

Rochester with Byrness Parish Council

<http://www.parish-council.com/rochesterwithbyrness>

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of Rochester with Byrness Parish Council held on
Tuesday

30 May 2023 at 7.00pm. The meeting was held at Rochester Roundhouse.

1. Attendance – Mrs S Chapman, Mr P. Scott, Mr P. Softley & Mr N. Hall, Mr M. Chilvers (Parish Clerk).

2. Apologies: There were apologies from Mr M. Kelly

3 Declaration of Interest: None were declared.

4. Minutes of the Parish Council Annual General Meeting held 31 May 2022: Were signed as a correct record by S. Chapman at the July 2022 Ordinary meeting.

5. Election of

- Election of Chair – S. Chapman was proposed by P. Softley and seconded by P. Scott
 - Vice Chairman – P. Scott was proposed by N. Hall and seconded by P. Softley
- Parish Council Representatives
- Byrness Village Hall – P Softley & S. Chapman
 - Rochester Village Hall – M. Kelly
 - Play Park – P. Scott
 - Kielder Partnership/Water Forest Park Trust – It was agreed to leave position open and whoever was available to attend

6. Review and agree Standing Orders, Risk Register, Code of Conduct and Safeguarding Policy

There were no amendments to the Standing Orders for the Parish Council and the current orders were re-adopted and signed by Mrs S Chapman. The Risk register was reviewed and agreed to be appropriate for requirements. The Code of Conduct and Safeguarding Policy were reviewed, and it was agreed by all to adopt the document.

7. Chair's Report

The Parish Councillors are pleased to report on the following work carried out during the past 12 months.

Byrness

Work by Northern Powergrid (NPg) on the new substation in Byrness has progressed well. Andrew Webster (NPg) attended the March Parish Council meeting to provide an update on the testing phase of the project and he hopes that the operation of the new substation will begin by Autumn 2023.

A new slide has been installed in the Byrness Children's Play Area. This was funded by the community legacy which Northumbria Water Ltd provided as part of the new water treatment works projects being built in Redesdale.

Also, as part of the legacy a recycled plastic picnic table was purchased and installed at the Play Area.

Frank Charlton has undertaken much needed tree maintenance work in Byrness and the large dead tree in the car park which he recently felled has been donated to the Northumberland Log Bank.

12 trees were planted at the old picnic site near St Francis church by NCC as part of the Great Northumberland Forest.

After several years of pressure and with the help of Guy Opperman MP the steep incline on the footpath outside 27 South Greens was altered by NCC to reduce the steepness. It is now usable by all and will be less dangerous in icy weather.

Information lecterns have recently been installed at both Byrness car park and at the Three Kings as part of the final stage of the Revitalising Redesdale project.

A new double sided Byrness road sign has been ordered to replace the original one on the A68 which disappeared some time ago.

The garages have recently been treated with preservative and debris removed from the gutters and roofs. Further work is scheduled to repair the gutters and other remedial work.

The path known as the 'Ride' is due to be repaired by Forestry England.

Chris Mowatt has again this year cut the grass keeping the village looking tidy.

Rochester

As part of the Revitalising Redesdale project there have been significant developments at the Roundhouse. Two information panels have been installed at both entrance gates. The internal walls have been 'wallpapered' providing information about Brementium Roman Fort at High Rochester.

Outside, with the help of volunteers from Landmarc at Otterburn Camp, wildlife friendly saplings have been planted around the boundary and wild-flower seeds sown in designated areas. Additionally, the first event has been held at the Roundhouse and it is hoped that Duncan Wise at NNPA will be providing a telescope for community use to allow future 'Dark Sky' events to be held.

A new grit bin was purchased by the Parish Council and installed at the bus stop opposite the Cafe.

The Parish Council are working with the NCC Climate Change team in an attempt to have an EV charging point installed in the car park at the Cafe. Whilst permissions have been given from landowners, NCC has so far declined the request due to cost but has promised to present other possible options in due course.

The Parish Council continues to work with NCC in an attempt to have the drainage on Brementium Way repaired and the road resurfaced.

