



**Longhirst  
Parish Council**

**Annual Parish Council Meeting**

7.45pm on TUESDAY, 04 MAY 2023

**MINUTES**

[Agendas are also available online](#)

**PRESENT:** Cllr Peter Coates, Cllr Glen Fahy, Cllr Peter Lovering, Cllr Chris Marr,  
Cllr Jon Mills

**APOLOGIES:** Cllr Janet Quinn, Cllr Richard Tordoff, Cllr David Towns (NCC)

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Helyn Douglas (Clerk)

**1 APOLOGIES**

Apologies are listed above.

Cllr P Coates handed over the Chair to Cllr G Fahy for the next item.

**2 ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR**

**2.1 Chair**

Cllr Fahy asked for nominations for a Chair for the coming year. Cllr C Marr proposed Cllr P Coates as Chair, and this was seconded by Cllr G Fahy. There were no other nominations. Cllr P Coates was therefore elected and resumed as Chair of the meeting.

**2.2 Vice Chair**

The Chair asked for nominations for a Vice Chair for the coming year. Cllr G Fahy proposed Cllr C Marr as Vice Chair, and this was seconded by Cllr J Mills. There were no other nominations. Cllr C Marr was therefore elected as Vice Chair.

**2.3 Casual vacancy**

Cllr Peter Lovering announced that this will be his last meeting. He is resigning as he is moving out of the parish. The Chair thanked Cllr Lovering sincerely for his time on the Parish Council. The Clerk will inform Northumberland County Council and a 'Notice of Vacancy' will be published. This process allows a period of time for residents to request a by-election. If this is not requested then the Parish Council can co-opt a member to join (through a process of advertising).

### 3 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2023/24

Councillors agreed to keep the date, time and frequency of the meetings unchanged, and the draft schedule was agreed. This will be put up on the noticeboards and on the website.

**ACTION: CLLRS P COATES & J MILLS, CLERK**

#### 3.1 **Six month rule reminder**

The Clerk reminded all Parish Councillors that if they should miss meetings for six consecutive months (ie 3 consecutive meetings) then they will lose their seat on the Parish Council. Dispensations can be granted by the Chair in some cases.

### 4 **ALLOCATION OF ROLES**

#### 4.1 **Responsibility for updating notice boards - the key sites are:**

- Village Hall
- Ulgham Lane
- Longhirst Colliery
- Micklewood Close

#### 4.2 **Other roles**

Members agreed that key contacts for specific issues would not be required this year.

### 5 **PARISH COUNCIL COMMITTEES**

Members agreed that no committees are required.

### 6 **PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES TO OUTSIDE BODIES**

#### 6.1 **Parish Association representative for Village Hall Management Committee**

The Chair proposed Cllr J Quinn to be the representative provided she is happy to continue. This was seconded by Cllr J Mills; there were no other nominations.

The Clerk will contact Cllr Quinn.

**ACTION: CLERK**

### 7 **REQUEST FOR REPRESENTATIVES FROM OUTSIDE BODIES**

#### 7.1 **Residents' Associations**

Members agreed to continue to invite the three largest residents' associations in the village to have representation at the Parish Council meetings, and these will remain as before:

- Longhirst Colliery - Bill Dryden
- Micklewood - Cllr J Mills
- Longhirst Hall - Andy Robson

### 8 **BANK MANDATE (review of signatories)**

Councillors agreed to keep the signatories as the Chair, Vice Chair and the Clerk. As these posts are filled by the same people as last year there is no need to amend the signatories on the mandate.

### 9 **FIELD TENANCY AGREEMENT**

## 9.1 [New lease for acceptance; new fee structure to be agreed](#)

The revised lease agreement, as updated by the solicitors last year, was presented and will be used this year. Whilst the lease would normally be in place for the 01 April, the Clerk has written to Mr Jordan to inform him of the delay and that the new lease and revised charge would be discussed at this meeting.

The lease having been agreed at the meeting in September 2022, the remaining issue was to consider the basis for calculating the rental charge. Councillors had been keen to find a more appropriate measure, rather than consumer or retail price inflation. The Clerk agreed that it was important to base the charge on a valid method that could be defended if queried.

The Clerk therefore presented figures from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, showing average rental values for Farm Based Tenancies in the North East from 2011 to 2021. These values vary greatly each year and the Clerk asked members to note that these are averages for the region so may not reflect the actual value of the field in question. This source does not provide forecast data of future rental rates.

The Clerk suggested that a more accurate figure could be obtained by using a land valuer but there would be a cost to doing that. There is also the likelihood of costs to the Parish Council if the tenant were to withdraw and the council had to maintain the land.

