

WARK PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman: Mr Edward Jeffrey **Contact:** clerk.wark@gmail.com

Meeting held 9 December 2024 at 7pm in Wark Town Hall

DRAFT MINUTES

1. **Welcome and Apologies for Absence:**

Present: Councillor Edward Jeffrey (EJ), Councillor Jason Riches (JR), Councillor Steve Batey (SB), County Councillor Nick Morphet (NM), Councillor Annie Hutchinson (AH), Councillor Brenda Murray (BM).

Apologies: Councillor Lisa Lorraine (LL), Councillor Judith Ward (JW)

MOP: Matt Fathers – Chestnut Tree update. X3 other MOP.

2. **Public Participation (For Members of the Public to speak - Restricted to 10mins max)**

Chestnut Tree has been inspected as part of the recent works. Faults present, acknowledged have been present for some time now but has fresh infection of Bleeding Canker, major scarring from 15-20 years where had previous infection, solutions discussed to support and reduce risk of felling or further damage in troublesome weather, acknowledged that footfall is limited underneath it but need to ensure safety of public. Discussion re: guard/fencing around base of tree, non -evasive bracing system could be used (£200 estimate), two braces would be needed. Whole tree moves in the wind, removal of limb not recommended, bracing preferred. Matt to give price for works. Acknowledged as very important tree. JR – preventative, keep strength in tree but protect tree and residents. Signage discussed to ensure public are aware of tree condition, age and risk. Discussion about options for replacement so can utilise in years to come.

MOP raised issue of dog fouling in the village being on the increase. JR – dark nights impacting on this. Discussion about bags and how these are chucked in trees. Dog wardens operating/signage? AH – Involve the children at the school in making the signage. NM – council can help with signage and stencils on the ground – to send to LK

3. **Notification of Other Business**

None

4. **Declarations of Conflicts of Interest**

None

5. **Approval of Minutes** (14 October 2024)

Steve proposed and Jason seconded. Can we organise to send minutes to records office. Can we locate the signed approved minutes from July and August – LK raised.

6. **Report from County Councillor Nick Morphet.**

- 1) I've received a reply from the Highways Maintenance Senior Team Leader about **moving the bins in Wark**. It's fine to move them, and if you could let me know when you plan to move the pole mounted

bin onto the pole by the surgery I'll let the Highways Maintenance officers know so they can arrange to remove the rusty pole. **Action: EJ to notify NM when pole moved.**

- 2) Wark's new **"twenty when lights flash" signs** have been installed, as has **the pole for the interactive speed sign** at the north end of the village. Unfortunately, they've removed the pole for the interactive speed sign at the south end of the village and installed a new pole next to the new lay-by. Highways Improvement have confirmed that this wasn't what they had asked for, and are looking into why their instructions weren't followed. I'll let you know what they tell me. The "twenty when lights flash" signs aren't working yet, but that's probably just because they haven't been programmed yet.
- 3) I've found out why **the dropped kerb to the south of River Meadow** is so long. In the words of the Highways Development Management officer responsible, "The geometry and levels of the footway were approved on the basis of existing levels and the need to avoid an undesirable crossfall while tying into existing kerbs and fixed points. Highways Development Management have the flexibility to approve a design that falls outwith the design parameters if the engineer considers it's necessary". I've also been asked why the developer changed the designs in 2020, narrowing the footway by 50cm. Highways Development Management tell me that it was "due to the presence of a well in front of Chapel House and because in front of Braeside the proximity to the existing brick wall would have resulted in an unacceptable crossfall and potentially undermined the wall's foundations". HDM have asked the developer to commission an independent Road Safety Audit, which will give us an unbiased opinion on the suitability of the current arrangement. I'll share the results with you when they're out.
- 4) I've been shown an early iteration of **the Local Transport Plan programme for 2025/26**. They've approved the installation of dropped kerbs in Wark, so I'll speak to the people who might be affected and make sure they're happy with the plans. The footway surface repairs haven't been scored yet, but I'll let you know when they have. Extra passing places on the C205 Ward Lane have been refused, because no collisions have been reported. The road to Lowstead/Linacres (which is an offshoot of the U5059) isn't on the list for carriageway repairs, but that'll be because the landowner hasn't done the drainage work yet as well as due to a lack of money. The landowner's neighbour has agreed to do the drainage work on his behalf, but as far as I'm aware his digger is still broken.
- 5) **The drainage work on the U5069 to Latterford Doors** will take place later this week or early next week. The road will be closed for a day or two, but the residents will be warned in advance so that they can plan for it.
- 6) It's not in Wark parish, but I thought you might like to know that the new signage went in at **Nunwick** last week, and the improved road markings will be installed in the New Year. I can also confirm that I've added both parish councils' concerns about the location of the bus stop at Nunwick to my list of suggested improvements, which I'll be submitting to public transport officers before Christmas.
- 7) I've found out why **the mast at Ray Hill** (near to Coldcotes Hill) has a generator, despite planning permission having been granted for a solar panel array. The owner of the telecoms equipment (which is a company called Cornerstone) is looking to bring a permanent electricity supply to the mast, and they currently have a temporary generator running 24/7 while they obtain the necessary permissions.
- 8) **The Warmer Homes scheme** is still open for applications but will be closing as soon as the funding runs out. You need to live in a house with an EPC rating of D or below and have a combined household income of less than £36,000 (and up to £44,000 for households of four people or more) to be eligible. Anyone who is eligible would be absolutely crazy to miss out.
- 9) **The new NCC Climate Change Team Leader** (Leanne Wilson) has started and seems to have hit the ground running. When I told her that I thought the new Climate Change Action Plan was too "report-like", too long and poorly written she told me that a shorter and more attractive public-facing version would be created. I'll share a link to it with you when it's ready.
- 10) Jack Moffat from **the Thomas Pocklington Trust** presented to councillors at Local Area Committee in November. The TPT is a charitable organisation that strives for equality for blind and partially sighted

