

Otterburn Parish Council

Meeting of the Parish Council held on 4 November, 2025

Held at Otterburn Memorial Hall

MINUTES

Present – R. Appleby (Chair), J. Nichols & S. Bloomer

In Attendance—Martin Chilvers (Clerk), Cllr J. Riddle (until 8.20) J. Hartshorne (JH) (until 8.35), C. Wilson (CW), A. Morgan (AM), C. Austin (CA) & Y. McConnell (YM) (all until 8.45). T. Tuyaerts (TT) (from 9.15)

- 1) **Apologies for absence** – There were apologies from G. Peto.
- 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** – The Chair welcomed Cllr Riddle who provided details of matters at the County Council. He referred to the investment made in the improvement of the condition of the roads within the county. He admitted that the Planning process within NCC was presently not working effectively and applications were taking too long to be processed. He referred to the multi-million pound investment by QTS at Cambois that would develop a large data centre. Cllr Riddle also provided details of the proposed 'easy recycle' that was a national scheme however Northumberland had received insufficient budget to make it work for all residents. As such negotiations were underway to determine the best roll-out that should include a 5 litre kitchen caddy for food as well as doorstep glass collection and a further recycling wheeled bin but the earliest roll-out was likely to be October 2026.

Cllr Bloomer asked why requests to NCC took such a long time to be processed and Cllr Riddle suggested matters could be raised at the Town & Parish Council Committee. CW highlighted that in her role on the RTC Trustee board the sports centre was in desperate need for a new roof and that quotes had been received for between £70K - £150K. She asked whether Cllr Riddle could suggest possible funding avenues within NCC and he suggested the matter should be raised with Wendy Pattison who was Cabinet member for Culture, Leisure and Tourism. JH highlighted that the litter bin at Percy Cross had a hole burnt through the plastic.

5. Opportunity for members of the public to raise matters: CW asked to speak about the recently installed planters at the junction of the A696 / B6320. She advised she had been approached by a couple of residents who objected to the installation. The first was a lady with mobility difficulties and needed to park where the planters were now located to go shopping at the Border Reiver rather than use the car park at the shop. The second was a resident who advised that the A696 had been widened many years ago for military vehicles but this section of the road was being narrowed. He also believed the planters were an eyesore. CW provided her own feelings about the planters and also believed them to be an eyesore. The Chair responded that the time of year NCC installed the planters was not great and the Parish Council had not been consulted about the installation. She added that volunteers had already begun to plant bulbs and had plans for further plants that should help to make the planters full of colour in the summer. It was also noted that there were a number of private properties in the village that it was believed could certainly be described as eyesores.

An objection of the planters was also raised as it was believed it would impact on the sales at the shop and that it may close. However it was agreed that in the absence of determining how much sales could be contributed to vehicles that had parked where the planters were now located and how many of them would not continue to shop there, it was not possible to provide evidence to such a claim.

CW suggested that the planters made the junction more dangerous as the road was narrower and that there was a risk vehicles would collide with the planters and listed a number of locations where similar projects had been reversed. Cllr Riddle advised that Highways would certainly have undertaken a risk assessment and detailed measurements before proceeding with the work however he felt sure there would be ongoing monitoring by Highways of the safety and effectiveness of the work. It was also noted that the road was no narrower than when vehicles used to park where the planters were now located.

CW thanked the Councillors for giving her the opportunity to voice her concerns about the planters.

6. Matters arising

a) item 6a: Road safety in the Parish: The Clerk provided a summary of the latest Speed Indicator Device (SID). The 85%ile for October was recorded at 30.9mph and 17.1% of vehicles recorded as exceeding the speed limit. For the three months since the average speed cameras were installed the average 85%ile was 31.56mph whilst the 21 months before the installation the 85%ile was averaging at 39.02mph and over 53% of vehicles had been recorded as speeding. It was noted that the build-out near Snaiths depot was in bad condition and the Clerk was asked to approach NCC for repairs.

b) item 6c: Bus stop outside the Memorial Hall: The Clerk reported that he still was waiting for a response from Neil Easton on the possibilities to have a bus time table and location marker for the bus stop of the service travelling to Jedburgh as well as replacing the faded signs at the bus shelter.

- c) item 6d: Parish Council vacancies: The Clerk highlighted that there were still two vacancies on the Parish Council and that anyone interested should contact him at otterburnpc@hotmail.co.uk for details.
- d) item 6e: 682 bus service West Woodburn to Hexham (to include Otterburn): The Clerk reported that Chris Curtis (NCC) had met with Go North East and the service would be extended to include Otterburn however the starting date was still to be confirmed as well as the timetable.
- e) item 9a: Local Transport Programme 2026-29: The Clerk confirmed that a request was made for safety features to be implemented for pedestrians on the section of road from the Willow Green junction to the first entrance to Otterburn Hall Estate. Additionally a request had been made for safety features on the B6320 approaching the bridge from both directions near the Otterburn Mill.
- f) item 9c: Repair of local road signs: The Clerk reported that he was still attempting to get a response from Glen Harrison (NCC) as to when the replacement signs would be installed.
- g) item 9f: Broken boards at footbridge near weir: The Clerk reported that NCC had replaced all boards and resolved the area that was often very slippery. It was agreed the contractors had done a good job.
- h) item 9h: Overnight parking at Percy Cross: Reference was made to an email received from Robin McCartney (NCC) regarding possible options to prevent overnight parking at Percy Cross and in particular rubbish left by a few parking at the location. From experience NCC has found that restricting height of vehicles entering similar locations has resulted in ongoing maintenance due to damage and this would also stop the law abiding campers who clear up after themselves. Parking enforcement was an alternative option however due to the remote location this was considered as unlikely to be successful. Potentially the Parish Council could welcome overnight stays for a cost and there may be the possibility of having a chargeable grey waste disposal facility provided. Following discussion the Councillors agreed to initially purchase a reflective sign advising that there should be no overnight parking and install this at the Percy Cross entrance.
- i) item 9i: Recycle of blister packs: The Clerk confirmed that the application for a grant from Ray Windfunds for a new blister pack recycling box had been successful and the box was located just inside the foyer of the Memorial Hall.
- j) item 9l: Christmas Eve event in the Millennium Green: The Clerk reported that there had only been two volunteers from the community willing to assist with arrangements of the event. It was noted that the number who had expressed an interest to attend the proposed event had also been low so it was agreed to not go ahead with the event this year. There was discussion about organising an event on the first Bank Holiday of May and it was agreed to discuss this in more detail at the next meeting.

