

THIRSTON PARISH COUNCIL

At the Parish Council Meeting held via Zoom on Thursday 23 July 2020.

Present: Cllrs S Allan, E Davidson, D Green, T Jackson, H Lindley and J Marshall.
The Parish Clerk in attendance – Mrs L Hamlin
One member of the public.

139 Apologies for absence – County Councillor G Sanderson

140 Declarations of interest in items on the Agenda – Cllr Green – Street Light in Eshott, Pot Holes Birnie Farm, Eshott

141 Public Questions (max 5 mins per person) – None

142 The minutes of the meeting 11 June 2020 were agreed as a true record and were signed at a later date due to Covid-19.

143 Matters Arising therefrom:

- a) Street light in Eshott Village – Cllr Green reported that the light is still not switching off at 11pm however as there have been no complaints it was agreed to remove this from the agenda.
- b) Road to Longhorsley to Burgham complaint – Cllr Jackson met with Martin King of NCC and he was very helpful. Mr King agrees that the works undertaken on the road were badly done and he will arrange for repairs to be carried out and try to arrange for another layer to be added to the road surface but that is dependent on budget constraints.
- c) Steep Bank – slippy surface – the Clerk had an onsite meeting about the footpath with NCC. They state that the footpath is in a good state of repair however as it is a steep bank then suggested requesting warning signs from NCC to put at the top and bottom of the bank. It was felt that this would not rectify the issue. The main issues is that the footpath gets a mossy coating on it and this needs to be regularly cleaned or a new surface applying to stop mossy developing. The Clerk suggested having the footpath resurfaced with the antislip coating that has been applied to the cycle track at Warkworth by Sustrain. This is an expensive but effective option. Another suggestion is to slurry seal the footpath, not as effective but less costly. Clerk
- d) Repairs to drain close to Glenshotton – the Clerk chased this up with NCC again and was informed this would be undertaken in the next few weeks.
- e) Ditch on the Burgham Park Road blocked – Cllr Jackson raised this with Mr King who agreed to have the ditch cleared out.
- f) Litter Picker request to NCC – Despite a reminder email being sent to NCC no response has been received. The Clerk has asked if this cannot be done due to Covid concerns but no still no response Clerk
- g) Street lights outside Pumpkin Pie Nursery – Need to check this has been done. Cllr Lindley agreed to check and report back to the Clerk. Cllr Lindley
- h) Painting of bollards on bridge – CC Sanderson has asked if it might be possible for NCC to paint the bollards when they do the crash barrier but he cannot guarantee this. Clerk will pursue. Also Felton Parish Council has raised concerns about the white railings behind the crash barrier needing painting. The Clerk had looked at the railings recently and did not think they needed any work doing to them unless they had already been painted when the crash barrier was done. Cllr Marshall to take and look and report back to the Clerk. Clerk
- i) Gullies on The Peth – CC Sanderson arranged to meet with NCC Highways to rectify the problem. The drains and gullies on The Peth and along Bridge End have now been totally cleaned, there have been issues in the past with cars parked so works could not be fully undertaken. The two workmen did an extremely thorough job of extricating a considerable amount of old foliage, twigs and road debris from each of the eight gullies and drains, it certainly proved to be a challenging task as everything was compacted right into the soakaway. Cllr Marshall
From their description it seems that all of the gullies were in the same condition. CC Sanderson has asked that NCC place this job on a routine gully emptying programme.

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- In addition, he has asked that NCC sweep the pavement and road sides more regularly to try to avoid the normal build up of the late summer/autumn fall of leaves along with straw and so on from harvest time
- j) Japanese Knotweed – the Clerk contacted the Northumberland Arms via email to find out who is best to speak to about this and has to date received no response. Cllr Marshall recommended speaking to Stuart Young. The Clerk will contact him direct. Clerk
 - k) Pot holes by Birnie Farm and near Thirston Mill. Birnie Farm has not been completed, the original ones at Thirston Mill have been filled but more have now appeared. There are also issues with pot holes on the Wintrick Road and the road down to Blackbrook Farm. Clerk to report to NCC. Clerk
 - l) Speeding issues in East Thirston – CC Sanderson has put aside some of his members scheme money to start drawing up a scheme and this has been relayed to the residents.
 - m) Cutting back of hedges along pathway from Old School to top of Peth – NCC has stated this work is being undertaken this week. Clerk
 - n) Road onto A1 – wearing issues – A1 Highways has confirmed they are aware of this issue and works are programmed for end of July/beginning of August.

