

ULGHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Parish Council held in the Women's Institute Hall on Monday 15th November 2021

Councillor J Scott (in the Chair)

Councillors G Brown, Mrs H Shaw and Mrs D Wilson

Also in attendance County Councillors J Watson and D Towns and 6 parishioners

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Mrs L Newman.

41/21 QUESTIONS FROM PARISHIONERS

The Chairman welcomed County Councillor Jeff Watson to the meeting. Councillor Watson introduced himself and stated that as well as being a member of the County Council, he served on both Warkworth Parish Council and Amble Town Council. He was a Cabinet member at NCC with responsibility for Healthy Lives. This gave him responsibility for services such as museum and libraries, Active Northumberland, play strategy, theatres and culture. He was also Chair of Advance Northumberland, the development arm of NCC. He had lived in the area since 1995 and had been in business all his working life.

He was attending the meeting this evening as the County Council wanted to build closer relationships with parish and town councils and he and his fellow Cabinet members would be attending several meetings of those councils who had expressed an interest in meeting them. He had been to three or four parish council meetings already. He was delighted to be in attendance this evening and he would try and deal with any queries that arose. If he could not provide the information, he would get back to the council later with a response.

A resident asked if there was any progress in NCC obtaining an audited set of accounts. He regularly checked the website there were no audited accounts for the last two years. He stated there was a letter on the website saying that the NCC auditors could not give an opinion on the accounts.

Councillor Watson stated that Councillors received a full audit report each year and he did not understand why the accounts were not available. He did not believe there were any issues of concern and felt that whatever issues that had been raised had been fully dealt with.

Councillor Shaw raised the issue of housebuilding in the county and the number of houses that were being built on fields. The properties tended to be very expensive, and they tended to be bought by people coming into the area. A lot of houses were purchased as second homes. It was difficult to reconcile all the house building with the available services. She heard many complaints about the lack of infrastructure to support new house builds such as water, sewage, roads, education, provision of GP services etc.

Councillor Watson stated that housebuilding was very difficult to control. If there were suitable areas of land that become available, developers can build on it. If any developer seeks to build more than 10 houses, then 15% is to be made available for affordable housing.

Also, Advance Northumberland were building affordable housing in places like Ellington where a new build 2-bedroom house could be purchased for £80 to 90,000 under the Government Help to Buy scheme.

People who move to the county outside of the area was a sign of the times. There was currently a big exodus from cities. He reported that he also had concerns with the number of holiday homes, and it was an issue in various parish areas.

Regarding the control of holiday homes, NCC were trying to deal with this by introducing the use of covenants on new homes. Councillor Watson quoted the numbers of holiday homes in some areas of the county. The new Local Development Plan also sought to address the issue as well.

Infrastructure was an issue for new developments. Section 106 agreements made developers pay towards services such as doctors and schools. NCC consult with Northumbrian Water on the issue of drainage and sewage services but if they believe the provision is adequate then that had to be accepted.

Councillor Watson reported that following building of multiple new estates in Amble several new shops and a public house had been built.

New roads could only be built if there was Government funding and backing. NCC were doing what they could to improve the rail network in the county.

Councillor Shaw felt that a major difficulty with planning was due to all County Councillors for the area being members of the Planning Committee. Assistance had been given by the local County Councillor when he could, but he could not represent the views of the PC or speak for them at NCC meetings.

Councillor Watson agreed that this would be preferable but unfortunately all County Councillors served on one of the Planning Committees at NCC. Parish Councils were invited to speak at meetings if they had raised an objection or they could speak in favour if they wished.

Councillor Towns stated that he had to be very careful when having conversations about local planning issues so that he was not pre-judging the situation.

Councillor Shaw felt it gave too much authority to Planning Officers who did not know the local areas.

Councillor Brown was concerned that the Clerk had had to contact NCC on 4 or 5 occasions to get various gullies cleaned. She had reported the issues via the website. Eventually after the roads had become flooded, Councillor Brown had managed to get in touch with an officer and the work had been carried out. He asked why a list of officer's numbers to contact could not be circulated to parish and town councils.

If an issue was reported via the website, a reference number was given but there was no follow up to say the work had been done.

Councillor Watson agreed to follow this up.

Two residents who had just moved into the village recently asked if there was any news about the public house.

The Chairman stated that this question had also been raised at the last meeting. He advised that this had just gone through probate. He reported that the building had been listed as an asset of community value by NCC which lasted for five years and could be renewed when this lapsed. This meant that the Parish Council would have the first opportunity to buy the property if it went up for sale. It also meant that it could not be bought for development in the 5-year period.

The resident also asked about climate change and why the streetlights were left on all night. He knew of some areas where they were switched off after a certain time.

