

Minutes for the Monthly Parish Meeting of Croxdale and Hett Parish Council
Wednesday 28 April 2021, 7.00 pm
Virtual Meeting

Parish Council Members Present:

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

107/20. Apologies for Absence:

Apologies of absence were received from Councillors A Watt and I Watt.

Also Present:

County Councillors J Blakely, S Dunn and M McKeon.

108/20. Declarations of Interest:

There were no declarations of interest.

109/20. Policing:

The Clerk had shared Policing crime stats: 6 incidents being recorded for the period February 2021 within the Parish.

Resolved: For Members' Information.

110/20. Public Participation

No members of the public attended the meeting virtually.

Resolved: For Members' Information.

111/20. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on the 31 March 2021 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman (under separate cover).

112/20. Matters Arising:

i. Defibrillator – Croxdale:

Clerk confirmed flowers were delivered to the Corner Shop on 9 April 2021. Spare replacement pads have now been delivered.

Resolved: For Members' Information.

ii. Hett Litter Pick:

April's litter pick took place on 09 April 2021.

Resolved: For Members' Information.

iii. 20 MPH - Speed Limit Trial:

No response has been received from DCC as yet; Clerk chased progressed on 29 March 2021.

Resolved: For Members' Information

iv. Hett Caravan:

The caravan at Hett has now been removed; however, no response has been received regarding the lease agreement. A third and final reminder is to be issued.

Resolved: For Members' Information

v. Street Signs, Hett:

The request for signage is still outstanding; County Councillor McKeon has progressed this on behalf of the Parish Council with DCC.

Resolved: For Members' Information

vi. Poultry Centre Drainage:

Reported to DCC on 2 March 2021 on whether this could result in a highways/road safety issue and is currently awaiting a response. If no response is forthcoming, Members felt the matter had been reported and highlighted to the correct authorities.

Resolved: For Members' Information

vii. Croxdale Inn Car Park Rent:

Clerk had contacted the owner concerned on 28 February 2021 regarding 2021/22 rent and is currently awaiting a response on their intentions regarding the land (deadline of 30 April 2021). A reminder was issued on 23 April 2021.

Resolved: For Members' Information

viii. Allotments:

The following matters was discussed / agreed:

A quote was received from Special Branch Tree Services for the tree works at the Poultry Centre at a cost of £360 (inc. VAT). Removal of any further trees on this allotment would be the responsibility of the tenant.

Resolved: Members agreed to proceed with the works; as the cost is under £500, the PC does not require three quotations.

Councillor Ord and the Parish Clerk met with a fencing contractor on 26 April 2021 regarding new boundary fencing at an allotment at the Poultry Centre; and is currently waiting for a quote.

Resolved: For Members' Information

The allotment holder has confirmed the fencing will be repaired/replaced as a result of the allotment fire at Front Street East.

Resolved: For Members' Information

A new tenancy is now in place at Councillor Burton's former small holding at the Poultry Centre.

Resolved: For Members' Information

A resident was offered the vacant allotment at Front Street East, however, has declined this due to the size and work that is required to turn it around. It was agreed residents would be offered up to 3 allotments, thereafter if they are turned down, they would be removed from the waiting list (or moved to the end).

Resolved: For Members' Information

It was noted an allotment at Front Street East requires possible asbestos removal from several tin roof sheets that looks to have been there for a number of years. It was agreed the Parish Clerk would find a suitable contact to investigate further.

Resolved: Parish Clerk to action accordingly.

Councillor Griffiths raised whether the Parish Council should consider installing noticeboards for allotment holders use to review correspondence as and when required instead of writing to everyone individually. As the Parish Council's allotments cover x4 sites, a suitable location could not be identified. It was agreed for the Parish Clerk to request for email addresses for any new tenancies and try to encourage the use of email from any current tenants going forward.

Resolved: For Members' Information

The Parish Clerk raised if the Parish Council wanted to consider a further addition to the allotment regulations before they were issued to tenants regarding allotment bonfires. The following paragraph was suggested:

Croxdale and Hett Parish Council accepts no responsibility for any loss or damage caused by an allotment bonfire. The tenant(s) are responsible for any necessary repairs in the event the fire spreads beyond their control.