people. Jack told us about the difficulty he has navigating urban environments (due largely to unsympathetic street furniture) and about the TPT's **Streets For All campaign**, which aims to make our public spaces easier and safer for blind and partially sighted people to navigate. The TPT puts on "Sim Specs" walks, in which non-visually impaired people navigate a built environment wearing glasses designed to simulate various visual impairments. Jack would be delighted to organise a Sim Specs walk for parish councillors and residents in a village in the Humshaugh ward – so please let me know if you're interested. The walk will take place in the village which shows the most interest.

- 11) And finally, there's a **vacancy on the Northumberland Association of Local Council's County Committee** for the Mid Tyne area (which is the Humshaugh ward plus Whittington parish). Email info@northumberlandalc.uk for more information.

7. Matters Arising

7.1 Village Pride – Flower Tubs, Street Signs and new Welcome to Wark Signage – JR

Looking at next year's budget, the village is slowly getting smartened up but we don't have any larger flower tubs, nothing to celebrate what Wark used to be. Historic Capital of Northumberland signage. People still parking on grass next to new car park. Improve the village look. Self-watering ones are good. Eco-friendly. JR willing to approach garden centres for planting. To price it in new year. History Plaque – Wark – SB proposed. Celebrate village and history.

7.2 Village Green Chestnut Tree - Risk of Falling Limbs from Village Green Tree Signs – JR

Discussed earlier. JR – path that goes past old school, trees dead and dying – discussion re: felling and replanting. AH queried ownership of land which needs to be established before permission to fell can be given. JR to follow up and will check with Highways.

7.3 Road surface around Village Green – Highways agree to scrape road and replace with planings – JR. Update – phone call from Highways, looked around – 2 options. Tarmacking would require increased funding. Planing and then surface dress it. JR to check costing.

7.4 New Car Park in Wark – Complete and signage purchased for spaces – JR

All completed. Being used, parking on grass still an issue. Signage highlights it is public parking not Doctors, Dressing stone opposite Battlesteads and P sign installed too. AH – reverse park to be encouraged, discourage grass parking and ensure residents are aware parking opposite Battlesteads is Parish owned and can be used as alternative to grass. Thank you letters to be sent to contractors for installation/works

7.5 Grass Cutting Contracts (Wark and Stonehaugh) – update EJ

Wark up for tender, slight increase. AH - to be advertised.

