

MITFORD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held at 7.30pm on Wednesday 22 March 2017 in The Village Hall, Mitford.

Present:

Councillors Mrs E Ridley, Mrs E Scott, M Sharp (Chairman – presiding), M Skillen and B Talkes

Also present:

NCC Councillor G Sanderson (who left after item 6)

SE Rickitt – Clerk

NB: "NCC" means "Northumberland County Council"

1: Chairman's opening remarks.

All were welcomed to the meeting.

2: Public Participation.

No members of the public were present.

3: Apologies for absence.

Parish Councillor D Towns

PC A Teasdale

Ms A Young

4: Declaration of any interests and the grant of any dispensations

Councillor	Item	Reason
None		

5: Report from the Beat Manager

PC Teasdale had provided the following written report for which Councillors were grateful

There has been an on-going problem with poachers across Mitford and the Northumberland area which we are addressing through operations during the night. We are getting reports through the day of people with dogs on land so please try and obtain registration numbers of any suspicious vehicles and do not approach or try to detain any person you think may be poaching. We have also had damage caused to fields at Tritlington by quad

bikes. I don't think this is connected to poaching – just off-road driving – which is another issue in the area.

There have been several break-ins to outhouses and sheds from which gardening equipment has been stolen over the last few weeks in the Morpeth area. There was the attempted theft of a quad bike from Netherwitton and diesel stolen from other areas. Please secure your garden sheds and outhouses with padlocks or another crime prevention devices. The same applies to trailers and horse-boxes which are unattended in your yard or outside your property.

I am aware of there have been door-to-door sellers in the area. Usually they are quite polite but we do get complaints that they can be over-bearing. If you have any issues please contact Police on 101. A couple of them had their goods seized last week because they did not have the correct certificate required to sell items door-to-door and they had been quite rude to residents.

6: Report from the County Councillor

Councillor Sanderson reported on a number of NCC issues, including

- He was pleased to say that his representations that the rural road network should be spared from any further budget cuts had been successful. Indeed, it looked as if there might be a modest increase in that budget
- He explained the reasons for NCC leaving the partnership running the camera vans. He hoped that this would mean a greater use of such equipment on other roads across the County.
- Councillors were concerned to hear of the school admissions policy for the Three Rivers Trust which might well cause problems for new parishioners, without two years residence.
- He thanked Councillors for their support over the previous four years, thanks which were reciprocated by the Council

Councillor Sanderson left the meeting at this point

7: Minutes of the meetings held on 1 February 2017

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

8: Any matters arising from the minutes if not already on the agenda

8.1 Carillion has not yet started the work on the Village Hall but as the Bypass is nearing completion the Chairman will continue to press. **Action MSh**

8.2 Light 24MF remains out and needs further reporting. **Action SER**

8.3 The Council were informed that the Chairman has spoken to the Chief Executive of Active Northumberland regarding "Warning – Horses" signs at Tranwell, and she would support their installation. Councillor Mrs Ridley reported that some immediate residents had indicated they did not wish to see such signs. The Council, nevertheless, agreed to support warning signs.

8.4 The noticeboard at Tranwell has been erected and arrangements are in hand for the installation in Mitford. **Action ES & MSk**

9: Planning

9.1 There were no current applications to consider. Applications received since the previous meeting had been circulated.

9.2 A resident had asked the Council to reconsider its position on a previous application – 16/03706/OUT – Land around Featherwood, Tranwell Woods. Following discussion, the Council resolved to confirm that a Tree Management Plan should be required as part of any approval as this should enable an improvement in the quality of the woodland. **Action SER**

9.3 Councillor Mrs Riley and the clerk reported on their discussion with the Strategic Planners at NCC regarding possible boundaries for Tranwell Village and Tranwell Woods

- There had been a recent trial where the issue was whether the two settlements are treated as villages (with the potential for infill development) or as open countryside within the Green Belt. Judgment was anticipated shortly. Councillor Mrs Ridley and the clerk had expressed surprise especially when told that a member of Morpeth Town Council had been asked to provide NCC with a written statement. *Other Councillors confirmed at this meeting that they too were unaware of the legal action and that they had received no requests for statements from NCC.*
- The Strategic Planners' general view that settlement boundaries were a matter for the Neighbourhood Plan and could be addressed at the first review of the Plan, and also that settlement boundaries within the Green Belt were no longer seen as best practice. Inset boundaries confirming that settlements were outside the Green Belt was better practice **IF** a development within a settlement was not to be governed by Green Belt Policies.
- Further discussion of the concept of boundaries is, however, dependent on the outcome of the litigation.

