

**ANNUAL MEETING OF CRASTER PARISH COUNCIL**  
**Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2016 - 7:15pm in the Craster Memorial Hall**

**Councillors Present**

**Vice Chairperson:** Martin Smith

**Parish Council members:** Elizabeth Pearson, Margaret Brooks, Henry Cummins, Ann Fettis, Alan Punton

**In Attendance:** Wendy Pattison (NCC Councillor), 1 member of the public

**Acting Clerk:** Geoff Newcombe

**Questions from the public** - all issues raised are covered elsewhere in the minutes

**Minutes**

**2251. Election of Chairman**

Bryn Owen was proposed as Chairperson.

Proposer: Alan Punton

Seconder: Henry Cummins

Vote: For 2; Against 2; Abstention 1. Vice Chair Casting Vote - For.

Bryn Owen was duly elected as Chairperson.

**2252. Parish Council vacancy**

No applications were received. Standing Order (SO) 12.3 allows suspension of any SO for a time limited period to progress business. It was proposed to suspend SO 13.4 and 13.5 for this meeting only to allow consideration of co-opting a member at this meeting under this agenda item rather than after acceptance of minutes.

Proposer: Margaret Brooks

Seconder: Elizabeth Pearson

Unanimous

Martin Smith a Councillor under the previous administration expressed an interest in standing again as a member of the Parish Council. It was proposed that Martin Smith be co-opted as a Councillor to Craster Parish Council as he was already experienced and a previous member.

Proposer: Margaret Brooks

Seconder: Ann Fettis

Unanimous

**2253. Declaration of interests**

Henry Cummins disclosed his interests in the car parking issues to be discussed in item 2271.

**2254. Apologies for Absence**

Received from Councillors Mark Green & Bryn Owen

**2255. Confirmation of the Minutes for the Meeting of**

The minutes were unanimously accepted as an accurate record of the meeting of 20th April 2017

Proposer: Elizabeth Pearson

Seconder: Ann Fettis

Unanimous

**2256. Matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda**

Councillor Cummins reported that the staff contracts at the Tourist Information Centres had been extended from end of May to end of September 2017, implying that they would remain open during the summer season.

The members welcome Councillor Wendy Pattison the Northumberland County Council (NCC) Ward Councillor to the meeting. Cllr Pattison introduced herself and reported that Cllr Peter Jackson was expected to be appointed the new Chairperson of NCC on 24<sup>th</sup> May. She also reported that she had asked Highways to repair the pavement outside the playground; Cllr Pearson stated that this work was underway. Cllr Pattison also said as part of her induction she had been touring the parish to highlight which roads need re-surfacing. Members asked that the Clerk send a letter of thanks to Kate Cairns the previous NCC ward Councillor for all her help and good work over the past four years.

**2257. Appointment of Officers**

- Vice Chairman

Martin Smith was nominated and proposed

Proposer: Alan Punton

Seconder: Elizabeth Pearson

Unanimous

Retiring Vice-Chair Alan Punton then invited Cllr Smith to take over as chair of the meeting

- Burial Committee

Bryn Owen and Elizabeth Pearson were nominated to continue as the representatives.

Cllr Bryn Owen

Proposer: Alan Punton

Seconder: Ann Fettis  
Unanimous  
Cllr Elizabeth Pearson  
Proposer: Martin Smith  
Seconder: Alan Punton  
Unanimous

- Car park task force  
Cllrs Henry Cummins, Alan Punton and Margaret Brooks nominated  
Proposer: Ann Fettis  
Seconder: Elizabeth Pearson  
Unanimous
- Leader Grant task force  
Postpone until next meeting
- Human Resources/personnel  
Cllr Ann Fettis was proposed  
Proposer: Alan Punton  
Seconder: Henry Cummins  
Unanimous
- Arnold Nature Reserve  
Cllr Margaret Brooks was proposed  
Proposer: Henry Cummins  
Seconder: Ann Fettis  
Unanimous
- CCT PC Representative  
Postpone until next meeting

**2258. Schedule of meetings for 2017/18**

After discussion of workflow and number of issues to be considered it was proposed that ten Parish Council meetings be held over the next year on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of each month except August and December; one of which is the annual meeting (in May) + Parish meeting(s) at discretion.

Proposer: Margaret Brooks  
Seconder: Elizabeth Pearson  
Unanimous

**2259. Retiring Chairman's Report on the Council Activities of the Preceding Year**

Appended

**2260. Standing Orders Revision**

The provisions of the SO's and the Risk assessment was considered to be satisfactory. It was considered that the SO's and other adopted policies and documents contained a mixture of gender orientated terms (e.g. chairman). It was proposed that the SO's and other documents be revised to provide consistency of terminology and non-gender specific titles.

