

Minutes for the Monthly Parish Meeting of Croxdale and Hett Parish Council

Wednesday 26 May 2021, 7.00 pm

Croxdale Community Centre

Parish Council Members Present:

Councillor K Summerson (Chair), Councillor P Adams, Councillor R Burton, Councillor J Garner, Councillor M Ord, Councillor A Watt and Councillor I Watt.

Also Present:

County Councillors J Blakley, G Hutchinson and M McKeon.

01/21. Chairman's Update:

Les Griffiths as outgoing Chairman thanked the Parish Council for their continued hard work over the last 2 years. The Parish Council is in a better financial position coming into 2021/22. A 'thank you' was awarded to County Councillors Jan Blakey and Maura McKeon and welcomed new County Councillor Gary Hutchinson. Lastly, a thank you was recorded for former County Councillor Stuart Dunn for his assistance over the past 4 years during his term of office and also to the Parish Clerk, in particular during the last 16 months during COVID-19.

Resolved: For Members' Information.

02/21. To Appoint a Chairman of the Council for the Following Municipal Year

No nominations were sought for the position of Chair of the Parish Council for the ensuing year 2021/22. This item would be deferred to the next meeting for appointment. As no Chairman was appointed, Councillor Summerson agreed to be Chairman for this meeting only.

Resolved: For Members' Information.

03/21. To Complete the Signing of the Declaration of Acceptance of Office by the Chairman

A new Chairman was not appointed; therefore, this item was not required.

Resolved: For Members' Information.

04/21. To Appoint a Vice-Chairman

No nominations were sought for the position of Vice Chair of the Parish Council for the ensuing year. This item would be deferred to the next meeting for appointment.

Resolved: For Members' Information.

05/21. Apologies for Absence:

No apologies of absence were received.

06/21. Declarations of Interest:

There were no declarations of interest.

07/21. Policing:

The Clerk had shared Policing crime stats: 8 incidents being recorded for the period March 2021 within the Parish.

Regarding the incident at the corner shop, this was reported to our PCSO on 29 April 2021 and currently awaiting a response. Councillor Summerson confirmed there was another customer in the shop and reported the matter to the Police, who were parked nearby. The owner of the Croxdale Inn was informed and as a result, the individual is no longer living in Croxdale.

Resolved: For Members' Information.

08/21. Public Participation

Three members of the public attended the meeting. An allotment holder attended the meeting in relation to the allotment fire at Front Street East allotments. The tenant responsible for the fire did not offer a replacement shed to the rightful owner. In addition, a quantity of tools had disappeared from the shed which were not reported to the Police.

Resolved: It was agreed for the Parish Clerk to contact the tenant responsible for the fire and request if both tenants could discuss directly and come to a mutual agreement regarding the burnt out shed and replacement.

09/21. Parish Councillor Co-Option

The Clerk reported 2 expressions of interest were received for Parish Councillor vacancies. One for Hett Ward and one for Sunderland Bridge Ward being:

Hett Ward = Les Griffiths

Sunderland Bridge Ward = Peter Kerrison

Each candidate was nominated and seconded with all Members voted in favour of each candidate.

Resolved: Les Griffiths be duly elected as Parish Councillor for Hett Ward and Peter Kerrison duly elected as Parish Councillor for Sunderland Bridge Ward. Their declarations of acceptance of office were signed at the meeting, as both candidates were present at the meeting.

10/21. Minutes:

The Minutes of the meeting held on the 28 April 2021 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

11/21. Matters Arising:

i. Hett Litter Pick:

May's litter pick took place on 13 May 2021.

Resolved: For Members' Information.

ii. 20 MPH - Speed Limit Trial:

No response has been received from DCC as yet; Clerk chased progressed on 29 March and 3 May 2021.

Resolved: For Members' Information

iii. **Hett Caravan:**

The caravan has now been removed and the tenant has signed the lease agreement.

Resolved: For Members' Information

iv. **Street Signs, Hett:**

County Councillor McKeon confirmed the signage would be erected at the weekend in addition to further dog stencils being placed in the area.

Resolved: For Members' Information

v. **Poultry Centre Drainage:**

Clerk chased progress on 3 May 2021 on whether this could result in a highways/road safety issue and received a response on 5 May 2021 that the case has been updated to state that action has been taken but still waiting for confirmation on what action has been taken.

