

Minutes for the Monthly Parish Meeting of Croxdale and Hett Parish Council
Wednesday 27 January 2021, 7.00 pm
Virtual Meeting

Parish Council Members Present:

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

64/20. Apologies for Absence:

Apologies of absence were received from Councillors P Adams, P Kerrison, A Watt and I Watt.

Also Present:

County Councillors J Blakey, S Dunn and M McKeon.

65/20. Declarations of Interest:

There were no declarations of interest.

66/20. Policing:

The Clerk had shared Policing crime stats: 5 incidents being recorded for the period November 2020 within the Parish.

Resolved: For Members' Information.

67/20. Public Participation

No members of the public attended the meeting virtually.

Resolved: For Members' Information.

68/20. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on the 23 December 2020 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman (under separate cover).

69/20. Matters Arising:

i. Defibrillator – Croxdale:

Equipment has been ordered and currently awaiting delivery. Installation is to be re-scheduled in due course.

Resolved: For Members' Information.

ii. Planning Application – Loggins Farm – Residential Home for Children:

The above planning application was approved on 15 January 2021 with some conditions noted. It was agreed to circulate the comments via the Parish Council's FB page contained in the Committee report to re-assure residents that the applicant wishes to work with the local community and there is no evidence to suggest that the proposed use would in fact be harmful to the safety or neighbouring amenities of the surrounding area.

Resolved: Clerk to action accordingly.

iii. Planning Applications – Police Custody Suite & Hett Lambing:

Clerk confirmed the Parish Council's objections to the above planning applications have been submitted and awaiting outcome.

Further discussions have been ongoing with the Planning Team regarding the Hett lambing application following notification that construction or at least groundworks seem to have already begun on site. DCC advised if the applicant has decided to start any works prior to gaining approval this would be at their own risk.

Resolved: For Members' Information.

iv. Hett Litter Pick:

January's monthly litter pick took place w/c 11 January. DCC are unable to commit to regular litter picks at Hett Lane/Leaman's Lane, therefore will remain once a month. It was noted the Team Leader passed through Leaman's Lane through to Metal Bridge and found very little litter lying around (2 Costa cups and an energy drink can).

Resolved: For Members' Information.

v. Litter at Thinford:

Clerk had contacted neighbouring Town/Parish Councils (Ferryhill/Spennymoor, Coxhoe, Cassop Cum Quarrington) on 5 January 2021 to determine if they have also experienced an increase in litter. No response received; Clerk has now contacted the retailers at Thinford on this issue (KFC, McDonalds, Star Bucks, Costa, Dominoes Pizza, Burger King).

Resolved: For Members' Information

vi. 20 MPH - Speed Limit Trial:

Clerk apologised for this oversight; this action has not yet been progressed with DCC.

Resolved: Clerk to action accordingly.

vii. Croxdale Play Park:

DCC has applied for funding to replace the timber fence with steel fencing due to the timber fence posts are rotting away or starting to rot. A steel fence would be more sustainable long term; however, no timescales were provided.

Resolved: For Members' Information

viii. Hett Caravan:

Clerk had previously circulated a draft response to be issued to the resident concerned, subject to any feedback or comments from Members.

Resolved: Clerk to issue letter accordingly.

ix. Steel Barrier Fencing, Hett Lane:

DCC requested for further information on 15 December 2020 regarding the location and type of fault, this was provided and currently awaiting a response.

Resolved: For Members' Information

x. Road Signs on Char Lane:

A response was received from DCC confirming that the Police initially approached the County Council due to speeding issues along the lane, the HGV issues was a secondary issue.

The signage was agreed in conjunction with the Police and is not an enforceable sign, it is only advisory.

Resolved: For Members' Information

xi. Street Signs, Hett:

Clerk progressed this further on 05 January and 25 January; a response was received today (27 January) confirming this was logged incorrectly in the first instance and has now been logged correctly.

Resolved: For Members' Information

xii. Parish Logo/Crest:

Indicative costs for a new parish logo/crest have been sourced which will cost in the region of £200-400 depending if the existing design style (based on the former Sunderland Bridge Parish Council) or agree for a new redesign.

Resolved: Members agreed to use the existing design style. Clerk to action accordingly.

xiii. Cemetery Maintenance Contractor:

The Parish Council's contractor is now in place, with all relevant insurance documentation been provided. It was noted the liability insurance was due to expire on 05 February 2021; therefore, the Clerk has asked for the renewal certificates in due course. A site visit is to be arranged once lockdown restrictions are lifted.

Resolved: For Members' Information

xiv. Flooding at Hett:

Councillor Griffiths reported flooding in and around Hett Village Hall due to lack of drainage and possible subsidence. This has been reported to DCC however, it was confirmed as they are not the landowners, it is not their responsibility. Clerk has since approached Northumbria Water Limited who carried out a site inspection on 25 January 2021; the outcome report has yet to be received. Following this outcome, the Parish Council needs to establish what is their responsibility regarding the drain and associated pipework under the unadopted road. County Councillor McKeon agreed to query this further DCC on behalf of the Parish Council.

Resolved: For Members' Information

xv. Cemetery Grass Cutting 2020/21:

Clerk informed Members, due to the first COVID lockdown period earlier in 2020, DCC were unable to carry out the normal standard of service for grass cutting. Therefore, a reduction in the annual charge originally quoted has been given of £721.25.

