

Minutes for the Monthly Parish Meeting of Croxdale and Hett Parish Council
Wednesday 11 January 2017, 7.00 pm

Parish Council Members Present:

Councillor J Anderson (Chair), Councillor R Burton, Councillor L Griffiths, Councillor J Garner, Councillor M Ord, Councillor K Summerson, Councillor A Watt and Councillor I Watt.

Also Present:

County Councillor J Blakey.

163/16. Apologies for Absence:

Apologies of absence were received from Councillor W Watt and also County Councillor M Plews.

164/16. Declaration of Acceptance of Office – Michael Ord

In accordance with the Local Government Act 1972, Michael Ord read and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office for Parish Councillor before the Clerk. The Chair welcomed Michael to the Parish Council.

Resolved: That Michael Ord is now a Member of the Parish Council.

165/16. Declarations of Interest:

Councillor R Burton declared an interest in item 08 (quotations for fencing repairs to the land adjacent to the Croxdale Inn).

166/16. Policing:

There was no Police attendance at the meeting and no report was received on the number of incidents for the period 15 December 2016 – 11 January 2017.

167/16. Public Participation

Michael Graveling and Anne Heywood were in attendance. Anne Heywood attended the meeting to express her views on behalf of residents of Sunderland Bridge regarding the forthcoming road works and road closure of the A688 that are scheduled for approximately 3 months. Residents are concerned of the lack in communication of the planned roadworks and most importantly how this would result in an increase in additional traffic through Sunderland Bridge, Leamans Lane and Hett Lane that will be used as a 'rat run' to avoid the diversion. The roads are not designed to take on additional traffic and vehicles such as HGVs. Safety of local residents and children is also an issue. County Councillor Blakey and the Parish Council shared Anne's concerns and suggested temporary signs are put in place at the junction at Sunderland Bridge indicating 'left turn only' and also where current signage is in place saying 'not suitable for HGVs' should say 'No HGVs'. The Vice-Chair and Clerk were already involved in a number of email exchanges between DCC on this issue.

Anne was thanked by the Parish Council for voicing residents' concerns and left the meeting.

Resolved: Cllr Griffiths, County Cllr Blakey and Clerk to continue to speak to DCC on this matter and seeked options to help alleviate our concerns as soon as possible.

168/16. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on the 14 December 2016 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

169/16. Matters Arising

i. Fencing at Hett Lane:

Clerk requested for an update from DCC on 6 November, 29 November, 8 December 2016 and 5 January 2017 and is still awaiting a response. County Councillor Blakey agreed to progress this matter on the Parish Council's behalf.

Resolved: County Councillor Blakey to progress.

ii. Policing:

A response is still outstanding from the Police regarding the incident at Croxdale Inn car park. Also, a response was yet to be received from Ron Hogg regarding policing matters; follow up emails were issued on 06 December 2016, and 5 January and 6 January 2017 respectively.

Resolved: Clerk to keep progressing for an update.

iii. Pond at Hett Village:

Clerk circulated latest email from Brian Ogden, HVHA, for information. Clerk confirmed she had contacted DCC as requested for quotes for appropriate signage; however, they only install water safety equipment/signage on completion of a water safety risk assessment. To purchase direct from a company would cost in the region of £20-30 for the sign/aluminium pole/brackets etc. Members suggested for the Clerk to contact other Parish Councils / organisations who have carried out similar works on village ponds for initial advice before agreeing to carrying out a risk assessment or erecting unnecessary safety equipment in the village. County Councillor Blakey suggested contacting Hamsterley Village in the first instance.

Resolved: Clerk to seek views of other Parish Councils / organisations who have carried out similar works on village ponds for initial advice.

iv. Litter Pick:

Clerk logged with DCC on 14 November 2016 and was notified this would be complete by 23 December 2016. However, Councillor I Watt confirmed this was still outstanding.

Resolved: Clerk to follow up with the County Council.

v. Hett Fencing:

Cllr Summerson is yet to inspect fencing at Hett cemetery.

Resolved: Councillor Summerson to action.

vi. Cllr Anderson Sister's Grave:

Clerk and John Todd unable to identify the above grave with existing cemetery plan. Clerk to locate grave once new cemetery plan is available.

Resolved: Clerk to action in due course when new cemetery plan is available.

vii. Croxdale Citroen Garage:

Clerk reported to Police and currently awaiting a response. It was noted this may be the Police's responsibility rather than DCC.

Resolved: For Members' information.

