

## **Rochester with Byrness Parish Council**

Minutes for the Meeting of Rochester with Byrness Parish Council held on  
Tuesday 28 November, 2023 *At Byrness Village Hall*

**1 Attendance:** S Chapman (Chair), P. Scott, N. Hall, P. Softley, M. Kelly & M. Chilvers (Clerk).

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

**3 Declaration of Interest:** None were declared

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

**5 Guest speaker** – None

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

**7 Matters arising**

a) Maintenance of Byrness garages – The Clerk reported he had been advised Mr Lynn was scheduled to undertake the work that week providing the weather was not too bad.

b) NCC roadside signage at Byrness – It was confirmed that the replacement sign had been installed by NCC however there was still a need for the shrubs around it to be cut back.

c) Land between burn and Old School House boundary – The Clerk reported that he was looking to confirm a date in January for Frank Charlton to visit and undertake a tree survey of the highlighted area as well as across the rest of the Parish Council land in Byrness.

d) Byrness flooding incidents and slurry transportation from Byrness sewage plant – It was confirmed that Northumbria Water (NWL) had undertaken an initial survey of both areas (near 1 Otterburn Green and 32 South Greens) and advised it was not a fresh water pipe causing the flooding. NWL were due to have an engineer visit from the sewage and drainage team to assess the area but as yet a date had not been confirmed. The Clerk reported that NWL had advised that the a tractor was removing slurry due accessibility difficulties of the sewage plant at Byrness. The work at the plant was due to be completed by February 2024. NWL advised that whilst the exit route would preferably be along Otterburn Green unfortunately the tractor was not able to pass the two parked camper vans and had to therefore go through South Greens. The spokesperson for NWL did advise that she would ask the driver to go slower following complaints about the speed through the village.

e) Catcleugh lay-by, Bremenium Way drainage & Rochester road flooding – The Chair reported that some of the verges along Bremenium Way had been cleared and this had had a positive impact but there was still lying water and repairs were required to the drains along the road. The Clerk was asked to contact Glen Harrison (NCC) again for a timescale of the work.

f) Damage to Byrness church car park area – It was confirmed that the work had been completed satisfactorily.

g) Possible EV charging point in Rochester – The Chair reported that the Parish Council was waiting for NCC to sign-off of the budget for the work before the project could progress. This was due in early 2024.

h) Speeding vehicles through Rochester – The Chair reported that Guy Opperman MP had met the Chief Superintendent on 27 October about local speeding traffic problems. As yet there had been no feedback from the meeting however the Clerk was asked to chase for an update.

i) Rochester defibrillator – The Chair reported that the quiz had been enjoyable and successful in raising £277 towards a new defibrillator at Rochester Village Hall. Together with the £500 grant from Ray Windfunds it was noted that there was a shortfall of £148 for the replacement defibrillator recommended. The Clerk was asked to approach Cllr John Riddle requesting whether there was any grant available to meet the shortfall.

j) Roadside gully clearance – The Clerk advised he was regularly emailing Glen Harrison (NCC) for a wagon to be directed to Redesdale to clear the roadside gullies and drains. It was noted that a couple of residents in Rochester were having to clear the drain along the A68 to prevent localised flooding because NCC had not been to clear the drains.

k) Parish Council insurance – The Clerk provided details of the email he had received in preparation for the insurance cover to be renewed from late January that included Long Term Agreement plan to January 2026.

l) Community telescope borrowing arrangements – The Chair provided details of the ‘loan’ form that had been shared with and received agreement from Duncan Wise (NNPA). There was discussion and a few amendments suggested before it was finalised and shared for use across Redesdale.

m) Emergency Plan development – The Clerk provided details of the plan that had been created in both Elsdon and Otterburn from a template provided by NCC. There was discussion on how it may be developed for Rochester and Byrness. It was agreed to create it for long term power outage and extreme weather such as heavy snow that cuts off the communities and it was suggested that Forest fires should also be included for Byrness. It was agreed that there was a need to include volunteers and the assistance of the Village Halls.

## 8 Planning

a) 23NP0093: Proposed conversion & change of use of redundant farm building into 6no units for holiday letting purposes with associated car parking & landscaped areas: Catcleugh Farm, Catcleugh, NE191TZ: This matter was discussed between meetings and there was no objection.

b) 23NP0100: Erection of a 35-metre-high Swann lattice tower supporting 3no radio antennas, 2no 0.6m transmission dishes and ancillary equipment along with ground-based apparatus including electrical generator with built-in fuel tank and ancillary development including a new access track, all for the purpose of telecommunications: Land north of A68, Catcleugh Reservoir, Rochester, NE191TX: This matter was discussed between meetings and there was no objection.

c) 23NP0103: Variation of condition no 2 of planning permission 23NP0008 (to reduce size of estate office building and car parking) Demolition of existing agricultural buildings and estate office and erection of replacement buildings, including new estate office: Cleughbrae Farm, Rochester: This matter was discussed between meetings and there was no objection.

## 9 Finance/accounts for payment

a) Parish finance update & 2024 precept – The Clerk advised the current bank balance was £27,957. This included reserved balances for Byrness garages £13,491 (before payment for repair work quoted at £2,285), Byrness allotments £345, Rochester Roundhouse £2878 and defibrillator £777, leaving a current working balance of £10,466 before any commitments in agenda item 9b were made. Local Government Association recommendation advises that the Parish Council hold in reserve the equivalent of one year’s precept as a contingency for unanticipated fluctuations. There was discussion about the amount of the precept for 2024-25 and there was agreement that due to the increase in costs it was necessary to increase the precept by £500.00 to £7,500.

b) Payments – The following payments presented were all agreed.

- M. Chilvers salary for October & November, 2023 of £376.28 and expenses of £19.99 (including VAT) for printer paper was agreed.
- Payment of room hire at Byrness Village Hall for meeting on 28 November, 2023 for £16.00 was agreed.
- Payment of £417.60 + VAT to Chris Mowatt Landscaping for grass cutting in Byrness was agreed.
- Payment of invoice for Remembrance wreath for £18.00 was agreed.
- A donation of £100.00 was agreed for the Great North Air Ambulance.

## 10 Any Other Business:

a) The Chair provided details following her attendance at the Town & Parish Council Conference in October including the Civility & Respect Pledge, Fix my Street, Climate change commitments.

**Date of Next Meeting. Tuesday 30 January, 2024, at Rochester Village Hall, starting 7:00pm.**  
Meeting closed 8.25pm