**ELWICK PARISH COUNCIL**

**Minutes of Meeting held at 7.00 pm on Wednesday 21st September 2022**

**at Elwick WI Hall**

**Present:**Cllrs. D. Woodward, B. Irving, R. Musgrave, R. Thompson and G. Winrow

**In Attendance:** M. Ireland, Clerk.

1. **Public Forum:** A resident read out a long statement he had brought with him, in which he expressed deep concern about bin lorry and fire brigade access to Nos 11-33 North Lane since the large stones had been installed. He stated he was speaking on behalf of all the residents, when he stated there had been little or no communication with residents about the stones before they were placed. He had sent several emails to the PC but received no response. The Chairman accepted a failure on the part of the Parish Council to communicate effectively but did note that he had communicated with the resident’s wife about the issue via WhatsApp and explained what was going to be done. The Parish Council had taken the issue very seriously and had contacted the HBC Refuse Department and Fire Brigade immediately on receipt of the email. Both had stated the stones were not a problem, the Refuse Department stating it was parked vehicles that were the problem, not the stones, and the Fire Brigade that they regularly checked every road in the Borough for access and had no issues in Elwick. The resident stated he had received a very different response*.* The Chairman agreed to have the stones removed, though they had been placed there in response to residents’ concerns about others parking on the grass opposite their homes. He also agreed to review the questions posed in the statement and provide a written response as soon as reasonably possible.

*The resident left the meeting at 7.33pm***.**

The Chairman noted that he had captured all these issues in his report to the July meeting, but the detail was not in the minutes. He therefore requested the Clerk attach his July report to the Minutes.

**Actions:** Cllr Woodward & Clerk to provide written response to resident’s questions; Clerk to attach Chairman’s July report to the minutes of July.

1. **Apologies:** Cllrs Aird and H. Thompson – accepted. Ward Cllr A. Martin-Wells.
2. **Police Report:** No report or response from PCSO J. Calvert.
3. **Declarations of Interest:** None declared.
4. **Minutes of 25th July** **2022:** Cllr R. Thompson proposed, with Cllr Irving seconding, the acceptance of the Minutes as a true record of the meeting. All being in agreement, it was **resolved** to accept the minutes as a true record, with the addition of the full Chairman’s report as an Appendix.
5. **Matters Arising*: (a) Microsoft 365:*** The Clerk reported that 365 had been purchased and installed.

***(b) Hartlepower –*** The Clerk reported that she had meeting booked with Hartlepower for the morning of 29th September, to discuss the proposed event format, etc.

***(c) Sealant*** – CllrAird had been unable to paint the remaining stones as he had yet to receive the sealant; Cllr R. Thompson agreed to purchase SBR from Charles Dickens the next day and pass on to Cllr Aird.

***(d) Kiosk*** – The Clerk informed that an application for a Permitted Development Certificate had been submitted, together with a cheque for £115.00.

***(e) Broadband Connectivity –*** Councillors who had sought lines of sight noted real concerns about trees blocking the view.

(***f) Community Power Act*** - the Chairman noted that Cllr Mike Young was the key person at HBC, and agreed to invite him to the next meeting to discuss this.

**Actions:** Cllr. R. Thompson to purchase SBR sealant; Chairman to invite Cllr Young to next meeting; Clerk to inform Hartlepower of issue of trees blocking lines of sight.

1. **Civility and Respect Pledge:** TheClerk had circulated information about the Pledge, together with the NALC website address, with the agenda, but several Councillors admitted they had not yet read it. She explained that the pledge had come about as a result of investigations by both NALC and the SLCC into the rising number of cases of Clerks, and some Councillors, suffering severe bullying and harassment by Councillors, which had led to illness and several Clerks leaving the profession altogether. A joint project had been set up, to look at how this issue might be addressed and the Pledge was one result of the work undertaken. Councils were being asked to pledge to:
* Undertake recommended training for chairpersons, clerks and councillors
* Follow good employment practices
* Have good governance
* Continue to lobby for change in legislation (including sanctions)
* Have a Dignity at Work policy
* Seek professional help at early stages of problem
* Learn from best practice
* Call out bullying and harassment when it happens
* Be a role model.

