

Minutes of a meeting of Kirkwhelpington Parish Council,

Kirkwhelpington Memorial Hall, Tuesday 2nd May 2023 at 7.30 pm

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

There were no apologies.

Sheila Lawes, Clerk

Seven members of the public

The meeting followed the Annual Parish Meeting.

Richard Thornton apologised for the fact that the agenda had not been prepared in sufficient time, had not been circulated and had not been published on the Parish Council website.

Richard Thornton and Ann Purves indicated they were to retire as Chair and Vice Chair respectively.

Kevin Fortune thanked both Richard and Ann for their service as councillors, and expressed his regret at their decision to leave. He further indicated his regret at the fact that the application for planning permission to quarry at Northside had prompted their decision, saying that the Parish Council's action regarding the application had not suited everybody in the village, but that councillors not opposing the application had acted with integrity. It was a shame the village had become so divided on the issue.

Richard Thornton assured those present that he had made up his mind to leave before the relevant planning application, which had had no bearing on his departure.

A parishioner thanked Richard for his service on behalf of the Village Hall Committee.

Richard asked Kevin Fortune if he would act as Chair for this evening's meeting, Kevin in turn asked Eileen Rogerson, who agreed to chair.

Richard and Ann left the meeting.

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 7th March 2023, and matters arising
 - a) B4RN Broadband – on the last occasion, it was reported that there had been no progress with this, nobody had heard that there had been any progress since March.
 - b) Retaining wall and path at Meadowlands – Eileen Rogerson indicated that the site in question was the path and steps between numbers 12 & 13 Meadowlands, which were crumbling. Discussion ensued, and all present agreed that the recent further deterioration in the path and walls presented a danger to pedestrians and residents.

It was resolved to write to Karbon Homes, pointing out the imminent risk of injury.

There was also discussion about whether to write at the same time to Northumberland County Council (NCC), to request their intervention given the ongoing delay from Karbon Homes, however it was resolved to await the response from Karbon Homes.

The matter will be reviewed at the next meeting.

Action: Parish Clerk to write to Karbon Homes.

- c) Parish Map. Anne Palmer reported that following the March meeting, Cllr John Riddle had sent her a link to the maps held by NCC Highways Department. However, these showed only roads and rights of way, and some of the land owned by NCC, they did not reveal any more detail about ownership of land more widely.

Action: Anne Palmer to research further where such a definitive map might be obtained.

- d) Public Transport. At the last meeting, John Riddle had indicated that a definitive timetable for buses might be held by Stuart MacNaughton at NCC, however this had not been chased up.

Action: Parish Clerk to write to Stuart MacNaughton at NCC for further advice.

- e) Application to carry out work to trees at Cliffside.

It had been agreed at the meeting in March that the Clerk should lodge the Parish Council's agreement to the application on the Public Access planning register.

Action: Parish Clerk to record Parish Council's agreement to the application at Cliffside.

2. Vacancies on Parish Council/lack of Chair & Vice Chair

Following the resignation of the Chair & Vice Chair, the Parish Council needed at least two new members. Richard Thornton had undertaken at the last meeting to find out about the procedure for recruiting new councillors, and for a change over of Chair/Vice Chair, however in his absence this could not be consulted.

Anne Palmer and Mark Neale consulted the Standing Orders, which offered no guidance on such matters. Mark Neale consulted guidance from Northumberland Association of Local Councils (NALC). Although not specific, it indicated that there is a formula for determining the number of councillors a Parish Council can have, and a process of advertising for, and instating, new members. There was not enough time or information to do anything about this tonight. It was resolved that:

Kevin Fortune would ring both NCC and NALC (07976961070) to obtain oral advice on next steps.

On her return from Holiday on 12th May, Anne Palmer would follow up as necessary, with a written request for advice.

We need to know first, how many councillors are needed – we have had six for a long time, but it maybe that the recent increase in population could mean another one is appropriate.

Second, how the Parish Council is required to advertise those vacancies; where the adverts should appear, how they should be worded, and for how long they should appear.

3. New Clerk

Eileen had obtained two boxes full of documents relating to the Parish Council, and Sheila, the new clerk, needs to see those in order to carry out certain necessary tasks. Sheila took the boxes away with her.

Anne Palmer asked what preparation had been made for the change of clerk, and whether any "handover" had been carried out. Sheila said she would arrange a handover meeting with Claire Miller.

Anne Palmer asked who was now responsible for uploading documents to the Parish Council website, Sheila indicated that she did not have the necessary permissions/passwords.

Mark Neale said he would take responsibility for this in the interim, and would find out the relevant passwords from Claire if they were not in the boxes.

4. Public Questions

- a) A member of the public asked when the hole in the road next to the village bus stop would be remedied.

A discussion ensued, nobody was sure why the hole had been dug, although it was assumed to be because a telegraph pole needs to be replaced. It is believed that Northern Powergrid dug the hole, but that other bodies may also be involved in the work on the pole.

Action: Mark Neale to contact NCC to find out what permissions have been given, and what progress can be expected.

- b) A member of the public asked what progress there is with the development at Gilbert Grange. At a previous meeting, Richard Thornton had asked a parishioner to find out who was in control of the site, that parishioner had ascertained that it is All Saints Living, and had passed the information on.

It was resolved that the Parish Council write to All Saints Living to enquire about when the remaining houses at Gilbert Grange will be finished, and when the site will be tidied up.

Action: Parish Clerk to write to All Saints Living.

5. Any Other Business

Mark Neale raised the issue of repeated power cuts in the village – the most recent being in April. At the previous meeting, before that latest power cut, it had been reported that at a meeting between Northern Powergrid, the relevant landowner and the Chair of the PC, it was agreed to carry out “resilience cutting” of trees adjacent to the power line. That had been carried out, but to no effect. It was resolved that the Parish Council write to:

- Northern Powergrid
- Guy Opperman
- Cllr John Riddle
- Offgem

To complain about the repeated power cuts.

Action: Mark Neale to collate the list of power cuts and action taken so far, Parish Clerk to write to the relevant bodies complaining about the service and asking for improvement.

6. Election of Chair

It was ascertained that as the meeting was quorate, it would be possible to elect a Chair. Mark Neale proposed Anne Palmer as Chair, seconded by Eileen Rogerson. Anne said she would be Acting Chair until new Parish Councillors had been co-opted or elected.

Anne indicated that in her view, it was a priority to recruit new councillors, and to determine a way to achieve this.

As a result, there would be an extraordinary meeting on Tuesday 6th June, to review advice obtained and to plan necessary adverts etc.

Members of the public left the meeting.

7. Year End Financial Statement

Sheila confirmed she had not had access to the relevant documents and had not had a chance to compile the Financial Statement.

It was resolved to consider this further at the next meeting, when she had had the opportunity to look in the boxes.

8. Annual Return

As above; to be reviewed when Sheila has had the opportunity to consult records including previous years templates.

9. Insurance renewal.

A quotation had been obtained, which had been circulated to all councillors. It was resolved to accept the renewal terms, and to pay the premium required.

(N.B. Both Eileen and Mark are approved signatories for cheques, and this, and other outstanding bills, were paid)

Date of Next Meeting: 7.30 pm Tuesday 6th June, in Memorial Hall

Meeting closed at 9.15 pm

DRAFT