Councillor Watson replied that this had been examined when the street lighting was changed but some areas were against it and there were safety issues to consider.

The Chairman stated that he had read some debate that argued that by switching off every other streetlight, this saved more energy.

In relation to climate change, it was reported that NCC had reduced their carbon footprint by more than any other council in the country over the last 10 years or so. It was anticipated that Northumberland County Council would be carbon neutral by 2030. This was helped a lot by no longer having a coal fired power station and also by having so many trees.

Councillor Watson left the meeting at this point and he was thanked for his attendance.

A resident asked about the planning application at the Southcroft Stables and he asked the Parish Council to keep up to date with what was happening with it.

The Chairman stated that the application had only been received on the day that the agenda was sent out and it would be examined carefully.

A resident mentioned that the condition regarding footpaths and lights as part of this application, had been removed on 31st December 2020.

42/21 MINUTES

Members were asked to approve the Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 18th October 2021.

In relation to 34/21, the Chairman reported that the sign had been reported to NCC. He also reported that the village warden would be clearing the footpaths at the Meadows later this week.

RESOLVED – The minutes be approved.

43/21 CORRESPONDENCE

(i) Request for donation from the Great North Air Ambulance

A letter of thanks had been received from the Great North Air Ambulance in respect of the donation made at the last meeting.

RESOLVED – The information be noted.

(ii) Correspondence from the Cricket Club regarding the tennis court

The Cricket Club had made a successful bid to the Wind Farm Community Benefits Fund for the installation of permanent training nets and had asked if they could site them adjacent to the tennis courts. They had asked if they could remove the hedge which was around 5 metres wide at their own expense. This would give them an additional 5 metres of space.

There was concern expressed as the hedging had been planted to muffle any noise. The Chairman suggested a compromise of taking out half the width of the hedge, but it was felt that this would kill it, depending on the species.

After some debate it was agreed that a further debate was needed with the Cricket Club.

RESOLVED – Further discussions would be held with the Cricket Club on this issue.

(iii) Email from Morpeth resident requesting advice with setting up a residents association.

The Clerk had circulated an email received from a resident of Morpeth who wanted to set up a residents association. She asked if one of the members of the UVA/Parish Council would be willing to discuss processes and share experiences.

The Clerk had asked for more information on the size of the area that was covered but had not as yet received a reply.

RESOLVED – The Clerk be asked to follow this up and circulate a reply when received.

(iv) Planning application 21/04319/REM – Reserved matters application for access, layout, scale, appearance and landscaping for 4 no dwellings on approved application 19/00072/VARYCO – Southcroft Stables

The Clerk had received this application on 15 November and had circulated the information to Councillors. A copy of the application was available for circulation at the meeting. Comments had to be made by 1 December 2021.

RESOLVED – It was agreed that comments would be made by the due date.

(v) Email received from resident re footpaths

The Chairman reported that he had received a long email from a resident on 17th November. It related to various questions about footpaths in the area. The Chairman summarised the various comments made, and he stated that he would ensure a reply was sent to the resident as soon as possible. The resident had also asked if the Parish Council still received financial assistance from NCC for having the footpaths cut. This had stopped some years previously as it was proving impossible to find a contractor who would take on the task.

Many of the items raised could not be dealt with by the Parish Council.

The Chairman had a booklet which related to footpaths and Rights of Way and he said he would allow the resident to have a look at this document.

RESOLVED – The information be noted.

44/21 REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES

(i) Ulgham Village Committee

The Chairman of the UVA wished to express huge appreciation to everyone who had helped with the firework display held on 5th November. Many people had assisted before, during and after the display. There were between 700 and 800 people in attendance.

The Chairman of the Parish Council asked Councillor Towns if he would be able to prepare a simple lease in relation to the Meadows which was being leased to the UVA from the Parish Council. Councillor Towns agreed to do that.

45/21 ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT

It was noted that the following accounts were now due for payment:

- (a) Clerk, November 21 salary, mileage £154.66
- (b) HMRC – PAYE payment, Clerk - £91.60
- (c) Widdrington PCC – payment for wreath for Remembrance Sunday - £18.00

46/21 REPORTS FROM CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS

The Chairman reported that there was some activity on the Haul road. He had emailed Councillor Towns who had advised him that one of the company representatives from Sanders would be willing to attend the December meeting to explain what was currently happening and what the future plans were for the road.

It appeared that the company were stockpiling material for future infill.

It was reported that NCC had received an official complaint about the road from a parish council although this was not from Ulgham Parish Council.

The representative from the company had asked for a 10-minute slot at the next meeting.

This was agreed.

47/21 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be held on Monday 20th December 2021 in the WI Hall, Ulgham at 7.00 p.m.