144 Report by County Councillor Sanderson (via Email)

Things continue to return to relative normality for our services from schools to older people care and in my areas of responsibility our car parks are open, we have "Socially Distance" signed our main towns, all but a couple of our public toilets are now open and work on our roads is going well as we crack on with our £28m roads programme.

I suppose at the back of our minds is the possibility of a Covid return and if that happens it will probably cause further delay to all the work we want to see done.

However, we plan to finish work on the Bridge in August and the Thirston scheme is still going ahead although delayed until the autumn.

This week we awarded the works contract for the Union Chainbridge - 200 years old this month - and the largest Heritage Lottery funded cross Council cross Border projects ever undertaken. We hope to see work started on the bridge soon which will renovate and restore this beautiful and historic structure.

And we are moving forward on our Climate Change work - we are looking to install more EV chargers across the County this year and we may be able to make a modest start on our free tree offer. We have recruited an Engagement Officer to increase our dialogue with residents, groups and schools.

We opened up our new cafe at Druridge Bay Country Park recently for take away snacks only at the moment and I have included two new improvement schemes for extra car parking at Plessey Woods Country Park to meet the demand and at QEII near Ashington where the car park is in a very bad state. The Parks generally have proved invaluable in recent months providing space, nature to enjoy, and fresh air - so I'm pleased we have invested in them over recent years.

I am currently looking at a possible scheme for East Thirston - it is unlikely to qualify for a 30mph zone but I would like to see a 40mph limit - I have placed £2000 from my members scheme reserve to start work on drawing up a scheme.

There is still virtually no staff at County Hall and face to face meetings are not happening but work continues well.

145 Report back from Meetings and Representations on behalf of TPC

Recreation Field Meeting – Cllr Marshall reported that a site visit was held on the recreation field to review the recommendations of the RoSPA report along with the groups observations. The toddler swings have been removed as the frame is rotten at the base and replacement quotes are being received and other minor works to be undertaken.

The play area is still closed due to Covid-19. A discussion had taken place as to how to reopen with plans in place for the number of people restricted to using the play area and the number of children on the apparatus as any one time. It was proposed for one family group per piece of equipment. However when the Insurance Company was consulted they were not happy with the cleaning/sanitising arrangements. Cllr Lindley asked about how to monitor numbers if children are attending on their own if old enough and Cllr Marshall stated that

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there was not the potential to supervise the play area which is one of the issues. Other Councils will be in the same position and we can look at what they are doing. The residents want to see the park open.

A Recreation meeting is being held next week and the play area will be the centre of discussions. Cllr Fiona Weddle has been appointed Chairman. Also a subgroup has been set up to look at the new building and hopefully will have had their first meeting by next week. The MUGA needs resurfacing and the boards around it need replacing.

Cllr Marshall asked the Clerk to forward to Felton PC Clerk the details of ringfenced funds held by Thirston for the play area and new building. Clerk

Meeting with NCC on 22 June – this meeting was attended by Cllrs Lindley, Green and Jackson and the Clerk along with Mrs McLoughlin, Mr Murfin and Mr Horsman of NCC. This seemed to be quite a positive meeting with NCC promising to do a number of actions however to date nothing has been forthcoming from NCC. The Clerk has chased up the actions and received the response that NCC are “We are still looking into this matter. We will be touch asap”. The Councillors expressed their disappointment that action has not been taken and the Clerk to write to NCC to relay this to them and ask for a response on the outstanding issues in time for the next PC meeting. Clerk

