

# Otterburn Parish Council

Meeting of the Parish Council held on 3 October, 2023

**Held at Otterburn Memorial Hall**

## MINUTES

**Present –** Ruth Appleby (Chair), Steve Bloomer, Joanne Nichols & Denise Corkin

**In Attendance—**Martin Chilvers (Clerk). John Hartshorne, Steve Crawley, Caroline Watson, Isabel Beattie Richard Watson, Charlotte Hickie, Jessie Hickie, Cllr John Riddle

1. **Apologies for absence –** There were apologies from George Peto & Andrew Shone
2. **Declarations of interest –** None were declared
3. **Minutes of the last meeting –** The minutes of the last meeting, having been circulated, were accepted as a true record and signed by the Chair.
4. **Public Question Time –** a) The Chair welcomed Cllr Riddle. He advised that the public toilets were due to have a revamp in the near future but advised this would not be major refurbishments but more painting and clearing debris. It would include both internal and external work. He advised that whilst other county councils were often closing public toilets Northumberland had made a commitment of over £1m refurbishment programme. Cllr Riddle also reported on the trial of pot hole filling that had just finished. Whilst it was a slower, as well as more expensive, process he believed the quality of the work exceeded the present process of filling pot holes. He advised that if work exceeded 20 minutes on the road then a road traffic order was required that added further delay and cost to the process. Results of the trial should be known soon.

**5. Opportunity for members of the public to raise matters:** Isabel Beattie highlighted that sections of the Otterburn Trail were very wet and slippery. It was suggested these were areas that had recently had a new drainage installed by Martin Dodd. It was agreed the Clerk would investigate and contact Mr Dodd.

### 6. Matters arising

a) item 6a: Ray Windfarm update: The Clerk's Report was received and agreed. The Clerk provided details of the open event at the Gun Inn, Ridsdale the following day. Anyone wishing to learn more about possible grants should initially refer to the website <https://raywindfund.co.uk/>.

b) item 6b: Road safety in the Parish: The Clerk provided an update he had received from Neil Snowdon (NCC) advising that there still had been no progress in the matter. Cllr Riddle advised he had that day received confirmation that the project had been given a high priority.

c) item 6d: Electric power supply in the Millennium Green: There was agreement that the Clerk should approach Richard Wilson for a quote regarding the required work to install power to the Millennium Green.

d) item 6e: Northern Powergrid energy resilience grant funding: The Clerk's Report was received and agreed.

e) item 6f: EV charging point at the NCC salt depot: The Clerk reported that the EV charging points should be operational from 14 October and that new signage should be installed at the junction on A696.

f) item 6g: School flashing light and other road signs: It was confirmed new school signs had been installed on either side of the school along the A696.

g) item 6i: Footpath towards Otterburn school: The Clerk reported that he still had not received a response from NCC regarding the overgrown footpath and overhanging branches restricting access along the pavement to the school. Cllr Riddle recommended contacting Andy Olive at NCC.

h) item 6i: Redevelopment of the Otterburn public toilets: Cllr Riddle covered this topic earlier in the meeting.

i) item 9a: Proposed maintenance work at the Play Area: The Clerk reported that he had heard back from Karbon Homes who whilst confirmed they did have responsibility for the strip of land between the road and the play area did not provide grants. However the representative did advise Karbon Homes would be willing to assist any proposal. It was agreed to return asking if they could provide the proposed concrete slope with a drop kerb and ideally with a feature to prevent vehicles parking in front of the gate. The Clerk advised he was waiting to hear from NCC regarding possible fencing and costing to replace existing fencing.

j) item 9e: Otterburn Welcome pack: Cllr Corkin provided details of the progress she had made with the proposed Welcome pack for new residents of the village. There was discussion on what should and should not be included as well as the catchment area to include services. Concern was raised should a business not be included when they wished to be. The proposal from the Chair to hold a separate, specific, meeting on the topic was agreed by all.

k) item 9f: Maintenance of flower boxes: Cllr Corkin provided details of the report she had shared earlier. She advised she had volunteers to assist with all boxes apart from the one near the RTC. Whilst she still needed to receive confirmation from Cllr Peto of the bulbs currently in the boxes and when seasonally these will flower, Cllr Corkin provided recommendations for new plants. Additionally she spoke of the suggestion of providing a second layer box at the two locations either end of the village to add more impact and include, possibly, "Welcome to Otterburn" signage. Whilst it was agreed by Councillors to invest in more bulbs and plants there was need to clarify the cost and confirm requirements with plants already in the boxes. It was agreed to

postpone the additional 'layers' for the time being and seek a more detailed plan and costing with discussion again next spring. The Councillors also sought details of the suggested plan to paint the existing boxes including the colour, cost and how it would be undertaken.