Resolved: For Members' Information

vi. **Croxdale Inn Car Park Rent:**

Clerk has reminded the tenant on 23 April 2021 and 11 May 2021 regarding this year's rent – no response has yet been received. It was reported a section of the car park is currently cordoned off as a result of cars using the car park for personal use.

Resolved: Clerk to issue further reminder. Councillor Summerson agreed to speak to the tenant also.

vii. **Allotments:**

The following matters was discussed / agreed:

The tree works at the Poultry Centre will be carried out on 1 June 2021.

Resolved: For Members' Information

Two new tenancies have commenced at the Poultry Centre. One tenant will take on the quarter of the allotment where the former chicken run was (at a charge of £10.00) and the other tenant will take on the remaining of the allotment (at a charge of £15.00). It was agreed due to the costs it was not feasible for the Parish Council to erect new boundary fencing to split these allotments, however as one plot is already cordoned off and the other tenant is responsible for the remaining of the allotment, fencing is no longer required.

Resolved: For Members' Information

The vacant allotment at Front Street East has been offered to the next person on the waiting list and the Allotment Manager is meeting with the resident on 27 May 2021.

Resolved: For Members' Information

The revised allotment regulations have been issued to all tenants. Feedback has been received to date from one tenant on the point regarding when a tenant vacates an allotment, it should be in a fair/good condition and free of any materials, rubbish or other structures. The tenant made reference to the state of their allotment when they took over and that the Parish Council has a responsibility to ensure an allotment is in a fit state to be allocated and not pass its responsibilities onto the next allotment holder. The tenant also

suggested if the Parish Council were to hire and suitably locate a skip and inform allotment holders of its availability there would be an incentive to tidy up the allotments.

The Clerk confirmed to the resident the purpose of the new rule was to put the onerous on the former tenant to not leave the allotment with unwanted waste/rubbish and to ensure this does not end up being the responsibility of the Parish Council or the new tenant. Discussion took place on the use of a skip for allotment holders to use and whilst it would be a good incentive for allotment holders to get rid of waste, it was agreed the skip would end up being used for personal and business use. In addition, Tudhoe household waste recycling centre is local for residents to dispose of any unwanted waste.

Resolved: For Members' Information

Councillor Kerrison agreed to arrange for a suitable contractor to investigate the possible asbestos at an allotment at Front Street East.

Resolved: For Members' Information

viii. Re-location of Rubbish Bin, Croxdale:

County Councillor McKeon confirmed this is still being considered.

Resolved: For Members' Information

ix. Streetlight – Croxdale:

This was reported further on 23 May 2021. A response was received on 25 May 2021; this is a major fault which can take longer than anticipated due to ordering parts which are out of the County Council's control.

Resolved: For Members' Information

x. Chair Lane, Highways Signage:

A request for the signage to be removed was issued to DCC on 10 May 2021 and currently awaiting a response.

Resolved: Parish Clerk to action accordingly.

xi. Croxdale Signage:

The corroded legs to the Croxdale sign adjacent to the Daleside have now been replaced.

Resolved: For Members' Information

xii. Hett Drainage/Village Green:

The above ongoing matter was discussed at length and whilst the Parish Council has a proposed solution for the drainage/flooding issue on the Village Green with assistance from DCC and the Coal Authority, the Parish Council is cautious about accepting the Coal Authority's 'without prejudice' offer without understanding the full nature of the risk and what has caused the subsidence (if this is confirmed as the case).

It is therefore impossible for the Parish Council to know whether any offer is adequate without our own independent ground investigation report to help inform us as to the nature of the issue. This is currently being considered with assistance from County Councillor McKeon.

The Parish Council appreciates the offer of the Coal Authority and DCC to assist with the drainage issue, however Members are not convinced that this a long-term solution and may agree for further investigation by way of the topographical survey and monitoring by the Coal Authority, to determine if there is indeed a subsidence issue and its impact on Hett Village Hall and our Village Greens.

Resolved: Without formally rejecting the Coal Authority's offer, the Parish Clerk is to contact the Coal Authority for any further information or guidance on whether the land in question has subsided and what the Parish Council's options are from here.

xiii. Seat replacement:

Clerk confirmed this remains outstanding from DCC regarding the condition of the seat at the bus stop near to the corner shop.

Resolved: For Members' Information

xiv. Cemetery Maintenance Moles:

The cemetery maintenance contractor is yet to confirm the procedure in relation to the mole issues at both cemeteries. The tree works at Croxdale cemetery is now complete.

