

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council
held on Monday 2 February 2015
at Stocksfield Community Centre**

Present: Ms M Hunt (Chair), Mrs A Dale (also present as County Councillor), Mr J Davison, Mr D Parke, Mr M Parker, Mrs K Pollock, Mrs J Robson, Professor R Thompson, Dr. P Vickers

Mr N Spencer (Clerk to the Council)

Also Present: Mr A Verheyden (Rights of Way and Environment Advisory Group (RoW&EAG))

Apologies: Mr J Roy

The Chair opened the meeting at 7:30pm and welcomed Mr Verheyden to the meeting who was attending as a representative of the RoW&EAG in place of Mr Roy.

15/14 Declarations of Interest

Mrs Dale (as a County Councillor) declared an interest in discussions on planning applications and as a County Council representative on the Tyne Valley Rail User Group.

15/15 Public Participation

There were no items of public participation raised.

Mrs Dale updated members on issues in respect of the use of taxis by the County Council and reported that the total cost of taxis related to school transport.

15/16 Minutes of the Meeting held on 5 January 2015

It was AGREED that the minutes of the meeting held on 5 January 2015 were a true record of the meeting (proposed Prof Thompson, seconded Mr Parke).

15/17 Matters Arising

a) Footpath at Meadowfield Terrace (previous item 15/2)

Mrs Dale reported that she had met with Northumberland County Council (NCC) Area Highways Manager and the Clerk. It was concluded that the footpath met the required standard and any further action was likely to exacerbate the problem. **DISCHARGED**

b) Stocksfield Square (previous item 15/2)

The Clerk reported that Mount View Care Home has agreed to provide signage in the near future to indicate the name of the houses. **DISCHARGED**

c) Branch End Play Area – Western Footpath (previous item 15/4(b))

The Clerk reported that the contractors have experienced delays at other sites and the work is now scheduled for week commencing 16 February. **ACTION: Clerk to BFd**

d) Defibrillators (previous item 15/4(c))

The Clerk reported that both defibrillator cabinets have been fitted and the defibrillators placed within the cabinets. They only become operational once added to the Ambulance Service's database which is likely to occur within a few days. A further familiarisation session will be held at the Golf Club in due course. An item will be posted on the Council's website once the defibrillators are operational. **ACTION: Clerk**

e) Annual Parish Meeting, 20 April 2015 – Speaker (previous item 15/11)

The Chair reported that Vera Baird, the Police and Crime Commissioner, has accepted the Council's invitation to speak at the Annual Parish Meeting and that the Chief Constable, Sue Sim, will also be attending. The Chair welcomed the news and asked members to ensure that this is communicated to residents. The Meeting will be advertised appropriately nearer the time. **DISCHARGED**

15/18 Rights of Way and Environment Advisory Group

Members noted the notes of the meeting of the RoW&EAG held on 26 January 2015. Mr Verheyden updated members on the following issues:

Footpath No. 16 leading to Broomley Woods

The footpath is almost impassable and Tim Fish (NCC) has secured funding to undertake a permanent repair to the footpath.

Parish Footpath Review

The review has identified a number of paths that require significant gorse removal. This will be undertaken either by volunteers or NCC's Field Team. There will be an attempt to establish a list of willing volunteers who can be called upon to assist in footpath clearance, under the guidance of NCC, and an item will appear in the next issue of NE43 News. **Action: Clerk**

Station

Work is continuing at the Station, both around the platforms and the area adjacent to the road.

River Watch

There is no sign of the American crayfish invading Stocksfield Burn.

Invasive Plants

Work continues to control Japanese Knotweed at Bywell.

Footpath development

Work continues to develop a circular walk that links Stocksfield and Prudhoe, along the riverside and the higher land of the valley. It is hoped a leaflet can be produced and it is anticipated making a request for funding from the Parish Council.

Woodland Plan

Land Factor has submitted a plan to thin the trees in the woodlands around the Parish that are owned by Allendale Estates. The Group agrees with the need to undertake the work. It was AGREED to respond to Land Factor in accordance with item 9 of the notes of the RoW&EAG.

Action: Clerk

The Chair thanked Mr Verheyden for the useful update and recognised the work of the RoW&EAG as an essential aspect of the maintenance of the village amenities. She asked Mr Verheyden to thank members of the Group on behalf of the Council.

At 8pm Mr Verheyden left the meeting.

15/19 Stocksfield Community Association Trading Arm (SCATA)

The Chair updated the meeting from a report prepared by Mr Duncan. SCATA is confident of filling all seven properties with local people or those with a local connection. Handover of the six Guessburn properties is planned for 20 March.

15/20 Finance

a) Approval of December Expenditure

It was AGREED that the expenditure for January, as listed, be approved (proposed Mrs Dale, seconded Mrs Robson).

b) Spend v Budget to January 2015

Members noted the current position.

c) Additional expenditure

Members AGREED that the additional cheque for £1226.92 in respect of staff costs should be paid. The Clerk circulated an amended monthly summary taking account of the additional cheque which was noted. The Clerk added that, having examined a range of alternative systems, he has decided to retain the current accounting software.

