

# MINUTES



## Bi-monthly Parish Council Meeting 7PM on THURSDAY, 05 SEPTEMBER 2024 Longhirst Village Hall



**Longhirst  
Parish Council**

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

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Helyn Douglas (Clerk), Residents x3

**APOLOGIES:** Cllr Chris Marr, also Cllr D Towns

<b>A</b>	<b>PUBLIC FORUM (10 minutes)</b>  i. <b>Speeding</b> - Residents raised concerns about speeding along the main village road. Potential solutions were discussed, including a 20mph speed limit, speed humps, or cameras. All options have been discussed before and each has its drawbacks. But the Parish Council agreed to approach the Police and County Council Highways Dept to discuss a wide-range of road safety issues.  ii. <b>Telephone Box</b> - Another resident asked if we could request that BT repaint the village telephone box.
<b>B</b>	<b>UPDATE FROM NORTHUMBRIA POLICE</b> There was no update provided.
<b>C</b>	<b>NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL UPDATE - CLLR DAVID TOWNS</b> Cllr Towns gave his apologies for the meeting but offered instead to meet with the Chair to go over any specific issues where he can provide support.
<b>D</b>	<b>RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION / GROUPS</b>  i. <b>Longhirst Colliery - Julie Murray</b>  <u>Road Safety at Longhirst Colliery</u> - J Murray noted that there had recently been a fairly serious accident at the turn off in to Longhirst Colliery resulting in both cars being written off. Cllr B Climson has bought a convex traffic mirror to install.  <u>Road Improvements around Longhirst Colliery</u> - J Murray presented a letter outlining road and associated drainage improvement works that are proposed on the roads near them (C125 and C126). The Parish Council will seek to find out more about this, including start dates.

The Chair will raise the planned roadworks in his meeting with County Cllr D Towns.

ii. **Longhirst Hall - Andy Robson**

A Robson had no issues to raise.

iii. **Micklewood**

Rockery

CllrJ Quinn noted that some rocks had been taken from the grassed area by the electricity sub-station. These had been left by the builders and were set aside to create a rockery in remembrance of Cllr J Mills who sadly died last year. This situation is unfortunate.

**1. APOLOGIES**

**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. There were no interests declared.

**3. PREVIOUS MINUTES - [04 JULY 2024](#)**

The minutes were agreed to be an accurate record of the meeting and were signed by the Chair.

**4. MATTERS ARISING (not covered elsewhere)**

**4.1. Letter of thanks to Hadston Garden Centre**

The Clerk has drafted the letter but was unable to find the correct address; Cllr R Tordoff will forward that on to her.

**4.2. Projector and screen for Longhirst Village Hall - progress**

The projector is now in place and is being used for the meeting. The cost was £1,629.50 and has been paid (to J D Shepherd).

**4.3. Bus Stop Signage Improvements - FixMyStreet ref: 6340584**

The Clerk has reported the request for the timetable cabinet and liner to be moved down but there is currently no update yet on whether this will be actioned.

**5. PLANNING**

**5.1. [Station Cottages - 23/02290/FUL report](#)**

The ancillary building on this site has surprisingly been granted planning permission. The Chair invited residents present to put forward their views on this matter. They noted their disappointment that this has been granted when previous indications from the County Council were that it would not be. The Clerk will write a letter to the County Council setting out our concerns. The Chair will also discuss this issue with NCC Cllr D Towns, but suggested that residents temper their expectations as it is unlikely that there will be any meaningful change.

**ACTION: CLERK / CHAIR**

**5.2. Stobswood Haul Road - 20/00465/PREAPP**

As reported at the last meeting, the contractor has gone in to liquidation and the works have ceased. No further information is available at this time.

**6. FINANCES**

7.

**7.1. [Bank Statements](#) and [Budget Report](#)**

The bank statements and budget report were presented - these cover up to the end of August. There were no queries raised.

**7.2. Speed Warning Sign repairs**

The Clerk has not heard back from Swarco but will try again.

**7.3. Longhirst Colliery Residents' Association improvements**

J Murray has produced a draft proposal and it will be tabled at a future meeting.

**8. BUSINESS**

**8.1. Resignation of Parish Clerk, [vacancy advertisement](#) and interim arrangements**

The Clerk, Helyn Douglas, confirmed that she has formally handed-in her notice and will cease employment with the Parish Council in a months' time. Due to other work commitments she feels she is no longer able to give the role the attention it deserves. Members thanked Helyn for all the work she has done over the past few years and stated that she will be sorely missed.

Councillors reviewed the draft advert and agreed to it being sent out via the Northumberland Association of Local Councils newsletter, with a closing date of no earlier than 06 October. Anyone interested in the role should contact the Parish Council at [longhirstpc@gmail.com](mailto:longhirstpc@gmail.com).

In the meantime, the Clerk has found temporary cover, provided by Samantha Dalglish. S Dalglish has experience of both Parish Clerk and Councillor roles. Councillors agreed to give her a fixed-term contract for 3 months. This will allow for a hand-over period in September between Sam and Helyn, then Sam can cover during October with a view to a new Clerk being in post in November. The additional cost for employing two Clerks would be for September and possibly November - at c£167/month.