Resolved: For Members' Information

xvi. Avian Flu:

Clerk had circulated details of new legislation that came into force on 14 December 2020. This information has been added to the Parish Council's website and linked to our FB page for information/awareness to parishioners in general and to any allotment holders who may own birds.

As a precaution, a letter has also been drafted to issue to all allotment holders regarding the new legislation.

Resolved: For Members' Information

xvii. Allotment Tenant – Breach of Regulations:

Clerk informed Members that an eviction notice has been issued to an allotment holder to serve 1 months' notice (24 February 2021), due to the tenant no longer residing in the Parish.

Resolved: For Members' Information

70/20 Parish Clerk Update / Correspondence:

i. Additional Local Council Tax Support Grant for 2021/22:

The Parish Council has received notification of additional monies to be received in 2021/22 in the sum of £31.83. DCC is to make a one-off payment to Town and Parishes in relation to LCT Support Grant as recognition of their tax base loss which in the main will be driven from an increase in the number of council tax benefit claimants as a result of COVID.

Resolved: For Members' Information

ii. PCVC Precept Consultation:

Th Police Crime and Victim Commissioners are consulting on a £15.00 council tax increase to a Band D property for 2021/22, which equates to nearly a 7% increase.

Resolved: Clerk to respond to the consultation accordingly.

iii. Cassop-cum-Quarrington Neighbourhood Plan Proposal:

Clerk informed Members of the above proposal; the consultation period will last for 8 weeks, that commenced on Friday 22 January to Friday 19 March 2021. County Councillors Dunn and McKeon encouraged Members to respond.

Resolved: For Members' Information

71/20. Financial Matters:

(i) Financial Report for the Period 1 April – 31 December 2020:

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 31 December 2020. The current net bank balances totalled £18,439.59.

Resolved: For Members' Information.

(ii) Fees & Charges Review – Cemetery:

The Clerk had provided a current schedule of fees and charges for Croxdale and Hett cemeteries along with charges for neighbouring Parish Councils for comparison. Following discussion, it was agreed to increase the following charges for 2021/22:

Kerb Edging (single) - £65.00 Kerb Edging (double) - £100.00

Resolved: The above revised Cemetery fees and charges will be effective from 1 April 2021, subject to an annual review.

(iii) Fees & Charges Review – Allotment and Garages:

The fees and charges for Croxdale and Hett allotment and garages were reviewed for implementation from 2022 in order to give a year's notice to allotment holders. Following discussion, it was agreed not to increase the charges for 2022/23.

Resolved: Clerk to write to all allotment / garage holders in due course.

(iv) Fees & Charges Review – Croxdale Inn Car Park Rent:

The car park rental income was reviewed and it was proposed for the fee to remain the same at £765.00 PA, however, in view of the impact of COVID-19 specifically on businesses and the hospitality sector and taking into account the current lockdown restrictions, it was agreed to consider this further at a future meeting.

Resolved: For Members' Information.

(v) Precept Setting 2021/22:

The Clerk prepared a number of proposals of Parish Precept recommendations for 2021/22 budget for Members' consideration. It was noted, regarding the Parish Council's Tax Base, has reduced from 298.2 to 291.2 for 2021/22 due to there being less taxpayers in the Parish. 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 2021/22 of £1,222.00 compared to £843.00 in 2020/21.

Following much consideration and discussion, it was agreed not to increase its Precept and to maintain at £17,500.00 for the financial year 2021/22. The maintain is to ensure there are sufficient funds in 2021/22 on reflection of careful forward planning for budget pressures, identified projects and use of reserves that the Parish Council has identified.

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

72/20: Planning Issues:

The Clerk reported the Parish Council has received the following planning application(s) for comment / objection:

- a) DM/20/03812/FPA - Conversion of garage to form a 1 bed self-contained residential annex – Front Street East, Croxdale.

Resolved: For Member's Information – no specific comments / objections were made with regard to the above planning application.

73/20. County Councillor Reports:

County Councillor McKeon gave an update in relation to: Durham's bus station replacement will start in February 2021 with works lasting until 2022. County Durham Together unit has been established for support during lockdown. Residents requiring advice or support can contact 03000 260 260 (it was agreed this would be circulated on the Parish Council's FB page). Financial support of £2million has been awarded to local businesses in response to COVID. Vaccination of frontline health and social care staff is currently taking place at County Hall.

County Councillor Blakey gave an update in relation to: Bowburn has also been identified as a vaccination centre. Ongoing issues at Tursdale/Metal Bridge regarding parked artic wagons parking overnight. Members/residents to be vigilant and report any issues to Councillor Blakey.

County Councillor Dunn gave a comprehensive update on funding cuts and ongoing austerity measures following a Motion to County Council to restore funding.

Resolved: For Member's Information.

74/20. AOB:

Dangerous Tree, Croxdale:

Councillor Garner asked Members if anyone was aware of the tree works that had taken place at Croxdale near to the play park. Councillor Ord provided an update; this was reported to DCC on 24 December 2020 via the Parish Clerk which required urgent attention. Works were carried out immediately with the tree stump remaining in place.

Resolved: For Member's Information.

Poultry Centre – Break-in:

Councillor Summerson reported there was an attempted break-in at the Poultry Centre on 20 January 2021 to a tenant's allotment. This was not reported to the Police by the tenant.

Resolved: For Member's Information.

Poultry Centre – Drainage:

Councillor Ord reported a drainage issue at the Poultry Centre near to a tenant's allotment which overflows and discharges onto the main road.

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

75/20. Date and Time of Next Meeting:

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday 24 February 2021 at 7.00 pm.