

Minutes of Kirkwhelpington Parish Annual Assembly held on Tuesday 3rd May 2022 commencing at 7pm in Kirkwhelpington Memorial Hall

Those Present: R Thornton, E Rogerson, K Fortune, A Purves, M Neale, A Palmer, C Miller, J Riddle (County Cllr), K Tipple (County Council), nine members of the public

1/22 Apologies for Absence

D Pearson

2/22 Minutes of Previous Meeting held Tuesday 7th May 2019

It was resolved that the minutes of the previous meeting held Tuesday 7th May 2019 be accepted as a true record,

3/22 Matters arising from previous meeting held Tuesday 8th May 2019

There were no matters arising from the previous meeting held Tuesday 8th May 2019.

4/22 Parish Council Chairman Report

This was the first Annual Parish Meeting further to the Covid-19 pandemic. Since the meeting held 8/5/18 Jim Brown and Philip Senior had retired, with Anne Palmer and Mark Neale having joined the Council, with thanks given to all. Parish Council concerns over the past year had included the state of roads, traffic safety, and the building development at Gilbert Grove, which was slowly nearing completion. There were ongoing problems with flooding at Walk Mill. Parking always a problem in small villages, and residents continue to be asked to park with consideration. Dog fouling problematic, with additional warning signage erected. An oak tree had been donated to commemorate Issac Elliot's services to the village, and transplanted to the North end of the village, with commemorative plaque to be placed. B4RN were planning to start the broadband route to the parish later in the year. Several improvements to seating and bus shelters had been actioned.

R Thornton had retired as a Director on the Ray Wind Farm Community Interest Company, with M Neale the current Parish Council representative. There were significant funds that could be accessed. Thanks given to County Cllr, Parish Cllrs and Clerk.

5/22 Reports from Parish Organisations

PCC or Kirkwhelpington and Kirkharle with Kirkheaton

G Purves reported the PCC had held their annual meeting last Sunday. Kirkheaton church now being used again, with all light bulbs to be changed to LEDs. Kirkharle fabric repairs being considered, including new handrails and path realignment, with six church concerts booked. Internal works at Kirkwhelpington church now complete, which would hopefully be used for art exhibitions, concerts etc, with PCC to work in conjunction with the Village Hall. PCC also wish to work with the Parish Council in assisting Ukranian refugees. All three churches in the parish now open for services and visitors following the Covid pandemic, and looking forward to welcoming more people and arranging additional social events for all members of the local community. New vicar being sought. PCC thanked Parish Council for the grant towards maintenance of the churchyard.

6/22 Public Participation

A Palmer interested in promoting wildlife on wild verges, with two residents present agreeing to team up and liaise with parish gardeners.

7/22 Any Other Business

Kevin Tipple, County Council Planning Officer present. The prospective North Side quarry applicant had been carrying out non-statutory pre-engagement public information sessions, with event held 29/4/22. The Parish Council and parishioners would be able to comment on the Planning Application once it had been submitted to County Council, which is expected imminently. The Local Plan is a county wide document covering a wide range of topics and matters, such as housing and minerals, which had gone through several rounds of consultation. Demand for provision of aggregate minerals over the plan period had been identified, with a call for sites process carried out. North Side had been identified during the first consultation process, consulted on in Regulation 19, and included in the draft plan submission to Central Government – plan being officially adopted 31/3/22. Engagement within the local community, specifically on this site queried. Kevin explained the consultation process tends to be fairly consistent county-wide, publicised and comments invited on the document. There were many designations in the plan for a range of different developments and the approach County Council had taken was also consistent nationally.

Once the planning application is received, it will be checked for validation, ie has the form been completed correctly, correct plans provided and supporting information provided, and after this, publicised via press notice, neighbour consultation, public notices, and Parish Council and County Cllr notified. The normal timescale for a major development would be at least 13 weeks, however environmental issues could lengthen this time, and in a lot of cases, applications will take longer. The Strategic Planning Committee would decide if permission is granted. County Cllr John Riddle reiterated no formal application had yet been lodged, and as far as the Local Plan consultation is concerned, every elector in Northumberland had received at least one information flyer by post, advising details of the consultation process.

If a Planning Performance Agreement is paid for by a developer, it guarantees there is an officer hitting certain timescales, but does not guarantee planning approval, and costs developers several thousand pounds. It is a project management tool, geared towards more complex developments to aid where resources can be utilised, and not designed to work on a householder application, but pertinent to larger developments that require technical consultees. The County Council Director of Planning is attempting to push the process for all large developments.

