

Whittingham, Callaly & Alnham Parish Council
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PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
DRAFT MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting of the Whittingham, Callaly and Alnham Parish Council held on Tuesday 21 May 2024, at 7.00pm at Whittingham Memorial Hall.

Present : B Wood, Chair (BW), A Whincup (AW), K Armstrong (KA), Prof. J Clark (JC), J Renner (JR), K Turvey (KT), A Young (AY), J Bolton (JB), E Gardiner (EG) and D Bateson (DB)

In Attendance : Linda Pullan, Parish Clerk (LP) and 25 members of the public

ITEM

DISCUSSION

**047/24 Apologies for
Absence & Declarations
of Interest**

R Bateson (RB) and S Gray (SG)

Declarations of interest – AW 050/24/iii Riverside path update

**048/24 Public
Questions**

The Chair invited public questions. Members of the public expressed concern regarding the Agenda item 050/24 Matters Arising from the previous Minutes i. Neighbourhood Plan and Councillors to vote for, against or abstain.

The Chair explained that the PC have been uncomfortable with the lack of information being provided by the Steering Committee who are looking into the NP. At the outset of the process the PC asked 2 Councillors to look into what was required in order to pull together a NP. The 2 volunteers were Vice Chair, Chris Durie and Cllr JC however early on in the process Cllr CD resigned from the PC. Monthly updates were provided verbally by Cllr JC however despite many requests to see written information nothing has been forthcoming.

At the February 2024 PC meeting it came to light that there was a set of Minutes from the Steering Committee meeting. These were deemed useful therefore the PC asked Cllr JC to provide all historical and future minutes to Councillors so they can get a flavour of what has been discussed, however despite continued requests these have not been forthcoming.

Cllr JC explained that the role of the Steering Committee is to gather opinions of the parish then send these to the consultant. The consultant will advise what evidence is needed, produce a legal document which will then go back to the community for consideration. All the documents that the Steering Committee have produced are on the PC website. The Steering Committee have no vision or agenda, only to systemise the opinions of the individuals responding to the questionnaires and find out what people in the parish want. Cllr JC mentioned traffic as an example. Cllr KA explained the PC had been doing a lot of work on this issue ie speed signs, school runs, buses etc which had seen improvement over the past 12 months.

Cllr KA also expressed concerns that despite the Steering Committee voicing all of the hard work done over the last year or so the most up to date information on the WCA Parish website is dated March 2023. The PC feel that the Steering

Committee must have documented information over the last 15 months that will pass onto the NP Consultant but despite many requests to Cllr JC this has not been forthcoming.

Cllr JC reported that when the Steering Committee had been set up, terms of reference or a vision had not been expressed by the PC. Cllr KT expressed her opinion that she is a supporter of the NP and would like to see it going forward but has concerns about the way it has been carried out and information not been forthcoming and the lack of transparency between the PC and the Steering Committee. Members of the public expressed their sadness that the NP has got to this state and urge the PC and Steering Committee to find a way forward for information to flow. The NP is a community plan which can control new developments and take into consideration all views of the parishioners and protect the village.

Member of the public, John Field expressed his opinion that as all 12 members of the PC have not been elected but in fact been filled by co-option, they do not have a democratic mandate to make decisions. (For reference, please note Councillor vacancies are advertised and filled in accordance with Local Government regulations on the noticeboards, PC website and Vale News).

It was suggested that the Steering Committee meetings are made available for the public to attend. Some of the PC felt uncomfortable with the lack of diversity. Whilst there is a great deal of experience on the Steering Committee, members all appear to be retired therefore maybe the views of younger residents and/or parents with children at the school could be taken into consideration and have a representative on the Steering Committee.

At the end of the public discussions Cllr JR suggested that before the PC vote on any motion on this topic the PC defer any vote on the Neighbourhood Plan to avoid any potential embarrassment by all concerned.

This delay will allow the PC and Steering Committee to have meaningful discussions and mediation with Sarah Brannigan at Northumberland County Council. This suggestion has avoided voting on the cancellation of the Neighbourhood Plan. Councillors in attendance voted in favour of delaying these motions.

049/24 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

JC mentioned Agenda item 037/24/i Public Questions *"The article printed in the Vale News Issue 121 April/May 2024 written by the PC"* was incorrect and had not been written by the PC. This had been written by Chair, BW on behalf of the PC. The minutes were amended. The minutes of the Meeting held on 16 April 2024 were APPROVED and signed as a true record.

050/24 Matters Arising from the previous Minutes

- i. Neighbourhood Plan – Following on from discussions over the past few months, the Chair is uncomfortable with the lack of feedback of any progress, clarity and transparency that has been provided to the Parish Council by the Steering Committee. The Chair would like to propose a motion to vote on the following: The Steering Committee is to stop its work on the Neighbourhood Plan and no further public consultations, letter, flyers, emails or evidence gathering will be completed. The process

will be formally stopped with the NCC. *Councillors to vote for, against or abstain.*

The following motion had been proposed by Professor Clark : That the Parish Council cancels the project to draft a Neighbourhood Plan for Whittingham, Callaly and Alnham. This motion was rejected by the Chair and Vice Chair due to similar wording above.

