

MINUTES OF MEETING OF CRASTER PARISH COUNCIL
Thursday 30th November 2023 – 6:30pm via Zoom

Councillors present:

Chair: Martin Smith

Parish Council members: Mark Green, Michael Craster and Margaret Brooks.

Also present: Adam Shanley (Parish Clerk), Maria Antoniou (Northumberland County Council) and Mrs Jackie Reeves, Ms Denise Metcalfe, Mr Colin Duncan, Mrs Diana Ridley, Mr Colin Duncan, Mrs Carrie Ringrose, Mrs Marion Gallon, Ms Linda Bain and Mrs Fyona Robson (members of the public).

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillors A Fettis, R Robson, E Pearson and A Gregory as well as County Councillor W Pattison.

2. Declarations of interest

None received.

3. Confirmation of the minutes for the meeting held on 19th October 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 19th October 2023 were unanimously agreed as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

4. Matters arising

None received.

5. Public participation

Ms Denise Metcalfe asked the Parish Council what they felt ought to be done about the EJBC using consecrated land illegally. Ms Metcalfe also highlighted that the decision to use the land is not included in any of the EJBC's minutes, in contravention with the Local Government Act 1972.

Ms Metcalfe advised that, because the land in question is consecrated, it is subject to faculty jurisdiction and therefore permission for its use is required from the Consistory Court. Councillor M Brooks advised that advice had been sought on that matter and it was confirmed that this is not the case.

Ms Metcalfe highlighted a specific case on consecrated ground but confirmed that this was not a decision specifically in respect of Spitalford.

Ms Metcalfe also highlighted her frustration that the EJBC have advised her that they are seeking advice on this from bodies such as NALC but that this had not yet been shared with her.

The Chair advised that he felt that this was an issue for the EJBC to respond directly to Ms Metcalfe. Councillor M Brooks advised that the EJBC would like respond to Ms Metcalfe's queries in the new year.

At this point, Ms Metcalfe left the meeting.

Mrs Jackie Reeves expressed her concern at the issue of potholes in the parish and advised that she had reported a pothole in Dunstan 5-6 weeks ago and nothing on this had been done. The Chair advised that he is following up with NCC on this matter.

Mrs Marion Gallon expressed her disappointment at the discussion at the last Full Council meeting regarding the collection boxes and the fact that certain accusations were made against the character of certain volunteers, in spite of the fact that this project is being carried out in accordance with the protocols agreed with NALC, the police, etc and is bringing in additional funding for community projects such as extra plants, bulbs, etc. The Chair thanked

those volunteers involved in this project and advised that he was aware that this was being done in accordance with the agreed requirements.

6. Discussion regarding the future of Tourist Information Centres across the county.

The Chair welcomed Maria Antoniou to the meeting and thanked her for joining the meeting this evening.

Maria began by thanking the Parish Council and also advised that she was aware of recent correspondence to the County Council regarding the future of the Tourist Information Centre. Maria stressed that no decision had been taken on the future of the County's Tourist Information Centres, however highlighted that recent grant funding had become available should communities wish to develop grass-roots, community-led projects to repurpose these assets across the county and advised that NCC may be able to support this.

Maria highlighted that the way in which tourists gain access to information about tourism attractions etc. had changed as technology has developed and the County Council's investment in online tourism information.

Members expressed a strong desire to see what could be done with the Tourist Information Centre in Craster and it was proposed that a Working Group of interested parties be established in order to look into this matter further alongside NCC. Councillors M Green and M Brooks agreed to be part of this Working Group and the Chair invited any other interested parties to contact the Clerk if they wished to be part of this.

At this point, the Chair thanked Maria for her attendance and Maria left the meeting.

7. Report by County Councillor Wendy Pattison

In Councillor Pattison's absence, the Chair referred those present to Councillor Pattison's latest County Council report and invited all those with any queries to please direct these to Councillor Pattison.

8. Report from Embleton Joint Burial Committee representative

Councillor M Brooks advised that the EJBC is looking to respond formally to Ms Metcalfe in the new year. Members expressed their full support for EJBC in this matter.

