

## **Rochester with Byrness Parish Council**

Minutes for the Meeting of Rochester with Byrness Parish Council held on

Tuesday 28 March, 2023  
*At Byrness Village Hall*

**1 Attendance:** S Chapman (Chair), P. Scott, N. Hall, P. Softley, M. Kelly & M. Chilvers (Clerk). Andrew Webster & Victoria (Northumbrian Water) Barb Sunley & Tracy Scott (all until 7.40)

**2 Apologies:** There were no apologies.

**3 Declaration of Interest:** P. Softley & S. Chapman 7k. N. Hall 9c – Rochester Village Hall donation request.

**4 Minutes of previous Parish Council meeting on 31 January, 2023** – Were agreed and signed as a true record.

**5 Guest speaker** – Andrew Webster (Northern Powergrid (NPg) regarding the new substation in Byrness)

Mr Webster provided background and then a progress report of the substation in Byrness. He reported that in an event of a power outage with normal usage of Byrness residents there should be approximately 2.5 hours of power from the substation. Naturally if residents were able to reduce their usage then the length of time the substation could provide power would be extended increasing the chances of no interruption before full power was installed. He reported that testing has shown that a switch over in power to the substation was down to milliseconds and that this should be good enough to prevent clocks etc going off and then need resetting when power had switched to the substation. He advised that some aspects still required planning out including communications with residents.

Mr Webster also provided an update regarding landscaping of the area. Cllr Softley highlighted there were a number of large rocks that required to be removed from the Parish Council land next to the substation and that top soil with grass seed should be re-instated where required. Mr Webster advised that there would be a power outage for each property when it came to connecting the substation however there would be communications as and when this will happen and assistance for those residents needing it.

Mr Webster spoke of NPg plans for further roll-out of the substations with 30 more planned. The Councillors thanked him for NPg choosing Byrness to be the first.

The Chair asked whether there was any chance of an EV charging point being installed in Byrness as well by NPg. Mr Webster advised that he would do what he could to make it happen and would update at a later date.

The Chair thanked him and Victoria for their time. They left the meeting at 7.40.

**6 Opportunity for members of the public to raise matters** – None was raised.

### **7 Matters arising**

a) *Revitalising Redesdale, Evaluation report, ongoing work* – The Chair reported on the meeting she attended on 17 March which was the 'final' Revitalising Redesdale event.

b) *Road signs at Carter Bar* – The Chair advised it was hoped the new signage would have been in place before the meeting on 17 March but unfortunately it was not, however NCC has advised it should be completed during April.

c) *Northumbrian Water treatment works legacy for Byrness* – It was confirmed that the slide had been installed in Byrness play area. It was reported that two children had struggled to climb the steps and the Clerk was asked to report this to Proludic to establish whether the steps could be made closer together.

d) *NCC / Forestry Commission Great Northumberland Forest tree planting* – The Clerk reported that he had been advised that 12 trees had been planted in the designated area and the Chair confirmed this.

- e) Maintenance of Byrness garages – It was confirmed that the treatment work had been completed and the gutters as well as roofs cleared of debris. It was agreed to obtain a quote for repairs needed on the guttering and the threshold within the Parish Council garage.
- f) Tree maintenance in Byrness – The Clerk reported that he had spoken to Kate Thick (Log Bank) who would be collecting the logs around 22 – 24 April.
- g) Resurfacing of the 'Ride' at Byrness – The Chair advised that Forestry England would still be laying the gravel however no date had as yet been fixed for the work. Cllr Softley highlighted that there was a problem with the small footbridge on the lower river side path. The Chair reported she had been at the location with Alex MacLennan who advised he would arrange for repair work to be carried out at the same time as the 'Ride' repairs. It was agreed David Mason would meet with either Cllr Scott or Softley to agree the location of waymarkers for the Three Kings walk in Byrness which would be placed on Parish Council land.
- h) Condition of NCC roadside signage at Byrness – The Clerk advised that the Byrness double sided sign had been ordered and he was waiting to hear from NCC when it would be fitted.
- i) Moles on Parish Council land, Byrness – The Chair reported that she had received a copy of A. Scott's insurance and it did provide the required public liability cover. It was agreed by all that this met the requirements of the Parish Councils insurers it is OK to continue to use Mr Scott for the mole catching. Cllr Scott reported that there were none on the Parish Council land at present.
- j) Information board at the car park, Byrness – The Chair reported & had shared the details that will be on the board giving the history of Byrness and this received support from all.
- k) Request to store materials for Byrness Village Hall on Parish Council land – Cllr Softley provided details of the materials likely to be stored and the request was agreed. It was also advised the Parish Council garage could be available if required. Cllr Kelly asked that the area was made good after the work.
- l) Rochester Roundhouse: including planting saplings, wild-flowers & booking events – The Chair reported that she still had the wild-flower seed to sow. She also advised that an event had been held at the Roundhouse and a payment of £6.00 received. It was confirmed that the charge for the hire of the Roundhouse would be £3.00 an hour or £20.00 for a full day. It was agreed to provide Isabel at the cafe with a key to the Roundhouse so visitors could look round. The Chair also referred to a conversation she had with Duncan Wise (NNPA) about the possibility of holding dark sky events at the location and possible funding available for the purchase of a telescope and it was agreed to proceed with this. The Clerk reported that it was hoped that staff from Landmarc would assist with the planting of the hedging saplings during April.
- m) Storage of original Rochester Village Hall lease at Woodhorn – Cllr Hall advised he would make an appointment to lodge the lease and submit it under the name of Rochester Parish Council.
- n) Damaged roadside signs and flower box in Rochester – The Chair reported that Robbie was building a replacement flower box, the cost of which would be met by the company whose driver hit the previous box.
- o) Catcleugh lay-by, Bremenium Way drainage & Rochester road flooding – It was reported that there was no update on this matter this month.
- p) Grass cutting costs and frequency in 2023 – The Clerk reported that the current contractor needed to increase each grass cut cost by 7% to cover increase costs. This was agreed by all. It was also agreed that the frequency would remain as it was in 2022 – up to 10 cuts in Byrness and up to three in Rochester covering the same locations. It was agreed to consider a grass cutting for the Roundhouse area at a later date.
- q) EV Charging Points, possible funding – The Chair reported on the application submitted on behalf of Rochester community for a charging point in the Rochester Relish cafe car park. This

was with agreement of the owners as well as Lord Redesdale. As yet there had been no response from NCC as to whether the application had been successful.

