence in Playing Field repaired.

**Tasks not yet completed:**

* Parts of pavements in The Walk need repairing – HBC
* Sanding & staining exterior woodwork on bus shelter, contracted – EPC
* Exterior of bus shelter to be painted – EPC
* Sanding, staining and repairing benches, contracted – EPC
* Damaged fence on Church Bank needs repairing - EPC
* Fence at entrance to Playing Field needs repairing, staining & notice attached – EPC
* Bench to be installed in North Lane – EPC
* Damaged bench in North Lane to be replaced - HBC
* Bench to be installed at Playing Field - EPC
* Oak tree to be planted in Playing Field – EPC
* Crab Apple tree and perennials to be planted and pond completed in Wildlfe Garden – EPC
* Bark to be removed from Soft-Fall area of Playing Field – EPC
* New soft-fall surface to be installed at Playing Field – EPC
* Tree in memory of Chris Banks to be purchased and planted – EPC.

1. **Financial Reports**: (circulated in advance). The Clerk presented the reports which were accepted.

**Receipts: £ Payments: £**

0.00 H. Thompson (reimbursement for setts) 96.00

Affordable Landscapes (1 cut) 390.00

Affordable Landscapes (crown lifting trees on

green & removal of tree stump) 840.00

**Total: 0.00 Total: 1,326.00**

1. **Budgets of 2022-2023:** The Clerk reminded Councillors that it was their responsibility to set the budget and precept for both the new Elwick Parish Council and the new Wynyard Parish Council for the next financial year. She further reminded that the split in finances being made by HBC, based on household numbers, was on a 73:27% basis in favour of Wynyard, which meant that Elwick would face some serious financial constraints. She had prepared a paper demonstrating the expected financial outcome at the end of March 2022; this included the balance of unspent 2021-2022 budget, ring-fenced funds (monies given for a specific purpose), and commitments already made. The balance left at the end of the financial year would be split in the same proportion as the precept, i.e. 73% to Wynyard and 27% to Elwick. Assets to be transferred across included a Notice Board, a defibrillator and some benches.

Mrs. Atkins was then invited to talk though the figures in the proposed Wynyard budget; she began by explaining that she had met with the Elwick Parish Clerk and Mrs. Hurst the previous week, to develop the budget, and that the figures had since been tweaked as new, more accurate information on costs was obtained. The Wynyard budget was built in the same way as that of Elwick, that is with the core costs of running a Parish Council identified first – including the Clerk’s salary & NIC costs, based on 20 hours per month, training for Clerk and all Councillors, audits, administration costs, insurance, website maintenance, bank charges, ICO fees for data protection, venue hire and a contribution to the Clerk’s broadband/telephone costs. Other expenses then identified included one-off costs for the first year, for example: recruitment costs and equipment for the Clerk, such as a laptop, printer, filing cabinet, etc and website development. Added to this were some specific projects including the start of a Community Orchard and two benches. Income to be received included a small LCTS grant and the funds to be transferred from Elwick PC. This would leave a figure of £13,000 to be met by the Precept. Mrs. Atkins was thanked for her comprehensive and detailed explanation. After a very brief discussion, Councillors **resolved** to require a precept for the new Wynyard Parish Council, of £13,000.

Mrs, Atkins then asked if she could discuss the remaining 2021-22 allocation to Wynyard, to which the Chair concurred. Mrs. Atkins requested that the balance of Wynyard funds be spent on the purchase of 2 new benches and the December issue of the Wynyard newsletter. Councillors were in full agreement with this, recognising that, although this would cost slightly more than in the budget, it would simply reduce the amount of end of year balance to be transferred to Wynyard.

Councillors then moved on to discuss the budget for the new Elwick parish. The Clerk had prepared several options in line with the suggestions made at the Annual Parish Meeting, but also a budget that included no village improvements at all. This latter budget demonstrated that the Council could not finance the basic costs of a Parish Council, as required by law, and identified in the Wynyard budget discussed earlier, without an increase in the precept. Other budget options provided included two different projects, which could be funded almost completely with external funding. Following a heated debate, which covered the real difficulty Councillors felt in having to raise the precept so much, and the impact this would have on residents, it was **agreed** to limit new activities for the next year, to those that could be resourced from external funds, i.e. road markings for the car park area in Manor Close and a red BT telephone box to restore the village green to the state when Conservation status was decreed. The fully renovated telephone box, was to be used as a free book & jigsaw puzzle exchange. The budget then agreed, Councillors resolved to require a precept of £7,996. It was further agreed that a full explanation of the increase in precept would be circulated to all households in the parish in the New Year.

The Clerk was thanked for her thorough preparation for the budget discussion.

1. **Correspondence:** Email received from Northern Gas requesting permission to cross the village green in order to install a gas supply to Manor Cottage – **agreed**.
2. **Planning Applications**:

**H/2021/0481** – retrospective application for a car port at Millstone House, Elwick.Councillors objected strongly to retrospective applications in general, but agreed the car port was not obtrusive and therefore would raise **no objection**.

**H/2021/0499** – 1, Delamere, Wynyard – two-storey side extension – **no comment**

1. **Matters of Concern to Councillors**: Cllr Hutchinson wished to pay for the new stones to be installed on the green; his offer was accepted with gratitude. No other concerns being raised, the Chairman reminded all of the date for the next meeting.
2. **Date of next Meeting:** 7.00pm, Monday 31st January 2022 at Elwick WI Hall.

*Meeting closed 9.10 pm.*