The clerk will circulate the judgment on receipt. **Action SER**

9.4 The clerk is in contact with the County Ecologist regarding a model Tree Management Plan but unfortunately the Ecologist is currently absent due to an accident. **Action SER**

9.5 The clerk is continuing to see if he could obtain an A0 or A1 sized plan of the Parish to assist in identifying the location of planning application sites. **Action SER**

10: Erosion at Fontside

10.1 The Council had been circulated with the following note prepared following a site meeting between Dave Clark of the Environment Agency, the Chairman and clerk on 20 February 2017

Background

1. *The River Font is a main river.*
2. *The Environment Agency does not have a duty to take action where private land is being eroded*
3. *The Agency will assist with advice where possible*
4. *The erosion at the base of the allotment appears to be natural and results from normal/moderate flows rather than only during a flood*
5. *The riverbank at that area needs re-profiling to flatten the incline to make it less susceptible to erosion. It will also need some properly installed rock/stone defences at the foot, in such a way that they are not undermined by erosion. One solution may be a loose rock dump at this location with profiling achieved by taking material from the opposite bank and piling over the rock to create a sloping bank beneath the allotment. Immediately upstream the profiling could be achieved by pulling material down from the top of the bank.*
6. *The tree, which was recently removed at the foot of the allotment, had a floating root ball for and therefore was providing little, if any, additional stability to at the land*
7. *At that point, and further down river, householders are depositing garden waste on the steep bank side. This is killing existing vegetation and therefore reducing the stability of the bank*

Actions

- a. *Mr Clark will seek advice from the Agency's Geomorphologist*
- b. *Mr Clark will make enquiries as to whether the land by the allotment and immediately upstream would qualify for tree planting as part of the Morpeth Flood Alleviation scheme*
- c. *Mr Clark will also seek at a view on whether the Agency can assist with the probable need for Crayfish capture before any works undertaken*

- d. The Parish Council will make an approach to the Mitford Estate to see if they are prepared to assist by re-profiling the bank in their ownership*
- e. The Parish Council will be asked to strongly advise residents and the allotment holder to cease placing garden waste on the bank side*
- f. The Parish Council will consider formally warning their allotment tenant not to use the portion of the site now overhanging the River Font*

10.2 The Chairman had subsequently met Alastair Laverty, the Agency's Geomorphologist on site on 20 March 2017. Councillor Sharp reported that his note of that meeting was with Mr Laverty for comment.

10.3 Councillor Sharp summarised his discussion and explained that the rate of erosion was probably slower than initially feared. His note will set out the reasons and recommended actions.

10.4 Following discussion the Council agreed to take the actions set out in Paragraph 10.1 (e) and (f). Action (d) will remain for further consideration.

Action SER

11: LED Street Lighting

Councillors had received concerns from two of the Fontside residents following the recent installation of LED Street Lighting. The clerk was asked to contact NCC's Street Lighting Team to arrange direct contact with those residents. It was noted that in other areas, NCC had fitted shades to mitigate flare into houses.

Action SER

12: Financial Matters

12.1 The Council noted the current accounts for 2016/2017.

12.2 The following BACS payments were approved

- HCI – Fee for .Gov.UK domain - £83.88 (retrospective)
- Widescope Web Design – Website Hosting Fee - £228.00 (retrospective)
- HMRC – PAYE Q4 – £112.50
- Gavin Christie – Village Warden - £444.00

12.3 The Council approved the draft final accounts for 2016/2017 so that the internal audit could be commenced. [A copy is attached to the signed minutes]

12.4 The Council resolved that it continued to satisfy the criteria for the General Power of Competence.

13: The Website

There was no report in Ms Young's absence.

14: The Village Warden

See item 8.4 above

15: The Village Hall

Councillors were pleased to note the car park had now been marked out.

16: A Possible Allotment Site

It was agreed that this should be the subject of discussion at the Annual Parish Meeting on 17 May 2017. **Action MSh & SER**

17: Correspondence

The Clerk circulated a list of emails received since the previous meeting, and tabled some information material for councillors.

18: Parish Council Elections – May 2017

18.1 The clerk reported that the formal notices of the Parish Council elections had been given on 20 March 2017.

18.2 The timetable was now

- 4 April 2017 – nomination papers have to be handed in by 4.00pm
- 5 April 2017 – details published of nominations – and thus contested elections identified
- 4 May 2017 – Ballot if required
- 6 May 2017 – Counting of Ballots for Contested Parish Council Elections

18.3 Councillors noted with regret that Councillors Mrs Scott and Talkes had decided not to stand for re-election as both had now served as Parish Councillors for 18 years. The Chairman, remaining Councillors and the clerk thanked them both for all their work and support for the Parish and the Council.

19: Any other business

19.1 Councillor Talkes reported that work on the steps in the middle of Scotch Gill Woods had not yet commenced. He would alert the clerk if no action commenced by the time of the next meeting. **Action BT**

19.2 The clerk was asked to report a further large pothole by No. 4 Fontside.
Action SER

19.3 Councillors were concerned about continuing flooding on the Molesden Road by West Coldside and asked this be reported to the Highways Dept. **Action SER**

20. Time and date of next meeting

The Council agreed to hold the next meeting on Wednesday 17 May 2017. This will be the Annual Parish Council Meeting and will commence on the rising of the preceding Annual Parish Meeting scheduled to start at 7.30pm

Confirmed as a true record

and signed by the Chairman..... Date.....

DRAFT