Proposer: Alan Punton  
Seconder: Elizabeth Pearson  
Unanimous

Cllr Cummins brought to the attention of the members "The Seven Principles of Public Life" (appended) which deals with the Fairness and Respect that Councillors could adopt. The feeling of the members was that they would like to adopt these principles. The Clerk suggested that NALC be asked to comment on how these principles would fit in/compliment the Code of Conduct already adopted by the Council. This was agreed as a suitable course of action.

**2261. Training for Councillors and Officers**

The following Cllrs requested that places are booked on various NALC training courses:-

<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Course</b>	<b>Date</b>
Henry Cummins	Introduction to Local Councils	12 <sup>th</sup> June 2017
Ann Fettis		
Martin Smith	Being Chair of a smaller Local Council	28 <sup>th</sup> June 2017

**2262. Planning Matters**

a. 17/00380/FUL - Land West Of Nyasa Dunstan Village

b. 17/00875/FUL - Land North East Of Dunstan Hall Dunstan

Comments back from NCC planning regarding policy on residential condition say it is not practical/possible. With regard to items (a) & (b); members wished their previous comments to stand regarding recommended conditions that new dwellings should not become second/rental homes. Therefore the members wished to arrange a meeting the NCC ward councillor and a planning officer

to discuss the planning policy, problems and PC wishes to progress the matter.

c. 17/01137/FUL - Land East Of Howick Scar Craster Northumberland

No objection

Proposer: Alan Punton

Seconder: Henry Cummins

Unanimous

d. 17/01419/FUL - 12 Heugh Road Craster NE66 3TJ

No objection

Proposer: Alan Punton

Seconder: Elizabeth Pearson

Unanimous

**2263. Parish Meeting**

A notice of the meeting was posted for 24<sup>th</sup> May at 7pm in the Craster Memorial Hall

**2264. The ownership of the gate between bungalows at South Acres**

This has now been repaired. Members requested that a letter of thanks be sent to W. Sutherland.

**2265. Constant standing water at the bottom of the pasture field**

Water is not sewage.

Cllr Punton is to investigate placing of stones outside car park to prevent random parking; landowner is amenable.

**2266. Embleton Joint Burial Committee**

The Cemetery House now on market; best offers received by mid-July to be considered.

**2267. Craster Community Trust.**

Letter received objecting to siting of a shed in the playground from a member of the public who lives nearby.

The situation has changed and there will probably now be no shed sited at the playground and no grass cutting; to be discussed at next meeting of Craster Community Trust (CCT). As PC had gifted shed members asked the clerk to ask CCT for return of the purchase cheque if the shed is not to be erected.

An Invoice for the Projection Screen gift in the sum of £498.00 + £99.60 VAT has been received from the supplier (agenda item: 2216)

**2268. Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

William Sutherland drafted a letter regarding dog fouling; members wished to postpone this until the next meeting to allow time for consideration.

**2269. Fixed asset maintenance**

The "Adam and Evelyn Dawson" memorial seat is incorrectly listed on the PC list of assets to be maintained. This has led to it being painted black. It was proposed that this item should be removed from the maintenance list and a contractor be engaged to remove the black paint/restore the seat to its original finish. Cllr Punton to make arrangements

Proposer: Henry Cummins

Seconder: Ann Fettis

Unanimous

**2270. Tourist Amenities / Grant Funding**

The Leader report was presented to NCC by Michael Craster requesting funding for the "Craster Trail"; the outcome is awaited.

**2271. Car Parking**

Cllr Henry Cummins launched an initiative for overflow car parking. Cllr Owen sent a report entitled "Car Parking Craster" (appended)

It was noted that a motorhome had recently been parked on the double yellow lines outside the Jolly Fisherman; if this becomes a frequent problem then complaint will be needed requiring enforcement.

