

## Minutes of a meeting of Kirkwhelpington Parish Council,

Kirkwhelpington Memorial Hall, Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> March 2023 at 7.30 pm

In attendance: Richard Thornton, Chair; Ann Purves, Vice Chair; Kevin Fortune; Eileen Rogerson; Mark Neale; Anne Palmer (Minutes)

Prior to the meeting, Sheila Laws, who had applied for the vacant post of Clerk, came to meet members of the Council, and stayed for the meeting.

Councillor John Riddle was also in attendance for part of the meeting. One other member of the public was in attendance.

2023/24: There were no apologies.

2023/25 Declarations of Interest. There were no declarations of interest, but Anne Palmer said that she knew other councillors had been uncomfortable with her taking, and expressing, firm views on the application to quarry at Northside, and had questioned whether this amounted to an interest that should preclude her from taking part in discussions about it. Anne said that on leaving her post as clerk, Claire Miller had lodged a complaint along these lines with the Monitoring Officer, which had now been fully investigated. Anne had just heard that the Monitoring Officer found there to have been no breach of the Code of Conduct.

2023/25 Anne Palmer had amended the draft minutes of the previous meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> January and circulated them prior to the meeting. Ann Purves proposed, Eileen Rogerson seconded, and all agreed these were a true record. The Chair to sign them and arrange for them to be uploaded on to the website. **Action: RT**

2023/27 Public questions. There were none, although the member of the public referred to the letter they had written to the Chair, and indicated they would like to address the Council on the relevant matters as they arose on the agenda.

Richard Thornton stated for the public record, he does not own a quarry and has no intention of opening one. He indicated that there were rumours to this effect.

Matter arising from previous minutes:

2023/28 B4RN. Mark Neale reported that the voucher scheme had been changed, and that I Northumberland are now involved in this project. Unfortunately they do not seem to be treating it with any urgency, with the result that there has been no progress.

2023/29 Retaining wall at the edge of Meadowlands. At the last meeting, it had been established that Karbon Homes are responsible for this wall. However they have given no indication of when they can do this. Chair/Clerk to chase this up with Karbon Homes. **Action: RT**

2023/30&31 Encroaching hedging on the footpath between Crofts/Eastlands & condition thereof. Kevin Fortune said he had done a lot of work at the end of last summer to cut back the hedge that overhangs the path, however the surface of the footpath is in a poor state and needs repair, it is potentially dangerous. It is not clear who owns the path, and therefore has responsibility for keeping it in good repair.

2023/32 Parish Map. This has been talked about at previous meetings, and it was believed that Claire Miller had obtained one. However nobody knows where it is. Anne Palmer said that a definitive map indicating ownership of, and responsibility for, the various parcels of land in the village would help us to get repairs such as that to the footpath, above, completed. She had in mind the sort of map that can be found on HM Land Registry.

John Riddle said that the Highways Dept at NCC have a map indicating what land in the county they own or are responsible for, and indicated that he would obtain a copy. It would only show what NCC own – but Anne thought this would be a good start. **Action: JR**

2023/33 Update regarding public transport. Anne Palmer indicated this was on the agenda due to her saying in November that it was difficult to find out the times of buses from Kirkwhelpington due to outdated and contradictory information at the bus stop and on the internet. (See previous minutes) John Riddle said it is possible to obtain an up to date timetable from Stuart MacNorton, Highways Manager at NCC. It was resolved to obtain this, **Action: JR/AP**

2023/34 Flooding in the village. It was noted that, following road re-surfacing works, a flooding problem had arisen immediately outside the village hall. Following remedial works to the drainage at the end of the village beside the road to Albion Terrace, the flooding had stopped, but the pavement was in urgent need of repair. The concrete is shrinking visibly away from the sides of the holes.

2023/35 The balance stands at £18092.72. Payments in respect of WC maintenance, rent of the village green, and advertising the vacancy for a parish clerk needed to be authorised.

Richard Thornton added that he had received an application for a grant of £500 from Cambo Young Farmers, to help fund the forthcoming County Rally, which they will be hosting at Fairnley Farm.

