

WOOLER PARISH COUNCIL

Draft Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of the Council, Held on Monday 28th September 7pm – a virtual meeting via ZOOM

Present: Councillor Mark Mather (Chair) Councillors: Tom Armstrong (Vice chair), Rob Donkin, Joyce Robertson, Caroline Cumming, Anthony Murray (via telephone), Kevan Curry

In Attendance: Kerren Rodgers (Clerk), Ian Smith (JPI Media), Helen Leighton-Rose, Helen Deane-Hall, Siobhan Younger

1. APOLOGIES

Cllr Mark Napier, P C Curtis Ritchie

2. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

- **Catherine Dunn email received – Tidy up Car Park at Bottom of Ramseys Lane**
An email was read out from the Floral Project asking if they can replace slab under the trees and also bollards with planters. Discussion followed as to ownership of the land, it is thought to be NCC owned but the meeting agreed that The Floral Project need to seek clarification and also consult the residents that use the land as a car park to ensure any works do not cause issues. The Chair also thanked Catherine Dunn and the Floral Project for all their hard work in the town.
- **Siobhan Younger – Dementia Friendly Town**
The meeting was addressed by Siobhan Younger regarding a project to ensure Wooler is a dementia friendly town. The increase in people being affected by dementia is expected to be over 1 million soon and therefore it is important for Wooler to make changes that can be inclusive for sufferers and their carers. The meeting agreed that this is something they want to adopt and it was agreed that dementia training will be arranged for the Cllrs and then start rolling out to local businesses.

3. COUNCILLOR APPLICATIONS

The Chair welcomed Helen Leighton-Rose and Helen Deane-Hall to the meeting and gave both the opportunity to address the meeting regarding their applications to join the PC. Both then left the meeting whilst a vote was undertaken. Both were co-opted onto the PC and the Declaration of Acceptance were signed in view of the meeting.

4. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

Cllr Helen Deane-Hall & Helen Leighton-Rose Item 10.

5. LOCAL SERVICES UPDATE

REPORT

Report received via email from PC Ritchie

- 1/ Shop lifting from the COOP – Enqs on going.
- 2/ Fight in the town centre - Parties dispersed.
- 3/ DV related assault – Offender dealt with.
- 4/ Intel led vehicle stop and a male was arrested for driving whilst over the limit and a quantity of illegal substances was found also.
- 5/ Criminal damage to a garden. – offenders identified.
- 6/ Minor public order offence at the Riverside Park – No complaints

The meeting was also informed that the Community Engagement Van will be in Wooler on Thursday 15th October 12 – 2pm in the bus station. Local Police Officers and also the Police and Crime Commissioner will be available to discuss residents' concerns. Cllrs will also be in attendance to raise local issues. The chair made note that poaching incidents are increasing in the area but the Rural Crime team is working well.

6. CORONAVIRUS – Covid 19

REVIEW & DISCUSSION

- Update – The meeting agreed to continue making available the meds delivery for those that really need it. It was also noted that the Hardship Fund is still available as well as telephone calls organised through Glendale Connect. The delivery of art equipment to the residents at the Old Vicarage were very well received a thankyou letter was read to the meeting from a Branxton resident that had been supported though Covid. Tillside PC have offered funds if it is necessary for Wooler PC to start the support service again.
- Cleaner/Bus Station Toilets – The meeting were informed that the additional hours had now been invoiced to NCC for the first three months. It was noted that providing this service was not covered by the NCC payment. Clarification of the additional payments going forward is to be sought from NCC.
- Community Chest Grant – Applications had been invited from NCC for a grant (particularly Covid related) but the Chair reported a very disappointing response had been received from NCC. Cllr Anthony Murray is going to register his disappointment of the lack of help.

7. PREVIOUS MINUTES

REVIEW & SIGN

To be signed as a correct record minutes of the previous meeting of the Parish Council on 17th August 2020

The Parish Council read through the minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 17/8/20 were agreed to be a true and accurate record.
Cllr Tom Armstrong proposed the minutes and Cllr Donkin seconded them. The Chair signed the minutes.