Resolved: For Members' Information

xv. Footpath Instruction – Tudhoe:

This was reported to DCC on 3 May 2021; Councillor Ord confirmed the works have now been undertaken.

Resolved: For Members' Information

xvi. Planning – Integra 61:

Clerk confirmed the original planning application was reviewed for Integra 61 but has contacted the Planning department to determine if there was a planning condition regarding the planting of mature trees.

Resolved: For Members' Information

12/21 Parish Clerk Update / Correspondence:

i. Parish Council Representative on the Spennymoor AAP Board:

Clerk informed Members of a request received from the AAP Co-ordinator for a Parish representative to replace Councillor Ord on the AAP Board.

Resolved: Interested Members are to inform the Parish Clerk accordingly.

ii. Dispensation Requests:

The Clerk advised applications were received from Councillors Burton, Garner, Ord and Summerson for dispensation to speak and vote in connection with the Council's allotments and garages.

Resolved: The Parish Council considered the applications for dispensation and agreed to grant on the following grounds for the remaining term of office (May 2025):

- i. Granting the dispensation is in the interests of persons living in the authority's area;**

- ii. **Without the dispensation, the number of persons may prohibit from participating in any business would be so great a proportion of the body transacting the business as to impede the transaction of the business.**

Resolved: Councillors Burton, Garner, Ord and Summerson be granted the dispensation accordingly.

iii. **Believe Housing – Land at Rogerson Close:**

Clerk informed Members of correspondence received from Believe Housing who believe the area of the above land is the ownership of Believe Housing, which was transferred initially from DCC in 2015 with surrounding Housing stock. Clerk had sourced a copy of the lease agreement with the former City of Durham Council dated 1987 and sent a copy to Believe Housing confirming the Parish Council's agreement.

Resolved: For Members' Information – no further correspondence has been received.

iv. **Request for replacement seat/repairs – Hett Cemetery:**

A request from a resident of Hett was received in relation to x2 benches located within Hett cemetery that is in need of restoration improvement works.

Resolved: A quotation in the first instance is to be sourced for improvements works for consideration at a future meeting.

v. **Hett Broadband:**

The Clerk advised Members of correspondence received from the Digital Durham Team at DCC re Hett broadband solutions following supplier engagement who are looking to upgrade the whole village to Full Fibre broadband using funding from the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme. As part of the project, they have queried if the Parish Council will support (non-financial) this initiative to help make the project a success.

Resolved: Members agreed to support the project; the Clerk is to seek further information to progress this further.

vi. **Request for improvements works at Sunderland Bridge:**

Councillor Adams brought to the Parish Council's attention the following matters at Sunderland Bridge – cherry tree pruning, seat on the village green that requires restoration works and the removal of x2 conifers next to the seat.

Resolved: The Clerk is to seek advice on the tree works and removal and to obtain a quote for restoration works of the seat for consideration at a future meeting.

13/21. Financial Matters:

(i) **Financial Report for the Period 1 April – 30 April 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 30 April 2021. The current net bank balances totalled £32,916.16.

Resolved: For Members' Information.

14/21: Hett Cemetery Pointing:

Three quotations had been sought in respect of the above works at Hett cemetery. Members reviewed each quotation and following discussion, it was agreed to pursue with contractor 1 due to cost.

Resolved: Clerk to contact each contractor accordingly informing them of the outcome.

15/21: Planning Issues:

No specific planning matters was discussed.

16/21. County Councillor Reports:

County Councillor McKeon reported upgrades to play parks are being progressed throughout the division. Specific updates were in relation to Windsor Court around the general tidiness of the area following feedback from residents, this is to be taken up with DCC and Believe Housing. Feedback was also received regarding parking near to the allotments at the rear of Rogerson Close/Terrace following an ambulance which could not get parked close enough to a house. It was determined residents who own an allotment live close by therefore do not use/bring a car on site. County Councillor McKeon is to look into this further on behalf of a resident.

Resolved: For Member's Information.

17/21. AOB:

Potholes at Hett:

Councillor A Watt asked County Councillors if any surplus tarmac could be utilised for potholes in Hett rather than going to waste?

Resolved: Following discussion, although this would be the most practical option, this may not be authorised by DCC.

Sunderland Bridge – Pothole:

Councillor Adams reported a pothole had been reported by a resident which remains outstanding (FS Case 337110348) refers.

Resolved: Clerk to chase progress with DCC.

18/21. Date and Time of Next Meeting:

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday 30 June 2021 at 7.00 pm at Croxdale Community Centre.