

**Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of
Elsdon Parish Council held in the Village Hall
on Thursday 9 May, 2019**

Present: Councillors Simmance, Maddison, Morgan, Graham and Renton. Clerk Martin Chilvers.
Cllr France

Apologies: There were no apologies.

Election of Officers for 2019-20

Cllr Simmance was nominated for Chair by Cllr Graham and seconded by Cllr Maddison
Cllr Graham was nominated for Vice Chair by Cllr Simmance and seconded by Cllr Renton

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

For this year's Chair's report I have blocked items under subject headings.

ROADS

Matters concerning the roads in and around the parish have again occupied much of the Parish Council's attention during the year but I can, hopefully without fear of contradiction, report that a number of issues have been addressed.

1. It has taken many years of communications with the County Council and substantial pressure from both Elsdon and Hepple parishes for the urgent and more permanent improvements to the B6341 from its junction with the A696 across to Thropton. The good news is that significant work was carried out in October and November and is currently being undertaken at the time of this meeting. Despite long frustrating diversions, all users of the road will be appreciative of this work although it is hoped the verges are prepared suitably to prevent larger vehicles from damaging them in the future. It would have been better in the long term for the whole road to be resurfaced but what we have is a vast improvement on the state in which it has been for many years.
2. We are still waiting for the road to have new white-lining to aid road safety in dark and foggy conditions but understand that the County Council is prioritising road resurfacing around the county.
3. The Parish Council also submitted, via the Local Transport Programme, a proposal for work to be undertaken on the A696 where subsidence had occurred near Blaxter Quarry, as well some substantial improvements to the Gibbet road. It is encouraging to report the first matter has been resolved. However the Gibbet road is still in a very poor condition and getting worse as it is being used as an 'unofficial' diversion route. We will continue to press the County Council about this matter.
4. There was a major drainage issue on the Gibbet road, creating a potentially dangerous ice problem. Despite the County Council pressing the point that the ditch was the responsibility of the riparian landowner, they actually sorted out the problem themselves. Because the road is not usually gritted during the winter months, we have succeeded in having three grit bins installed, to ensure greater road safety.
5. The Parish Council is also in communication with the County Council regarding the Raylees road, seeking action to ensure heavy vehicles refrain from using this narrow road with the tight junction at the A696, despite satnav directions.
6. The roundels and other road markings associated with the new 30mph signage at the entrances to the village have now been painted and spring bulbs planted at some of the new signs.
7. The issue of Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATs) in Elsdon came to the Parish Council's attention at the close of the year ending May 2018. The Parish Councillors, after giving consideration to this, believed it would not be beneficial to the community for any of the suggested routes to become BOATs and submission to the County Council was made accordingly. There has been no confirmation from the County Council that this has been agreed but presumably it has and so will ensure that the upkeep of these roads remains the responsibility of the County Council.

8. The new street sign for "Crawford Crescent leading to Crawford Close" has been installed by the Parish Council. It is believed this has helped visitors and, in particular, delivery drivers to find their location quicker.
9. To that end, a new street plan of Elsdon has been updated and posted across the Parish including the website.

RAY WIND FARM COMMUNITY FUND

1. The Parish Council has been kept updated on progress either by its representative on the Ray Wind Farm Community Interest Company, Paul Cowie, or by the Parish Clerk, Martin Chilvers. There have been a number of issues raised over the months and we thank them both for their input.
2. It was encouraging to see that three applications for funding were successful during the year, namely for heated pads for all the seating in St Cuthbert's Church, for a new porch at the Village Hall and for extra marquees and a gazebo, chiefly for the Village Fete. We are grateful to those individuals who willingly give of their time to continue to improve the quality of life for Elsdon residents.
3. The Parish Council has also submitted a preliminary enquiry regarding firstly the funding of brown tourist signs for the village and secondly a project manager for installing protection to the edges of the Village Green.

REVITALISING REDESDALE

1. Thanks go Cllr Morgan for representing the Parish Council on the HLF Revitalising Redesdale Steering Group.
2. The Parish Council has applied successfully to Revitalising Redesdale and to the National Park for funding to replace one of the benches surrounding trees on the Green. It is expected that this will be ordered soon and installed prior to this summer's Fete.
3. The Time Bandits held an informative event on the Green, followed by a Tea Set in the Village Hall.

VISITORS

We welcomed two visitors to Parish Council meetings this year. These were:

1. Sally Brewis from the Bailiffgate Museum in Alnwick to talk about the Out Of Town project and the launch, involving Elsdon Writers' Group.
2. Resident Margaret Tait who, as Chair of the School Governors, gave us a valuable resumé of the federation of Otterburn and West Woodburn schools into the River Rede Schools Federation.