Cllr Hall continues to download the data from the two speed indicator devices in Rochester on a monthly basis. The Clerk reviews and presents the data and shares this with the Police, local authorities as well as Guy Opperman MP highlighting the excessive speed of a high percentage of drivers passing through the village with an 85%ile consistently near 40mph.

Chris Mowatt made a wonderful job of cutting the grass verges in the village again this year.

Other matters

In recent days the installation of new signage at Carter Bar has been completed creating a proper gateway into Redesdale, Northumberland National Park, the Northumberland Dark Sky Park and our communities. This is a project that has taken many years of pressure to come about, and our thanks are expressed to the Revitalising Redesdale project and all those who provided funding.

The Revitalising Redesdale project designed and installed star cairns at Rochester Roundhouse and the old picnic site near St Francis church in Byrness.

The Parish Council submitted three items for the Local Transport Programme. These were a) Measures to enforce the Rochester 30mph speed limit b) Safety measures at the Byrness junction and c) 20mph speed limit within the village of Byrness.

The Chair attended the Town, Parish, and Community Council conference earlier in the year.

The Parish Councillors after careful consideration agreed to maintain the precept at £7,000 but believed this may need to increase next year to meet rising costs.

During the last year the Parish Councillors considered 15 planning applications.

The Councillors agreed donations to Horsley and Byrness churches for the maintenance of their churchyards. Donations were also made to Byrness Village Hall as well as the Great North Air Ambulance, Tynedale Hospice at Home and Rochester Village Hall.

There are three vacancies within the Parish Council and the Councillors would like to hear from anyone in the Parish who may be able to spare sometime to volunteer and become a Parish Councillor and help make a real difference to our community.

We all know the important role of Village Halls in rural communities and the Trustees of both our Village Halls have gone above and beyond to improve the facilities they provide to our Parish.

I would like to thank Peter Softley for all his hard work, dedication, and determination over the past four years in securing all the funding required for the extensive refurbishment of Byrness Village Hall and to the Trustees for supporting him despite increasing costs and numerous setbacks. The work which has just started will extend the life of a community asset for at least another 20 years and provide a lasting legacy for future generations.

Following Storm Arwen, Rochester Village Hall was identified by NCC as a location for a Crisis Centre. I would like to thank David Pentney for all his hard work in securing the funding from the Northern Powergrid Community Foundation and spearheading the resilience project and to the Trustees for getting the project completed so quickly. Thanks to this project the community is now able to support and take care of our residents should we be faced with another unforeseen event.

Finally, my thanks go to all the Councillors for their continued support to the Parish and the time they give freely and to Martin for his advice, support, and efficient handling of council business.

Considerable progress has been made in many different areas during the last year. 2023-24 will no doubt continue to present further challenges, but I am confident that by working together on behalf of the parishioners the Councillors will do all we can to improve the quality of life in this beautiful valley.

8. Finance Report

The Clerk advised that the balance at the beginning of financial year was £23,783.52 and at 31 March, 2023 it was £22,450.91.

Income totalled £14,609 and included precept £7,000 (the same as the previous year), Garage rental of £1,830, Allotment rental £36.00 and VAT refund of £2,945 as well as wayleave from Northern Powergrid for £298 and a grant from Cllr John Riddle for £2,500 that was used for funding towards the new signage at Carter Bar.

The expenditure during the financial year totalled £15,941 compared to £21,357.62 the previous year that included the cost of the two new Speed Indicator Devices). Costs included Clerk's salary £1,828, donations of £1,600 gross cutting £1,854 + VAT, Parish insurance

£604, Byrness tree maintenance £807 + VAT as well as recycled plastic picnic table and a new slide for the Byrness play area.

The Clerk confirmed that as of 31 March 2023 there was £12,321 reserve for the Garages. Reserve balance for the Byrness allotments was £272 and there was £2,872 remaining in the Roundhouse reserve budget.

The Clerk reported that deducting the 'reserved' balances left a working budget as of 31 March, 2023 of £6,984.

9. Matters for consideration - None were raised.

The meeting was closed at 7.20pm.