Resolved: Members agreed to the above addition. Clerk is to issue revised regulations to all allotment holders.

ix. Cherry Trees, Croxdale:

Councillor Dunn confirmed DCC are to look at first and determine if one or four are to be replaced which are to be reviewed in the autumn.

Resolved: For Members' Information

x. Re-location of Rubbish Bin, Croxdale:

Clerk informed Members of a complaint received regarding rubbish around the bus stop near to the corner shop and into the resident's garden and requested if the bin near to the corner shop could be moved closer to the bus stop. DCC confirmed the existing rubbish bin outside of the shop could not be re-located as its already in a suitable location. County Councillor McKeon agreed to follow this up for further justification. A response was received today confirming the case had been re-opened and was been investigated further.

In addition, the broken glass panels in the bus stop and the condition of the seat have also been reported. Councillor Kerrison reported the panels in the bus stop were replaced today.

Resolved: For Members' Information

xi. Streetlight – Croxdale:

This was reported further on 9 April 2021; DCC are already aware of this issue, which has been identified as a major fault. Repair works to the streetlight is expected to be completed within 25 working days due to the complexity of the works that are needed.

Resolved: For Members' Information

xii. Cemetery Tree Works, Croxdale:

The above works will be carried out on 10 and 11 May 2021.

Resolved: For Members' Information

xiii. Chair Lane, Highways Signage:

County Councillor Dunn had investigated this further with Highways on behalf of the Parish Council. Residents are keen for the speed limit to be reduced to 20mph; however, this is not possible due to highways legislation. The road is not suitable for HGVs and advisory signs were installed to help stop rat running. This should not affect deliveries as the signage is advisory only. It was agreed, the Parish Council is to contact DCC and request for the signage to be removed as this was never the intention of residents when the issue was first raised to the Police.

It was noted the Police have denied being a party to the erection of the signs on two occasions.

Resolved: Parish Clerk to action accordingly.

xiv. Croxdale Signage:

The above sign is corroded and looks unsafe outside of the Daleside Arms and has been reported to DCC on 13 April 2021.

Resolved: For Members' Information

xv. Hett Drainage/Village Green:

A site visit took place on 1 April 2021 with the Coal Authority and agreed to carry out a survey for subsidence. DCC confirmed they are willing to make a contribution towards the proposed work, this would be in the form of supplying the materials needed to undertake the works. The Coal Authority has also made an offer 'without prejudice' which is to be investigated further before accepting any such offer. This was made instead of carrying out a further subsidence survey.

A further site visit took place on 21 April 2021; a revised plan is to be received from DCC and an estimate from the Coal Authority for the works. The visit also resulted in finding a pitfall around Hett Village Hall and was subsequently filled in by the Coal Authority.

The Parish Clerk referred to correspondence received from the Secretary of Hett Village Hall Association who expressed their concerns of the 'without prejudice' offer and acceptance of such offer would result in further complications in the future, should any further subsidence occur.

Councillor Griffiths confirmed the steel for the roof has now arrived in the UK and expected delivery into Hett on 17 May 2021 to commence works thereafter.

Resolved: For Members' Information. The Parish Clerk is to contact the Coal Authority in the first instance and request in writing what the offer means and to receive confirmation if the Parish Council does accept their offer, will it cause problems in the future of any further flooding/drainage or subsidence. Upon receipt of their response, legal advice may also be required.

xvi. Hett Moor Solar Project:

The planners at Lightsource BP contacted Councillor Griffiths and County Councillor Dunn following their attendance at the online community consultation event last year. Aerial view points on the site location from Leaman's Lane were provided, however, residents views was that the marker on the map is only one location to view the solar farm from, and no matter which way you enter the village from the south, east and west the solar farm will be visible and detract from the open views. BP have offered a site visit if of interest, before the application progresses to Planning Committee.

On a separate issue, Councillor Garner could recall at one of the community consultation events that took place at Bowburn (in relation to the Integra 61 planning application), there was reference to planting of mature trees around the site that would deter its visual impact from Hett on the Amazon structure.