The Clerk noted this was most definitely NOT a problem at Elwick Parish Council but recommended that Councillors leave any decision until the October meeting, to ensure they had sufficient time to read and understand what they would be signing up to. **Agreed.**

1. **Skips:** The Clerk reported that her recent investigations had shown the cheapest available would cost £240+VAT per skipand only be in situ for a few hours; if the Council wished to have them available until6/7.00pm, the cost would double. All present **agreed** the Parish Council could not afford to reinstate the skips this year, as they had not been included in the budget. It was further agreed to discuss this further at the budget meeting in November. **Action:** Clerk to add to November agenda.
2. **Ward Councillors’ Reports**: The Clerk noted no reports had been received.
3. **Chairman’s Report**: The Chairman had submitted a written report which had been circulated prior to the meeting. His report covered:
* Disappointment that we had to cancel the ‘Gig on the Green’, but it was the right thing to do following the death of the Queen.
* Thanks are owed to the Clerk for so quickly organising the Book of Condolences, photograph and flowers for the church, and the photo and condolences from the Parish Council on the notice board and website.
* A request to the Clerk to invite the Fire Brigade to meet Councillors ad walk about the village to review access.
* There is an increasing issue with parking around the village, particular areas are the green on the south side, the access to The Paddock and North Lane, around the school. We need those who have drives and garages to use them for their own vehicles in order that those without these amenities may park on the roadside – it is the neighbourly thing to do.
* The new owner of The McOrville has asked that we remove the marquee currently stored in one of his stables whilst work is being undertaken; the problem we have is that our own storage shed is already full – I will ask the WI if we may use one of their sheds in the short term.
* The marquee in question doesn’t have bags for the poles, therefore I request the Clerk to purchase 6 more pole bags.
* A proposal to call a meeting of all stakeholders in the parish – businesses, church, local groups and the school, to discuss how we might work better together fort he benefit of everyone.
* Warm place concerns – the need to ensure that, with the cost of energy rising so fast, every resident has access to somewhere warm during the cold months – our Tuesday Cuppa N Cake is a start, but we will need more – the shop is willing to offer space on a Thursday afternoon with free tea and biscuits available. All present **agreed** the PC should pay for the refreshments.

The Clerk informed that the Cuppa ‘N Cake group had discussed extending the hours in response to the school extending the school day, from 2.00 – 4.30pm, and those present the previous session had agreed to support this. Cllr R. Thompson requested the hours be amended to 2.30-4.30pm but the Chairman disagreed with this amendment. He proposed that 2.00-4.30pm be trialled through to the October PC meeting, when it could be reviewed and possibly relaunched together with the shop’s offer. This was **agreed**.

The Chairman noted that the shop owner was also willing to run a wine & cheese evening.

The Clerk informed that she had held a walk-about in the village with the new HBC Arboriculturist. They had looked at all the trees on public land and he had agreed that the branches on the trees which leant over the road and footpath on Church Bank needed removing, and the tree trunk already denuded of branches could be lowered below line of sight, though not removed entirely as it was still alive – these required official notification be given to HBC, which he would support, and there was no cost for this. He further advised that the PC could legally remove any self-seeded trees of less than 3” diameter, from the playing field and Church Bank.

**Actions**: Chairman to contact WI, to organise Stakeholder meeting; Clerk to invite Fire Brigade to make walk-about the village with Councillors, to purchase 6 x marquee pole bags, to notify HBC of tree pruning and request contractor to remove smaller trees.

1. **Social Activities Committee Report:** Cllr Woodward had nothing to report except the cancellation of the Gig. He stated that all energies now need to go into the planning of the Christmas Fayre, Children’s Christmas party and Carols around the Tree. The next SAC meeting would be in early October.
2. **Village Maintenance Group Report**: Cllr Irving’s written report had been circulated in advance.

***No tasks reported at the July meeting have been completed.***

**New tasks:**

* Fencing on the path down to the ghyll is partially down and in a dangerous condition – HBC
* Complaint received from two residents that the ramp across the beck in the ghyll is broken and covered in weeds & nettles, which makes it unusable - HBC

The Clerk noted that these issues had already been reported to HBC’s Access Officer, though clarification was needed as to the exact whereabouts of the ramp. Other issues discussed included:

* The oak tree planted earlier this year in the playing field had been badly damaged and needs staking, to help it straighten up, as it is still alive.
* Three flower tubs need removing urgently. The two on the green opposite Potters Farm and one in Manor Close. A resident has requested one be placed outside her house on the green which she will maintain. It was suggested that Andrew Sturrock might we willing to help move the tubs.
* It was **agreed** that the bench donated by Elwick Millenium Association, currently stored in the shed, was to be placed on the north village green and the bench currently in that position moved to the playing field – both to be securely fixed into concrete by the contractor.
* A volunteer team was needed to manage the Wildlife Garden – Cllr Winrow to request help via the Facebook page.
* Cllr R. Thompson reported the shed appeared to have twisted and now one of the doors will not open; it needed shoring up at one end.