146 Potential Projects

- a) Footpaths/Rights of Way – Nothing to report
- b) Landscaping – the tubs have been planted. Cllr Marshall reported that the bench at the top of The Peth is in need of some work. Cllr Lindley to seek a quote for this work. Cllr Lindley
- c) Neighbourhood Plan Update – NCC has given notification that Regulation 14 consultation can recommence. The Clerk has submitted a Groundworks Grant application to cover the Planning Consultants works to update the Neighbourhood Plan to incorporate the NCC SEA regulations and Environmental Report, review responses from the Regulation 14 consultation and prepared supporting documents for Regulation 15 stage. The Regulation 14 consultation has been increased to a minimum of 8 weeks. The Clerk had hoped to have information in this edition of The Bridge to make resident aware of the consultation however as start dates have not been finalised a letter drop will have to take place again. A meeting will be arranged with the working group once the consultant has updated the plan which should be by the beginning of August. Clerk

147 Planning:

To report on any planning decisions:

20/00742/FUL – Oakdale 4 Burgham Park – installation of wind turbine - WITHDRAWN
20/00933/LBC - The Granary 2 East Thirston Farm Steading – ground floor extension to rear of property. Proposed internal door to be removed and blocked up – WITHDRAWN
20/01323/FELTPO - Beech Cottage, Eshott – Tree Works – GRANTED

Planning applications pending:

18/03736/FUL - Felmoor Park, East of A1 - 24 lodges, 10 caravans, miniature golf – Site visit undertaken – no objections
19/00300/PREAPP – Burgham Park Golf Cub – Erection of 56 dwellings and improvements to course and club house – objections submitted and request for inclusion in pre-app discussions.
19/03659/VARYCO – Eshott Airfield – make temporary hours of 7am to 11pm permanent – objections submitted.
19/00669/PREAPP – Plot 4, Eshottheugh – Holiday leisure park comprising 24 single story chalets and 19 two story chalets – objections submitted
20/00764/FUL - Pethfoot House, West Thirston - Repairs, maintenance, refurbishment, alteration and minor extension works – no objections
20/01373/LBC - The Old Manse, West Thirston - Listed Building Consent to replace lean-to with single storey extension, plywood door and window with french doors and north elevation windows with like style wood framed double glazed 12 pain sash windows – No Objections

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20/01327/FUL – Building NW of Blackbrook Farm - Conversion of redundant agricultural building to provide a single dwelling unit – No objections

20/01580/FUL - Thirston Court - Retrospective : 2 no. new dwellings (re 18/01327/AGTRES), alterations to site layout to incorporate changes to parking, access, bin, external storage, realignment of boundaries including change of use of Agricultural Land to Garden, Orchards ancillary to residential use and discharge of conditions relating to landscaping and contamination remediation. The residents and developer met and made amendments to the application which both parties were agreeable to and based on the amended plans the Parish Council submitted No Objections.

20/01942/PRUTPO – Oak House, Eshott Village - Tree Preservation Order Application - Oak Tree (T1) Crown lift tree to 3.5 metres and thin crown canopy by 20% removing snapped and dead hanging limbs – no objections as long as work is undertaken in the autumn

20/02026/COU – Cottages at Burgham Park Golf Club – Change of use from holiday cottages to residential dwellings

20/02093/FUL – Burgham Park Golf Club - Replace greenkeepers shed, create six-hole golf course, re-locate driving range, create landscape bund, erect driving range shelter, extension and alteration of clubhouse and new car park layout

Cllr Jackson raised concerns as the residents of Burgham had been involved in a consultation process with the developer which stated the housing and golf club development would be incorporated in one application as they are linked, ie housing only allowed if club development takes place. However it would appear that applications are coming in piecemeal. Cllr Marshall stated it may be that NCC has told them to submit them separately but this can be addressed in consultation response.

APP/P2935/W/20/3254874 – Appeal by Northumberland Estates in relation to housing application at Land East of Greycroft (19/05017/OUT). As yet no case officer has been allocated to this form Planning Inspectorate so no timescales and deadline dates have been published. The Clerk has looked on the planning Inspectorate website for an indication of timescales but the notification has changed and no timescales are being published at present due to Covid-19 backlog and limitations.