- r) Neighbourhood Watch recruitment drive – The Chair provided details of this matter and it was agreed to post the topic on the Parish Council website as well as the noticeboards.
- s) Identification required at voting stations for elections – It was noted that photo identification would be required to vote at polling stations from May 2023.
- t) Changes to 885 bus service to Hexham – It was noted that the operator for this service had changed and was now Adapt. Whilst the time table remained the same the service now ran on Monday's.
- u) Parish Council vacancies – The Clerk reported that he had not received any interest from the posters. It was agreed to add to the local newsletter and Facebook.
- v) Date of September Parish Council meeting: A revised date of Wednesday 4 October was agreed and availability at Rochester Village Hall would be checked.

## 8 Planning

- a) Pre-planning consultation for a telecommunications installation at land north of A68, Catcleugh reservoir, Rochester, NE191TX: Feedback had been provided with agreement in principle subject to a planning application submitted.
- b) 23/00622/ADE: Advertisement consent for 1x lectern, Car park, Byrness: There was full support for this application although noted that the Parish Council had submitted it.
- c) 23NP0020: Permanent retention of the access at the existing Rochester water treatment works: – There was agreement from all to support this.
- d) 22/01459/FUL: Retrospective: Construction of a barbecue hut and planting of 250 trees & 200 metre of hedgerows: Elishaw Farm, Elishaw Moor, NE191JH – Application withdrawn – This was noted by all.
- e) 21/02639/FUL: Conversion & extension of an agricultural building into a microbrewery & eatery. Temporary hot drink takeaway container: Elishaw Farm, Elishaw Moor, NE191JH – Application withdrawn: This was noted by all.
- f) 23N0008: Demolition of existing agricultural building and estate office and erection of replacement buildings including new estate office: Cleughbrae Farm, Rochester: This application was supported.

## 9 Finance/accounts for payment

- a) Parish finance update – The Clerk advised the current bank balance was £26,677 and with payments due he forecast the closing financial year balance to be approximately £22,493. The forecast provided for 2023-24 suggested possible over spend of £1,156 against the precept of £7,000 but that a more detailed review would be provided at the annual meeting in May.
- b) Policy for assessing donation requests – The draft policy for assessment of donation requests was discussed. The Chair reported on her conversation with Graeme Popay (NALC). NALC did not provide a template for such matters. She advised that there were already strict rules within Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 on what donations/grants a Parish Council could make. It was questioned whether a policy was required. Cllr Softley provided reasons why he was not in agreement to restrictions of the policy. It was highlighted that the Parish Council received so few donation requests that with the existing rules in place a policy was not required. Cllr Hall requested sight of the existing rules and the Chair agreed to share these with all. It was agreed all would give further consideration to the topic and a decision would be made at the next meeting. Meantime a decision was agreed that to assist with budgeting donation requests would only be considered twice a year, at the May and November Parish Council meetings.
- c) Payments – The following payments presented were all agreed.
  - M. Chilvers salary for February & March, 2023 of £304.82 was agreed.

- Payment to Turtle Engineering Ltd for a defibrillator battery for the Rochester device for £199.99 + VAT was agreed.
- Payment to Proludic Ltd for purchase and installation of slide in the Byrness play area for £2,856.11 + VAT was agreed.
- Payment to Frank Charlton for felling and cutting the large tree at the Byrness car park for £550.00 + VAT was agreed.
- Payment to John D Falla for £288.69 + VAT for ecosote for the Byrness garages was agreed.
- Payment to C. Mowatt Landscaping Ltd for £600.00 + VAT for treating the Byrness garages and clearing gutters as well as roofs was agreed.
- Payment to NNPA for £2,500.00 for the Carter Bar signage was agreed. This amount had previously been provided by Cllr John Riddle for NCC to create and install signs.
- Payment of £14.00 to Byrness Village Hall for hire of hall on 28 March for meeting was agreed.
- Clarification was provided by the Chair that the Rochester Village Hall donation request which had been Agreed at the January meeting was towards the costs of the planned Coronation event in May only. The village hall committee had not heard from NCC in respect of their £500 grant application and it was assumed they had been unsuccessful. All confirmed agreement to the £500.00 donation.
- The Clerk advised that the Rochester defibrillator unit required new pads at the end of April and it was agreed by all to purchase these. It was also highlighted that there was a problem with the Rochester defibrillators new battery and this was being investigated.

#### **10 Any Other Business:**

a) The Chair highlighted the Northumbrian Water Ltd would be 'flushing' the water system on 29 March that would include properties in Rochester and Byrness.

b) The Chair reported that the Parochial Church Council for Horsley and Byrness would be holding their Annual meeting on 17 April in Byrness Village Hall. All residents are welcome.

c) Cllr Kelly highlighted that the Rochester Village Hall newsletter would shortly be available and would be shared.

**Date of Next Meeting. Tuesday 30 May, 2023, at Rochester Village Hall, starting 7:00pm.**

The Ordinary meeting will follow the Annual Parish Meeting

Meeting closed 9.30pm