

Tuesday 5 March

Meeting commenced: 19:30

Present: Cllrs Palmer (Acting Chair), Rogerson, Fortune, Brown, Lawless, Robson. 5 members of the public present and Parish Clerk.

**01/03/2024. To receive, and approve if appropriate, apologies for absence and reasons given**

None received

**02/03/2024. To receive declarations of interests**

*Members are reminded to declare any interest in any item on the agenda, now or at any time during the meeting.*

None given

**03/03/2024. To approve the minutes of previous meeting held 2 January 2024.**

Agreed & signed by Chair.

**04/03/2024.**

**a) To receive comments/ queries from members of the public.**

Concerns about waste piling up at Knowesgate Hotel, enquire whether any enforcement was possible. Report to Environmental Health as rats had been spotted at the site.

Request for signage from A696 for Mary Castle as some delivery drivers can't find it. Road number is C195.

Parishioner reported there had been a higher number of reports of rats in the village, it was suggested this may be caused by the wet weather driving them from their usual haunts. Parish council can advise residents to not leave out food sources which encourage them, including bird feed, food waste etc.

It is suspected the petrol station at the Knowesgate Hotel has been purchased by a company who own several filling stations in rural Northumberland and the borders. Suggested Parish Council write to them to understand their plans and how they can work with us to ensure the site is kept clear.

**b) To receive an update from the local PCSO**

Email update received as follows:

*Area crime details since 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024 – 1<sup>st</sup> March 2024 there have been a total of 10 incidents reported in the F9Y4 area covering Kirkwhelpington. 3 of these incidents were crimes, others were traffic related incidents, wildlife related incidents, personal incidents.*

*Local Hexham Neighbourhood Team Updates*

*In recent months, Hexham Neighbourhood Team has increased staffing levels as well as working with a new Neighbourhood Model meaning an increase in proactive work and proactively targeting and disrupting offenders.*

*We are now working even closer with local authorities, community leaders and residents to help decide our policing priorities for the area. We are working to find useful, long-term solutions to local problems that we have been made aware of, while maintaining our wider focus on reducing/preventing crime across our area.*

*With this, the team have completed 5 warrants in the space of 4 months, which have resulted in seizure of large amounts of drugs, weapons and large amounts of cash.*

*We continue to respond to our communities via diary appointments, and also via our online reporting system where people can report non-emergencies. If there are neighbourhood related concerns, they tend to come directly to our team to make further contact or action. If residents have concerns or any information they wish to share with police, but would like to remain anonymous, this can be reported via CrimeStoppers online or via 0800 555 111.*

*Although there were public concerns around the reduction of Police Community Support Officers last year, we currently have 2 Police Community Support Officers remaining in Hexham, which is looking to increase in summer 2024. This news means we can not only increase our foot patrols, but our involvement with community.*

*Northumbria Police recently completed recruitment for Community Speed Watch, and we are pleased to say we have 11 new Community Speed Watch Volunteers covering the Hexham/F9 area. All 11 have completed training and signed off ready to go. If anyone wishes to take part Community Speed Watch in the Kirkwhelpington area, the next recruitment will be in June 2024, where applicants can apply on the website.*

*We aim on setting up our Community Engagement van as well as holding 'Catch up with a Copper' in various areas across Hexham/rural Beat where we will be open for members of the public to chat to the local officers with concerns and to help answer any questions you may have. These will be advertised in due course via social media and posters.*

#### **05/03/2024. Parish Clerk's report**

*An update of work carried out since the last meeting & relevant information.*

Footpath maintenance volunteers have met with Footpath Officers from the area and have produced a plan for improvements they would like to make. The County Council should be able to help with some resources for the works.

Bank account changes. New signatories have been set up with Santander, just need to go through set up of online banking. Clerk will email Cllr Lawless & Rogerson to set this up.

New defibrillator case has been purchased to replace the cracked one. £500 was kindly funded by Ray Wind Fund. Bill from the electrician is still to be received.

Dog waste bin is in place & being used. Over time will need to assess whether some form of hard standing is needed in front. Clerk to confirm emptying schedule with Northumberland County Council As the bin is away from the centre of the village, signage could be used to point people to the location.