If the above motion is rejected, Professor Clark has proposed the following second motion : That the Parish Council reaffirms its decision to proceed with the drafting of a Neighbourhood Plan to give effect to the views of parishioners as already gathered, and to be gathered, by consultation; it will invite Ludman Planning Ltd. to be the Parish's Consultant in that process; and it will approach Locality for a grant towards the cost of a Consultant. *Councillors to vote for, against or abstain.*

See Agenda item 048/24 Public Questions.

- ii. Endowment Fund - Following on from discussions over the past few months and the kind donation received from Col. Hutchinson, the Chair would like to propose a motion to vote to keep the money in the current account of the Parish Council, not the endowment fund, and use the money as the Parish Council see fit for improvement of the community. *Councillors to vote for, against or abstain.* Cllr AW seconded. Cllr JC vote against, all other Cllrs vote for.

All members of the public and Cllr JC left the meeting at 8.50 pm.

Cllr KA confirmed that like her fellow Councillors she was uncomfortable in tying up funds that had been donated to the local community. Any return of 11% will bare risk plus will be difficult to administer in terms of trustees. If further funds were donated, then it would also implicate AGAR accounting returns therefore add a further administrative financial burden to the PC. Cllr KA has been in regular contact with Col. Hutchinson's family and he is delighted that his donation will improve the Parish.

- iii. Path along riverside – construction work has started this week on the path.
- iv. Defibrillator update – the PC agreed to pay for the new defibrillator. This will be repaid as a donation by Cllr Steven Bridgett.

**051/24 To receive the
Chairman's Report for
2023 – 2024**

Chair BW reviewed the annual Chairman's report for 2023 – 2024. There were no questions. LP to place on PC website and send to Vale News.

**052/24 To appoint a
Chairperson for 2024 –
2025**

It was RESOLVED that Brian Wood (existing Chair) would continue in role. Proposed KT, Seconded JR, AGREED by all.

**053/24 To appoint a Vice
Chairperson for 2024 –
2025**

It was RESOLVED that Andrew Whincup (existing Vice Chair) would continue in role. Proposed BW, Seconded AY, AGREED by all.

054/24 To appoint a representative on the Village Hall Committee for 2024 – 2025

It was RESOLVED that Elidh Gardiner (existing representative) would continue in role. Proposed KA, Seconded KT, AGREED by all.

055/24 To appoint a representative on the Board of Whittingham C of E Primary School Governors for 2024 - 2025

It was RESOLVED that Andrew Whincup (existing representative) would continue in role. Proposed DB, Seconded JB, AGREED by all.

056/24 Highways Matters

Restoration of historic cast iron road signs update. EG had photographed most of the cast iron road signs, will update at the next meeting.

057/24 Planning Applications

24/01161/VARYCO Land South West of Lorbottle Hall – Variation of condition 2 (approved plans) on approved application 22/00773/FUL in order to remove outbuilding. **PC SUPPORTED.**

There were no further applications received since the agenda had been prepared.

058/24 Finance

- i. To receive the monthly finance report for May (*Circulated with Agenda*)
- ii. To approve invoices and expense claims received prior to, or during the meeting.
Invoice received for Annual NALC fees £170.34 for Subscription and National Affiliation Fee & £75 for Annual Website Fee = £245.34. **Approved.**
Invoice received from Claire Miller for auditing services 4 hours @ £25 per hour = £100. **Approved.**
- iii. Clerk's salary 1 – 31 May '24 15 hours @ £15.00 per hour = £225 to be approved. **Approved.**
- iv. Agreement from Parish Council to appoint Claire Miller as Internal Auditor @ £25.00 per hour for 2024 - 2025. **Approved.**
- v. Speed sign warranty to extend a further 3 years £480 per sign. At the end of the initial 2 year period the PC need to budget £480 for a 3 year extended warranty on the Speed Signs to ensure they continue to operate. All Councillors agreed that this was a good idea and the funds will be set aside. This will be reviewed in November 24 when the PC agree the annual budget and precept. **Approved.**

059/24 AGAR return and End of Year Accounts

AGAR return and End of Year Accounts were presented to the PC.

060/24/a

The Internal Audit Report was received and AGREED and the appointment of Claire Miller as Internal Auditor for 2024 – 2025 was APPROVED.

061/24/b

The Annual Governance Statement 2023/24 Section 1 that there is a sound system of Internal Controls was APPROVED.

- 062/24/c** The Annual Accounts for 2023/24 were APPROVED.
- 063/24/d** The AGAR Accounting Statement and the Explanation of Variances for the Financial year ending 31 March 2024 were APPROVED.
- 064/24/e** The Certificate of Exemption was APPROVED.
- 065/24/f** Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights for Accounts year ended 31st March 2024 commences on 5th June 2024 and ending on 17th July 2024.
APPROVED.
- LP to upload all documents to the PC website and send the Certificate of Exemption to Mazars, External Auditor. Notices for the Period for the Exercise of Public Rights to be posted on all village noticeboards.
- 066/24 Correspondence (not covered elsewhere on the Agenda)** Northumberland County Council confirmed the Order below on 12 April 2024 :
Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 Section 53.
Definitive Map Modification Order (No 7) 2023 – RB No 29 & BOAT No 30 (Parish of Whittingham)
- 067/24 Any General Matters** None to report
- 068/24 Time and Date of Next Meeting** Tuesday 18 June 2024 at 7.00 pm Whittingham Memorial Hall

Signed as a True Record of the Meeting Chair _____ Date _____