

Minutes for the Monthly Parish Meeting of Croxdale and Hett Parish Council
Wednesday 12 October 2016, 7.00 pm

Parish Council Members Present:

Councillor J Anderson (Chair), Councillor R Burton, Councillor J Garner, Councillor L Griffiths and Councillor K Summerson.

Also Present:

County Councillor J Blakey.

111/16. Apologies for Absence:

Apologies of absence were received from Councillors A Watt, I Watt and W Watt and also County Councillors M Plews and M Williams.

112/16. Declarations of Interest:

Councillor R Burton declared an interest in item 11 (Council Owned Land Adjacent to the Croxdale Inn).

113/16. Policing:

There was no Police attendance at the Meeting. Councillor Summerson raised concerns over a motorbike theft that had taken place from a shed at a resident's house at Croxdale that had taken place on 7 October 2016. This was reported to the Police and a crime number was issued accordingly. An appointment was made with the family concerned for the following Tuesday evening, however, during this period the motorbike in question was spotted which was raised with the Police further who advised 'not to follow' and a Police Officer was unable to come to the scene. A letter is to be sent to Ron Hogg / Mike Barton regarding the shortage of Police Officer's throughout County Durham which is causing criminal activity to increase.

Resolved: Clerk to write to Ron Hogg, Police and Crime Commissioner.

114/16. Public Participation

Michael Graveling was in attendance.

115/16. Minutes

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

116/16. Matters Arising

i. Bus Stop Repairs – Johnson Terrace, Croxdale:

Councillor Garner queried the above bus stop has not been fully repaired – the perspex has been removed, but not replaced. Clerk to raise with Durham County Council (DCC) further.

Resolved: Clerk to contact DCC further.

117/16. Parish Clerk Update / Correspondence

i. Resignation from Vice Chairman – Councillor J Shaw:

The Clerk reported she had received notification from Councillor J Shaw via email dated 24 September 2016, that he had tendered his resignation as Parish Councillor due to personal reasons. The Clerk had read out the email to Members at J Shaw's request. It was agreed the nomination of Vice-Chair is to be deferred to the next meeting when all Members are present. It was noted that under section 15 (6) and 34 (6) of the 1972 LGA Act provides that a Council may, but need not, elect one of their Members to be a Vice-Chairman. The Clerk is to raise the vacancy with Durham County Council and remove J Shaw as a bank signatory with immediate effect. In view of the election's next year, it was agreed not to arrange for another member to be added as a bank signatory. Councillor Anderson requested a letter of thanks to be sent to J Shaw for his work and commitment as Parish Councillor over the last number of years.

Resolved: Clerk to write to J Shaw and notify DCC and the bank of resignation.

ii. Grass Cutting – Cricket Field – Rear of Front Street East, Croxdale:

Clerk raised with DCC – still awaiting feedback as this is not covered in our grass cutting contract, only the cemeteries are covered. Councillor Summerson confirmed the grass has been cut intermittently this year and on a number of occasions only the goalmouth areas have been cut leaving the rest of the playing area too long for ball games. There is an area behind the goal that has not been cut for approximately three years; this is becoming very rough and overgrown. Clerk is to ask DCC if it would be possible to have it cut with a flail early next year to enable wild meadow seeds to be sown (similar to what has been done with the old cock of the north frontage).

Resolved: Clerk to contact DCC further regarding grass cutting services.

iii. Letter to Mrs Dent:

Clerk report that a letter has been sent to Mrs Dent as requested.

iv. Pond at Hett Village:

Clerk has sought Health and Safety advice from DCC regarding remedial works at Hett Village Pond. DCC confirmed the measure needed would depend upon a number of factors i.e. depth of pond, level of access, types of premises in the vicinity of the pond etc. Clerk is to enquire if DCC would carry out a risk assessment and advise on any appropriate safety equipment / signage that would be required.

Resolved: Clerk to contact DCC further regarding health and safety issues.

v. Cemetery Complaint:

Clerk reported after further discussion with complainant, the complaint was referring to cemetery at St Bartholomew's church not Croxdale. Anne Heywood is now dealing with this.

118/16. Financial Matters

i. 2014/15 and 2015/16 External Audit Report

The Clerk reported that notification of the Council's audits for 2014/15 and 2015/16 from BDO (External Auditor) has been received. Following Police investigations, BDO has now concluded their work and the accounts have been amended to remove £5,566 of income previously included following the investigations undertaken.

The Clerk circulated a copy of the "issues arising report" to Members for information which stated that the auditors raised a "minor issues" statement in that the comparative figures in the Annual Return did not agree to the audited Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2015. It was noted that no further action was required and the queries was as a result of the above monies being removed from the accounts.

Resolved: That the Annual Return, Certificate and issues arising report has been approved and accepted by Members.

ii. Financial Report for the Period 1 April 2016 – 12 October 2016

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 12 October 2016. The current net bank balances totalled £8,767.93.

The following cheque payments were approved:

Cheque Number – 400258 – Croxdale Community Association - £2,000

Cheque Number – 400259 - Miss C Maddison – Clerk's Wages August - £257.80

Cheque Number – 400260 – HMRC – Tax & NI Contributions – £64.60

Cheque Number – 400261 – Miss C Maddison – Broadband Subscription - £31.49

Cheque Number – 400262 – Durham County Council - £193.32

Cheque Number – 400263 – Miss C Maddison - £100.20

Resolved: For Members' Information.

iii. Budgetary Control: Forecast of Outturn – 31 March 2017

The Clerk provided details of the forecast of outturn budget position for the Parish Council highlighting key areas of spend to the end of 31 March 2017.