8. MATTERS ARISING

REVIEW & DISCUSSION

To consider matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting of the Parish Council –

none

9. PARISH REPORT

UPDATE & DECISION

- **First School Site/Cemetery Land** – Cllr Mather reported difficulty getting an answer from NCC further to last months meeting. Bernicia not now interested in land and disappointingly Lesley Wood – Estates department NCC had done nothing regarding the land needed for the extension to the cemetery. An update had been asked for and Cllr Murray is to push for information again. It was noted that NCC had been in chaos for the last few weeks but hoping this will improve.
- **Riverside Trees Update/Cars Parking-** The Chair read out a thank you letter from the Log Bank. The benches are to be installed next week and thanks to Angus Murray who is also coming to help. The information board for the flower fountain is also being installed which should finalise the Riverside Project. Cllr Donkin informed the meeting that a resident had donated 1000 crocus bulbs and thanks were extended. Despite discussions with NCC no signage regarding the parking on South Road was forthcoming and the meeting agreed to get notices produced.
- **Cars on Scotts Park** – NCC had also been asked to re-instate the bollards at Scotts Park but no response had been received.
- **Market Place Works** – The Chair informed the meeting that the grass has been reinstated, looks very good. A planning application has been made to trim the trees and a donation has been received from the Clock Winding Group for a new Cherry Tree and also Weeping Willows for South Road. Further to the meeting with the Fountain gp, Cllr Donkin has spent time preparing the stand for the signs for which the meeting thanked him.
- **Parish Council Laptop** – The Chair reported that the current PC laptop is having issues and the Clerk was asked to obtain quotes to upgrade the equipment.
- **NCC Communication Issues-** Cllr Mather reported that the issues with NCC which is currently taking at least 50% of the Clerks time chasing NCC departments to get answers to emails. He had spoken to Glen Sanderson and forwarded an email sent regarding several outstanding items which had then “spurred” on Robin McCartney (Highways Manager) to respond. It is now hoped that issues will be resolved although the Coop crossing had been denied (this information had not been passed on to

WPC) and the meeting agreed it was unacceptable that no response was received from emails sent, as well as not being informed of decisions made. The email response from Robin McCartney was read out and a further meeting is to be scheduled for Thurs 8th Oct to follow up on the outstanding issues.

In particular the following issues would seem to have been ignored by the Highways team;

-The Riverside/A697 crossing is still being investigated as Highways claim not to have any instructions from planning.

-Ramseys Lane, Highways are now say nothing more can be done even though with additional housing the traffic problems have been exacerbated. This item was included on the LTP in 2016/2017 and the problems with parking and access has been regularly brought to NCC attention. The Chair made note that the safety of the Wooler residents is not being taken seriously by Highways.

-The Haughhead to Wooler footpath has been inspected and deemed safe – the meeting has requested a copy of this report. Again, this a matter of safety for any resident that has to walk along the A697 (the footpath was accepted as in “poor condition” by NCC in March 2018 and has undergone no repairs since)

Cllr Murray is again going to push for these issues to be resolved with Glen Sanderson. The meeting agreed that this poor service from NCC is unacceptable and the residents and visitors to Wooler are being greatly let down by NCC Highways department.

- **LTP 2021/2022** – The meeting agreed that the LTP requests should be as follows:

i) The COOP crossing

ii) Ramseys Lane

iii) Chatton Road Bridge

All these areas have constant traffic safety issues and with the building of new properties, the meeting agreed this would worsen.

10. SCHOOL FARM FIELD SITE

DISCUSSION & DECISION

- Community Orchard – Helen Deane-Hall informed the meeting that the trees will be arriving at the end of November and is hoping to get the School involved in the planting. Potentially space for more trees but meeting agreed to wait until the first ones have been planted.
- Water – The meeting was informed that Northumbria Water had declined a request from WPC to provide the water to the site. This is to be followed up again but the Clerk is to progress the application in the interim.
- Polytunnel – The Chair thanked Cllr Donkin for getting 3 quotes for the new community polytunnel which will now be passed to Cllr Murray for consideration for potential funding. The Chair expressed how much the polytunnel would benefit the community.

11. COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT

REPORT & DECISION

Cllr Murray reported that “business” was still being affected by Covid but that he hoped for a positive change now the leadership of the NCC had been resolved. It is hoped that Glen Sanderson will work hard to improve things.

12. SCOTTS PARK/BRYONS PARK

UPDATE & DECISION

- Update – The meeting heard that nothing had been received from the Parks department regarding signing over Brysons Park. However, it was pleasing to report that when the repairs were carried out to Brysons Park, Cllr Mather managed to speak to the company involved and they agreed to repair the damage at Scotts Park for £400 rather than the £1300 originally quoted.
- Litter Problem – Thanks were extended to Cllr Curry for dealing with litter left at Brysons Park and for monitoring the problem. It was agreed that moving the bin closer to the play park may help solve the issue and Cllr Donkin kindly agreed to assist with the movement of the bin.
- Cllr Donkin reported that he had carried out repairs on the seat at Scotts Park and that the roundabout needing repairing as it was not working properly. The Chair asked if he would provide a quotation for the work involved to fix the roundabout and present to the next meeting. Cllr Donkin was again thanked for all the voluntary work carried out.