It was noted the information about the village outside the memorial hall was out of date and could be revamped. Additionally the raven marker for St Oswald's Way is missing. Clerk to contact St Oswald's Society to find out about replacement.

### **06/03/2024. Exclusion of the public**

*To determine which items, if any, of the agenda should be taken with the public excluded.*

It was decided items C, I, and J from 08/03/2024 were to be discussed towards the end of the meeting with the public absent.

### **07/03/2024. Planning**

*To consider planning policies, applications and appeals received and resolve to submit comments where appropriate. [Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Sched. 7, para.8]*

<b>Reference</b>	<b>Detail</b>	<b>Status</b>
23/04242/FUL	Kirkwhelpington Memorial Hall	GRANTED - 24/1/24
23/02576/FUL	Wetland scrapes, Dean House Farm	GRANTED - 23/2/24
24/00280/FUL	Barn at Great Law Farm Cottages, Kirkharle	No comments. Closed 19/2/24

### **08/03/2024. Items for Consideration and Decision**

#### a) Street lighting in the village

Clerk has contacted Northumberland County Council for a street lighting assessment but no reply received. To be followed up.

A solar powered external light has been put on top of a parishioners garage, with their kind permission. This is motion activated and will be assessed to see how effective it is, particularly when sunlight levels are low. Thank you to Cllr Lawless for taking this forward. To note: the Ray Wind Fund has funded a solar powered lamp post for Otterburn Parish Council. This was on PC owned land, not covered by highways or the County Council.

#### b) Show schedule on PC website

Request from Kirkwhelpington & District Show Committee to have a PDF copy of the show schedule on the Parish Council website. This was approved. Clerk to look at web traffic to understand how many visits to the PC website are currently happening, and see whether this is increased once the schedule is in place.

#### d) Neighbourhood plan/ future ambitions

The Council had an informative meeting from Rob Naples of the Neighbourhood Planning team in late February. The process is quite flexible and can be adapted to suit the needs of the parish.

Councillors felt that the process would be useful engage parishioners and help the PC understand their needs and thoughts for the future. It could help with future planning for essentials like housing. There were some reservations about cost and personnel time, but there are grants available for funding. It was felt the process would help with future planning and bring the community together.

The Council agreed to begin the process of making a neighbourhood plan. Clerk to contact Rob Naples and begin first steps, including community engagement plan.

#### e) Power cuts & village generator: emergency plan, insurance, storage

Since January meeting the parish had a significant outage during Storm Isha. The generator was switched on in the village hall and some parishioners made use of the facilities. However, this wasn't available in the evening or first thing in the morning and is currently set around the Post Office opening times. The Parish Council will work with the Village Hall Committee to create and share a plan for power outages, letting parishioners know when the village hall will be open and what support will be available (e.g hot drinks, warm space etc). Sample plans may be available from other parishes e.g. Otterburn and Elsdon. Cllr Palmer will draft a plan.

It was advised when the generator is in use to secure it in some way, which will be looked at as the planned changes to the village hall take shape. Parish Council need to work with Village Hall Committee to understand their insurers requirements for fuel storage for the generator & mowers.

It was noted that broadband and mobile signal are both lost during a power outage, so it's not possible to report the power loss to Northern Power Grid (NPG). Cllr Palmer has requested a satellite phone from NPG to report outages, which is under consideration. Currently some non-digital landlines still work during power outages, but with the roll out of digital lines replacing the copper wiring these will also fail to work in a power cut. Clerk will draft letter to Guy Opperman (MP) outlining the risks to the village during power outages. Parishioners are also advised to contact their phone and/ or broadband providers to ask for advice on battery back up power for their devices.

f) Play area improvements funding & remedial works needed

Cllr Fortune provided an estimated quote for repairs to the birds nest swing and matting underneath, approximately £1450. Councillors agreed to the repairs being made. Clerk to explore funding options including Ray Wind Fund and S106 funding from County Council. Further development of the play area will be discussed as part of the community engagement in the neighbourhood plan.

