

# MINUTES



**Longhirst  
Parish Council**

## **Annual Parish Meeting (public)**

**7PM on THURSDAY, 09 MAY 2024**

**Longhirst Colliery Recreation Hall**

**PRESENT:** Cllr Peter Coates (Chair), Cllr Bill Climson, Cllr Glen Fahy, Cllr Chris Marr, Cllr Richard Tordoff

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Helyn Douglas (Clerk), Andy Robson, Julie Murray

- 1 WELCOME & INTRODUCTION TO PARISH COUNCILLORS**
- 2 PARISH COUNCIL CHAIR'S REPORT – Update on the past year's activities**

### **Thanks expressed**

The Chair firstly thanked the Clerk for her expertise. He also thanked those volunteers who support community activities in the village throughout the year. In particular:

- Lawrence Carey for his remarkable efforts maintaining the planters.
- Members of the Parish Council
- The Litter Picking Group
- Trustees of both the Parish Association and the Wildlife & Community Trust
- Members of the Parochial Church Council
- Volunteers who organise the Open Gardens event and other social activities like pub nights, coffee mornings and fetes, the sign cleaners, and the writers and editorial team of the Longhirst Leader.

The Chair was pleased to see new people coming forward to support these existing activities.

### **On-going Projects**

#### The Butterwell Aggregates Liaison Group

The plant is taking longer to set up than we expected, but the Chair was encouraged by the speedy resolution to recent queries regarding HGV vehicle movements through the village. Once the plant is open the Chair does expect the Parish Council will be able to work closely with the operators.

#### Ashington Road

After raising this issue at the Castle Morpeth Local Area Council the Chair was satisfied with the clear response received and does expect progress to be made. He would like to see the ditch cleared by the end of

September and ideally new drainage on the east side. The issue of raising the level of the road remains to be resolved.

#### War Memorial and immediate area

The Chair thanked Cllr R Tordoff for his work clearing the vegetation from around the bus stop, as well as the more extensive clearance work undertaken by Northumberland County Council.

#### Paddock Wood

Groundwork North East are going to put forward a proposal to the Parish Council for how work to improve the paths can be carried out (including quotes). The Chair remains disappointed by the lack of engagement from the Woodland Trust but will attempt to arrange another meeting.

#### Domino's Field

The Chair did visit the offices of the land owners (based in Derbyshire) whilst on holiday in March. Whilst one of the directors appeared open to consider the idea of a community woodland at the site it appears that the two key directors are less keen. Further progress by the parish council cannot therefore be made at this time.

#### Lychgate repairs

Whilst not directly a Parish Council issue, the Chair did note with pleasure that repairs to the lychgate at St John's Church have been completed. Work on tarmacking around the entrance as well as installing new bollards will start soon.

#### Elections

The Chair reminded everyone that in May next year there will be Parish Council elections, and encouraged anyone interested to consider standing.

### **3 LONGHIRST COLLIERY RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION UPDATE**

Ms Julie Murray gave an update on the work undertaken by the Residents' Association as well as future plans:

Ms Murray was keen to point out that the hall is open to all residents across the parish, not just those in Longhirst Colliery, and is available for parties or other events. Residents are not charged a set fee but are asked to make a contribution via an honesty box.

Their Annual General Meeting took place in April and two new members have joined. Last year the association made c£700 from contributions and other money-raising activities such as coffee mornings. This helps to cover the cost of the electricity used and future maintenance.

Work to date includes the addition of a sofa seating area. In future the association would like to raise enough money to install a TV and aerial, wi-fi, new tables and an outdoor BBQ, as well as replacement pads for the defibrillator.

The nearby woodland was severely damaged by Storm Arwen and restoration work has been slow. However, recently staff and volunteers from the Great Northumberland Forest Team at Northumberland County Council visited and planted over 2000 saplings of many different native species. The team is due to return in October to plant an orchard of around 200 fruit trees. Residents are delighted by the work done so far.

Most of the paths around the woodland remain blocked by fallen trees and this work remains to be tackled. Cllr Climson is hopeful that the wood chippings from the fallen trees can be reused on site to reinstate the paths. The area generally is in need of being tidied up and a request is being made for volunteers. The Chair suggested that if Cllr Climson provides the dates for these events then these can be advertised in the Longhirst Leader.

#### **4 OPEN DISCUSSION**

There were no residents present so there were no issues raised.

#### **5 FUTURE PLANS**

Councillors put forward practical projects that they would commit to:

##### **War Memorial area improvements**

Cllrs C Marr and R Tordoff continue their interest in improving the look of the main street in the village, particularly the war memorial and surrounding 'gateway' to the village: cutting back overgrown foliage, supporting Lawrence Carey in maintaining planters and installing new seating.

##### **Weed control**

Cllr Tordoff also offered to help remove weeds growing on the outside of the garden walls, particularly on the run up to the Open Gardens event in the village. The Chair suggested a reminder in the Longhirst Leader initially, to be followed by an offer of support from Cllr Tordoff if required to kill the weeds by spraying.

##### **Reinstatement of iconic laburnums**

Cllr Tordoff also wondered if there was any possibility of reinstating the alternating purple and white laburnum trees in the gardens along the main street. As these are private properties this would require discussion with the property owners.

##### **Village Archive**

The Ian Thompson Archive is not progressing well at this time as Cllr Tordoff is not able to access the materials at this time. However he remains committed to pursuing this in the future.

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### **Cricket Club event**

Mr A Robson noted that the Cricket Club organises an annual 'get together' for the residents of Longhirst Hall and Micklewood Close - he wondered if this could be extended to include the rest of the village and will contact the organisers to discuss this.

### **Access to village for Micklewood residents**

Mr Robson also noted that the Longhirst Hall developers (Dere Street) are considering selling a parcel of land behind the sub-station at Longhirst Hall to the Micklewood Close residents. Mr Robson felt there might be the potential for a path to be put in with an exit on to Dairy Lane, thereby providing direct access to the village. The Chair felt that some residents on Dairy Lane might object but that the Parish Council would offer whatever support it could.

### **Longhirst Colliery Plans**

Cllr C Marr suggested that the Parish Council should integrate the improvement plans for Longhirst Colliery Recreation Hall into its wider Parish Plan, and might contribute financially to these. The Residents' Association will put together costed plans for presentation at a future meeting. The Chair also suggested it approach Mike Elphick for some initial advice as he has a great deal of experience in applying for funding.

Close of meeting at 7.45pm