

Minutes for the Monthly Parish Meeting and AGM of Croxdale and Hett Parish Council
Wednesday 25 May 2022, 7.00 pm
Hett Village Hall

Parish Council Members Present:

Councillor L Griffiths, (Chair), Councillor J Garner, Councillor P Adams, Councillor S Burton, Councillor P Kerrison, Councillor M Ord, Councillor A Watt and I Watt.

Also Present:

County Councillors J Blakey, G Hutchinson and M McKeon.

01/22. Chairman's Update:

Councillor Griffiths reflected over the last year, in particular around Parish Council meetings resumed face to face and thanked Councillors for their attendance, both virtual and in person. The position of the Parish Council grows from strength to strength with our overall budget and reserves in a relatively good position and welcomed spending in the current financial year based on Parishioners wants and needs.

Resolved: For Members' Information.

02/22. To Appoint a Chairman of the Council for the Following Municipal Year

Nominations were sought for the position of Chair of the Parish Council. One nomination was proposed and seconded: Councillor Griffiths. Members unanimously voted Councillor Griffiths be elected as Chairman for the ensuring municipal year.

Resolved: Councillor L Griffiths is elected as Chair of Parish Council for the ensuring municipal year.

03/22. To Complete the Signing of the Declaration of Acceptance of Office by the Chairman

Councillor L Griffiths duly signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office as the Chair of the Council.

Resolved: For Members' Information.

04/22. To Appoint a Vice-Chairman

Nominations were sought for the position of Vice Chair of the Parish Council. Councillor J Garner was proposed, seconded and agreed.

Resolved: Councillor J Garner is elected as Vice Chair of Parish Council for the ensuring municipal year.

05/22. Apologies for Absence:

There were no apologies of absence.

06/22. Declarations of Interest:

Councillor Ord declared an interest in agenda item 10 – garage policy.

07/22. Policing:

The Clerk shared Policing crime stats: 3 incidents being recorded for the period March 2022 within the Parish. The Clerk had queried the arrangements regarding PACT Meetings within the Parish and confirmation had been received from PCSO Ruth Dickinson that at present, PACT meetings are only being held in area(s) predominantly if there are ongoing issues that the Police are made aware of. Residents are encouraged to report police-related matters to 101 where possible.

Resolved: For Members' Information.

08/22. Public Participation

Nick Rippin, Constituency Support Manager, Office of Mary Kelly Foy, was in attendance regarding the ongoing work around the 30MPH restriction in Croxdale. A range of suggestions and proposals were discussed including: MP to formally write to DCC on behalf of the Parish and residents to request the 40MPH speed limit to be reduced to 30MPH, a campaign group to be set up, the MP to visit Croxdale and to hold a surgery for residents to drop-in, a leaflet drop and banners to be displayed and to also consider seeking support from Joy Allen, the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Councillor Kerrison confirmed a letter of support is yet to be received from the Headteacher at Tudhoe school, in support to make the B6288 a 30MPH limit from Tudhoe all the way to Croxdale roundabout. Nick Rippin kindly agreed to help co-ordinate the above in conjunction with residents and Councillors. Hett and Sunderland Bridge are also to be considered.

Resolved: For Members' Information.

09/22. Minutes:

The Minutes of the meeting held on the 27 April 2022 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

10/22. Matters Arising:

i. Hett Litter Pick:

Confirmation of May's litter pick has not yet been received. Regarding Hett grass cutting, DCC confirmed they have instructed teams to coincide their grass cutting (edging of greens) with the tractor cutting the bulk of the greens so they are in Hett either the same day or just one day apart, which should help with the overall appearance going forward. DCC aims to cut on a 10-working day cycle (every 2 weeks), however, machinery breakdowns and the weather can affect these timescales. Councillor Kerrison also fed back on grass cutting in relation to the football field at Croxdale which has been unsatisfactory. The Clerk contacted DCC to determine when this will be cut and to ask what the delay is, however, Councillor Kerrison confirmed the grass has been cut.

Resolved: For Members' Information.

ii. Hett Village Green:

Further revised plans were received by DCC on 20 May 2022 and are now with the Parish Council's solicitor.

Resolved: For Members' Information.

iii. Allotments:

The Clerk confirmed she had re-inspected an allotment at Front Street East and improvement works has been made to the plot concerned. Regarding the other plot at Front Street East (that required attention), the tenant has terminated his tenancy with immediate effect – the re-allocation of allotments is still ongoing.

The Clerk reported correspondence has been received from an allotment holder at Front Street East regarding pieces of wood/glass thrown onto plants and destroying them and questioned if this was 'hate' related. The Parish Council was not aware of any ASB or vandalism previously and advised the tenant to contact the Police if this matter persists. As this allotment is joint access, the Clerk agreed to write to the adjoining tenant for awareness and remind this allotment holder regarding rules on commercial waste.

Resolved: For Members' Information. Clerk to write to allotment holder accordingly.

iv. Defibrillator - Croxdale Community Centre:

County Councillor McKeon and the Parish Clerk are to progress with the AAP funding form.

Resolved: For Members' Information.

v. Hett Pond:

No written quotation was received to date. Clerk to chase progress with the Cemetery Maintenance contractor.

Resolved: For Members' Information

vi. Croxdale Cemetery Fencing:

Clerk had contacted Deerness Fencing (part of the Esh Group) who carried out the repair works previously, and currently awaiting a response.

Resolved: For Members' Information

vii. Sunderland Bridge Bench Repairs:

Councillor Adams reported the painted bench on the village green at Sunderland Bridge is not satisfactory with this being recently re-painted. Clerk confirmed she has contacted the contractor who was currently away on holiday and confirmed he would reassess the bench. The bench at Hett cemetery is satisfactory.

