

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF CRASTER PARISH COUNCIL**  
**Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2024 – 6:30pm in the Craster village Hall**

**Councillors present:**

**Chair:** Martin Smith

**Parish Council members:** Margaret Brooks, Michael Craster, Ann Fettis, Rosie Robson, Allan Gregory and Nick Ringrose.

**Also present:** Adam Shanley (Parish Clerk), County Councillor Wendy Pattison and 5 members of the public.

**1. Welcome and apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Councillor M Green.

**2. Election of Chair**

Councillor M Smith was elected as Chair of the Parish Council. Proposed by Councillor N Ringrose and seconded by Councillor M Brooks.

**3. Election of Vice-Chair**

Councillor M Brooks was elected as Vice-Chair of the Parish Council. Proposed by Councillor N Ringrose and seconded by Councillor A Fettis.

**4. Declarations of interest**

Councillor R Robson declared an interest in item 13 and took no part in the discussion or vote on this matter.

**5. Confirmation of the minutes for the meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2024**

The minutes of the meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2024 were unanimously agreed as a true and accurate record of proceedings, subject to the following amendments:

- The minute under item 5 be amended to: *"The Clerk confirmed that the pedestrian footpath sign requested by a local resident had now been installed at the bottom of Tower Bank."*
- Under item 13 of the minutes, the following be added: *"The Clerk highlighted that he had been contacted by the CCT regarding the renewal of the lease of the play park and Members unanimously agreed to renew the lease with the CCT for the play park and requested that the Clerk take all appropriate action to have this completed."*

**6. Matters arising**

None received.

**7. Public participation**

A resident raised the issue of the lack of public footpath signage at the top of the Tower Bank for the Craster Trail. The Clerk advised that he would speak with Philip Bradley, NCC Footpaths Officer about this.

A resident also raised a concern that the crossroads at Whindy Side Bank is really dangerous with an horrific pothole and overgrown verges. The Clerk advised that he would speak with the Highways department about both of these issues.

**8. Report by County Councillor Wendy Pattison**

Councillor W Pattison raised the issue of signage at the crossroads and felt that there seemed to be an excess of street clutter in this location. Councillor Pattison suggested that the Highways department and AONB be invited to carry out an audit of all the signage at this location.

Councillor W Pattison also made Councillors and residents aware that it is Mental Health Awareness week and highlighted that the Council is putting more funding and resources into supporting people with mental health issues.

### **9. Report from Embleton Joint Burial Committee representative**

Councillor M Brooks advised that the EJBC had recently received a communication from a local resident and is looking to respond to this further enquiry as soon as possible.

Councillor R Robson took the opportunity to thank the EJBC and its contractors on maintaining the cemetery as a place of peace and respect.

### **10. Report from Craster Community Trust representative**

Mrs Helen Chamberlain advised that the CCT had once again hosted a very successful "Meet and Eat" event in the Hall and thanked all those involved in supporting this event.

Helen also welcomed the new WI artwork in the Hall and thanked the WI Members involved in producing and installing this.

Helen also advised that the works to the lights in the Hall will hopefully be commencing on 21<sup>st</sup> May and the CCT looked forward to seeing this aspect of the Hall's maintenance completed.

The Chair thanked Helen and all CCT Members for their excellent work in maintaining the Hall as a much-valued community facility.

### **11. Annual Governance and Accountability Return for 2023/24**

- (i) Members agreed the internal audit report 2023-24
- (ii) Members approved the annual governance statement 2023-24
- (iii) Members approved the draft annual accounts for 2023-24
- (iv) Members approved the accounting statement and explanation of variances 2023-24
- (v) Members approved the certificate of exemption form 2023-24

Councillor N Ringrose also recommended that the Council looks into acquiring a high-interest savings account and the Clerk advised that he would look into this following agreement by Members.

### **12. Works to footpaths in the parish**

The Clerk advised that he had recently visited Craster and Dunstan outside of the usual schedule of meetings in order to take photographs of the footpaths both running up Tower Bank as well as the footpath running behind Smith Court.