**Actions:** Cllr Winrow to put request for volunteers on Facebook; Clerk to ask Andrew Sturrock for help with moving the flower tubs, contractor to stake the oak tree and move the benches as agreed and resolve the issue with the shed.

1. **Financial Reports**: (i) The Financial Reports had been circulated in advance; these were **accepted.**

**Receipts: £**  **Payments: £**

Wayleave 10.35 Seymour Civil Engineering (Village wall repair) 1,053.89 Spanglefish (Domain name and website hosting) 103.00

Elwick WI Hall Account (Room hire) 40.00

ICO (Data Protection fee) 35.00

HBC (Permitted Development Application) 115.00

D.M. Ireland (copy of map, gift flowers & posy & photos) 48.99

DALC (Village Greens training) 40.00

Affordable Landscapes (grass and clearing bed) 1,881.60

HBC (Emptying Playing Field bins) 119.86

D.M. Ireland (salary July – September) 910.80

HMRC (PAYE) 227.70

**Total: 10.35 Total: 4,575.84**

The Clerk informed that she had purchased two complete sets of toner for her printer over the summer, enough to print 12,000 pages in black, 6,000 in colour, and requested the PC make a contribution to the cost of these, as it was very expensive; she was making the same request from the two other PCs for whom she Clerked. Councillors were unanimous in stating the Clerk should be reimbursed in full for any costs incurred on behalf of the PC and insisted that she be paid for ALL the toner purchased. It was therefore **resolved** to reimburse the Clerk for the toner purchased. The Clerk expressed her thanks.

(ii) The Clerk informed that that External Audit Report had been received and read out the Auditor’s comments. The Auditor noted that the Council had not fully implemented the recommendations made in 2020/21 Audit Report relating to the splitting of the income from HBC correctly. Councillors noted that HBC had never made explicit that the precept payment included the LCTSS grant, and Cllr R. Thompson proposed the Clerk request a proper written breakdown of this income in future; all being in agreement, this was so **resolved**. The Auditor had also noted the Clerk had miscalculated the dates for the 30 days required for the Public Right to examine the accounts, in 2021, having given one day too many, and thus Councillors should not have agreed they had met the requirement and, although the dates were correct for the current year, Councillors needed to put in place arrangements to ensure that it always met its statutory obligations in future years. Councillors were somewhat perplexed by this comment and felt that giving an extra day for the public to examine the accounts in no way meant they were not meeting their statutory obligations, but rather exceeding them. However, all **agreed** that in future they would double-check the 30 days had been calculated correctly, before agreeing the AGAR. The Auditors other comments were noted.

1. **Red Gap Applications:** The Clerk reported that applications had been approved. She had yet to sign the contracts as she was awaiting the outcome of the Permitted Development application for the Kiosk and was having difficulty in establishing whether permission had been granted by HBC to turn the land in Greenlea into a Wildlife Garden. The land belonged to HBC but as EPC had been maintaining it now for over 20 years, she thought there should not be a problem, however she had been unable to find evidence that permission had been sought or given, which was a requirement of Grantscape. She noted that it was possible that the concurrent agreement with HBC covered this piece of land as well as the greens and asked whether she should seek permission from HBC - **agreed.**
2. **Correspondence**: ***HBC – Parish Councillor Induction Training, 5.30pm, Wednesday 28th September –*** agreed places be booked for Cllrs R. Thompson and Winrow, the Clerk already having booked a place for herself on behalf of another PC.
3. **Planning Applications**: No new applications received however it was noted that the HBC Conservation Officer had objected strongly to the application for Chantry Cottage. The Chairman proposed that the Conservation Officer be requested to provide constructive alternatives as to how buildings within the Conservation Area be made more energy efficient, without detriment to the Conservation Area status. All **agreed** she be invited to the event being planned with Hartlepower.

**Action:** Clerk to extend invitation to Conservation Officer.

1. **Matters of Concern to Councillors**:
* Cllr Musgrave noted fly tipping on left hand side of Craddon Bank and in North Lane (near the A19) where a tartan bag had been dumped several weeks ago.
* Cllr Irving noted the large amount of litter at the parking space at the bottom of Church Bank.
* The Clerk noted that the parish Council had still not received information directly from HBC as to plans for traffic calming in the village.

**Date of next Meeting:** 7.00pm, Monday 31st October 2022 at Elwick WI Hall.

*Meeting closed 9.50pm.*