Councillor M Brooks also advised that the tenant continues to live in the house and is very happy there.

9. Report from Craster Community Trust representative

Councillor M Craster advised that the CCT had hosted the first of its lunches, as discussed at previous meetings, and that this had gone extremely well with 14 attendees to the first event. Councillor M Craster advised that the Trust had agreed that the lunches should not be hosted every month but that these lunches would be hosted at various intervals during the year. Councillor M Craster advised that the next date for the lunch will take place on 19th January 2024.

Councillor M Craster thanked Jackie Reeves and others for their excellent work with this initiative.

Mrs Marion Gallon highlighted that this initiative is aimed at all residents of all ages and this is intended to be a great social evening.

The Council **agreed** that the date of the Christmas light switch on would be Saturday 9th December at 5:45pm.

10. Update from the latest meeting of the Parish Council's Community Fundraising Committee

The Clerk took the opportunity to thank the representatives of this Committee for their ongoing voluntary work. The Clerk advised that additional collections had secured further funding and, as per usual, the Committee had met to discuss future projects.

The Clerk advised that the Committee had recommended that the collection box at the playpark be moved to the harbour and that an additional collection box and sign be purchased for installation at the car park. Members **agreed** to this and asked the Clerk to make the necessary arrangements for this to happen.

11. Update following the joint letter to Councillor Glen Sanderson on planning enforcement issues in the AONB.

The Clerk highlighted that the three Chairs of each Parish Council – namely Craster, Newton-by-the-Sea and Embleton had taken the unprecedented action of writing jointly to the Leader of Northumberland County Council, in order to express their serious concerns over the lack of action on planning enforcement issues.

The Chair highlighted that he was aware that there were a number of outstanding cases in each area and that NCC seemed to be taking little to no action on these cases. The Chair stressed how important this was to local residents and advised that the AONB must have the highest possible protection against inappropriate development. The Chair advised that he would keep the Council updated on any response the Councils receive from NCC on this matter but that he was aware that recruitment and retention of staff in this area was a significant problem and not just one which exists in Northumberland.

12. Report following the public information session with AONB and NCC on the Conservation Area.

The Clerk reminded Members that recent planning proposals had highlighted the exceptional heritage of the Dunstan part of our parish. The Clerk advised that, since the decision on a most recent application, the idea of making Dunstan a Conservation Area has been discussed at a number of public meetings.

The Clerk highlighted that, in order to ensure that discussions around such a proposal are fully informed and considered, he had arranged an information session with relevant officers at the AONB and NCC as well as members of the public.

The Clerk thanked Sarah Winlow (AONB Officer - Historic and Built Environment) and Eleanor Scott (NCC Conservation and Heritage Officer) for providing this session on 9th November.

The Clerk advised that, whilst the meeting was specifically about a Dunstan designation, the AONB and NCC's Conservation Officers made clear during the meeting that previous reports have highlighted the fantastic heritage of Craster and they felt that Craster should be included. The Clerk reminded Members that this was rejected at a meeting of the parish pre-Covid – something he also stressed at the public meeting.

The Clerk advised that there was the offer of a free-of-charge (the AONB paying directly) Conservation Area Character Appraisal of the parish which could be done relatively speedily. The Clerk advised that this would not commit the Council to any course of action but would merely ensure that any decision on potential future designation was fully informed.

Members unanimously **agreed** to progress this proposal further and ask the AONB to commission a Conservation Area Character Appraisal.

13. To address the issue of coastal erosion on the North side of Craster

Councillor M Green highlighted the issue of coastal erosion taking place on the North side of Craster and stressed his concerns that climate change and coastal erosion could have a significant impact on Craster. It was **agreed** that the AONB should be contacted in the first instance about this to see what they could do to deter this issue.

14. Items for next Agenda

The Chair reminded Members to contact the Clerk with any Agenda items for the next Council meeting.

15. Date and time of next meeting

18th January 2024 – 6:30pm in Craster Memorial Hall.

There being no further business, the Chair thanked all attendees for their contributions and closed the meeting.

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. S. Smith'.

**Chair of Craster Parish Council
(18th January 2024)**