

**Minutes for the Monthly Parish Meeting of Croxdale and Hett Parish Council**  
**Wednesday 12 April 2017, 7.00 pm**

**Parish Council Members Present:**

Councillor J Anderson (Chair), Councillor R Burton, Councillor L Griffiths, Councillor J Garner, Councillor M Ord, Councillor K Summerson, Councillor I Watt and Councillor A Watt.

**01/17. Apologies for Absence:**

Apologies of absence was received from Councillor W Watt and County Councillors Blakey and Plews.

**02/17. Declarations of Interest:**

Councillor Burton declared an interest in item 11 (quotations for fencing repairs to the land adjacent to the Croxdale Inn).

Councillor Ord declared an interest in item 14 (Review of Allotment Holder Tenancy Regulations: Gardens and Small Holdings). However, the Clerk advised an application was received from Councillor Ord for dispensation to speak and vote in connection with the Council's allotments and garages.

**Resolved: The Parish Council considered the application for dispensation and agreed to grant on the following grounds for the remaining term of office (May 2017):**

- i. **Granting the dispensation is in the interests of persons living in the authority's area**
- ii. **Without the dispensation, the number of persons may prohibit from participating in any business would be so great a proportion of the body transacting the business as to impede the transaction of the business.**

**Resolved: Councillor Ord be granted the dispensation accordingly.**

**03/17. Policing:**

Police and Crime Commissioner, Ron Hogg, attended the meeting and gave an update to Members on a number of issues. Key areas of discussion included, reduction in Government grants by 25% resulting in a decrease of 380 Police Officers in County Durham, however the force is trying to maintain the same level of PCSO Officers. Overall budget of £1.2M has been reduced to £950,000. New Police HQ has saved a total of £750,000 PA in running costs. Durham Constabulary has been awarded the best Police force in the UK for 3 years running. The force has strong partnerships with communities in tackling organised crime and drug issues with their key focus on area safeguarding with Durham being one of the highest suicide rates.

Matters within the Parish was discussed such as issues with off-road motorcycles, speeding on the A167 and the Police investigation with the former Parish Clerk.

Members thanked Mr Hogg for attending the Parish Council meeting and left the meeting.

**Resolved: Ron Hogg is to respond to the Parish Clerk on the issues mentioned above following investigation.**

#### **04/17. Public Participation**

Michael Graveling was in attendance.

#### **05/17. Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on the 08 March 2017 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **06/17. Matters Arising**

**i. Fencing at Hett Lane:**

A response was received from Brian Buckley of Highways who advised DCC would not normally write to a landowner to renew a boundary wall/fence unless there was an imminent or potential danger to highway users. However, the Parish was advised in May 2016 via Customer Services that DCC did write to the land owner.

**Resolved: Clerk to clarify matters with DCC accordingly.**

**ii. Litter Pick:**

Notification received from DCC that the litter pick between Leeman's Lane / Hett Lane was completed on 31 March 2017.

**Resolved: For Members' information.**

**iii. Big Spring Clean:**

Litter pick within the Parish was cancelled which was due to take place on Saturday 08 April 2017 due to lack of interest and volunteers.

**Resolved: For Members' information.**

**iv. Rogerson Terrace:**

The issue of motorists using the rear of Rogerson Terrace making U-turns during rush hour was raised with the Police to monitor at peak times.

**Resolved: Currently awaiting a response from PCSO Abby Pattison.**

**v. Road Plainings:**

Councillor I Watt confirmed no road plainings has yet been received.

**Resolved: Clerk to follow up with the County Council.**

**vi. Fencing on A167:**

Notification was received informing the maintenance work was carried out on 30 March 2017.

**Resolved: For Members' information.**

**vii. Review of Governance Documents:**

No amendments or queries were received on the following documents and were therefore approved and endorsed with immediate effect.

- a) Standing Orders
- b) Financial Regulations
- c) Members Code of Conduct
- d) Risk Assessment
- e) Disciplinary Policy
- f) Grievance Policy
- g) Data Protection
- h) Complaints Procedure

**Resolved: For Members' information.**

**viii. Former Ness Factory – Parking:**

The issue of parked cars at the former Ness factory was raised with the Police to speak with a member of staff and report the outcome. Councillor Burton confirmed this has since improved with the gates now opening at 8.00 am.

