**ELWICK PARISH COUNCIL**

**Minutes of Meeting held at 7.00 pm on Monday 31st October 2022 at Elwick WI Hall**

**Present:**Cllrs. Woodward, Aird, Irving, Musgrave, H. Thompson, R. Thompson and Winrow

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

1. **Public Forum:**  No members of the public were present. The Chairman noted that no request had been received and it as unanimously agreed that no permission be granted for a bonfire or firework display on or near the village green.
2. **Apologies:** Ward Cllr A. Martin-Wells. Cllr Musgrave reported that she had been trying to contact Cllr Young on behalf of residents of Coal Lane, as a fellow resident, not as a Parish Councillor, but to no avail; several letters and texts had gone unanswered. Councillors again expressed concern at the lack of attendance of Ward Councillors at PC meetings since April 2020.
3. **Police Report:** No report or response from the police received. The Clerk informed that she believed PCSO Jasmine Calvert was on still on sick leave and noted that we now have a police constable with responsibility for the rural area of Hartlepool - PC Ben Hayes, who can be contacted directly on 07970075902 or at Benjamin.hayes@clevelnd.pnn.police.uk.
4. **Declarations of Interest:** None declared.
5. **Minutes of 21st September** **2022:** Cllr Winrow proposed, with Cllr R. Tompson 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.
6. **Matters Arising*: (a) Resident complaint*** – The Chairman reported that he had been in touch with the resident, who had been very pleased with the prompt removal of the stone, The Fire Brigade had agreed to make an accompanied visit to the village, to ensure that every residence had appropriate access for the emergency services. The resident’s letter would be responded to once this had been completed.

***(b) Energy event –*** the event had taken place on Thursday 20th October, sadly only 21 residents had attended, but it was clear that there were problems with the implementation of the Warm Home Initiative in Elwick. After a brief discussion it was **agreed** that information from residents needed to be collated and presented to those responsible if the issues were to be resolved in a timely manner. It was further **agreed** that all agencies in attendance be asked to provide information for the Parish Council website.

***(c) Community Power Act*** - the Chairman noted he not yet been able to action this.

***(d) HBC Parish Councillor Induction Training –*** The Clerk reported that she had attended this in her capacity as Vice-Chaiman of DPPC, that sadly no Elwick Councillors had attended, which was a shame as it had been an excellent and informative event. The trainers were the two CDALC Officers and a f**ellow Clerk, all from Co. Durham; she agreed to circulate the slides from the event.**

***(e) Bench –*** The Chairman informed that after consideration he had agreed the bench to be moved to the Playing Field would not be the Smurthwaite remembrance bench, but the one currently nearest the footpath down Church bank, and the new bench would be installed here in its place.

**Actions:** All to request feedback from residents on their experience with the Warm Homes Initiative and pass on to the Clerk, Clerk to request information from agencies, invite John Paul White to November meeting and send slides of training event to all Councillors.

1. **Playing Field:** The Chairman reported that a small horse had got out onto the main road, via the Playing Field, as a result of someone leaving the gate into the horse field ajar. Fortunately, it had been stopped just short of the A19, or a major incident might have ensued, for which the PC would have been held liable. Following the incident, which had been reported to the Clerk, he and the Clerk had met with Mrs. Grieves; it appeared the real issue is with dog walkers constantly opening the large gate to go up through the fields. Grieves’ do not want dogwalkers going through there, as it damages the fence, and they do not want dog walkers in the field with horses. The following actions were agreed:
2. As a priority – install a self-closing gate on the main entrance.
3. Look at reopening the metal gate behind the zip wire, and permanently fencing off the large broken gate.
4. Urge walkers to go down the beck.

Libby agreed to the idea of urging walkers straight down the ghyll along the Beck.

The Clerk had since received a quote from Geoff Bell in the sum of £500 + VAT for the purchase and installation of a gate here. A further meeting, with Chris Scaife, HBC Access Officer, had been held that afternoon, and it had been agreed that the Grieves’ being willing, a ‘Permissive Right of Way’, could be created from the gate at the lower end of the Playing Field to the ghyll. The whole project would require a path to be created down the length of the Playing Field, with two footbridges over the beck, two kissing gates and a boardwalk over some boggy land but would result in a lovely new route for both walkers and dogs. This would, of course, cost quite a lot of money, but would provide a solution to the issue of dog walkers using the Playing Field to illegally access Grieves’ land.