County Cllr Riddle became aware of the quarry proposals on 10/3/22 via a zoom briefing with County Council Planning Officers. M Neale quoted County Council stating “A large amount of technical assessment had been carried out by County Council,” K Tipple replied essentially this had been a technical assessment through the Local Plan, with input from Highways, Public Protection, Ecologist and Archaeologist Officers at County Hall. At that stage there was no site detail, and a lot more information is required at the planning application stage. Supplementary policies in the Local Plan need to be scrutinised, with any prospective applicant then putting together an acceptable scheme. Parishioner of the view the County Council had effectively approved outline planning permission, as it is an allocated site and in principal agreement had been given. J Riddle explained there is a call for sites, with sites assessed, some technical work carried out, and if the site is a possibility, it will be included in the Local Plan, however a site allocation is not outline planning permission. Local Government do not want allocations included that will not go forward, so there needs to be reasonable certainty the areas in the Local Plan allocations are deliverable, ie for a willing landowner to be on board, and site operator signed up, and in the opinion of the County Council this site was acceptable.

Parishioner of the view quarries should not be permitted within one kilometre of a village, however there are no distances in practice on developments and residential properties, with each development looked at site by site. As a benchmark a distance of 500m is used as a starting point for sites of blasting, and 250m where there is no blasting.

Anne Palmer aware public consultation had been carried out regarding the Local Plan and questioned why the closest public sessions were in Bellingham and Ponteland when the plan included such major implications for Kirkwhelpington. Anne Palmer expressed dismay the site had been acknowledged as appropriate, when the County Cllr, Parish Council and land tenants were all unaware, and asked how public engagement is effective when nobody of relevance knew about the allocation. Anne Palmer of the view the consultation process was inadequate, along with the consultation regarding the recent Wannies Ascension planning application, which had resulted in the inhabitants of Kirkwhelpington and West Woodburn not being treated as neighbours.

Kevin Tipple explained planning regulations state a site notice is put up, a local press notice displayed, and notifications to the most immediate neighbours and adjoining landowners. It is at the discretion of the Planning Officer if information goes wider, with County Council likely to carry out a kilometre notification radius in this instance, which would take in the most affected isolated properties. John Riddle stated the developers had presented a briefing to County Council, and as a follow up action, had set up a separate briefing with the Parish Council, due to friction anticipated. Once there is an application in, the Parish Council and any individual can object. There is a five minute slot for objectors and proposers to speak at the Strategic Planning Committee, where the application will be determined. When developers approach the County Council, details are confidential until the developer wishes to make any proposals public and submit an application.

Richard Thornton stated the draft Local Plan had been so broad and all encompassing, there were generalisations, but nothing easily recognisable to Kirkwhelpington, and confirmed as a landowner he had been contacted by North East Concrete four years ago about the possibility of re-opening a quarry on his land.

Parishioner of the opinion the Local Plan consultation should have been held in Kirkwhelpington, however further parishioner of the opinion no member of the parish had ever shown interest in the Local Plan consultation, which had been publicised and ongoing for several years.

North East Concrete had initially approached NCC in 2018, in response to a demand for further aggregate, however parishioner believes there is enough aggregate signed off for 49 years. Kevin Tipple explained there is a large land bank of reserves, however when analysed, there is a limited number of sites the landbanks cover. Planning policy framework states production, capacity and diversity of supply is looked at through the Local Plan process. In particular, looking at the end of the plan period, there are existing quarries, however with permission end dates and reserves, the aggregates would run out by the end of the plan period. A Palmer asked how the new proposal fits in with the Council's declaration of carbon neutral by 2030, which seems inconsistent with the plan to open up a new and untouched area of the countryside, given the resources required to open a new quarry. Kevin explained the Local Plan has to be looked at as a whole, there is a demand for aggregates for certain projects and infrastructure. County Council are looking at encouraging recycled material, and there would be a lower carbon footprint sourcing aggregates locally, rather than outside of Northumberland. County Cllr John Riddle stated carbon neutral is important, but is

not a material planning issue, and advised road planings are being recycled, along with other materials.

John Riddle and Kevin Tipple thanked for their attendance.

The meeting closed at 8pm.

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