A discussion ensued. Mark Neale said he could not see what benefit would accrue to the residents of Kirkwhelpington.

Others explained that the Young Farmers do a lot of charity work in the area, including distributing logs to the elderly. Anne Palmer questioned if the £500 would be going direct to a charity, but RT clarified that the £500 would be for the expenses of the rally itself, from which charitable fundraising would result.

John Riddle added that the rally is very much like a village show, and the practise of traditional country and farming crafts is promoted.

Anne Palmer questioned whether there is public entry, and if not, whether any grant could be made contingent on people from Kirkwhelpington being specifically invited to attend. RT added that the public are always welcome at rallies.

Eileen Rogerson suggested that the PC donate £250, on the basis that the rally benefits members of Young Farmers and their families, which includes residents of Kirkwhelpington – but that Cambo Young Farmers should be encouraged to seek the remainder from the Education Fund, on the basis that the rally encourages traditional crafts.

This was proposed by Eileen Rogerson, seconded by Anne Palmer, and agreed, Mark Neale dissenting.

#### 2023/35 Planning Matters

Anne Palmer reported that she had tried to find out the current situation regarding pending planning applications, but the NCC Public Access site had been down for essential maintenance all week.

TPO Cliffside. Member of the public explained that this application was to fell a number of trees on their land, which they described. It was resolved that the Council should support the application. **Action: RT/Clerk** (to record Council's support on the Website)

Eastlands. No real news on the progress with the new development, although all had witnessed recent activity at the site. There are rumours that the development is moving to completion.

Quarrying at Northside. Anne Palmer reported that the planning officer David Love is expecting this to go before the Planning Committee in May 2023.

Car Park at Sweethope. This application has been withdrawn.

2023/36 Lighting at the bus shelter. John Riddle reported that implementation of the Local Transport Plan will include improvements to lighting.

2023/37 Ray Wind Community Fund. Mark Neale reported that the Fund is concentrating its efforts on rural poverty, with grants being directed towards families through schools. A recent grant has been made to Otterburn PC, to install a 3 phase electricity supply and EV charging points in the village.

2023/38 Lane repair/drainage at Albion terrace. Karbon Homes have said they have no budget for this.

2023/39 Climate Change. Anne Palmer had asked for this to be put on the agenda, as we had previously discussed the NCC Climate Change Toolkit for Parish Councils, but had been unable to obtain a copy. Anne had finally obtained a copy from the clerk to Allendale Parish Council, and had distributed it to councillors on 28<sup>th</sup> January.

She summarised: NCC declared a climate emergency in 2019, and has an action plan for reducing carbon emissions by 50% by 2025. It is asking for parish councils to assist it in achieving this goal, and has suggested that parish councils do the following:

- Declare a climate emergency
- Create a climate change sub-committee
- Allocate funding and/or land within its control for environmental projects
- Put climate change at the heart of any neighbourhood plan
- Collaborate with environmental pressure groups
- Use powers – e.g. as consultee on planning matters – to promote environmental responsibility
- Discuss climate change at meetings
- Form bulk purchase groups
- Raise awareness among population, e.g. by engaging guest speakers
- Join NCC's Community Champion's Scheme
- Promote low carbon heating
- Promote low carbon transport (walking and cycling), and identify safe walking and cycling routes
- Install EV chargers
- Develop lift sharing schemes and a "library of things"
- Plant trees
- Manage land for wildlife
- Promote community composting

Anne explained that she had initiated an Environmental task Force, which had met for the first time on 3<sup>rd</sup> March. She reported that they had initiated a WhatsApp group in which people could collaborate on the maintenance and sharing of information about footpaths, and could liaise with regard to journeys to the tip, bottle bank, etc.

Anne explained that although they had had a lengthy discussion about composting, nobody had identified a suitable site for this, and the feeling was that without active, expert management, any compost site would become a nuisance.