Planning Issues:

The Old Farm Byer, East Thirston – At the last meeting it was reported that the applicant won his appeal to the Planning Inspectorate. The residents at East Thirston were happy with this as the appeal clearly stated what conditions the applicant had to comply with. However the residents are now concerned as NCC is not taking enforcement action on the applicant following the Planning Inspectorates decision on a number of issues that have not been addressed. The residents are very frustrated with the lack of action and response times from NCC Enforcement Officer and have therefore requested a meeting with NCC Planning Director and CC Sanderson is trying to get these issues resolved but has informed residents that it is not necessarily a simple process.

Northumberland Arms – The beer gardens are now open again and whilst the Parish Council wish to encourage and support the pub there is still the outstanding issue of retrospective planning permission for these beer gardens. Clerk to speak to Stuart Young on this issue.

Clerk

Planning Application notifications are being sent electronically. The Clerk has tried to download relevant documents to email to Councillors but some are too large. The Clerk suggested putting application documentation onto dropbox or send via google drive however the Councillors happy to receive the relevant planning application link to the NCC portal.

148 Requested Agenda Items:

- **Review of Council Policies** – The Clerk circulated the current policies and also a new policy for Virtual Meetings. Financial Regulations and Standing Orders have differences for contact work amounts in relation to going out to tender. It was agreed that the Standing Orders should be changed to reflect the rules in the Financial Regulations. Clerk

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Disposal Policy, Publication Scheme, Complaints Procedure and TPC Risk were all reviewed with no amendments.

Clerk

Virtual Meetings Policy was agreed and adopted.

The Clerk will update the policies section of the website.

- **Potential projects within the Parish** – Councillors could not think of any specific projects that could be undertaken with the limited financial resources the PC currently has however the Clerk suggested that when the Neighbourhood Plan goes to residents then a request be put in the covering letter asking for any project ideas people may have which the Parish Council could consider.

Clerk

- **Facebook Post making comment on Thirston Parish Council** – Mr Richard Pike of Eshott Airfield posted a comment on Felton and Thirston Matters relating to aircraft complaints stating “I have tried to call the Parish Council on several occasions to discuss this but my calls were unanswered and not returned”. The Clerk confirmed that there has been no such contact and all the Councillors also stated they had not had any communication from Mr Pike.

Councillors expressed their disappointment and frustration that the Parish Councils position is once again being misrepresented by Mr Pike and Eshott Airfield however facebook is not the medium in which to respond.

149 Correspondence:

- NCC – Local Plan Consultation on addition evidence – this information with relevant link has been forwarded to the Councillors but the Clerk also has the details on a memory stick if they prefer this. Cllr Lindley would like to have the memory stick. Clerk to hand over.
- Email from resident re traffic calming at Bridge End, West Thirston - CC Sanderson has asked if some signage on the Peth can be added to the scheme for the village, he was thinking about some signage maybe at the top and half way down the Peth.
- Letter of thanks for Felton Village Hall donation – for information
- Inclusion in Email to NCC & MPs re FOI request for letter sent between Mark Lancaster and Paul Maynard referred to in planning application for Eshott aerodrome – for information
- Email re dangerously low flying over private land – This resulted in the landowner being thrown from their horse - no response has been received from NCC about this issue.
- Emails – a number of complaints re overflying by airfield – It would appear that some pilots are not following the circuit route as advertised by Eshott airfield and are frequently cutting over houses at a low height. NCC could impose flight routes as per CAP793 – Safe Operating Practices of Unlicensed Airfields (9.2). Athey’s Moors recently application has specified flight routes and NCC could impose the same on Eshott Airfield. There is still no information from NCC to direct residents to the right person to make complaints.
- NALC and CAN update emails
- Clerks and Councils Direct, CPRE newsletter – it was agreed not to circulate these at present.

Clerk

Clerk

Clerk

150 Finance

(a) **Financial Summary** was reviewed with no issues and the current balance stands at £12,772.41

(b) **Payments** - The following list was put before members and was approved:

Payments this meeting:		
IB95	Anne Morton for plants in tubs (already approved and paid)	£25.14
IB96	L Hamlin Salary and Expenses 24 Hours for PC (£348.00) 3 Hours for Neighbourhood Plan (£43.50) 2 x Zoom Conferencing (£28.78) 2 x Home Working Allowance (£22.18)	£442.46
IB97	The Stephen Carey Fund	£37.50

(c) **Receipts** – None

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- (d) **Audit** – As agreed at the Meeting held on 11 June as no advice/guidance had been received by NALC by the end of June in relation to dealing with the apportionment of Felton Cemetery Joint Committee funds into Thirston PCs accounts the Clerk submitted the accounts to be audited without including any apportionment

The Accounts have been audited by the internal auditor. He has raised a few issues as below.

1. Fair and Bridge Donations – these are made by the Parish Council without a letter of request and the 2019 donation cheques have not been cashed and this is not the first time this has happened. Also has the PC asked to see what reserves are held by these groups and what happens with the donated money? The Clerk responded to state that as these are both groups that benefit the village these donations are approved as part of the budget approval. The Clerk asked if the Councillors would like a letter requesting a donation in future from these organisations and it was agreed that this should be adopted going forward.
2. Recreation Field Group – Auditor asked if an updated Terms of Reference was available. The Clerk checked with the Felton PC minutes and it was stated in July 2020 that these had been approved in March 2020 however Thirston PC has not received a copy and there is nothing on the Felton PC website. The Clerk has asked Felton Clerk to provide updated, adopted ToR.
3. Recreation Field Group – Concern over budget for expenditure, does TPC receive assurance that total cost of the work provided by contractors can satisfy financial regulations with respect to competition. The Clerk responded that the budget is set by Felton PC and historically the main contractual expenditure did go out to three companies for tender but the different companies contacted over the years did not want to tender for the work. Clerk spoke with Felton Clerk and she has confirmed that the budget for the recreation field is one the agenda for next weeks meeting. Cllr Marshall stated they are forming a budget for the upcoming year and asked for clarification as to what the auditor requires as reassurance. Clerk to provide before the recreation field meeting.
4. Policy Review – as covered above in 148.
5. Ludman Planning – The Auditor asked what the total contract value is and the Clerk stated this is hard to establish as it is dependent on how much work is required to amend the draft neighbourhood plan. The Auditor also asked if there was a quotation and approval mechanism for appointing the Planning Consultant and the Clerk provided this information.

Clerk

The Accounts have been signed off by the auditor but he did respond NO to the following “This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangement to manage these” which related to the Terms of Reference for the Recreation Field Group and the uncertainty over the tender process for contractors for Recreation Field Group.

- (e) **Approval of Annual Governance Statement** was approved unanimously by the Council.
(f) **Approval of Accounting Statements** was approved unanimously by the Council.

151 Urgent Items

- Cllr Marshall has taken video footage of the interesting water feature by the new path down to the river when it rains. He has forwarded this to the Clerk tonight to assess what can be done. Clerk will look into the issue.
- Cllr Marshall asked, on behalf of the recreation field, whether the bin that the PC resided on the bridge between West and East Thirston could be used in the play area. As this bin is being actively used it was felt this was not something the Council could support.
- The car crash that took place on The Peth earlier this month hit the wall at the top of the Peth before ending up in the trees and some damage has been made to the wall. The question was asked if NCC are aware of this. Clerk will take photos and send to NCC.

Clerk

Clerk

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152 Items for next agenda

Response from NCC re outstanding issues from June meeting and related emails.

153 Resolution to exclude public and press

The Parish Council passed a resolution under Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 to exclude public and press due to the confidential nature of the business to be discussed, which includes discussion of personal data.

- a. **Update on Claim of Slander** – The Parish Council submitted a response to the Insurance Company for their views, some minor amendments were made and the letter sent to the solicitor along with a date of when the next PC Meeting is however no response has been received.
- b. **Request for assistance to seek clarification from NCC on a specific matter that NCC is not responding to** – to be addressed along with the other outstanding issues with a deadline date of end of August.

Clerk

Chairman closed the meeting at 9.22 pm

Date of Next meeting: 10 September 2020