

MINUTES



Bi-monthly Parish Council Meeting 7PM on THURSDAY, 04 JULY 2024 Longhirst Village Hall



**Longhirst
Parish Council**

PRESENT: Cllr Peter Coates (Chair), Cllr Colleen Anderson, Cllr Bill Climson, Cllr Glen Fahy, Cllr Chris Marr, Cllr Janet Quinn, Cllr Richard Tordoff

IN ATTENDANCE: Helyn Douglas (Clerk), Resident x1 (item 6.5 onwards)

APOLOGIES: Cllr D Towns (NCC), Julie Murray

A	PUBLIC FORUM (10 minutes) There were no members of the public present, and no issues had been submitted.
B	UPDATE FROM NORTHUMBRIA POLICE The police were not able to be present tonight but did suggest that residents sign up for regular updates via the Northumbria connected website: https://www.northumbriacconnected.co.uk/
C	NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL UPDATE - CLLR DAVID TOWNS Although unable to attend tonight, Councillor David Towns offered to meet separately with the Chair; Cllr P Coates will take up this offer, including raising the lack of progress on Ashington Road.
D	RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION / GROUPS Longhirst Colliery Julie Murray was not present tonight but Cllr Climson reported that residents have painted the bus shelter at Longhirst Colliery and cut the grass in the area. There were no issues raised on behalf of either Longhirst Hall or Micklewood residents' associations.

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies are listed above.

2. **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

Parish Councillors were asked to declare any interests for items on the agenda. Councillors were also reminded to keep their declaration forms up-to-date.

3. **PREVIOUS MINUTES**

3.1. [Public Annual Parish meeting - 09 May 2024](#)

3.2. [Annual Parish Council - 09 May 2024](#)

3.3. [Bi-Monthly Parish Council - 09 May 2024](#)

Each set of minutes were reviewed and agreed to be an accurate record and were duly signed by the Chair.

4. MATTERS ARISING (not covered elsewhere)

4.1. Ulgham Community Benefit Society - update

The Community Benefit Society is discussing options with a local property developer about the possibility of retaining part of the premises as a community pub/hub, and using the other section for housing.

4.2. Cricket Club annual event - extended to village

Andy Robson was not present so there was no update on any progress in extending the event more widely.

4.3. [Letter to County Council regarding new waste disposal arrangements](#)

A letter has been sent to the County Council setting out our concerns regarding the new permit process for DIY waste. Councillors feel the new application process is cumbersome and may lead to an increase in fly tipping. The County Council has replied informally that it is looking to shorten the length of time it takes to order a permit.

5. FINANCES

5.1. [Bank Statements](#) and [Budget Report](#)

The Clerk presented the bank statements and a new budget report.

5.2. Netweaver overcharge

Cllr C Marr has not heard back from Netweaver regarding our query on the additional £6 charge. The Clerk agreed to write this off due to the time already spent trying to resolve it.

5.3. Insurance renewal confirmation £327

The Clerk confirmed that the insurance was renewed with Zurich for £327 for one year only.

5.4. AGAR (audit) submitted & gift for internal auditor

The Clerk confirmed that the paperwork has been submitted. Members agreed that the Clerk can purchase a £40 gift voucher for the internal auditor.

5.5. Community Skips - update (cost £311)

Cllr Tordoff confirmed that the skip was used by around 15 people in the village. It was a reasonable success and might be repeated in the future. Members expressed their thanks to Cllr Tordoff for arranging and overseeing this.

6. BUSINESS

6.1. Projector and screen for Longhirst Village Hall - progress

A proposal was agreed to install a mid-range overhead projector in Longhirst Village Hall's Reading Room, including a pull-down screen,

speakers, and a spare bulb. The cost is approximately £1,600. The Parish Council will provide the funds, and the Parish Association will handle the installation.

ACTION: CLERK

6.2. War Memorial and immediate area improvements - update

Cllr Tordoff confirmed that he had purchased three solid wood benches from HGS Trading Ltd (ex-display models from the Chelsea Flower Show) at a total cost of £790. He had also purchased sealant for the benches at £32.95, as well as timber for the protective frame for the oak tree in Paddock Wood at a cost of £31. Members were happy with these costs.