Anne asked Richard Thornton who he had previously contacted about the collection of garden waste in the village, as there might be a contact through the Climate Change Team ([climate@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:climate@northumberland.gov.uk)) Richard confirmed he had not tried this – AP to chase up, **Action: AP**

Anne said there are plans to start a closed Facebook Group, for similar information sharing purposes, but added that the problem is reaching those who do not use technology – who are often the people who need assistance with trips to the tip, etc. Anne asked if the Parish Council might assist with this, but the general consensus was that people managed, and that many people in the village were prepared to help others.

Anne asked if the Parish Council would be willing to appoint a Climate change sub-committee or adopt any of the proposed measures. Richard Thornton did not think the Parish Council was big enough to do so.

2023/40 Crises Management. This had taken on a new impetus due to the many power cuts the village had experienced this winter.

Mark Neale reported that following the cut between Christmas & New Year, he had been in contact with a representative from Northern Powergrid, who had indicated the need for a “resilience cut” of trees along the route of the power supply. This was carried out last week. Richard Thornton had attended a meeting with Northern Powergrid and the relevant landowners, at which this work was agreed, and pointed out that the delay to this work had not been caused by the landowners blocking access, but rather to a string of mistakes and miscommunication. It is to be hoped that this remedial work will put an end to power cuts.

Anne Palmer reminded councillors that she had suggested that the Parish Council take a lead in voicing the concerns of villagers about the constant cuts, to the MP, Ofgem, the mayor of the North of Tyne and Northern Powergrid itself (E-mail of 7<sup>th</sup> January)

Richard Thornton thought that these bodies were already aware of the problems, without further action.

The member of the public wished to update the Parish Council about their plans to turn the village hall into a resilience hub (in their capacity as chair of the Village Hall Committee), and summarised the proposals put forward in their letter to the chair:

- Alterations to be carried out to the Hall itself, which included annexation of a strip of the playing field currently owned by the Parish Council, in order to extend the tool shed to accommodate a generator.
- Obtaining a generator. Member of the public explained that while grants for this were available from Northern Powergrid, these were on the proviso that plans accord with the Northern Powergrid model – which these do not.
- Establishing internet at the Hall
- Agreeing with the Parish Council the terms of maintenance and insurance of the generator and associated equipment and fuel supplies

Richard Thornton said that the plan was a good one, and proposed that the Parish Council provide funding.

This was agreed, and the member of the public agreed to obtain quotes for the work and to look in to alternative/additional funding.

Anne Palmer suggested that, as the plan includes making it possible for children to do homework etc during a powercut, funding from the Education Fund might be available.

2023/41 Communication with Northern Powergrid – see above

2023/42 To consider public transport in the village – no comments

2023/43 Footpath Maintenance – see item 2023/39

2023/44 Generator and warm Hub – see item 2023/40

2023/45 Wild Verges. It is proposed that Andy Steele will take over all grass cutting tasks. Anne Palmer to liaise with Andy prior to the work starting this Spring about possible areas of verge to be managed for wildlife. **Action: AP**

Items for next agenda (Parish Meeting 2<sup>nd</sup> May 7.00, and Parish Council Meeting to follow at 7.30)

Eileen Rogerson – Coronation. It was resolved that Eileen and Ann Purves form a sub-committee to organise village celebrations, in conjunction with the Wannies Group. It is envisaged celebrations would be along similar lines to the events held to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee in 2022, but that the picnic/party should be in the village hall rather than on The Green. **Action: ER/A Pu**

Anne Palmer – Climate Change – proposed that this be a standing item in accordance with NCC guidance

A.O.B. Richard Thornton and Ann Purves indicated they would be standing down as parish councillors after the next meeting in May. Anne Palmer queried if this would necessitate an election, RT said he would seek guidance from NCC.

**Action: RT**

All other councillors expressed regret at the decision of Richard & Ann to step down.

It was resolved to offer the vacant post of Clerk to Sheila Laws, who accepted.

Date of Next Meeting: Annual Parish Meeting, 7pm Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> May, Parish Council Meeting, 7.30 pm Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> May, All in Memorial Hall

Meeting closed at 9.15 pm

DRAFT