7. Finance

- a) Budget update: The Clerk reported that there was presently a balance of £11,330.27 following receipt of the second payment of the precept. The Clerk provided details of the spend to date for 2025-26 and a possible forecast for the remainder of the financial year. There was discussion regarding the anticipated spend in 2026-27 and level of precept for that financial year but it was agreed to finalise the decision at the January meeting.
- b) Clerk's salary and expenses for September & October, 2025: The payments of £604.65 salary plus expenses of £11.98 (telephone & email storage) and £2.99 for a 2026 calendar were agreed.
- c) Reimbursement to Clerk of payment of two Remembrance wreaths: The payment of £28.32 + VAT was agreed.
- d) Reimbursement to Clerk of payment of Terracycle blister pack recycling box: The payment of £144.00 + VAT was agreed. This cost was met by the Ray Windfunds grant.
- e) Reimbursement to Clerk of payment of padlocks for Millennium Green power sockets: The Clerk reported the padlocks had not been purchased as other options were being considered.
- f) Payment of invoice to Slate & Nature for repair to dog bag dispenser: The invoice of £23.75 was agreed.
- g) Payment of invoice to Otterburn Memorial Hall for room hire: The payment of £30.00 was agreed.
- h) Payment of invoice to Turtle Engineering for replacement defibrillator pads: The Clerk reported that the pads required replacing by the end of December 2025 and there was agreement to purchase the pads nearer the time for £59.99 + VAT.
- i) Payment of invoice to Chris Mowatt for grass cutting: The payment of £136.00 + VAT was agreed.
- j) Payment of invoice to Spanglefish for website annual subscription: The payment of £33.30 + VAT was agreed.
- k) Otterburn school PTA donation request towards Carol service refreshments: The Clerk reported that he had not received details of the request and that there was nothing to consider. The payment of £15.50 for the annual subscription of the 'Clerk's & Council Direct' was agreed.

8. Planning

- a) 25/03370/COU: Change of use to allow formation of ground floor coffee shop to existing building and provision of non illuminated free-standing sign to front car park: Berties of Otterburn, The Old Post Office, Otterburn, NE191NP: It was noted that the Councillors had reviewed and supported the application between

meetings however a note of caution had been expressed for action to be taken to ensure visitors did not park on the pavement and block access for pedestrians.

b) 25/03371/ADE: Advertisement consent for free standing non illuminated sign to front car park area: Berties of Otterburn, The Old Post Office, Otterburn, NE191NP: This application was reviewed between meetings and supported by the Councillors

9. New Business

a) Request for an additional litter bin in Otterburn: The Clerk reported that he had received a request for an additional litter bin to be located near the A696 / B6320 junction now that the bin at the Otterburn Mill had been removed after it closed. It was highlighted that this was on the Otterburn Trail route with the nearest litter bin located outside the public toilets. It was noted that the area was reasonably well clear of litter and dog mess at present, but it was agreed to monitor the situation before any decision was made.

b) NCC free trees: There was agreement to apply for a further 10 trees for the green at Willow Green where due to the very dry summer many of the previous saplings had not survived.

c) Community Governance Review 2025 pre-consultation questionnaire: The Clerk summarised the questions NCC presented and the Cllrs provided collective responses.

d) Spring bulbs and summer plants: The Clerk highlighted that the original four planters located across the village required some attention after a period of neglect and possibly the purchase of bulbs / flowers for all year display. It was agreed to research options and discuss the topic further at the next meeting.

e) Dementia friendly community: The Chair provided a summary of the event run by Jo Elliot at Elsdon village hall on 27 October. The Chair also reported on equipment that the Memorial Hall would be able to receive to assist those visiting with dementia and help make the hall more dementia friendly.

6a) TT apologised for arriving late however wanted to take the opportunity to thank the Parish Council for the work with NCC to introduce the road safety controls at the A696 / B6320 junction. He reported that he had spoken to a number of people working and living up the lane towards Girsonfield as well as Castle Rigg who had advised how much easier and safer it was to exit on to the A696 since the planters were installed. TT also advised he had spoken to pedestrians who pass by to and from the shop and many had said how much easier it was now and that seven residents were now visiting the shop again as it was safer to do so.

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

a) Cllr Nichols suggested the possibility of an additional scheme that may reduce traffic speed when entering Otterburn from the west would be to introduce roadside entrance gates. It was agreed the Clerk would investigate and provide details.

11. Date, time and place of next meeting: The next meeting of the Parish Council to be held at 7.30pm on Tuesday 6 January, 2026 at Otterburn Memorial Hall. Meeting closed at 9.25pm