

Milfield Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting held in The Reading Room, Milfield

on Friday 20 January 2023 at 7.30 pm

Present:

Parish Councillors: David Hughes (Chairman) Jon Darlington, John Fairburn and Mick Burton

In attendance: Ms Kerren Rodgers Clerk, County Councillor Mark Mather, Mrs Hughes, Harvey Curle, Andy Watt

NB: NCC means Northumberland County Council

1: Report from the Police

Via email - Since the last meeting on 26th November, there have been 9 incidents reported for Milfield. These include 4 crimes and 2 calls regarding anti-social behaviour.

As I am sure residents will be aware there is currently an overt CCTV camera in Field Court. This is a response to increased calls to service at the location.

On a wider perspective there has been a recent incident of theft from a farm within the North Northumberland area, I would like to remind residents and farm owners to secure their properties and vehicles as best they can when not in use, and to report any suspicious incidents. There has been nothing further to report that would have a wider impact on the Milfield community.

Cllr Fairburn requested that information regarding what area the CCTV camera covers – The Clerk to request further details. Discussion regarding the lack of detailed information and Cllr Mather informed meeting that a Wooler ward meeting is to be arranged to allow cllrs to voice concerns. The lack of information regarding the number of police visits was also questioned and is to be raised.

2: Apologies for absence

Apologies had been received from Parish Councillor Gillian Kozakiewicz

The Chair welcomed Cllr Burton to his first full meeting and the new Clerk – Ms Kerren Rodgers.

3: Public Questions

Mr Andy Watt noted that recent facebook posts suggest that Milfield is a “hotbed” of crime and asked what was the Councils view? The Chair confirmed he had no personal concerns but the PC and/or NCC had no control over police actions. He also raised concerns over the intrusion of cameras in the village. Cllr Mather explained the process of installation of cameras by NCC/police but the PC had no knowledge or involvement. The police will be monitoring the data. The feeling was that police visits had gone down since the camera has been installed. Mr Watt noted that a police officer “walking the beat” may be more effective.

The Chair noted that it was hoped that the police would be able to attend the informal parish surgery meeting as it was increasingly difficult to get them to attend a PC meeting on a

Friday night due to operational problems and pressures of work. Discussion took place regarding timings of meeting, Cllr Mather informed the meeting about local police shift patterns, Wooler PC had held a surgery and the police had been able to attend and it had been very useful.

Mr Watt raised a point regarding the state of the roads, particularly regarding Wheatriggs Estate. The Chair noted that the repairs to roads had been delayed whilst the new estate was built. Cllr Mather is to chase NCC Highways development. He also noted that temporary repairs to potholes are currently being undertaken but all potholes should be reported on the NCC website <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Highways/Roads/Protection.aspx>. The more reports of problems may get the repair actioned quicker.

Cllr Mather noted that the PC could try and get major roadworks on Wheatriggs on the LTP.

The Chair also noted that hoping to get a representative from Bernicia either at a surgery or PC meeting regarding property repairs and also their charitable funds.

4: Declaration of any interests and the grant of any dispensations & leave of absences

None

5: Agreement of bi-monthly Parish Surgeries, setting up of PC Social Media account

The Chair noted that an informal PC surgery in-between formal PC meetings to allow residents to voice concerns – discussion followed regarding the need for a formal agreement. It was proposed to have a Milfield PC facebook page, Cllr Darlington raised concerns over whether this should be a Parish Council facebook page and who should control it. The Clerk/Cllr Mather explained how other PC's run their pages, solely an information page relating to PC work. Cllr Darlington felt it important it was produced from “within” Milfield but none of the current Cllrs have the necessary skills. Further discussion followed regarding the role of the Clerk and Responsible Officer. Cllr Hughes proposed an agreement in principle to set up a facebook page - agreed

6: Report from the County Councillor

Cllr Mather reported on the Schools consultation process and the recent meeting held in Wooler. Despite a disappointing turnout, the concerns raised were over free school transport rather than the particular school. Therefore, free school transport will be available to the school in the partnership or the closest local High School. The consultation is still open, and the views of residents are very important.