Resolved: For Members' Information.

119/16. Cemetery Update

i. Grave Plans:

Hett: Clerk brought to the meeting the new cemetery grave plan for Hett following conservation works from DCC. This will now be the new plan going forward with the original now being stored by the County Archivist. Clerk to be reimbursed with printing costs (£100.20) as DCC could not do this in-house therefore the plan had to be ordered online via

an external printing provider. Clerk confirmed the reserved grave burial plots for Mrs Willets can now be actioned.

Resolved: For Members' Information, Clerk to write to Mrs Willets accordingly regarding grave plots and the Clerk to be reimbursed in the sum of £100.20.

Croxdale: Clerk confirmed Croxdale's cemetery plan is to be sent to Leeds at the end of October for conservation works to commence in November. A special courier is to be used at a cost of £80.00 (each way) as opposed to the Conservator charging travelling time to collect the plan plus mileage. Insurance was discussed whilst in transit, whereby the courier will provide a "goods in transit cover" up to the value of £50,000 should anything happen to the cemetery plan whilst being transported to and from Leeds.

Resolved: For Members' Information.

- ii. **Cemetery Fencing:** Clerk reported fencing issues at Croxdale and Hett are still outstanding. A further complaint has been received from the farmer at Croxdale (Mark Hutchinson) regarding the quality of work carried out and to inform the Parish Council the new fencing is encroaching onto his land; the Clerk is currently waiting for written correspondence from Mr Hutchinson along with photographs as evidence before this can be actioned further.

Clerk confirmed she has contacted DCC to see if they are willing to provide an individual assessment of works carried out along with a quotation for the works to be put right but is currently awaiting their response. Councillor Summerson and Garner agreed to visit Croxdale cemetery and look at the boundary issue in the first instance.

Mrs Willets comments were noted regarding the good work that had been carried out at Hett cemetery.

Resolved: Clerk to liaise with DCC regarding a visit to the cemetery and Councillors Summerson and Garner to carry out a separate visit.

120/16. Council Owned Land Adjacent to the Croxdale Inn

Further discussion took place regarding future use of the abovementioned land. In order to turn the land back to allotment usage, this option was going to cost a considerable amount of money. Previous discussions were held in making the use of the land as a communal area for allotment holders. A further request was received from Special Branch Tree Services, whereby the land would be used to support a local business in terms of materials and consumables being stored (logs, wood chip). Allotment holders would also be given full access to a green waste skip. Rental of the land would be payable (amount to be agreed) and the full cost of erecting the fence as per the proposed plan of the area would be met from the company.

Councillor Summerson provided a hand out of the land in question and the proposed 3 options. Due to not all Members being present at the meeting, it was agreed this item should be deferred to the next meeting.

Resolved: Clerk to write to the owner of the Croxdale Inn advising a decision will be agreed at the next meeting regarding the future use of the land.

121/16. Zurich Insurance Renewal

The Council's insurance policy is due to be renewed effective from 27 October 2016 at a cost of £252.67 (Inc. VAT). The Clerk also requested for an additional quote to include the cemetery fencing at Croxdale and Hett which covered all damage cover including, fire, theft, vandalism etc. Members agreed that the cemetery fencing should be included at a cost of £86.99; therefore, the total charge for 2016/17 insurance is £339.66.

Resolved: Clerk to arrange payment of £339.66 to Zurich Municipal for 2016/17 Council insurance.

122/16. Planning Issues:

i. Planning Applications:

The Clerk reported the Parish Council has received the following planning applications for comment / objection:

- a) Ness Furniture Ltd – refurbishment of the former NESS factory
- b) Site of former Thinford Inn – Costa Coffee

Resolved: For Members' information – no specific comments / objections were made with regard to the above two planning applications.

ii. Payphone Kiosk Removal:

Clerk confirmed that only a small number of the kiosks identified (153) have been subject to interest in terms of adoption, with greater number subject to objections to their removal. It would appear that the running costs and responsibility for maintenance etc. have been contributing factors in a reluctance to adopt the kiosks. DCC is currently collating consultation responses to inform the Secretary of State of its responses prior to BTs deadline of 9 November 2016. Clerk to keep Members updated as application progresses.

Resolved: For Members' information.

123/16. County Councillor Reports

County Councillor Blakey gave an update in relation to road works at Gilesgate now complete, consultation currently out regarding Durham City's bus station, Parish Council Bye-laws and enforcement action regarding dogs in children's play areas.

Resolved: For Members' Information.

124/16. 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.

125/16.AOB:

i. Social Media – Facebook Page for Parish Council:

Councillor Burton sought Member views on creating a Facebook contact page for the Parish Council to help promote events / circulate information throughout Croxdale and Hett. Members agreed the use of social media is the way forward in helping to share key information with residents as well as community groups / organisations.

Resolved: Councillor Burton together with the Clerk is to set up a Facebook page who will act as group administrator for content approval / circulation.

ii. Grass Cutting at Rogerson Terrace:

Councillor Anderson raised residents' concerns with regard to overgrown front gardens – grass/bushes at Rogerson Terrace.

Resolved: Councillor Garner agreed to inspect the area and report back at the next meeting.

126/16. Date and Time of Next Meeting:

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday 09 November 2016 at 7.00 pm.