

**Minutes for the Annual General Meeting and Monthly Parish Meeting of
Croxdale and Hett Parish Council
Wednesday 11 May 2016, 7.00 pm**

Parish Council Members Present:

Councillor J Anderson (Chair), Councillor J Shaw (Vice-Chair), Councillor J Garner and Councillor K Summerson.

43/16. To Appoint a Chairman of the Council for the Following Municipal Year

Nominations were sought for the position of Chair of the Parish Council. No nominations were received apart from Councillor J Anderson who was then proposed, seconded and agreed.

Resolved: Councillor J Anderson is elected as Chair of Parish Council for the ensuing municipal year.

44/16. To Complete the Signing of the Declaration of Acceptance of Office by the Chairman

Councillor J Anderson duly signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office as the Chair of the Council.

45/16. To Appoint a Vice-Chairman

Nominations were sought for the position of Vice Chair of the Parish Council. Councillor J Shaw was proposed, seconded and agreed.

Resolved: Councillor J Shaw is elected as Vice Chair of Parish Council for the ensuing municipal year.

46/16. Apologies for Absence:

Apologies of absence were received from Councillors A Watt, I Watt, W Watt, D Wilson and County Councillor M Williams.

47/16. Declarations of Interest:

There were no declarations of interests.

48/16. Policing:

There was no Police attendance at the Meeting. Councillor Summerson commented that an incident took place on 9 April 2016 in Croxdale Working Men's Club involving the Police and queried why this wasn't reported as an incident at April or May's Meeting? Clerk agreed to contact PC Bruce Cockburn to clarify matters.

Resolved: Clerk to contact PC Bruce Cockburn accordingly.

49/16. Public Participation

Michael Graveling was in attendance.

50/16. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 13 April 2016 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

51/16. Matters Arising:

i. Assets Register

Councillor Garner queried if the cricket field behind the allotments should be added to the Assets Register as this is Parish owned land.

Resolved: Clerk to contact G Bestford for clarity and report back findings at the next meeting.

52/16. Parish Clerk Update / Correspondence

i. Caravan at Hett

Clerk reported that the Conservation Team at Durham County Council (DCC) is assisting with this matter and requested photographs of the caravan.

Resolved: Clerk to produce photographic evidence of the caravan in question to DCC to help source the exact location.

ii. Parish Website

Two quotes had been received with regard to developing a new website for the Parish Council from DCC and a local private web-developer based in Durham. Quotations obtained were as follows:

	Durham County Council	Dave Dove Web Developer
Setting up of Parish Website	£569.81	£580.00
Annual Cost	£569.81	£60.00

The annual charge from DCC covered training costs / specialist advice / support as and when required. The Parish would therefore be paying an annual charge for a service they may not require / use. It was therefore agreed to proceed with Dave Dove Web Developer to produce the new website for the Parish Council. The Clerk advised the annual hosting charge of £60.00 could be transferred to another hosting provider (which would not affect the Parish website) if for any reason Dave Dove's business was to cease to exist. If any support was required, a one-off charge would be payable as and when advice was required. It would be the responsibility of the Clerk to keep the website up to date.

The Clerk asked Members to give some thought on what contact details they would prefer to be added to the website and whether a photograph could be provided.

Resolved: Clerk to make contact accordingly and start producing website content.

iii. Council Owned Land Adjacent to the Croxdale Inn

Councillor Shaw reported a meeting took place on 5 May 2016 with the owner of the Croxdale Inn with Mr G Bestford also in attendance. Mr Bestford provided a summary handout to Members, whereby, the owner confirmed that he wished to retain its use as a car park and that he had always been willing to pay for this right but had never been informed of the terms or been asked for payment(s).

The Parish Council therefore was required to decide the following:

- a) To grant exclusive use (subject to allotment holders still having access) of the land to the owner?
- b) To offer the owner the use of the land only on the basis of what was previously permitted – for use as a car park by their customers and employees but without any right of exclusivity and whether a rental income of £500 be acceptable?
- c) Should the Parish Council decide not to grant a lease to the owner, should the land be fenced off and put to alternative use as an allotment or similar?

Following discussion, Members agreed with option (b) and to increase the rental income to £750.00 PA (with a rent review to take place in 18 month's time) and to request the owner to make an upfront payment of £1,000 (£500 for each of the calendar years 2015 and 2016) before the lease is formally drafted.

Resolved: Clerk to write to the owner of the Croxdale Inn accordingly.

iv. Grave Plans

The Clerk reported quotations from DCC have not yet been received in respect of the new grave plans for Croxdale and Hett cemeteries.

Resolved: For Members Information.

v. Cemetery Fencing

A quote had yet been received from Councillor W Watt contact and Councillor Shaw confirmed JWS could not carry out the required works. It was therefore agreed to contact DCC to see if they can provide a quotation for new fencing at Croxdale and Hett cemeteries.

Resolved: Clerk to contact Councillor W Watt for an update and approach DCC for a quote.

vi. Signage Frames at Croxdale Roundabout

This was reported to DCC on 19 April 2016 and collected on 20 April 2016; however Members reported the frames were still present.

Resolved: Clerk to notify DCC that signage frames are still present and request for them to be removed.

vii. Hett Village Hall Association (HVHA)

The Clerk reported she had met with Brian Ogden, Secretary and Donald Waller, Chair, of HVHA on 25 April 2016; and gave an update with regard to their ongoing application for transfer of land to enable the Association to raise funds for a replacement building which was brought to a stand-still by the former Parish Clerk. The Association was keen to move forward and work more closely with the Parish Council.