15/21 Consultations

Northumberland Local Plan Core Strategy Update

The Chair, Dr Vickers and Mr Parke attended the special meeting of the East Tynedale Town and Parish Council Forum on 6 January 2015 and learned about the additional document in relation to Green Belt proposals which had been circulated to members. This aspect has been incorporated into the proposed response which has also been circulated. The Chair reminded members that a

second special meeting of the Forum is to be held at 2pm on Thursday 5 February at Stocksfield Community Centre, specifically about small settlements in the Green Belt. The Chair, Mr Parke and Mrs Dale will attend, but other councillors are welcome to attend as well.

The Chair summarised the main issues within the response:

- The target for job creation appears over ambitious, particularly taking into account the limited broadband services within the County.
- The focus for commuting will be Stocksfield, Ponteland and Prudhoe.
- The Green Belt review proposes a separation of one parcel of land in Stocksfield which would allow a reassessment of land south of the A695.
- The timescales for implementation are too long.
- It appears that where Neighbourhood Plans do not exist, the Parish Council will lose its influence in respect of planning considerations yet many Parish Councils have legitimate reasons for not developing a Neighbourhood Plan.

It was AGREED (proposed Mr Davison, seconded Mrs Pollock) that the response (as amended) be approved but not returned until after the meeting on 5 February (see above) and after any necessary amendment to the response has been made. **ACTION: Chair, Clerk**

Pharmacy Needs Assessment

The proposed response had been circulated and forwarded as appropriate without amendment. *Northumberland County Council's Proposed Budget 2015-16 and 2016-17*

The proposed response had been circulated and forwarded as appropriate without amendment. A reply has since been received from Mr S Mason, Lead Executive Director – Corporate Services which the Chair summarised and asked the Clerk to circulate it to all members. **ACTION: Clerk**

Parish Polls

The proposed response had been circulated and forwarded as appropriate without amendment.

Woodland Plan for Bywell Woodlands

This item was dealt with at paragraph 15/18.

15/22 Advisory Groups

a) General Governance Advisory Group (GGAG)

i) Notes of GGAG meeting 19/01/15.

Members noted the previously circulated notes of the meeting. The review of subscriptions had been approved at paragraph 15/20(a).

ii) Banking and financial arrangements.

The Chair said the GGAG had considered and recommended approval of the proposals in the report circulated with the papers. The Clerk summarised the proposals which he explained were intended to streamline the workflow whilst maintaining suitable safeguards. After discussions with regard to the proposed bank and authorisation processes, it was AGREED (proposed Mr Davison, seconded Mrs Pollock) to:

- Authorise the next GGAG to determine which bank or banks the Parish Council uses
- Adopt electronic banking as the preferred means of payment and receipt of funds
- Maintain the requirement for two signatories or authorisers for any payment but amend the requirement so that the Clerk can be one of those authorisers
- Align the authority levels to authorise expenditure
- Adopt the existing provision of the Financial Regulations in respect of payment of invoices up to £500 in advance of Council Meetings
- Open a corporate credit card
- Undertake a review of Financial Regulations

ACTION: Clerk

iii) Review of overtime for Parish Clerk

(The Clerk withdrew from the meeting during this item)

The Chair reported that the GGAG has reviewed the Clerk's current overtime arrangements and has recommended they are extended until 31 March 2015. After discussion the recommendation was AGREED.

b) Planning Advisory Group

There were no planning applications to consider. Members noted the contents of the planning schedule.

c) Rights of Way and Environment Group

See paragraph 15/18.

15/23 Parish Council Representatives

East Tynedale Town and Parish Council Forum, 14 January 2015

The Chair reported the following discussions:

- Involvement of parish councils in the planning process (as previously discussed at paragraph 15/21)
- Potential for financial incentives from NCC for businesses who allow the public to use their toilet facilities (the Clerk is liaising with NCC)
- Wylam Parish Council raised the issue of skate parks. It was the clear view of most that they are disproportionately expensive and very often almost unused once the initial novelty had worn off.

Internet safety

A presentation by Mr B Wade, Senior Assistant Head Teacher from Prudhoe Community High School, on internet safety will be held on 25 February at the Community Centre. Dr Vickers will attend on behalf of the Parish Council. The session is aimed at parents and grandparents.

15/24 Review of Community Flood Plan

Mr Parker summarised the existing Community Flood Plan. He concluded that the current arrangements are adequate, accepting that the main responsibility rests with the Environment Agency and the emergency services. Members noted his comments.

DISCHARGED

15/25 Any Other Urgent Business

Stocksfield Festival

The Clerk reported that the Stocksfield Festival Committee has requested permission to use the eastern sports field without payment on Saturday 12 September for the Stocksfield Festival, use the Council's public liability insurance and allow NCC to lay tarmac planed from roads in the entrance to the eastern field. It was AGREED to give approval to all matters. (Dr Vickers declared an interest in relation to the Stocksfield Festival and did not vote).

Action: Clerk

Dr Vickers mentioned the potential to incorporate use of the defibrillators into the Festival. The Clerk will liaise with the Festival Committee.

Action: Clerk

15/26 Date of Next Meeting:

7.30pm 2 March 2015 – Stocksfield Community Centre

The meeting closed at 9.28pm.