170/16. Parish Clerk Update / Correspondence

i. Allotment Query:

Clerk informed Members of a query she had received from a member of the public in relation to regulations on whether you have to live in the parish to hold an allotment and if it is acceptable to hold horse manure/waste on site. Following discussion, as the site in question was in relation to the Poultry Centre, and is classed as a 'small holding' rather than a 'garden allotment', it is acceptable for waste to be stored onsite as it is used as fertiliser. As long as the allotment holder in question resides in the Parish at the time of commencing their tenancy agreement, but if they no longer live in the area now, then they are still entitled to rent a Parish allotment.

Resolved: Clerk to notify the complainant accordingly.

ii. CDALC Update:

- **2016/17 Annual Return** – all Parish Councils need to provide an annual return for 2016/17 and will be externally audited by BDO, which will be the last year they provide the audit.
- **Elections May 2017** – the election process will start on the 23 March 2017 in County Durham. Nomination forms are to reach the Returning Officer by the deadline of 4pm on 4 April 2017.

Resolved: For Members' Information.

iii. Quotes for Fencing at Croxdale Inn Car Park:

A quotation was received from Dan Burton of Special Tree Branch Services who strongly advised to replace the fencing (rather than repair) due to the current fence being in a state of disrepair. The quotation equated to £1,765.00 which included materials, labour charges and to dispose of the old fence. As the works are to be carried out in the new financial year, other quotations are to be received over the next coming weeks for comparison and agreement at a future meeting.

Resolved: Clerk to seek 2/3 alternate quotes for comparison based on the same specification of the quote referred to above.

171/16. Financial Matters:

i. Financial Report for the Period 1 April 2016 – 11 January 2017

A financial update prepared by the Clerk was circulated to Members which included a detailed schedule of receipts and payments for the financial year to date and bank reconciliation to 11 January 2017. The current net bank balances totalled £6,330.23.

The following cheque payments were approved:

Cheque Number – 400277 - Miss C Maddison – Clerk’s Wages December - £258.00

Cheque Number – 400278 – HMRC – Tax & NI Contributions – £64.40

Cheque Number – 400279 – Miss C Maddison – Broadband Subscription - £31.49

Cheque Number – 400280 – Miss C Maddison - £250.00

ii. Budget Precept Setting 2017/18

The clerk prepared a number of proposals of Parish Precept recommendations for 2017/18 budget for Members’ consideration. It was noted regarding the Parish Council’s Tax Base has decreased from 292.2 to 289.9 (decrease of 2.3) for 2017/18 due to there being less people in the Parish paying council tax. The Parish Council has also been notified that DCC is to also continue to provide the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) grant funding in 2017/18 of £1,015.00 compared to £1,020.00 in 2016/17.

Following much consideration and discussion, it was agreed to increase the Parish Council precept from £9,500 (2016/17) to £13,500 (42.1% increase), resulting in a Band D charge of £46.57 (compared to £32.51 in 2016/17). The proposed increase is to ensure sufficient funds are available for 2017/18 on reflection of careful forward planning for additional budget pressures and overheads that the Parish Council has previously identified.

Resolved: Clerk to complete and return precept proforma to DCC accordingly.

172/16. Cemetery Update

i. Grave Plans:

Clerk confirmed Croxdale cemetery plan is still with the Conservator in Leeds; digitisation and printing works should be completed by the next meeting in February.

Resolved: For Members’ Information.

ii. Cemetery Fencing:

Clerk reported that no response has been forthcoming from recent emails and letters to RA Fencing. A voicemail message was also left to the contractors on 10 January 2017 and is yet to receive a telephone call back. It was noted the price quoted from DCC to complete the works would need to be completed by the end of March; otherwise, we would have to wait until October until the grass cutting season is complete. Clerk has also kept Mark Hutchinson (farmer) up to date on developments.

After consideration, Members agreed to commence the process with the small claims court. It was noted initial costs would be required upfront which then may lead to a possible hearing cost also.

Resolved: Clerk to start the process of the particulars of claim.

173/16. Planning Issues:

No planning matters were discussed. Councillor Summerson confirmed he had reviewed the planning submission regarding 4 Queen's Garth and had no comments on the application.

Resolved: For Member's Information.

174/16. County Councillor Reports

County Councillor Blakey gave an update in relation to: budget setting report to County Council in February and an update on the development at Croxdale garage, change of use on 3 units.

Resolved: For Members' Information.

175/16. Former Parish Clerk

That under Section 100(a)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the above item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely discussion of exempt information as defined in paragraph 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

176/16. AOB:

i. 2018/19 Allotment and Garage Rent Review:

Councillor Summerson requested for the fees and charges review for the allotment and garages be discussed at the next meeting.

Resolved: Clerk to add to February's meeting agenda.

ii. Street Lighting, Croxdale:

Councillor Burton reported a faulty streetlight on Front Street East, Croxdale.

Resolved: Clerk to report to DCC in the first instance.

177/16. Date and Time of Next Meeting:

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday 08 February 2017 at 7.00 pm.