13. WINTER MAINTENANCE

UPDATE & DECISION

The Chair confirmed that NCC will be providing a snow plough and gritter again this year which will be kept locally. This will allow for a NCC employee that lives locally to ensure that paths are gritted every day where necessary. The WPC have previously paid for any Sat/Sunday work and the hourly rate for the coming winter will be £13.67ph. The meeting agreed that this was acceptable.

14. TORY SITE/TORY BANK

REPORT, DISCUSSION & DECISION

- War Memorial Repairs – Discussion took place regarding the type of works required at the site as the current concrete “walkway” was in need of replacement. The meeting agreed that quotes for removal and replacement of the concrete area with railings. Any recommendations for contractors should be passed to the Clerk.
- Tree Works – The meeting was informed that the removal of Ivy from the trees on the Bank has begun along with the removal of the dangerous trees. Cllr Mather reported that he had received a number of concerns regarding the clear fell. It was confirmed that the next phase of works was light pruning to improve safety and that no trees were being removed. The third phase will be the big works and all residents views will be taken into consideration but this work is required as a matter of safety. A 2nd tree survey is to take place once the ivy has been removed to ensure all trees are safe and to look at opening up the site to the public, whilst continuing to make it wildlife friendly.

15. PLANNING MATTERS

DISCUSSION & DECISION

- Proposed river restoration scheme – Land Northwest of Haugh Head Crossing Cottage, Wooler 20/02501/FULES
 - The Chair confirmed that the PC had great concerns over this application and an email was read to the meeting regarding the lack of footbridge plan in the application, lack of consideration for wildlife, potential flooding problems and also reduction in the available water to properties in the locale that run on wells. Cllr Helen Leighton-Rose also raised the issue of bank erosion and the problems this may cause further down the river. Cllr Murray also raised concerns over the design of the footbridge as it is so popular. All concerns are to be lodged against this application on the planning portal.
- Infill former rail bridge (AKC/35) using engineering fill material, foamed concrete and EPS infill. Land West of Coldmartin Croft, Wooler 20/02675/FUL
 - Concerns raised over the plans to infill under the bridge as the farmer has land/stock on both sides of the A697 and currently uses this “tunnel”. Also the meeting was concerned that the footpath has not been taken into consideration and this matter was raised with Robin McCartney.
- Single storey rear extension and alterations to roof of existing rear element. 16 Glendale Road, Wooler, NE71 6DN 20/02682/FUL – No comment
- 2 Storey extension of existing care home to provide 8 no. bedrooms, internal alterations and construction of new timber conservatory The Old Vicarage, 26 Cottage Road, Wooler 20/02445/FUL – it was noted the meeting fully supported this application

16. PLANNING DECISIONS

UPDATE & DECISION

None

17. OUTSIDE BODIES

REPORT, DISCUSSION & DECISION

None

18. COUNCILLOR'S TASKS/QUESTIONS

REPORT, DISCUSSION & DECISION

- Cllr Cumming had received a complaint from a resident regarding dog fouling on the High Street and also the bottle neck at the top of the High Street. The meeting agreed that residents are to be asked to fill in the form on the NCC website.
- Cllr Armstrong put forward a suggestion that all Cllrs make a note of voluntary hours worked and put forward monthly to Clerk. The concern is that currently work is being undertaken for free that should be put into the budget as any future change in Cllrs may result in this work not being carried out.

19. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next Parish Council meeting will be held on Monday 26th October 2020 at 7pm. Continue to look at options but at the moment will still be held via zoom.

20. AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

Presentation from Suzanne Cooke re Inclusive Arts Project
Christmas Lights

21. FINANCE - Finance Report/admin matters

The Clerk provided the meeting with the current position regarding cashflow to budget. The meeting agreed to change the numbering system of the agenda to help when researching previous matters. The meeting was asked to agree the cost of a virtual Training Webinar with SLCC for the Clerk – all agreed. The meeting was also informed that the Clerk has now taken on the role of Clerk & RFO at North Sunderland and Seahouses PC and the Chair is to contact NSPC Chair to discuss savings on duplicated costs.

- Payments for authorisation – SEE TABLE BELOW

T Armstrong – Expenses Gravel & top soil	236.48	Transfer
Zoom – September registration	14.39	DD
Viking – Toilet Rolls	37.06	Transfer
Picnic Tables/Key Cutting	608.00	Transfer
Glendale Garden Centre – Gras Seed	12.00	Transfer
Northumberland CC – Sept payroll	971.91	Transfer
Clerk Exps – Toilet rolls (Gents toilets)	4.00	Transfer
Zoom – October registration	14.39	DD

Two signatories to authorise the above payments – the Parish Council agreed the payments and the Chair signed the invoices to authorise payment by clerk.

Signed:

Signed: