

**Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of
Elsdon Parish Council held in the Village Hall
on Thursday 14 May, 2015**

Present: Councillors Colby (Chair), Simmance, Maddison, White and Tait. Clerk Martin Chilvers.
Parishioners – Annie Gregory, Simon Etheridge, David Renton & David Coles (from 7.10)

Apologies: There were no apologies

Election of Officers for 2015-16

Cllr Colby was nominated for Chair by Cllr Simmance and seconded by Cllr Tait

Cllr Simmance was nominated for Vice Chairman by Cllr Colby and seconded by Cllr White

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting – 8 May, 2014: The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as a true record.

Summary of the year's activity and questions (Cllr Colby):

In progress

It has been a further busy year and whilst some topics have been successfully resolved, unfortunately others make an inevitable, predictable and frustrating appearance on the agenda month after month.

These include:-

- Repair works to the local bridges and roads. It sometimes seems that we are lucky to get a response, or even an acknowledgement, from Northumberland County Council on these matters. We accept that all councils have been forced to make large financial cutbacks, and it is recognised that some road resurfacing has been undertaken, and that surveys of the bridges have been carried out, but we will continue to press NCC to carry out the identified repairs. The Parish Council are determined that Elsdon residents will receive as good a service as anyone else. The damage to the footbridge has been reported to NCC and the Northumberland National Park, and we will monitor any progress. We continue to communicate with neighbouring PCs on issues that affect us all.
- Damage to the Village Green There is still concern over the state of the village green. Vehicles cut corners and drive too close to the edges, or even drive straight across the green itself. We are aware of at least one guilty vehicle driver and we have contacted the organisation that they work for to request at least some sort of compensation for the damage caused.

We are also aware that large vehicles, and in particular log wagons, are eroding the edges of the green. Evidence is being collected and the PC is working with the NCC and NNPA to discover what effective action can be taken not only to repair the damage but ensure that no further erosion occurs. The PC are monitoring the situation regarding the speed and possible weight violations of large vehicles coming through the village, as this may cause further damage to the green, the vulnerable bridges, and not least endanger the lives of residents. We will contact the police and other agencies as required.

We have been in regular contact with Homes for Northumberland regarding the creation of “parking areas” in front of the properties in Crawford Crescent in order to protect the edge of the green. There was some hope that they would be able to part, or even fully, fund this work, but unfortunately financial constraints have prevented this. We will continue to work with all agencies and seek out possible funding to enable this vital piece of work to go ahead.

- Superfast Broadband We are assured that Superfast Broadband will be available to Elsdon residents before the end of September. It was extremely heartening to see so many residents at the recent meeting in Otterburn on this subject, and our thanks must go to David Coles for publicising this event and campaigning so strongly on this issue.

The community will be receiving “fibre to premises” that will provide an extremely fast service. Details are only just becoming available, and it does appear that there are still a number of hurdles to overcome, but it is at last within touching distance. It would appear that a few residents living in the more remote areas of the parish may, at least initially, fall outside the catchment area that BT Openreach are able to provide with a service, but we will continue to monitor the situation and keep residents updated.

- Middle Hill Wind Farm The Parish Council continues to monitor the potential application for a windfarm at Middle Hill, to ensure that all details are properly presented and correct procedures are followed.
- The Rector’s School This is an empty property that has caused much frustration over a number of years. The PC is looking into ways in which this property can be protected, and perhaps restored to a useful purpose, but it has been and continues to be, a complex situation that cannot be solved as quickly as we would hope.
- Councillor Bridgett Unfortunately another whole year has gone by without a visit to the PC by Councillor Bridgett. We will continue to issue invitations in the hope that he will be able to attend at least one meeting during the coming year. He does receive copies of our agenda and minutes.

2). More recent topics

- Village defibrillators Following a presentation by Damian Weston, the PC is working with other Parishes and committees to enable Elsdon to benefit from at least one defibrillator in the near future. We know of individual fund raising activities in Elsdon planned for the summer months, and we are very grateful to those residents who have offered to organise them. We have also been made aware that a recent Promise Evening event in Otterburn raised almost £10,000, and that much of the Redesdale Valley will benefit from this. Our congratulations go to those who made this happen, and to those who donated and bid for the promises!
- Parking permits for Elsdon residents at Kielder Water The PC is working on behalf of residents to attempt to have Elsdon included in the free parking catchment for Kielder Water. Whilst an initial request has been unsuccessful, we will continue to seek a more positive resolution.
- Winter’s Gibbet After a long interval without our iconic landmark, Winter’s Gibbet has been replaced, sadly without the head! The PC is aware that the head is in the possession of the

National Trust who own and maintain the Gibbet, and we have been in correspondence with them for its return. The Elsdon Community are offering to potentially assist financially to have this replaced, but so far our requests have not been positively received by the National Trust spokesperson. But, we shall keep channels of communication open, so, watch this space, I know of at least one local person who would be delighted to write the strapline for a newspaper article on this topic!

- Community Asset Transfer The PC will be investigating, in collaboration with EPIC and the whole community, the potential possibility of using the “Community Asset Transfer” process, for very different reasons, for a couple of properties in Elsdon should the need arise. No decisions have been made, but it is part of the ongoing desire to discover new ways of funding the improvement and maintenance of the village in difficult financial times.
- Redesdale Landscape Partnership Project Following on from the meeting on this topic earlier in the year at The Redesdale Arms, that was attended by a gratifyingly large number of Elsdon residents, a list of Elsdon’s aspirations was put together in collaboration with EPIC, for this funding bid that will be submitted in the next few weeks. Should the bid for HLF be successful it will provide funds to roll-out local community projects.
- Garden Waste Collection Requests for a garden waste collection service met with a longwinded, and some felt inappropriate, response from NCC. We are undaunted, and will keep up the pressure.

3). Resolution

Elsdon Projects in the Community (EPIC) has now been established in its own right, and is meeting on a regular basis. Funds that were held by the PC on behalf of EPIC have now been passed over, and they have opened their own bank account. The PC will continue to work closely with EPIC on projects that benefit the community.

We have continued to build upon the relationship with NNPA and have been grateful for the support received in the community over the last 12 months. Particular thanks go to David Coles and Alan Colby who worked alongside the Village Fete committee to produce a bid that resulted in £2500 being donated by NNPA for the very successful 2014 fete.

Whilst it took some time and presented a number of problems, we did eventually achieve the conversion of the street lights to LED. Adjustments to brightness and direction were identified, and carried out, and feedback across the community has been very positive.

The breakdown of the drainage on the green has been a longstanding issue, but thanks to hard fought £2,252 compensation from Northern Power Grid following the problems caused by underground cabling, much has been achieved. Special thanks go to Ian White who project managed this operation with help from a number of local people. The work was completed in time for the village fete, and was much appreciated.

Those properties in the village managed by Homes for Northumberland were refurbished during 2014. The PC intervened on behalf of individual residents who had encountered problems, and these were successfully resolved.

Thanks to the efforts of the Village Hall committee, supported by the PC, Elsdon has successfully applied to become a Dark Sky Discovery Site. Interpretation boards have been installed and further Dark Sky events are planned this year.

Despite funding becoming increasingly tight, the PC made a decision to maintain the precept at the same level of £1,500. During the past year the PC have made donations of £50.00 to the Great north Air Ambulance, Rede Valley newsletter and the North Tynies Child Care. A commitment has also been made to give small donations to the 2015 firework display. It is hoped that the funding of small local events etc. can now be handed over to EPIC.

4). Thank yous!

On behalf of the PC I would like to thank the whole community. Their support over the last year has been tremendous. A large number of residents have attended external meetings, and have shown their commitment to the improvement and protection of the parish. Thanks to the generosity of Ken Hargreaves and Maureen Walton, and the hard spade work of a number of residents, we have daffodils all around the Pinfold and Church, and they looked beautiful this spring.

I would also like to thank Cllrs. Sue Bolam and Chris France. Between them they have attended most of our meetings, and I am very grateful for their support, guidance, advice, and their openness when reporting on matters that affect us.

Finally, I would like to thank Martin and my fellow councillors. Each of you has given up so much of your valuable time to attend meetings, and to work on a number of projects. It has been a great year with the positives outweighing the negatives, and I enjoy our debates on issues that are fired by an enthusiasm and passion. We are a very small community and many of us wear several hats. I would like to thank everyone for their professional and unbiased approach to PC matters.

This year in particular has proved physically and emotionally difficult for me in a couple of ways, and I am so grateful to you all for your understanding and support. 2015/2016 can only get better, I am looking forward to it!

Financial Report:

The Clerk provided a report on the finances from 1 April, 2014 through to 31 March, 2015.

- Opening bank balances totalled £3,154 and closing for the year at £3,425.
- The Precept had been maintained at £1,500.
- There had been £2,500 and £386 funding successfully applied for from NNPA for the village fete and church exhibition respectively. £2,253 had been received from Northern PowerGrid as compensation after problems relating to the underground cabling work. £3,708 receipts had been received from the village fete and £503 was credited as VAT reclaim. Also £133 was received as Northern PowerGrid wayleave.
- There had been £150 made in donations during the year. £50 to Great North Air Ambulance, Rede Valley Newsletter and North Tynies Child Care.
- £2,298 had been paid out in respect of the village green drain repairs. Fete expenses totalled £2,495 and further payments were made from the profits of £2,000 to PCC, £1,300 to EPIC for the 2015 fete and £438 to EPIC for community projects.

Reports from County Councillor and questions: Cllr Bridgett was not in attendance.

Any other business:

There was no business raised.

Meeting closed at 7.20pm