Northumberland Communities Together (NCT) have produced leaflets for contact details for any problems that residents may be experiencing. Leaflets left in reading room or contact the Clerk.

The Boundary Commission are currently reviewing the ward boundaries within Northumberland. It is expected Wooler ward will remain, but the process is ongoing. Cllr Mather concerned if Wooler ward grew as this would make it difficult to attend all meetings and maintain the level of contact.

Potholes repairs are high on the agenda with NCC, but an additional team for repairs is needed at a cost of approx. £6m. An additional piece of equipment has been purchased and trialled in the South East of the region.

The first Town & Parish Conference was held last week. Not greatly attended from the North of the region. Information from and discussion with planning, highways, NCT and broadband.

Inequalities group is to meet in Wooler to look at the differing problems within specific areas. Cllr Mather keen to stress the rural inequalities and log bank is prime example of this problem. Cllr Hughes noted that one problem would be electric cars as there is no-where to charge a car publicly in Milfield. Cllr Mather suggested emailing the Climate Change team to see if a charging point site could be found, this is a free resource.

Winter maintenance team had increased working hours to 23hr rota. Problems with salt not working well in extreme low temperatures. Investment has been made in new equipment to make responses quicker and more effective.

Funding towards Church purchase has been agreed and will be forthcoming.

7: Minutes of the meetings held on 23rd September 2022 & 26th November 2022

- a) The minutes of the meeting of the 23rd September 2022 were agreed & signed
- b) The minutes of the extra-ordinary meeting of the 26th November 2022 were agreed & signed

8: Any matters arising from the minutes not otherwise on the agenda

None, not discussed elsewhere in the meeting.

9: Planning

None

10: Playing Field and Garages

The Chair reported that a meeting with NCC was due to happen regarding the installation of bollards to stop vehicles accessing the site and causing damage to the field.

The Clerk is to start again as some information is missing. The ground rent is to be reviewed and note was also made that the PC has a garage that is currently empty, and a decision needs to be made if this garage should be kept for PC use. Letters are to be resent to check current occupation of the garages. Cllr Fairburn asked if the “gap” should be filled, or should the PC garage be moved? Discussion followed regarding options that may be open to the PC.

11: Environmental Matters

None

12: Highway Issues

Already discussed

13: Finance

The Council noted the following payments

- Pitman computers – Repairs and upgrade to PC laptop – it was agreed this could be paid via BACS via ex-Clerk.
- It was noted that the deposit fund transfer had now happened which would allow the bank mandate to change. The Clerk to progress the banking mandate changes.

The Chair reported on the funding gained for the purchase of the old Methodist church and the matter is now with the solicitors.

Cllr Fairburn reported that the tree near to the garages is on the tree-surgeons list to be felled, and he will chase to get a date.

The Chair noted that the precept needed to be agreed and the PC had been historically running at a loss. As there are now 30 more houses, it is suggested that the precept was increased inline with 2022/2023 charges to maintain the individual charges remain the same. It was agreed that the Chairman and Clerk would obtain the necessary information and proceed with the Precept request to NCC by the deadline of the 27th January 2023.

14: Any other business

It was noted that the grit bins were empty, and this should be reported on the NCC website <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Highways/Winter.aspx> The Chairman also noted that previously roads were impassable due to ice. Cllr Mather confirmed that if icy roads are reported the gritting team will be dispatched. A new path gritter is being purchased and will be based at Wooler and will be available for Milfield and Chatton.

The Chairman noted that the notice boards are due to be replaced and a new community printer is to be purchased which will allow for better signage.

17: Time and date of next meetings

The Council agreed that the next scheduled meeting is Friday 17 March 2023 at 7.30 pm in The Reading Room, Milfield.

Confirmed as a true record

and signed by the Chairman Date