We are grateful to both of them for giving up the time to speak to the Parish Council.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

1. It is good to see that work on the Pinfold, a collaboration between the Parish Council and EPIC, has now been completed with the installation of a membrane and pea gravel, and the siting of a new wooden picnic bench, making it more welcoming for residents and visitors.
2. The Village Fete on August Bank Holiday Monday was a great success on a warm sunny day. It was well attended and valuable funds were raised for various local projects as well as St Cuthbert's Church.
3. The bonfire and firework display was well attended and was as successful as ever, and enjoyed by all.
4. BBC Countryfile visited Elsdon to film their Christmas Special. The Bird in Bush and the First & Last Brewery were heavily featured, showing-casing Elsdon and subsequently attracting a significant increase in visitors to the village and surrounding area. We are delighted that both the pub, now serving meals, and the brewery appear to be thriving.
5. The Parish Council expresses its thanks to all those volunteer local residents who were involved in organising all these activities, not forgetting also the Big Lunch, the Tea Set, the Film Club, and

the series of events in the Church under the heading "Culture in a Cool Place". Without their enthusiasm and dedication, none of this would happen and Elsdon would be the poorer for it.

MISCELLANY

1. After careful consideration of the proposed projects around the Parish the Councillors decided to keep the parish precept at the current level of £1,525.00.
2. The Parish Council has now introduced online banking.
3. The Parish Council has dealt with three planning applications during the year, for a barn at Whiskershiel, for a porch at the Hemmel and for the new position of Smoutel Ford, with associated alterations to the line of the public bridleway.
4. During the last year the Parish Council has made donations to the Great North Air Ambulance and to Community Action Northumberland, both of which organisations do exceptional work in the local area.
5. After lengthy negotiations with the County Council it has been agreed to have an additional street light on the road from Bird in Bush to Crown Farm. This will be installed, hopefully this month, at the Crown Farm end of the road; it should not impact on the view of the church but will improve the safety of pedestrians using this road at night.
6. The Parish Council has met with and is awaiting response from the County Council for the potential installation of tourist brown signs at significant junctions for Elsdon. These will help to 'put Elsdon on the map' and notify drivers of, and direct them to, the facilities and places of interest that the village has to offer.
7. Dog mess has become an increasing problem throughout the village. The Parish Council has recently purchased a new litter bin and a couple of dog poo bag dispensers. These will shortly be fitted and it is hoped those who have not been clearing up after their dogs will do so in future helping to keep Elsdon tidy and clean.
8. The Parish Council was informed that the new website for St Cuthbert's Church is being developed and should be "live" in the not too distant future.
9. The Parish Council has supported the Bailiffgate Museum in Alnwick with its successful HLF funding application for the 'Out Of Town Museum'. The official launch event was on 27 April and it is hoped local residents are able to assist in the collection of information and articles for the project.
10. The Parish welcomed Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP in December, using the pub as the venue for her visit.
11. The Parish Council wishes to recognise the valuable contribution given to Elsdon and the surrounding communities by Otterburn resident Emma Anderson in producing the Redesdale and Three Kirks Newsletter, to keep us all informed about local events. Also thanks to Alan Colby who runs the Elsdon Town Crier.
12. The Parish Council regularly receives comments from local residents about their local environment. Issues such as protruding bolts at the footbridge, the tree stump on the Green and barbed wire on the Mote Hills have all been addressed. There is the matter of the broken fence by the Burn and this is being dealt with by the County Council.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank our National Park representatives, Cllrs Sue Bolam and Chris France, for their frequent attendance at meetings. Their knowledge and experience has been invaluable over the last 12 months as it has for many years.

I also wish to thank my fellow councillors for their work during the year, to vice-chair Cllr Glen Graham, to Cllrs Keith Maddison, Peter Morgan and David Renton for their support.

Last but not least, I wish to thank our clerk Martin Chilvers most wholeheartedly; through his efficiency and dedication, as well as forbearance, we are able to operate effectively month after month and continue to represent our community.

Financial Report:

The Clerk provided an update on the Parish Council finances. Opening balance on 1 April, 2018 was £3,914 and closing balance on 31 March, 2019 was £4,221. Income was £1,857 that included £1,525 precept as well as £138 way-leave from Northern Powergrid and a VAT re-claim of £194. Expenditure during the year totalled £1,550 including £758 Clerk salary, £120 room hire, £280 Insurance and £150 donations (£50 to Community Action Northumberland and £100 to the Great North Air Ambulance). There was also a payment of £89 for the purchase of two dog poo bag dispensers.

There was discussion on the use of the Parish Council bank savings account and the Clerk advised he would investigate the account for interest paid and whether there was notice to withdraw funds.

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

Any other business:

There were no other matters raised.

Meeting closed at 7.30pm