After some discussion it was **agreed in principle** to continue discussions on the creation of a Permissive Right of Way, provided external funding towards the cost could be obtained. It was further **agreed** to ask Mr. Scaife about landowner responsibility for managing trees along a Public Right of Way and to formally request the temporary loan of a kissing gate for the entrance to the Playing Field, rather than pay for a wooden gate now, only to have to replace it with a kissing gate later. It was agreed that if such a loan was not feasible, the Clerk was authorised to spend up to £500 + VAT to have a wooden gate installed. **Action**: Clerk to request loan of gate and pursue purchase & installation of a wooden gate if loan not feasible, to ascertain landowner responsibilities for trees along PRWs as discussed.

1. **Warm Hubs:** The Chairman led a discussion on the potential for a number of warm hubs to be initiated in the village, with a view to providing residents with choice of venue should the cost of energy and/or power cuts mean they were unable to heat their own homes for any period. Already available was the free Tuesday ‘Cuppa ‘N Cake’ session at the WI hall, now running from 2.00 – 4.30 pm. It was understood that the Tea Shop was willing to provide space on a Thursday morning from 10.30am, with the PC funding free tea/coffee for residents. Discussions were to take place with the landlords of the McOrville and Spotted Cow, with a view to further days/times being available. The Clerk was requested to seek funding for the purchase of catering supplies for any Elwick warm hubs.

**Action:** Clerk to seek funding.

1. **Civility and Respect Pledge:** Councillors now having had sufficient time to read the background information on the Pledge, available on the NALC website, agreed unanimously to sign the Pledge and requested the Clerk arrange the necessary training. **Action:** Clerk to sign the Pledge on behalf of EPC and arrange training for all Councillors.
2. **Ward Councillors’ Reports**: The Clerk noted no reports had been received.
3. **Chairman’s Report**: The Chairman had circulated a written report just prior to the meeting. His report covered:
4. **Stones on North Lane -** Removed, communicated to resident. Working on arranging Fire Brigade visit to review village and access. Will work of full reply to letter. Have had a complaint about people driving over the grass…
5. **Parish Liaison meeting** had discussed:
* Charter Working Group progress and need to Identify what are quick wins and what require constitutional changes as well as clarification on role of our Clerk within the group and had expressed desire to make it a less formal atmosphere to encourage participation. Cllr R. Thompson quickly briefed on the latest W/P meeting.
* Discussed the role of the One Stop Shop and whether we could have notifications of OSS applications. Some issues on sensitivity and confidentiality of some submissions. Not hopeful.
* Discussed issues from other PCs. Dalton looking at purchasing a generator in case of black outs.
* Discussed Conservation Areas and possibility of getting more detailed input from Conservation Officer.
* Discussed Warm Hubs – Looking at support as discussed at committee
1. **Playing Field Gate** – covered earlier in the meeting.
2. **Conservation Area Issues -** Headland and Seaton are having consultation on the Conservation Area Management Plan. Should we request something similar for Elwick? The Clerk informed that she had just received notification that the traffic calming works were to commence the following week. Councillors were extremely concerned to hear that these included a chicane on the main road through the village green. Cllr Thompson proposed, with Cllr H. Thompson seconding, that the PC should write immediately to HBC with the following points: (a) this would be a breach of Conservation Area status, (b) concern at the lack of consultation on the amended proposal, (c) likely to be ineffective at slowing traffic as drivers will clearly see if oncoming traffic was close, and if not would just speed through, and finally, (d) EPC had already strongly expressed opposition to a chicane on the road through the village green. This was **unanimously agreed,** and the Clerk requested to write to HBC with the points made.
3. **Christmas Fayre -** going ahead, with both pubs and the shop involved. Stall holders to be fully confirmed.
4. **Social Activities Committee Report:** Cllr R. Thompson reported that the group had decided not to organise a Halloween event, that the Cuppa ‘N cake sessions had been extended as agreed at the September meeting, and this had been popular with young families, however, it was likely that the £200 allocated to this project last year but not yet called on, would be required to cover the cost of the extended hours. The Clerk was asked to apply to HBC Warm Hubs fund. There followed a brief discussion on the need for the PC to have an Emergency Plan, and what this might entail – for example, should there be prolonged power cuts this winter, could we ensure that residents had somewhere warm to go to and hot drinks/meals available? Would we need a generator – if so, where for? How could we ensure lighting without one? It was agreed we would need to have discussions with the two pubs, before making any decisions. Cllr Thompson then reported, the group were working hard to make the Christmas Fayre, planned to run from 5.00-8.00pm on Friday 18th November, a success, using both the pubs and shop as venues linked with stalls/lighting along the green in front of them and Santa in his Grotto in the Cowshed. Also in planning were the annual Carols Around the Tree with the church, and the Children’s Christmas party.