The new benches will require fitting and Cllr Tordoff offered to do this in August, but may require some help - anyone willing to offer should get in touch. The existing benches will be relocated elsewhere: either across the road or possibly to Paddock Wood.

6.3. Paddock Wood path improvements - update

Issues remain regarding the maintenance of the site. Tilhill, sub-contractors for the Woodland Trust, have cut back the paths - but also cut the flower meadow too early, preventing re-seeding. The Chair noted that we have also not received any response to our request to improve the paths (at our own cost). Members agreed that the paths are degrading and are difficult to navigate (particularly in winter) preventing residents from using this amenity.

Councillors are deeply dissatisfied with the lack of engagement from the Woodland Trust despite our numerous attempts to contact them. They discussed various options for how to prompt the Trust to respond, including taking matters to the local press, or carrying out our own ecological survey. At this time members agreed that the Chair and Vice Chair will write a very firm letter setting out our intention to carry out the path improvements unless we hear back to the contrary.

ACTION: CHAIR / VICE CHAIR

6.4. Longhirst Colliery Residents' Association improvements - update

The association representative, Julie Murray, was not present, and no formal application has been submitted yet. This item will be discussed at a future meeting.

6.5. Ashington Road flooding - update

No work on either the ditch clearing or the new drainage pipework has yet taken place, despite a promise given by the Highways Dept at the Castle Morpeth Local Area Council (CMLAC) meeting in November 2023. Councillors discussed when to contact NCC about this, but agreed to wait. If this work is not done by the end of September, the Chair intends to return to the CMLAC to raise a complaint.

At the adjoining Potland Park site, Cllr G Fahy reported that the gates and fences have been removed and this is leading to an increase in fly tipping. The new bridleways have also not been installed. Cllr G Fahy will arrange another site meeting with an NCC Countryside Officer to discuss this.

ACTION: CLLR G FAHY

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- 6.6. Weed control and reinstatement of iconic laburnums - discussion**
Members discussed suggestions from Cllr Tordoff for controlling the weeds growing out of the walls along the main street in the village, and to consider reinstating the iconic look of the gardens using lilac trees along the main street. However they felt there was not enough interest for this from residents so these ideas will not be pursued at this time.
- 6.7. CAB request for donation**
The annual request from the Citizens' Advice Bureaux has been received. Councillor felt this did not meet the priority criteria and declined an award.
- 6.8. [LGA Carbon Literacy free training](#) - for info**
The information was noted.
- 6.9. [B4RN full fibre for rural Northumberland](#) and [Digital Switchover](#) - for info**
Copper landlines are gradually being replaced by digital services across the country. No household will lose their landline until a suitable broadband service is available to them. Alncom has been appointed by central government to carry out this upgrade work in Northumberland.

7. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- 7.1. Old Haulage Road**
The Chair understands that Sanders Plant & Waste has gone into administration, and it is unclear how this will impact the future of the road restoration works.
- 7.2. Bus Stop Signage Improvements**
The Chair reported a number of complaints from residents about the poor signage at the bus stop outside the Longhirst Village Hall. The information liner is too high to be easily read and the QR codes are not accessible for everyone.
- 7.3. Outstanding planning issues at Station Cottages**
Cllr G Fahy asked for an update on the one remaining unresolved planning application on the site.
- 7.4. Digital/online safety issues for Councillors**
Cllr J Robson requested further information and a discussion on ways Councillors can balance their online safety with their need to also maintain a public profile.
- 7.5. Acknowledgements**
The Chair would like to send a message of congratulations to the Open Gardens organisers, noting around 350 people attended across both days. The Clerk will contact Hadston Garden Centre to offer our thanks for the continued support they offer to Lawrence Carey regarding the planters in the village.

8. NEXT MEETING:

- 8.1. 7pm on Thursday, 05 September 2024 at Longhirst Village Hall**