The Clerk also reported that Brian Ogden had requested copies of the Council's Standing Orders, Constitution (Parish Council does not have a Constitution) and Procedures for AGM which was provided accordingly on 3 May 2016.

Resolved: For Members Information.

viii. Hett Lane Fencing

This was reported to DCC on 19 April 2016; and subsequently issued a letter to the land owner on 21 April 2016 requesting that the fence is to be repaired.

Resolved: For Members Information.

ix. Allotments

Clerk had written to the x2 allotment holders requesting that their allotments are maintained and tided on a regular basis. It was reported that x1 allotment had been seen to but the other remained untidy. Councillor Summerson gave an update with regard to the works to be carried out on his allotment which is currently in hand.

With regard to the issue of rats at the allotments, a charge would be payable to DCC to carry out a site survey and ascertain what possible problems or harbourage issues there may be. Members agreed for this to be carried out in order to resolve the pest issue.

Resolved: Clerk to contact DCC to arrange for the survey to be carried out and await feedback at the next meeting with regard to the up keep of the other concerned allotment.

53/16. Financial Matters

i. Parish Council's 2015/16 Annual Return

The Clerk reported that the Parish Council's Internal Auditor, Mr S Allen, has examined the Council's 2015/16 accounts and records and certified the annual internal audit section of the Council's Annual Return to BDO accordingly. Mr Allen also confirmed that there were no matters arising from his audit but requested the Council to note his comment under objective D.

The Clerk had read to Members sections of the Council's Annual Governance Statement with respect to accounting statements 1-9 and was agreed by Members as prepared by Mr G Bestford.

The Parish Council's Accounting Statements 2015/16 was approved and duly signed by the Chair and Clerk.

Resolved: The Parish Council's Annual Return be completed and sent to BDO (External Auditors) by the submission date of 27 June 2016.

ii. Financial Report for the Period 1 April 2016 – 11 May 2016

A financial update prepared by the Clerk was circulated to Members which included a detailed schedule of receipts and payments for the financial year to date and bank reconciliation to 11 May 2016. The current net bank balances totalled £28,341.57.

The following cheque payments were approved:

Cheque Number – 400226 – JWS – Cemetery Maintenance - £260.00
Cheque Number – 400227 – Miss C Maddison – Clerk's Wages 17 February-30 April - £631.57
Cheque Number – 400228 – HMRC – Tax & NI Contributions – £178.58
Cheque Number – 400229 – Mr S Allen – Internal Audit Fee – £100.00

Resolved: For Members Information.

54/16. Notice of Vacancy in the Office of Parish Councillor

The Clerk reported that the Returning Officer at DCC did not receive the requisite number of signatories to call an election for the recently advertised vacancy. The Parish Council may now therefore co-opt under the Parish Council's own co-option procedures. It was noted as the Parish Councillor vacancy was for Sunderland Bridge, preference would be to fill the position from Sunderland Bridge area, but if this proves difficult due to lack of interest from residents, nominations from Croxdale and Hett would be considered. It was therefore agreed to display an advert for the vacancy throughout the village.

Councillor Anderson raised with Members if anyone was aware of Councillor Wilson's intentions of remaining as a Parish Councillor in view of his new employment at Rotherham and agreed for the Clerk to make further contact to clarify matters.

Resolved: The Clerk to produce an advert for displaying throughout the village for expressions of interest to be sought from residents and directed to the Clerk in the first instance. The Clerk will provide details of nominations at the next meeting for co-option. The Clerk to also contact Councillor Wilson with regard to his position as Parish Councillor.

55/16. Planning Issues

Councillor Summerson reported Mr Greenwell's planning application for a single storey rear extension had been approved. The Clerk couldn't recall seeing this application on the weekly updates of planning applications forwarded by DCC.

Resolved: Clerk to contact Planning Department at DCC for further information in respect of the above application.

56/16. Cemetery Fees and Charges 2016/17

The Clerk had provided a current schedule of fees and charges for Croxdale and Hett cemeteries along with charges for Bowburn and Belmont Parish Council for comparison. Following discussion, it was agreed to increase a grave purchase (burial plot and Exclusive Rights of Burial) from £50.00 to £75.00 and no longer have a separate charge for a double plot. Therefore in future, residents would purchase and be charged for x2 single graves in place for a double plot. There was no record of a headstone fee, however, Members agreed as the grave would already be purchased, a separate fee should not be charged to erect a headstone. All other charges remained unchanged.

Resolved: Fees and Charges Schedule for 2016/17 be updated accordingly and reviewed on an annual basis. A copy will also be sent to Funeral Directors and added to the Parish website.

57/16. Cemetery Update

This item was covered in the Clerk's update at agenda item 07.

58/16. County Councillor Reports

There was no County Councillors in attendance; therefore there was no update provided to Members.

59/16 – AOB

i. Road Markings

Councillor Summerson reported that the road markings on the B6288 (from the Ness Factory to the local shop located on Front Street, Croxdale) have faded and that the old markings are starting to re-appear.

Resolved: Clerk to report to Highways Department at DCC.

Further Payment to Acting RFO / Expenses to Vice-Chairman

- ii.** That under Section 100(a)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the above item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely discussion of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

iii. Former Parish Clerk

That under Section 100(a)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the above item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely discussion of exempt information as defined in paragraph 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

60/16. Date and Time of Next Meeting:

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday 08 June 2016 at 7.00 pm.