

WIDDRINGTON STATION & STOBWOOD PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT THE COMMUNITY CENTRE ON MONDAY 8th April, 2019 COMMENCING AT 6.30. P.M.

In attendance were Councillors Mrs S Willoughby (Chair), D Baron, K Batson, G Tate,

R A Smith (Parish Clerk).

Three members of the public.

1. To receive apologies for absence

none

2. To receive declarations of interest

Cllr Batson declared a non-pecuniary interest in regard to any matters relating to the Stobswood Welfare.

3. To receive questions and comments from members of the public (time limited to 20 minutes in total)

A resident referred to Community Foundation 2018 Impact Report produced by the Ventient Sisters North Steads Wind Farm Community Benefit Fund. In the first year of the fund £185,000 had been made available for the benefit of the communities within the Fund area of benefit. Interest in the Fund has been high and the Advisory Panel were asked to consider a high number of applications and awarded grants to 16 organisations totalling £135,732. The awards ranged from just under £3,000 to four exceptional awards of over £10,000. Details of the applications were included. For the first five years of the Fund £15,000 is ring fenced to support apprenticeships for residents from within the Fund area of benefit and will work in conjunction with the Northumberland College.

Concern was expressed that minutes of the meetings of the Advisory Panel were not made available to the public. It was considered appropriate to request a representative of the Community Foundation to attend a meeting of the Parish Council to discuss the Community Benefits Fund in more detail.

4. Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on the 11th March, 2019 for approval and adoption

Cllr Mrs Willoughby proposed to approve and adopt the minutes; the proposal was seconded by Cllr Batson and carried.

5. Matters arising on the Minutes

(Minute 7 page 24) The Clerk stated that he had notified the Coquet Children's Centre that the change to one session every 7 weeks was not acceptable and the Community Centre was not available. In addition, they were advised that arrangements were being made for provision of a weekly toddler group for a Tuesday afternoon and Friday morning. A response had been received advising that it may be possible to offer an additional Session one afternoon per month. Cllr Mrs Willoughby had spoken to them and concluded that the additional session would not be appropriate.

6. Reports from Outside Bodies

Cllr Mrs Willoughby referred to the Calendar of Parish Events. The date of Saturday the 15th June would not be appropriate as the Fun Fair would not be available. A weekend in August/September would probably be better.

7. Correspondence Received

The Northumberland County Council Elections Returning Officer had notified the Parish Council that the current uncertainty regarding our exit from the European Union there is a possibility that we may need to take part in the upcoming European Parliament elections. Therefore, the Widdrington Station Community Centre may be required for the Polling Station on Thursday the 23rd May, 2019 and the hours of poll will be 7.00 am to 10.00 pm.

8. Planning Applications

a) Planning Ref 18/03280/FUL Proposal change of use from public to private use to extend garden and driveway at Glendale, Heavensangel Cattery, Grange Road, Widdrington Station. Letter received from NCC Development Management advising permission granted.

Concern was expressed that permission had been granted, the Parish Council had objected to the proposal on the grounds that if the application was allowed there would be severe restrictions for vehicular access to neighbouring properties as well as parking problems. The Clerk had received a letter which a concerned resident had forwarded to the NCC Development Management Officer and requested that it was read out at the meeting. It was considered that representatives of the Development Management Department as well as the NCC Highways Section are invited to a meeting on site to discuss the concerns raised.

b) Planning Ref 19/01009/PRUTPO Tree Preservation Order application to reduce 3-4 large branches of T1 Oak back to main stem. Location – Land North West of 50 Maple Drive, Widdrington Station, Applicant Sam Robson. The Parish Council had no objections to the application.

**9. Parishes of Widdrington Station and Stobswood and Widdrington Village Public Footpaths nos 14 & 4
Proposed Rail Crossing Diversion Order Section 119A Highways Act 1980 West Stobswood NZ 225 955
(OS Explorer Map 325)**

The County Council has received an application from Network Rail to divert the above public footpaths which join together between West Stobswood and Widdrington Moor as shown on the supplied plan.

Public Footpath no.14 (Widdrington Station and Stobswood) and Public Footpath no.4 (Widdrington Village) crosses the East Coast Main Railway Line, and the applicants have carried out an assessment of the crossing point, concluding that the crossing is non-compliant to Network Rail safety standards as the warning time is less than the crossing time. The footpath crosses 4 lines in total at this point, two of which form the East Coast Main line, with a line speed of 100 mph. The crossing is on a curve, and passes over crossovers and point work. Network Rail have calculated that it would take approximately 25 seconds to cross the line, but that the warning time (i.e. when trains can be seen) is only 6.6 seconds at the worst point on the crossing.

The erection of a footbridge would be the only satisfactory alternative option at this site; however, the applicants estimate that the cost of this would be in the region of £2.5m. It is therefore considered that it is not reasonably practicable to make the crossing safe for public use. The proposed alternative seeks to maintain a footpath link between West Stobswood and Widdrington Moor using an alternative route through fields, and uses the Felton Lane level crossing to cross the East Coast Main Line, 670 metres to the north of the existing crossing. The existing routes of the public footpaths to be closed were shown on the supplied plan as a solid black line between points marked A and F. The proposed alternative route is shown as a dotted line between points marked A,B,C,D,E and F.

In 2010 we consulted on the extinguishment of these paths, however we received an objection to the proposal and have been seeking an alternative solution since then. The County Council supports this proposal as it allows a footpath link to be maintained using a safer crossing of the railway, however before making an order I would welcome any comments you may have, by **Friday 3rd May** if possible.