Councillors could not agree whether to adopt this method, and instead opted to put up the charge by £30 to £574. The Clerk will confirm this to Mr Jordan and issue an invoice. This issue will be revisited at a later date.

**ACTION: CLERK**

## 10 **ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2022/23** **([AGAR, Form 2](#))**

### 10.1 [Asset Register](#)

The Asset Register was reviewed. The overall estimated value has risen slightly this year to £54,475 (the new items being the Jubilee memorial plaque and tree).

### 10.2 [Annual Accounts 22/23, inc Bank Rec, & Bank Statements](#)

The year-end accounts, bank reconciliation, bank statements and associated materials were presented for review. The Councillors agreed these to be accurate.

### 10.3 **Certificate of Exemption** (see AGAR p3)

The Clerk presented the Certificate of Exemption based on gross annual income or and or expenditure being under the £25,000 threshold. The council also met the other qualifying criteria. On this basis the Councillors agreed to submit a Certificate of Exemption.

**ACTION: CLERK**

### 10.4 **Annual Internal Audit Report** (see AGAR p4)

The internal auditor had signed off the various elements of the internal control measures, and had no comments to make regarding suggested improvements.

- 10.5 Annual Governance Statement** (see AGAR p5)  
The Councillors reviewed the system of internal controls, including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements, and confirmed the statements made at Section 1 to be accurate. This form was signed by the Chair.
- 10.6 Accounting Statement** (see AGAR p6)  
The Councillors then reviewed and approved Section 2, the accounting statement, and this was also signed by the Chair.
- 10.7 [Exercise of public rights](#)**  
Any person interested has the right to inspect the accounts and raise any issues or objections with the external auditor (further details can be found on the notice). The formal inspection period will start on 05 June and will close on 14 July. The accounting information will be made publicly available on the website or by contacting the Clerk.

ACTION: CLERK

## 11 REVIEW OF POLICIES & PROCEDURES

- 11.1** [FOI Publication Scheme](#) (inc links to all adopted policies & procedures)
- 11.2** [Structure diagram](#) - check for accuracy
- 11.3** [Contact details for Parish Councillors and Clerk](#) - check for accuracy
- 11.4 [Role of Councillor](#) (no changes)
- 11.5 [Parish Council Plan](#) (covered under Annual Parish meeting)
- 11.6 [Anonymous correspondence policy](#) (no changes)
- 11.7 [Casual Vacancy](#) (no changes)
- 11.8 [Code of Conduct](#) (no changes)
- 11.9 [Complaints](#) (no changes)
- 11.10 [Data Protection & Subject Access](#) (no changes)
- 11.11 [Disciplinary Policy](#) (no changes)
- 11.12 [Document Retention](#) (no changes)
- 11.13 [Donations](#)
- 11.14 [Equality & Diversity Policy](#) (no changes)
- 11.15 [Financial Regulations](#) - may require changes as a result of internal audit
- 11.16 [Grievance Policy](#) (no changes)
- 11.17** [Health & Safety Policy](#) (NEW)
- 11.18** [Learning & Development Policy](#), inc Review of Training (and [Training Log](#))
- 11.19 [Personal Data Information Asset Register](#) (no changes)
- 11.20 [Public Participation at Meetings](#) (no changes)
- 11.21 [Records Management](#) (no changes)
- 11.22** [Risk Management Policy](#) inc discussion/review of [Schedule](#)
- 11.23 [Scheme of Delegation](#) (no changes)
- 11.24** [Standing Orders](#) (NEW version)
- 11.25 [Social Media Guidance](#) (no changes)
- 11.26 [Volunteering Policy](#) (no changes)

The Structure Diagram (ref 11.2) and Contact Details (ref 11.3) were checked for accuracy and no amendments were required.

A Health & Safety Policy was presented and adopted by Councillors. (ref 11.17).

The Learning & Development Policy (ref 11.18) requires an annual review of training requirements. Currently the arrangement is for Councillors to read the

key documents and confirm on the log that they have done this. Councillors enquired if any formal training is available (locally or nationally). The Clerk replied that there is some in-person and online training available from Northumberland Assoc of Local Councils, but these are not available 'on demand'.

Northumberland-ALC used to offer an in-person training session covering the key aspects of being a Councillor, the Clerk understood this had been delivered to Longhirst Parish Council before but as that was some time ago another session could be arranged. She will look in to this, and any other options that might be available locally or nationally.

**ACTION: CLERK**

The Risk Management Policy and Schedule (ref 11.22) were reviewed and no changes were required.

Councillors confirmed that all of the other policies and procedures do not require any changes.

Close of meeting at 8.30pm