The Clerk advised that, whilst the footpath running up the Tower Bank is not so heavily overgrown, the footpath behind Smithy Court leading down into Craster from Dunstan certainly is overgrown.

The Clerk advised that he would liaise with NCC's Footpaths Officer on this matter.

### **13. Update on the Tourist Information Centre project**

Members noted the response from residents to this proposal at last night's annual meeting of the parish. Members felt that there did not seem to be a great drive or desire from the community to pursue this project any further.

A number of Members highlighted the lack of volunteers and particularly those with the necessary building/ project management skills in the parish to pursue this project further.

Councillor R Robson declared an interest in this item. Councillor R Robson highlighted that she had run a number of successful businesses in this area for many years and she felt that she would like to pursue a business venture of her own, outside of the Parish Council, for this site.

As such, Councillor R Robson advised that she did not feel it would be appropriate for her to continue on the Parish Council, with this project being her intention. Councillor R Robson resigned from the Parish Council and left the meeting at this point.

Councillor A Fettis advised that she felt that the Parish Council would be taking on a significant liability on a building like this and she had concerns about this and the likely impact on workload for the Parish Council. This was echoed by Councillors M Brooks and A Gregory.

Councillor N Ringrose also expressed his concerns that the parish is not able to demonstrate a compelling need for this asset and how it would create social value.

Councillor N Ringrose highlighted that Councillor M Green had largely led this project and he felt that a decision on whether to pursue grant funding under the auspices of the Parish Council should be deferred until Councillor M Green is in attendance at a future Parish Council meeting.

A number of Members also highlighted that, should a scheme be successful and makes a lot of money for the community, where would any profit or surplus be invested in a future community project.

Members felt that there may be a conversation to be had with NCC regarding the future use for the site and in a way which limits the liabilities on the Parish Council but which brings a community benefit of some kind.

Members **agreed** not to progress with the grant application for the feasibility study and the Chair agreed to speak with Councillor M Green about this decision. Members **agreed** that the Chair and a small number of nominees of the Chair's choosing should instead be invited to speak with NCC – Councillor W Pattison suggested Mike Robbins and Paul Jones – in order to get a better understanding of what could be possible for the site and an offer to the community.

#### **14. Update on the Conservation Area Character Appraisal report by the AONB**

Members noted the response from residents to this proposal at last night's annual meeting of the parish. Councillor A Fettis advised that she felt that this proposal from the AONB had caused some concern in the parish and she felt that the Parish Council should not be seen to promote this in any way.

The Chair reminded Members that this is an AONB initiative and the Parish Council's only role in this project is to support a public engagement between the AONB and local residents.

The Clerk advised that he would be chasing up the publication of the Conservation Area Character Appraisal as he felt that this was an excellent piece of work which may help guide the parish in their assessment of this proposal.

Members felt that residents needed to have the opportunity to ask questions to the AONB and Conservation Officers at NCC regarding the implications of such a designation and the Clerk agreed to liaise with relevant parties to facilitate a drop-in session on this project.

#### **15. Update on the works on the construction of the mobile phone mast**

The Clerk advised that he was delighted to see work commencing on the new mobile phone mast and Members agreed to await further information on its completion.

A suggestion was made that an official opening may take place with a selected individual photographed taking the first mobile phone call from the quarry car park.

Members thanked the Clerk for all his work on this excellent initiative.

#### **16. Planning matters:**

**Update on 24/00121/FUL** | Construction of two holiday lets (Sui Generis) with associated landscaping | Land North and East Of Dunstan House Dunstan Northumberland. Members **noted** the recent objections from the Built Heritage and Design Officer and the AONB to this proposal and **agreed** to maintain the Parish Council's objection to these plans.

#### **17. Items for next Agenda**


The Chair reminded Members to contact the Parish Clerk should they wish to have an item of business included on next month's Agenda.

#### **18. Date and time of next meeting**

20<sup>th</sup> June 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. Smith'.

**Chair of Craster Parish Council  
(Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2024)**