Resolved: For Members' Information. Clerk to check with Planning in the first instance regarding the planting of mature trees at Amazon.

113/20 Parish Clerk Update / Correspondence:

i. Remote Meetings Update:

No announcement as yet; still awaiting the High Court Judgement regarding the continuation of remote meetings after 6 May 2021.

Resolved: For Members' Information

ii. Cemetery Maintenance – Moles:

The above is becoming an issue at both cemeteries. The Cemetery Maintenance contractor had previously indicated his fee for this service at both sites was £200. Clerk to confirm if this will be carried out in a humane mole control way.

Resolved: Clerk to contact Cemetery Maintenance contractor in the first instance.

114/20. Financial Matters:

(i) Financial Report for the Period 1 April – 31 March 2021:

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 March 2021. The current net bank balances totalled £14,745.26.

Resolved: For Members' Information.

(ii) Appointment of Internal Auditor for the year ending 31 March 2021:

Clerk requested approval for Mr G Fletcher (who also carried out last year's audit) be appointed as the Council's Internal Auditor for the year 2020/21.

Resolved: Mr G Fletcher be appointed as the Council's Internal Auditor for the year 2020/21.

(iii) 2020/21 Annual Return and Audit Requirements – Certificate of Exemption:

As the Parish Council's annual turnover is less than £25,000, the Parish Council does not require a full external audit. However, the Parish can request a full audit if required, subject to a fee. The Parish is still required to carry out an internal audit, completion of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) and to publicise correct accounting information at the end of the process for Parishioners to view on our website.

Resolved: For Members' Information. The Parish Council agreed for the exemption of a full external audit for 2020/21.

115/20: Hett Cemetery Pointing:

Three quotations had been sourced in relation to the above works. One quote is to be queried further in relation to the use of lime mortar as opposed to sand and cement.

Resolved: Clerk to action accordingly.

116/20: Parish Councillor Vacancies:

The Parish has two vacancies for Parish Councillor: x1 Sunderland Bridge Ward and x1 Hett Ward. The vacancies are to be filled by co-option, however after the normal election process, the Parish Council is not obliged to advertise these formally, but it is recommended to do so by CDALC.

Resolved: For Member's Information. The Parish Clerk is to advertise the vacancies accordingly for co-option at the next meeting.

117/20: Planning Issues:

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

- a) DM/21/00624/FPA - proposed house and detached garage - land To South West Of 39 Salvin Street, Croxdale
- b) DM/21/01415/TPO - Glebe House, Sunderland Bridge, tree protection order
- c) DM/21/01122/FPA - land North and East of Burger King, Thinford Park - Development of 7no. Use Class B8 (Storage and Distribution) units,

Resolved: For Member's Information – in relation to application A, it was agreed to object to this planning application and request for the decision to be brought to Planning Committee, rather than an officer decision.

118/20. County Councillor Reports:

County Councillor McKeon and Dunn thanked the Parish Council for their continued support over the last 4 years on Parish matters.

County Councillor McKeon confirmed the opening of Coxhoe Village Pantry was this week, which is accessible to residents across the division, not just to Coxhoe.

Resolved: For Member's Information.

119/20. AOB:

Incident at the Corner Shop:

Councillor Kerrison reported an incident took place at the corner shop on 26 April 2021 involving the shop owner and an individual who was thought to be residing at the Croxdale Inn by way of verbal abuse and threats. It was understood that this matter had not been reported to the Police by the shop owners.

Resolved: Clerk to report to the Parish Council's PCSO contact in the first instance.

Footpath Obstruction – Tudhoe:

Councillor Ord reported the footpath from Loggins Farm to Tudhoe Primary School is overgrown and needs to be edged off. The overgrown vegetation is reducing the width of the footpath and could potentially be a hazard for parents and children who walk to school from Croxdale.

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

Allotments Waiting List:

Councillor Garner reported the waiting list for an allotment was made on behalf of the resident's daughter (who no longer resides with the parents), therefore, the residents concerned were not requesting for an additional allotment.

Resolved: For Member's Information.

120/20. Date and Time of Next Meeting:

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday 26 May 2021 at 7.00 pm.