Resolved: For Members' Information

viii. Front Street, Croxdale:

Councillor Blakey confirmed no feedback has been received to date from the Housing Officer which may result into an action for Neighbourhood Wardens.

Resolved: For Members' Information

ix. Planning:

The Parish Council's objection to Croxdale Estate's planning application for new build development at Foster Terrace was submitted and County Councillors McKeon and Blakey has requested this application be considered by Planning Committee rather than an officer decision. Members noted there has been a number of objections via the planning portal from residents which is mainly around highways/road safety concerns and 1 comment regarding use of allotment land.

Resolved: For Members' Information

x. Croxdale Inn:

Clerk confirmed payment has been made from the owner of the Croxdale Inn regarding the car park rent for this year (£765.00). Regarding the lease agreement, Members agreed to make this an annual agreement rather than renew the previous 5-year lease agreement as it is more practical to review annually as part of the annual review.

On a separate note, Members commented commercial vehicle(s) has been using the car park. Clerk is to remind the owner that 'exclusive use' was permitted for allotment holders, customers and employees of the Croxdale Inn only.

Resolved: For Members' Information. Clerk to issue annual tenancy agreement for 2022/23.

xi. Cemetery Chapel:

The Parish Council's solicitor confirmed on the basis the PC has had exclusive use of the chapel without permission or consent for a 12-year period then the PC can claim adverse possession and at the same time make a first registration application to own it. Legal costs would be £500 plus VAT and Land Registry disbursements. The amount will depend on the value of the Chapel.

Councillor Kerrison suggested another method of claiming ownership through 'change of title absolute'. Clerk is to query this further with the Parish Council's solicitor. County Councillor McKeon agreed to make enquiries on behalf of the Parish Council via Durham University regarding ownership and historical information on the chapel itself.

Resolved: For Members' Information. Clerk to contact solicitor accordingly.

11/22 Parish Clerk Update / Correspondence:

i. Parish Planters:

Clerk informed Members of an estimate received from Thinford Nurseries for the supply of and planting of plants throughout Croxdale, Hett and Sunderland Bridge at a cost of £1,002.00. No quote was received from DCC.

Members agreed not to pursue and current arrangements are to continue for Croxdale and Sunderland Bridge. Regarding Hett, it was proposed for Hett Village Hall Association to be responsible for the planters near to the Village Hall.

Resolved: For Members' Information.

12/22. Financial Matters:

(i) Internal Audit Report – 2021/22:

The Clerk reported that the Parish Council's Internal Auditor, Mr G Fletcher, has examined the Council's 2021/22 accounts and records and certified the annual internal audit section of the Council's Annual Return accordingly. A copy of the auditor's report was circulated to Members for information which confirmed the Parish Council's internal controls are satisfactory for the size of the Council and no recommendations were made.

Resolved: For Members' Information.

(ii) Parish Council's 2021/22 Annual Return:

The Clerk confirmed the Parish Council was not eligible to be exempt for a full external audit due to the annual turnover being more than £25,000.

The Clerk had read to Members Sections of the Council's Annual Governance Statement with respect to accounting statements 1-9 and was agreed by Members as prepared by the Clerk.

The Parish Council's Accounting Statements 2021/22 was approved and was duly signed by the Chairman and Parish Clerk.

It was noted the period for the exercise of public rights will commence on 01 June 2022 until 14 July 2022 inclusive.

Resolved: The Parish Council's Annual Return be duly signed and agreed.

(iii) Financial Report for the Period 1 April – 30 April 2022:

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 2022. The current net bank balances totalled £46,617.93.

Resolved: For Members' Information.

13/22. Parish Council Co-option:

The Clerk reported no applications were received with regard to the vacancy of Parish Councillor for Sunderland Bridge Ward.

Resolved: For Members' Information. Clerk to re-advertise vacancy accordingly.

14/22. Garage Rules and Regulations:

Clerk had circulated updated policy for Members consideration in view of legal advice received in respect of insurance, ownership and maintenance. Discussion took place on the future of garages (longer term) and was agreed garages would be phased out and not to be re-let once vacant. However, tenants are responsible for the structure to be removed at their expense once the tenancy has ended to avoid any associated costs to be the responsibility of the Parish Council (and the tax payer).

Resolved: Clerk to contact garage tenants or next of kin where appropriate regarding the three garages that are currently vacant.

15/22. Planning Issues:

No new planning applications was discussed.

Resolved: For Members' Information.

16/22. County Councillor Reports:

County Councillor Blakey gave an update in relation to: attendance at recent coffee morning, with discussion taking place regarding Hett Solar Farm. The unveiling of Croxdale Community Centre's

mosaic in relation to the Queen's Jubilee. A replacement Beat Officer is to be confirmed following the current postholder retiring.

County Councillor Hutchinson gave an update in relation to: grass cutting – there is a current issue with parts for equipment and workmen are therefore having to use smaller machinery. Complaints have been received regarding the Environment Agency in relation to trees being cut and waste being disposed of in the river.

County Councillor McKeon gave an update in relation to: cost of living crisis and reiterated the Community Pantry at Coxhoe.

Resolved: For Members' Information.

17/22. AOB:

Queen's Jubilee Celebrations:

Councillor Adams informed Members of Sunderland Bridge celebrations of the Queen's Jubilee on Sunday 5 June 2022 from 2pm. Councillor Griffiths confirmed Hett Village Hall is also arranging a similar event for Hett residents.

Resolved: For Members' Information.

Road Plainings:

Councillor Griffiths requested for road plainings to be sourced from DCC for Hett following a request from residents.

Resolved: Parish Clerk to arrange accordingly.

18/22. Date and Time of Next Meeting:

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday 29 June 2022 at 7.00 pm at Croxdale Community Centre.