**Resolved: Currently awaiting a response from PCSO Abby Pattison.**

**ix. Road Closure – Thinford Works:**

The road works at Thinford are now complete and roads re-opened. Awaiting a response from DCC following their review of the roads. Clarification was received regarding the issue of abuse and it was abuse from residents to road users who had genuine reason to be travelling on Leaman's Lane. No further correspondence on this matter has been received. With regard to the signage at Sunderland Bridge, there is already a 'unsuitable for HGVS' sign located north of the junction on the A167. It was not considered necessary to provide one from the south as any vehicles would have likely turned off at Butchers Race. In addition, there is already a bit of sign clutter at the Sunderland Bridge junction.

**Resolved: For Members' information.**

**07/17. Parish Clerk Update / Correspondence**

**i. Election 2017:**

Clerk confirmed both Wards within the Parish (Sunderland Bridge and Hett) were not contested, therefore there will be no election on 04 May 2017 for the Parish. All 9 current Councillors were therefore re-elected to the Parish Council.

**Resolved: For Members' Information**

**ii. Transparency Funding 2017/18:**

Clerk confirmed funding for 2017/18 is available for the ensuing year to cover costs such as internet/staffing costs to meet transparency requirements.

**Resolved: For Members' Information.**

**iii. Spennymoor AAP:**

Clerk notified Members she had met with AAP Co-ordinator, Michael Wilkes, on 20 March 2017 for an introduction as new Parish Clerk and for a general discussion on how the Parish can work more closely i.e. funding/grants that we may benefit from and is now included to their distribution list for news and updates.

**Resolved: For Members' Information.**

**iv. Correspondence from St Bartholomew's Church:**

The Church is looking to organise a get together for former Councillor M Williams as a 'thank you' for all of his work and commitment as County and Parish Councillor, however, whilst Members appreciated the works that Mac has carried out over the number of years, it was thought it would be more appropriate for the Church to arrange the event entirely. The Parish would be happy to help publicising the event if required.

**Resolved: Clerk to reply to the Church Warden accordingly.**

**v. Council Tax Increase Notice:**

Clerk circulated a copy of the above notice that is currently displayed within the Parish for information and the Clerk's response to a resident's email requesting further information with regard to the Precept increase.

**Resolved: For Members' Information.**

**08/17. Financial Matters:**

**i. Financial Report for the Period 1 April 2016 – 31 March 2017**

A financial update prepared by the Clerk was circulated to Members which included a detailed schedule of receipts and payments for the year end and bank reconciliation to 31 March 2017. The current net bank balances totalled £3,187.51.

The following cheque payments was approved:

Cheque Number – 400296 - Miss C Maddison – Clerk's Wages Marc - £258.00  
Cheque Number – 400297 – HMRC – Tax & NI Contributions – £64.40  
Cheque Number – 400298 – Miss C Maddison – Broadband Subscription - £31.49  
Cheque Number – 400299 – Durham County Council – 2016/17 Grass Cutting - £2,174.56  
Cheque Number – 400300 – Miss C Maddison – Parish Expenses -£14.05  
Cheque Number – 400301 – JW Smith – Cemetery Maintenance- £160.00

**Resolved: For Members' Information.**

**ii. Appointment of Internal Auditor for the year ending 31 March 2017**

It was agreed that Mr G Bestford be appointed as the Council's Internal Auditor for the year 2016/17 with the following terms of reference:

- To ensure that the Council's annual accounts are prepared in accordance with proper practices as defined in the 'Governance and Accountability for Local Councils – A Practitioners' Guide 2014' and as revised by the 'Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England – A Practitioners Guide 2016';
- To ensure that the Council has a sound system of internal controls which are effectively applied in the exercise of its functions and to so certify the Annual Internal Audit report section of the Council's Annual Return;
- To ensure that the Council has carried out a risk assessment and put adequate procedures in place to manage risks including adequate insurance covers;
- To ensure the Council has adequate measures in place to prevent and detect fraud;

- To ensure that the Council is acting lawfully and has provided electors with the opportunity to exercise their rights in accordance with the Accounting and Audit Regulations;
- To ensure that the Council has acted upon all matters raised in internal and external audit reports.