**8.2. Church Lychgate Repairs & Improvements**

St John's Church Parochial Church Council has written to thank all those parties involved in helping to get the repairs done (including the Parish Council).

**8.3. Church Car Park Island Clearance Work**

Volunteers are still being sought to help tidy the overgrown vegetation on the traffic island near St John's Church. Councillors agreed to provide funds of £100 towards any equipment needed for the job. Anyone interested in supporting this should contact Cllr Peter Coates: [pandccoates@gmail.com](mailto:pandccoates@gmail.com).

#### 8.4. Relocation of outdoor seating - options for discussion

Cllr R Tordoff has cleaned the existing benches near the War Memorial and whilst these need some additional maintenance the suggestion is now to leave these in situ. Therefore the three new benches are now available for installation at other locations around the parish. Councillors agreed that one will be placed at Longhirst Colliery and a second at Paddock Wood. There will be a discussion with Longhirst Parish Association about placing the third outside Longhirst Village Hall. If that is not suitable then alternatives are: at the bird hide, nr St John's Church, on Ulgham Lane or by the railway crossing.

#### 8.5. Paddock Wood path improvements - update

The Chair, Cllr J Quinn and Mike Elphick met recently on site with two new officers from the Woodland Trust. The officers were advised of the history of the Trust's apparent lack of interest in maintaining the wood, the unfortunate mowing of the central area in June by a subcontractor and the very poor condition of the paths in winter. A range of low cost improvements that the Parish Council would like to see carried were discussed.

The Chair also consulted with the owners of the strip of land that runs between the woodland and the burn. Their primary concern was that any new drainage might well create additional water discharge over their land. To avoid this, the Chair suggested scaling back our plans and focusing on creating a new path parallel to the burn but on higher ground (with natural drainage). Councillors agreed to this work being carried out by Groundwork North East at a cost of c£500.

#### 8.6. Ashington Road flooding - next steps

Although ditch clearance work has not been carried out this year, the work done last year was extensive and means that the road is less likely to flood this winter. However, Councillors were very keen that the maintenance work promised by NCC Highways is completed to prevent the flooding from recurring. The Chair and Cllr G Fahy will meet on site to review the situation.

Wider land management issues at Potland Country Park still remain unresolved. Cllr Fahy has written to the land management company in both July and August but no work has been done at the site. This issue may need to be taken to the next Castle Morpeth Local Area Committee.

**ACTION: CHAIR / CLLR G FAHY**

#### 8.7. Bus Service Improvement Plan: [Safe & Accessible Bus Infrastructure Fund](#)

The Clerk suggested this may be a way to fund the signage improvements requested at the last meeting, or any other improvements at the shelters. Members felt this was not necessary, but Cllr G Fahy offered to print off a timetable and put it in the noticeboard within the bus shelter itself.

**ACTION: CLLR G FAHY**

#### 8.8. [Online data and personal safety \(and secure email addresses\)](#)

##### Online data

The Clerk presented information relating to balancing the requirement for a public profile as a councillor, whilst maintaining personal privacy (and

safety). Firstly, she noted that it is important to encourage individuals to feel safe enough to participate in civic life. If contact from a third party crosses the line into abuse or threats then this is a police matter and should be handled as such.

Whilst there is no legislative requirement, good practice does strongly suggest Parish Councillors make some contact information available to the public. This can be an email, phone number (mobile or landline) or postal address. Currently only Councillors email addresses are on the website as the Clerk considers that to be the least intrusive. Councillors can set up an entirely separate email address for their parish council business if they feel that would be helpful. Any Councillors wishing to change their contact details should contact the Clerk.

Home addresses - The Clerk also pointed out that home addresses are currently on Declaration of Interest forms (published on the County Council website). This information can now be withheld and anyone wishing to stand at the next election may want to exercise that option.

#### Secure email

The use of a dedicated .gov email address brings cyber security and freedom of information advantages but has no advantages in promoting personal safety. Use of a .gov.uk email address is considered good practice but is not followed by all councils. Councillors decided not to pursue this option at this time.

#### 8.9. [Town & Parish Council Conference - 03 Oct 24](#)

There were no Councillors available to attend.

#### 8.10. **Warhorse Field**

The Chair reminded people of the recent article in the Longhirst Leader outlining the history of the field (aka Domino's Field). He was keen that its history is celebrated in some way - anyone with ideas should contact the Chair at: [pandccoates@gmail.com](mailto:pandccoates@gmail.com).

### 9. **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS (for information)**

#### 9.1. **Football Field - tree maintenance**

The tenant has reported that two of the trees overhanging the field require maintenance. Quotes will be sought.

**ACTION: J MURRAY AND CLLRS R TORDOFF & J QUINN**

#### 9.2. **Local Transport Plan**

The Clerk will reply reiterating the same request as last time, regarding the completion of the re-surfacing of Station Road near North East Grains.

**ACTION: CLERK**

### 10. **NEXT MEETING:**

#### 10.1. **7pm on Thursday, 07 November 2024 at Longhirst Village Hall**

Close of meeting at 9.20pm