Please Note: If inspecting these proposals users are requested to approach the existing rail crossing with extreme caution, and to avoid using it if at all possible.

There was no objections to the Northumberland County Council's support Network Rail's proposal of the safer crossing of the railway with the diversion of the public footpaths.

10. Best kept Darden Awards – Certificates of Commendation.

Cllr Mrs Willoughby considered that currently with only four Parish Councillors it would be difficult for the Certificates to be issued as in the past. Cllr Baron suggested that an invitation could be publicised for residents for nominations for the Certificates of Commendation to be awarded. Cllr Batson considered that the quality of the Certificate could be improved when ordering a further supply from the printers. 200 no A4 size was agreed.

11. Purchase of Defibrillator for Stobswood and consideration of location.

Cllr Tate considered that the most appropriate location was beside the Grit Box at the junction with Grangewood Terrace with the electric supply drawn from the Street light. Cllr Mrs Willoughby proposed that the Northumberland County Councillor Ward Member for Stobswood is requested to consider funding the defibrillator from the Councillor's Community Budget. The proposal was seconded by Cllr Batson and carried.

12. Seafarers UK Merchant Navy – 'Fly the Red Ensign for Merchant Navy Day' on 3rd September, 2019.

It was agreed to defer consideration of a donation to the Merchant Navy Fund and the displaying of a Red Ensign to the next meeting.

13. Finance

i) Parish Clerk's financial statement – monthly update Bank of Ireland Account as at 31.03.2019 £46,028.35
Receipts – monthly interest £3.71, monthly VAT reclaim amount £1,344.82, Proceeds from Fund Raising Event 07.12.18 for 'COMBAT STRESS' £215.00 reconciled with Bank Account statement for March, 2019 from the Bank of Ireland.

ii) Payments for Approval: -

Parish Clerk's March Salary £739.20 (5 weeks)

Parish Clerk's March Expenses £18.00 (Working from Home Allowance £10.00, Home Internet & Telephone £8.00)

A Henderson Parish Handy Person, March Invoice £350.47 (includes £141.97 for additional work and materials)

Ken Arries Seasonal Parish Grounds Maintenance Worker March Payment £237.50

HMRC £542.48 Quarterly Payment PAYE & NIC Quarter Ended 31.03.2019

Northumberland County Council £20.00 Small Society Lotteries annual renewal fee

Molly Muir £100.00 Expedition to Sri Lanka

2019 Morpeth Northumbrian Gathering £50.00
Northumberland Pride 2019 £50.00
COMBAT STRESS £160.00
Cormeton Electronics Ltd £399.60 Annual Fire Alarm maintenance fee
Canon Hygiene £93.60 Period April to June Delivery & Collection of Community Centre Hygiene Units.
Homebase Shelving for Storage Unit at Community Park £125.00 and storage boxes for Community Centre £30.00
ARGOS Little Tikes Jungle Climber for Community Centre £259.99

Cllr Mrs Willoughby proposed approval of the payments; the proposal was seconded by Cllr Batson and carried.

iii) Quarterly Statement 2018/19 – Budget against expenditure as at 31.03.2019

The Clerk distributed a report showing the Council's expenditure for the year 01.04.2018 to 31.03.2019. The total Budget for the year was £53,740 and £57,426 had been spent. The overspend was mainly due to the provision of the Memorial Garden at a cost of £4,653 which had not been included in the Budget when determined in October 2017. £2,600.00 of the cost of the Memorial Garden was met from the Northumberland County Council Ward Members Cllrs Dickinson and Towns Community Budget allocation. The report would be published on the Parish Council Website and Notice Boards to conform with the Government's requirement for information to be available to the Parish Community.

iv) Timetable for Audit of Accounts for the year ending 31.03.2018

The Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments Ltd (SAAA) appointee as external auditor PKF Littlejohn LLP of 1 Westbury Circus, Canary Wharf London E14 4HD has advised the Key dates in regard to the submission of the Return is as follows:-
Deadline by which completed & approved Annual Audit Return and all applicable supporting documents Monday 1st July, 2019

Statutory common period to be included in the smaller authority's period for the exercise of public rights – **Monday 1st July to Friday 12th July, 2019.**

Statutory deadline by which the Annual Audit return and signed external auditor report must be published together with the Notice of Conclusion of the Audit – **Monday 30th September, 2019.**

Recommend that David Booth is again requested to carry out the Internal Audit Report and a meeting in regard to the Risk Assessment under the Annual Statement of Assurance is to be held before the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council to be held on Monday the 13th May, 2019 (Wednesday 24th April, 2019 agreed)

All files and documents to be referred to David Booth by 09.05.19 and Audit Form for the Year Ending 31.03.19 to be presented to the Parish Council meeting to be held on the 10th June, 2019.

14 To consider any urgent business which shall be limited to circumstances in which the Council's responsibilities cannot be met, or the Council's interests are likely to be prejudiced, if the business is deferred to the next available meeting in order to allow for inclusion on the relevant agenda.

Cllr Mrs Willoughby expressed frustration that she had not as yet had a reply to her notification sent to Vera Baird QC Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner dated the 13th January, 2019 expressing concern that the appointment of a Community Police Officer for the Parish to replace the former Police Constable Dent who retired last year. PC Dent's retirement has left a large gap in the community and being a rural area, police officers covering the beat are stretched to cover a large area.

The Clerk was requested to follow up the request.

The meeting closed at 8.50 p.m.