Stonehaugh – EJ advised contractor has experienced issues but ultimately the work falls below acceptable and will be readvertised. To be drafted and circulated. Maximum of cuts to be agreed. Centre of village doesn't belong to PC. Be clear about the number of cuts to be paid for by PC. EJ to contact current contractor and advise lost tender.

7.6 Wark Public Toilet Cleanliness – update EJ

Wark - Increase of hours in Wark to Two hours a week (checked over three days)– this has been agreed and started. EJ checking and commented toilets are spotless. Extra hours

agreed– proposed by EJ and JR seconded. Will monitor the expenditure and review after 3 months.

7.7 Moving Vehicle Signs - update EJ

In hand, they have to book traffic lights and cherry picker to install – is it worth putting second pole in at same time. Will you give a discount for ordering another one – SB and JR agreed to enquire.

7.8 Stonehaugh Public Toilet – update AH

Vacancy to be advertised in Stonehaugh.

7.9 Activity Centre Lighting/Electrics – SB

No response from electrician who installed the lighting etc. SB has engaged alternative Park End electrics. SB has this in hand and will liaise with Liam Reid to get access.

7.10 Parish Council Election 2025 – AH

AH term will finish at end of March and elections 1 May 2025. AH to retire, BM to stand for Stonehaugh, Info will come from council. Replacement will be needed for Wark.

8. Financial Matters

8.1 Precept for 2025-2026 – Information circulated prior to meeting.

Cash Flow Projection for next financial year -projections to be discussed in New Year.

8.2 Annual Donations –consider recipients from previous year and any new requests.

Monday Men - £200

Church - £100

Toddlers - £50

M Murray - £100

Wark Senior Citizens Dinner - £50

Wark Junior Football Club - £50

Sport Tynedale - £50

Air Ambulance - £100

School - £50

Community Based Service to be finalised – ring fenced with £100.

Pick categories going forward into next year.

8.3 Accounts Package – AH

AH suggests account package for accountants. AH has sent EJ information. Cost to be established – arrange to see it online (presentation) demonstrates capabilities, SLCC recommended. EJ says worth looking at. Agreed to discuss in New Year when agree precept. at Precept meeting.

8.4 Accounts and Approve Payment Schedule – Circulated and agreed.

Date Invoice/Receipt	Description of Goods/Service	Amount (£)
31/10/2024	Composting Toilet Maintenance - Stonehaugh	60
31/10/2024	Website/Social Media Maintenance	100
18/11/2024	Payroll - Wark Toilets	100.16
18/11/2024	Payroll - Stonehaugh Toilets	102.96
18/11/2024	Payroll - Clerk	386.1
18/11/2024	Paye Liability for Nov (Month 25/08)	2.8
25/11/2024	Poppy Wreath	20
19/11/2024	Installation of SID Sign Post	1000
24/11/2024	Reimbursement - Signage for New Car park at Wark	228.99
09/09/2024	Overdue Payments (PAYE) from 2020-2021	309.51
25/11/2024	Postcrete - for installation of parking sign posts	19.47
09/12/2024	Reimbursement for cleaning materials	23.91

8.5 Bank Account – balance noted as at 30 October 2024 - £23730.36 (includes funds for MVS)

8. Reports from Representatives to Other Bodies (Wark Town Hall, Stonehaugh Community Hall and Giles Heron Trust)

Wark Town Hall – busy at the moment, lots of public events, busy organising highlights package, another Giles Heron fund £500 – used for children – to do Roald Dahl events – world book day event. Toddler and school invited. Second grant for building work received. April/May decorated, kitchen replaced, quiet space for nursing etc and used for emergency situation.

Stonehaugh Community Hall – Christmas party on Saturday. Letter from Parish Council needed re: parking as ongoing issues with parking and access – concern that emergency vehicles may struggle to get through. Pot holes filled along back lane – M Murray takes of this.

9. Other Business – Not for Decision

Nothing

9. Close Meeting/ Agree Date for Next Meeting (Proposed): 27 January 2025 – not possible due to councillors being on leave. Suggested date is agreed for precept to be agreed in new year and meeting held once councillors return.

Close meeting 20:50

10 Housekeeping (Employment, Leases and Pay Grades) – Not for Open Meeting.

Clerk to Wark Parish Council