## **7. Finance**

a) Finance update: The Clerk advised the current bank balance was £17,752.59.

b) Clerk's salary and expenses for September, 2023: The payments of £245.68 & expenses of £5.99 were agreed.

c) Payment of invoice to C. Mowatt for grass / hedge cutting: The Clerk advised he had not received the expected invoice.

d) Payment of invoice to Westotec Ltd for supply & installation of speed indicator device: The payment of £4,315.00 +VAT was agreed.

## **8. Planning**

a) There were no applications to review at this meeting.

## **9. New Business**

a) Red squirrels along the main road through Otterburn: It was reported that a number of red squirrels had been killed on the road in recent weeks. There was discussion as to what action could be taken to prevent this. The Councillors were not optimistic that a 'bridge' would be permitted given the type of road and likely cost although it was agreed to investigate. In the meantime it was agreed to review the signage and replace or add new signage if appropriate.

b) Remembrance service and unknown Tommy statues: It was reported that Cllr Peto had agreed to represent the Parish Council at the service. Additionally there would be two children from Otterburn School attending to lay a wreath provided by the Parish Council. Cllr Bloomer agreed to install the 'unknown Tommy' statues, one at either end of the village.

c) Communications with NCC: Cllr Bloomer highlighted the difficulty in reaching appropriate department at NCC and the poor response rate, providing a recent example. Cllr Riddle invited local residents to contact him if they require assistance when contacting NCC. Meantime it was agreed the Clerk would make the most recent copy of the 'Whose Who' published by NCC.

d) Use of lay-by at east side of Otterburn: It was reported that a number of residents had witnessed the lay-by near Bankfoot being used as a toilet by people stopping there. Cllr Riddle suggested that the incident should be reported to Greg Gavin at NCC and that when the public toilets were redeveloped signage should be included at appropriate locations in an effort to stop this behaviour.

e) Advertising signs at A696 / RTC road junction: It was highlighted that the signs were becoming worn and either required maintenance by the owners or to be removed.

f) Mess on ground behind garages at Brierley Gardens: Cllr Nichols reported that the area behind the garages near the road to the RTC was overgrown and not been cut back for many months. Additionally the drainage along the pavement was blocked and required attention. Cllr Riddle suggested the Clerk contact Paul Jones at NCC to seek a Public Asset Map to determine who was responsible for area and if it was NCC then report the matter to Andy Olive. It was also highlighted that the pavement at Lonnins Lane required weed killing.

## **10. Any other business / Matters for discussion at the next meeting of the Parish Council**

a) The Chair reported that she was a member of the Bellingham Surgery Patient Participant Group and provided details of the remit of the group. She advised that the group met quarterly and invited residents to contact her should they have any matters they wished to be raised about the surgery.

b) The Clerk reported that he had received a call from Mr Farrell that he was able to acquire two bike stands and asked if the Parish Council would like these to install in the village. The Councillors agreed they would be beneficial and it was suggested they could be located at the Millennium Green car park and at the public toilets, assuming County Council provide permission for this.

c) It was reported that some of the Otterburn Trail signage was difficult to read and required some attention.

d) It was reported that some of the trees on the left hand side exiting the village up Bankfoot were overhanging too far and required cutting back. There was discussion regarding the possibility of moving the 30mph signs at Bankfoot to the top of the hill and it was acknowledged this was the second phase of the project that the Parish Council were looking to have introduced by NCC

**11. Date, time and place of next meeting**: The next meeting of the Parish Council to be held at 7.30pm on Tuesday 7 November, 2023 at Otterburn Memorial Hall.

Meeting closed at 9.10pm.