**Resolved: Mr G Bestford be appointed as the Council's Internal Auditor for the year 2016/17.**

**iii. Approval of the Council's 2016/17 Statement of Accounts, 2017 Annual Return and Audit Requirements**

The Clerk reported 2016/17 audit documents had been received from BDO and will be completed in advance and approved at the next meeting in May.

**Resolved: For Members' Information.**

**09/17. Cemetery Update – Fencing:**

Clerk confirmed a letter 'before court action' was issued to RA Fencing on 10 March 2017 via recorded delivery which was returned to the sender as 'addressee gone away'. A copy was also issued via email to which a response was received on 14 March 2017 requesting for a copy of the fence boundary lines. Clerk replied on 18 March and follow up email was issued on 07 April, suggesting a meeting at the cemetery to take place to discuss the ongoing issues.

Advice was sought from Citizens Advice who suggested to hand deliver a final letter as if it did get to Court we would need to give evidence that every possible way of contacting them has been sought. If a claim to the Small Claims Court was submitted to an old address, the Parish would be charged a further court fee.

**Resolved: Clerk to issue further letter to be hand delivered via Councillors A and I Watt.**

**10/17. Planning Issues:**

No planning matters was discussed.

**11/17. Croxdale Inn Quotations**

Revised quotations and specification were received as detailed below:

Company 1: Cost: £1,400.00 (from £1,480.00) (not VAT registered).

Company 2: Cost: £1,515.00 (not VAT registered).

It was noted for Company 2 that the quote was not revised due to the cost of the timber itself being the main cost. Following discussion, the majority of Members voted for Company 2 to carry out the works due to being local within the Parish. Councillor I Watt did not participate in the voting.

**Resolved: Company 2 be appointed to carry out the above works at the Croxdale Inn car park.**

**12/17. Grounds Maintenance Contract 2017/18**

Clerk had received correspondence from the County Council for 2017/18 grass cutting services within the Parish at a cost of £1,839.31 + VAT. The Clerk circulated a schedule of grass cutting

contractors that other Town / Parish Councils currently use (other than the County Council) for information and discussion on whether the Parish should look elsewhere. It was also noted 2 companies had previously expressed an interest in grass cutting services that were on file. Following discussion, it was agreed the services carried out by the County Council (that covered 2 cemeteries, cricket field and other areas), were value for money and therefore agreed to remain with DCC for another year.

**Resolved: Clerk to complete the contract form for grass cutting services 2017/18 with DCC.**

#### **12/17. Parish Council Byelaw: Cricket Field**

Members agreed for this item to be deferred to the next meeting for discussion.

**Resolved: Clerk to agenda for the next meeting.**

#### **12/17. Review of Allotment Holder Tenancy Regulations: Gardens and Small Holdings**

Members agreed for this item to be deferred to the next meeting for discussion.

**Resolved: Clerk to agenda for the next meeting.**

#### **13/17. County Councillor Reports**

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

**Resolved: For Members' Information.**

#### **14/17. AOB:**

##### **i. Butchers Race**

Councillor I Watt reported the dyke southbound at Butchers Race is building up of rubbish and causing an odour.

**Resolved: Clerk to report to DCC accordingly.**

##### **ii. Garden Waste at Sunderland Bridge:**

Councillor Garner queried what the arrangements were with garden waste at Sunderland Bridge on the village green due to residents cutting the grass themselves following discussion with a resident and questioned if it would be appropriate for the Parish Council to pay for a brown waste bin. As this was previously carried out by the Association, which no longer exists, it would not be appropriate for the Parish to pay for this service as it would be unfair to other residents within the Parish who pay for the Garden Waste scheme direct.

**Resolved: Councillor Garner to feedback to Sunderland Bridge residents.**

#### **15/17. Date and Time of Next Meeting:**

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday 10 May 2017 at 7.00 pm.