h) Speed limits in village & signage

Request for 20mph speed limit in Kirkwhelpington village and slow/ bend in road signage at Mary Castle. Cllr Brown to contact John Riddle, local councillor and cabinet member for improving roads & highways to explore options for additional signage and road surface conditions in the parish. Cllr Riddle to be invited to the May meeting.

k) Appointing an internal auditor

Clerk had received three quotes regarding the internal audit for 2023/24 and 2024/25. The Council decided to go with Robert Macfarlane for both years at a cost of £95 per year. Clerk to engage the internal auditor.

l) Review of Asset Register

Hedge trimmer to be removed, goal posts to be described as 'set'. New items added including defibrillator, generator and clerk's laptop.

m) Review of Risk Assessment

Include reference to standing orders and how payments are set up and signed off two different members of the council, so ensure full transparency.

n) Review of insurance policy

Due for renewal in May. Clerk to get quote from Clear Councils with the updated asset register.

## 09/03/2024. Items for Information Only

### a. Correspondence

Report of road flooding on gated track behind Kirkwhelpington village. Clerk will report to highways via fix my street app.

### b. Items for Information

Ray Wind Fund update from Cllr Lawless. B4RN are now entering phase 2 of fibre roll out which will bring the supply to Bavington and Kirkwhelpington. B4RN are holding a public meeting in Kirkwhelpington Memorial hall on Thursday 14 March at 7pm for anyone who is interested in finding out more.

Once again it was noted other parishes are more active in seeking out funding from the Wind Fund, including small businesses as well as community groups. Cllr Lawless will analyse some of the figures to understand the split between different areas. It is hoped the forward planning enabled by the neighbourhood plan will help the Parish Council to plan for longer term improvements which would attract funding.

Climate change toolkit. Cllr Palmer advised there was nothing to report but climate change and environmental impact should be included in the Neighbourhood Plan. Cllr Palmer is attending carbon literacy training next week and will report back in May meeting.

May meeting. Clerk advised of meeting format for May meeting including annual parish meeting where Chair writes agenda and invites participation from community groups. Then the annual council meeting is held where a new Chair and Vice Chair are elected as the first items of business, before the parish council meeting is held.

The Chimes Magazine deadline is next Wed 13 March for anything to be included for April/ May. Cllr Palmer to include date for annual parish meeting.

### c. Items to be included in next agenda

B4RN would like to attend a future meeting to update the council on plans & answer any questions – feedback at next meeting.

Recognition of those making contributions to community.

Highways – road condition & speed limits

Power cuts

Dog bin hard standing – assess what needed to allow access.

Climate change toolkit - carbon literacy training.

Gates being left open along footpaths

## 10/03/2024. Finance

### a) Account Balances – *To receive a report detailing account balances*

Balance on all accounts as of 31/01/2024: £14,527.74

### b) Accounts for Payment – To review and approve items of expenditure, including those received before the meeting.

Date	Description	Amount
29/02/2024	Staff expenses	TOTAL: £652.55
	<i>Printer ink</i>	£22.29
	<i>Defibrillator case</i>	£612
	<i>Signage</i>	£18.26
29/02/2024	Staffing costs Nov-Dec	£281.41

		£70.40 tax
29/02/2024	Village hall toilet maintenance grant Jan & March	£511 (£255.50 x 2)
1/2/24	Northumberland Estates village green	£15

All payments approved – clerk to issue cheques for signing..

c) Bank Reconciliation for approval

**11/03/2024. Date & time of next meeting.**

Tuesday 7 May, annual parish meeting, 7pm. Annual council meeting, 7:30pm. Members of the public are welcome to attend both meetings.

*The Council passed a resolution to exclude members of the public and press can be excluded from the meeting for the following agenda items to be discussed which are either confidential or exempt as defined in Schedule 12 of the Local Gov Act 1972.*

c) Clerk salary increase

Agreed as per National Association of Local Councils guidance.

i) Support for Church grass cutting

Clerk to research how money given in past - records held in village hall. Explore other ways to support. Need to understand the ask from the Church.

j) Grass cutting contract

Clerk advised a contractor would be required to show proof of insurance, including public liability of up to £5,000,000 and provide a risk assessment for the work. An employee would be covered under the council's current insurance. To be reviewed in October ready for the cutting season in 2025.

Meeting closed 22:10