**2272. Transparency Fund**

The Parish Council Website information being migrated to new site which is now live:-  
[www.northumberlandparishes.uk/craster](http://www.northumberlandparishes.uk/craster)

**2273. Financial matters**

a) Bank Opening Balance 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 (£1,567.55) & Bank Closing Balance 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 (£9,921.61)

b) Current Account Balance - £11,007.74

c) Spent & Received since 20/04/2017

Spent

- Clerk - £363.87

- HMRC - £69.20

- Northern Garden Sheds Ltd - £550.00

Received

- NCC Precept - £1,500.00

d) Cheques required

Clerk - £193.78

HMRC - £42.57

Clockwork Audio Visual Ltd - £597.60

NALC membership 2017/18 - £85.27

e) Risk Analysis

As per last annual meeting; all expenditure has to follow standing orders and financial rules, be proposed and seconded at PC meeting and cheques signed by two members. SO now have provision to arrange electronic banking with similar safeguards.

f) Internal Auditor appointment

Proposal to appoint Fraser Suffield to audit CPC accounts before submission to BDO.

g) Parish Council Insurance

Members agreed that CPC remain in the NCC insurance scheme and its current cover is sufficient

Proposer: Henry Cummins

Seconder: Alan Punton

Unanimous

2274. **Correspondence received**

As circulated by e-mail

2275. **Items for Next Agenda**

- CCT website and new e-mail system
- Leader Grant task force representative
- CCT PC representative

2276. **Information Share**

- Mick Oxley (Gallery Owner) has agreed to print off and display agenda's/minutes at no charge to PC; with the posted list of meetings and website it will negate having to visit the notice board to post routine meeting notices. Members requested that a letter of thanks be sent to Mick Oxley.
- Cllr Pearson reported that the kerbside fence adjacent to the bus stop/turning area has been repaired.

2277. **Date and Time of Next Meeting**

Parish Meeting Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> June 2017 @ 7pm;

CPC meeting 15<sup>th</sup> June 2017 @ 7:15pm.

Open to Public & Press

## **Annual Meeting May 2017**

Chair's report on the term of the Craster Parish Council 2013 – 2017

The last four years have been years of change for the Parish Council. The death of Cllr Taylor in early 2014 cut the main link with the County Council and initiatives had to be taken to establish new communications directly with officers. This has paid dividends and we have been able to resolve several long standing concerns.

The Dunstan Water Leak, and associated road resurfacing, a feature of the agenda for over ten years, and the flooding at the bottom of the Tower Bank have been solved by the Parish Council working closely with County Council Officers to identify the root causes of the problem and address them.

The operation of the Council has been examined and compared to best practice and the legal requirements and changes have been made to Standing Orders to ensure conformance. This has led to more openness and transparency and at no time during the last four years have the public been excluded from the Parish Council meetings.

The community has been more involved in our decision making processes and six well attended Parish Meetings have been held during the last two years. These have become an important part of the work of the Council and the level of precept is now referred to a Parish Meeting before being set by the Council.

With the Parish Meetings the Council has identified projects within the community and has used the reserves from the sale of land to the Water Board to fund these projects. These have included the provision of a defibrillator, a grant towards the building of a skiff for the rowing club, the purchase of a screen for the Memorial Hall and the purchase of various items of equipment for the play park. The remainder of these reserves have been earmarked as the Council's contribution to the establishment and signing of the Craster Trail, which includes a new footpath down the Tower Bank.

Over many years a major item of Parish Council expenditure has been the precept given each year to the Embleton Joint Burial Committee. This committee manages the Spitalford Cemetery and typically around 40% of the Parish precept was used to subsidise its activities. During the last 3 years the management of the cemetery has been reviewed and improved and it now operates on break even basis. This has allowed the Parish Council to reduce the precept collected from residents by 40%.

Parking with Craster has been improved by new restrictions on Heugh Road and the Parish Council benefited from our Ward Councillor allocating £30,000 of her allowance over two years, with no contribution from the Parish, for improvements to the verges in Heugh Wynd and by the Church.

The Parish Council has reached the conclusion that it is being expected to finance many activities for visitors and consider that it is unreasonable for this burden to be placed on the residents. The County Council has been petitioned to increase the charges on the quarry car park to provide an income flow for the community to provide these facilities. This petition was signed by the vast majority of the residents and has been well received in the press. It will be considered by the Petitions committee of the County Council in June.

Last year one of the longest serving Councillors, Mrs Joyce Shaw, passed away. Her knowledge of the community and its history has been missed.

In May Michael Craster stood down after many years' service to the Council and he will be difficult to replace. It was through his work that the new footpath down the Tower Bank obtained permission from Lord Howick and the Greys and their generosity in providing this new access route between the communities of Dunstan and Craster should be recognised by all.

John Gallon is also retiring from the Council and the work he has done over the last three years is second to none. Three times he stepped into the breach when clerks resigned and his meticulous attention to detail and willingness to take on duties, and carry them out, has been of immense benefit to the Council.

It is good that we have three new, younger members of the community prepared to become Parish Councillors. Replacing Joyce, Michael and John will not be an easy task but we have a duty to the Parish to continue to endeavour to influence decisions which impact on us all.