**Action:** Clerk to apply to HBC for Warm Hub funding.

*Cllr Musgrave left the meeting at 9.08pm.*

1. **Village Maintenance Group Report**: Cllr Irving’s written report had been circulated in advance:

**Tasks not yet completed** **by EPC:**

***Playing Field:***

* Entrance fence to be repaired and wood stained; possibly have a gate installed to prevent horses getting out
* Notice to be attached to fence
* New bench to be installed
* Missing boards around soft fall area to be replaced
* Damaged Oak tree to be staked.

***Wildlife garden:***

* Wildflower meadow needs cutting and clearing; shrubs need tidying and buddleia pruned
* Four flower tubs to be moved – one from Manor Close and three around the green.

**Tasks not yet completed by HBC:**

* Fencing on the path down to the ghyll is partially down and in a dangerous condition; horses have been getting onto the path.
* 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.
* Pavement around the corner of The Green with North Lane in a very bad state. Many complaints received from residents, especially those who have difficulty walking.

**NB**: In Manor Close, just past the car park space, piles of hedge trimmings and ivy have been dumped.

The Clerk informed that John Pearson had been requested, immediately after the last meeting, to undertake the installation of the bench and staking of the Oak tree at the Playing Field, as well as the cutting of the wildflower meadow, and she was assured he had not forgotten but had been very short staffed. Andrew Sturrock had agreed to move the flower tubs when he had time.

It was agreed that the boards around the soft fall area in the Playing Field be reduced to one level, utilising any then spare to fill in the gaps. The fence at the entrance was now subject to agreement over what type of gate would be installed, though the Notice still needed to be installed. Cllr Winrow undertook to put a request on Facebook requesting volunteer help with Wildlife Garden maintenance.

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

**Receipts: £**  **Payments: £**

Mazars LLP (External Audit) 408.00

D.M. Ireland (Toner) 350.00

R. Musgrave (Flowers for resident) 25.00

Gala Tent Ltd (Pole Bags) 55.93

Affordable Landscapes (grass) 856.80

D.M. Ireland (365; map for planning application) 84.99

Affordable Landscapes (grass) 428.40

Bank charges 18.00

**Total: 0.00 Total: 2,227.12**

The Clerk informed that she had signed the Grantscape contract for the Wildlife Garden Toolkit, but that Grantscape would not issue the contract for the Kiosk until HBC had given written permission for its installation on the village green.

The Clerk also noted she had two invoices awaiting payment and, as these were for meetings related to the Charter/Rural Plan, she felt all PCs should contribute. As EPC held funds on behalf of the Rural Plan Group, could these costs not be met from that fund? It was unanimously agreed that HRPG be asked to pay for all costs relating to such meetings, to whichever PC hosted them. **Action:** Clerk to make request of HRPG.

1. **Budget proposals 2023/24:** The Clerk requested Councillors consider what they wished to see included in the budget proposals for the following year, in order to give her time to acquire costings and prepare an options paper. The following suggestions were made:
* The proposed footpath from the playing field
* Skips
* CCTV
* The Coronation
* Speed cameras
* Spare parts for the marquees
* Fittings for the kiosk to make it into a book exchange
* Trees survey
* 2 x picnic benches for the playing field

As this would be a complex budget, and in the light of rising costs, the Clerk proposed that a preliminary meeting be held to discuss this. It was **agreed** to hold a one-hour meeting in the WI hall, on Wednesday 16th November at 12 noon.

1. **Correspondence**: ***HBC – Remembrance Sunday service –*** invitation to attend the service and partake of refreshments afterwards at the Borough Hall – noted.
2. **Planning Applications**: No applications received.
3. **Matters of Concern to Councillors**:
* Cllr H. Thompson – leaves around the village – could we ask householders to kindly sweep up any outside their homes and dispose of them, as HBC now only had one road sweeper for the whole Borough.
1. **Date of next Meeting:** 7.00pm, Monday 28th November 2022 at Elwick WI Hall.

*Meeting closed 9.52pm.*