## **Car Parking in Craster**

Since before I was a Parish Councillor there has been a Parking Committee/Task Force composed of Councillors and others. Currently Michael Craster is the chair and Henry a leading member, in fact it has been Henry that has frequently reported to the Parish Council on the work of the Task Force. The existence of this Task Force reflects the concerns of residents with car parking in the parish, probably the biggest concern for many. Some progress has been made over the years to improve the situation with restrictions and additional capacity in the quarry, but there is still a problem of insufficient capacity.

One of the solutions which has been considered over the years is the use of the Turn Field as an overflow facility. At the present time this field does not have planning permission for car parking and can only be used for a maximum of 28 days per year, and while this is a help, it cannot be seen as the final solution. When it is opened by the Greys it has been either a commercial enterprise for themselves, or in conjunction with community organisations that have manned it in return for part of the income.

Some time ago discussions were held with the planners/highways departments by the late John Taylor to determine what would be required to bring the facility to an acceptable standard so that it could obtain planning permission and be open more frequently. As I understand it work would have to be done to improve the access and it is likely that Section 106 money would be required to install suitable traffic calming measures at the entrance. This is a safety critical issue as the footpath is on the opposite side of the road to the entrance and pedestrians cross at this point to use the public footpath across the Turn Field. I also understand that to cope with more than the occasional usage work would have to be done to re-enforce the surface of the heavily used parts of the field.

Prior to submitting the current Leader Grant application the task force, John, Michael and myself, did discuss with the Grant coordinator the possibility of including the development of the field. It would be an eligible project, but for us to be able to apply we would need a long term, 25+ years, lease, be prepared to fund 20-25% of the project, and be able to demonstrate some level of job creation, possibly a minimum of one seasonal full time job.

In examining the feasibility of the grant application I estimated that to develop the field so it could be legally used for more than 28 days would require an investment of at least £50k, which would include the installation of a ticket machine so full time staffing would not be required, but there were many unknowns including the cost of the lease. Michael had some preliminary discussions along these lines with the Greys. I do not know the current position, but I gather Henry has forestalled this work and made a private arrangement.

I estimate that there are at least 100 days per year when there is excessive car parking along the Bogue Road. As we all know this reduces access and is a safety issue. We are currently working with the County Council to design a scheme of works which will prohibit this parking and create a safe footpath. If this is done then the availability for overflow parking will become critical and will be needed whenever the quarry car park is full, probably 100 days per year. On many of these days the demand may be low, but even ten cars going round the parish looking for somewhere to park is a real concern.

Working on the basis that if the Parish Council were to obtain a lease and apply for a grant to fund the work then Planning Permission would be sought and the improvements made. If the employee would be working 5 hours per day, 35 hours per week, then as a responsible employer National Insurance would come into play and as a public body the Council would not contemplate zero hours contracts. Without having figures relating to the cost of the lease it was not possible to get the figures to stack up in time for the Leader Grant application and it was shelved.

The petition paper, "A fair deal for Craster and its visitors" includes as one of the objectives the "development of the overflow car park". As this would be utilising public funds it would be on a not for profit basis, which has always been my understanding of the outcome the Task Force was seeking. Using income from the quarry car park to fund the overflow car park would make the project feasible and we could be able to employ a Parish Council Officer with supervision of the Turn Field as one of the duties.

I understand that Henry has obtained a personal lease for the field from the Greys and is proposing to open it as and when he considers demand justifies it. It would be helpful if Henry could let all concerned know the

full nature of the concession he has for the use of the Turn Field and how he intends to utilise it in the future. There would seem to be three, and possibly more policy options:

1 The concession is used to cherry pick the 28 most lucrative days and leave the basic problem unsolved on the other 70+ days.

2 Henry applies for Planning Permission to create a Car Park and provides the investment necessary to meet the requirements, with or without grant funding, and operates the Car park as a commercial activity.

3 Henry uses his concession to enable the Parish Council, or other community group, to obtain a lease on the Turn Field. They would then seek Planning Permission, obtain grant funding and create a facility which addresses the Car Parking problems in the parish and is operated by the community for the community.

It would be most useful if the Parish Council had a clear decision on this issue at the next meeting as it is highly relevant to discussion of the petition with the Petitions Committee in June.

## **The Seven Principles of Public Life**

### **Selflessness**

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

### **Integrity**

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

### **Objectivity**

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

### **Accountability**

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

### **Openness**

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

### **Honesty**

Holders of public office should be truthful.

### **Leadership**

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life/the-7-principles-of-public-life--2>