

**Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of
Elsdon Parish Council held in the Village Hall
on Thursday 11 May, 2017**

Present: Councillors Colby (Retiring-Chair), Simmance, Maddison, Morgan, Graham and Renton. Clerk Martin Chilvers. Cllr Bolam, Ian White, Tony Patrick

Apologies: There were no apologies from Parish Councillors. Cllr France offered his apologies.

Election of Officers for 2017-18

Cllr Simmance was nominated for Chair by Cllr Maddison and seconded by Cllr Graham

Cllr Maddison was nominated for Vice Chairman by Cllr Renton and seconded by Cllr Graham

Summary of the year's activity and questions (Retiring Chair Colby):

In progress

I feel that we have made some progress over the year regarding the state of the roads into the village, in that some potholes have been mended, and we have had what appear to be very productive and positive meetings with Neil Snowden from NCC. Unfortunately, the excessively heavy traffic that uses the road from Otterburn to Rothbury still causes damage and nuisance. Whilst we are aware that this is a B road and therefore an agreed route it does not make for a peaceful rural existence, or stop the erosion of the edges of the roads. I am hopeful that the promised new signage and proposed new positioning of the speed limit signs will help to alleviate some of the problems.

The road to Raylees also continues to be in a poor condition, largely due to the badly managed ditch clearance by an NCC contractor a couple of years ago. The Parish Council has brought this to the attention of certain officers at NCC, through emails and conversations, and also through the intervention on our behalf of Anne Marie Trevelyan MP. We have requested that the road sides be cleared and passing places be installed, but still await a resolution to this issue.

The Parish Council are working closely with NCC officers regarding the necessary repairs to the Starmyres (Elsdon East) bridge. Through a dialogue with the lead engineer and local farmers at a recent Parish Council meeting a start date of early June 2017 has been agreed that does not interfere with lambing.

Despite our best efforts I have to report that it seems highly unlikely that Elsdon residents will be able to benefit from the NCC garden waste collection scheme in the near future. However, I am confident that Parish Councillors will continue to press for this service if it is seen as a priority by residents.

The Parish Council has been represented at the Ray Wind Farm development meetings by Cllr Simmance who has reported back the proceedings. As a result, we know that Elsdon community, and businesses, will have every chance to apply for funding as this becomes available within the next couple of months.

Through a number of different channels the Parish Council have joined in the efforts to prevent the closure of Otterburn Memorial Hall surgery and, more recently, the proposed closure of Rothbury Community Hospital. Whilst it is unsure whether the hospital will remain open the Parish Council will do all it can, within the limits of its power, to apply the will of local residents.

As Chair I have had the pleasure of representing Elsdon at the HLF Revitalising Redesdale Landscape meetings and reporting progress to the Parish Council. This is an exciting and wide ranging project that through the partnerships that have been created will bring many benefits to Elsdon and the whole of Redesdale. It appears that the proposed bid has been well received by the HLF and that final decisions will be made shortly. Lydia Speakman has attended Parish Council meetings on several occasions and is very supportive of the ideas that have been put forward by Elsdon residents.

It has been agreed by the Parish Council that the edges of the village green should be strengthened and protected, and the responsibility for raising funds, possibly from Ray Wind Farm, to carry this out has been passed to EPIC.

The Parish Council has recently begun to work with Julia Plinston (CAN) to research the public/community transport needs of local residents, as it is recognised that mobility is a growing problem for residents in our community.

It is with some disappointment that I have to report that despite our best efforts, both from within the National Trust and through the media, the head has still not been replaced on Winter's Gibbet. Perhaps this should be seen as a long term project as and when there is the energy and determination to make it happen?

Completed Work

Following damage to the green by a large vehicle from Otterburn Camp, Councillors met with representatives from the Camp to agree a course of action. Subsequently the repairs were carried out by a contractor of their choice at no cost to the Parish Council.

Despite a few communication problems Broadband has now been made available to virtually all of those residents in the main village and the Parish as a whole that requested it. The Parish Council has been working with BT Openreach to ensure that appropriate connections are made across the village green that are beneficial to residents and avoid the installation of unnecessary posts.

A number of positive meetings have taken place between NNPA officers, both in Elsdon and at other venues, and it is felt that good relationships have now been restored and that there is a better understanding of issues from both NNPA and Elsdon Parish Council, especially on planning matters.

The Parish Council have been very supportive of the work being undertaken by Katie Bland and Steve Shaw to the Bird in Bush public house. We wish them well in their venture as it is never easy taking on such a substantial project, especially in a listed building.

Thanks are given to those who volunteered to clear up the bonfire site. Without them the green would still be littered with bonfire debris.

Throughout the past year Councillors have attended a variety of meetings, and have raised the positive profile of the village even further, whilst ensuring that the aspirations and expectations of residents are widely recognised.

The details concerning the BT public telephone box had been wrongly reported and thanks to the diligence of Cllr. Simmance this was brought to the attention of the Parish Council. Subsequently the closure of the box has been halted. It was agreed that given the poor mobile phone reception and its proximity to the defibrillator the telephone box should be given a reprieve.

During the last year the Parish Council have made donations to the Great North Air Ambulance, and Tynedale Hospice, both of whom carry out exceptional work in the area.

The Parish Council agreed to the provision of a new community notice board to replace the dilapidated old one, and is grateful to EPIC for funding this, and to David Scott for carrying out the necessary work.

Thanks to the perseverance of Peter Morgan a 50% discount for Elsdon residents on a Kielder Water Discovery Pass has been secured. I am sure that Cllr Morgan will prove to be a great asset to Elsdon Parish Council.

The Parish Council were happy to agree to the planting of tree whips on the edge of the village green and we are grateful to those volunteers who braved the inclement elements to get them planted.

The Parish Council considered 14 planning applications during the last 12 months, either from the NNPA or NCC.

Despite a continual strain on very limited finances, after careful consideration the Parish Council made the decision to maintain the precept at £1500.

Finally a few thank yous!

I would especially like to thank the residents who took the time to attend meetings and support the work of Elsdon Parish Council, I am sure that this will continue, and hopefully grow.

I am indebted to Cllrs Sue Bolam and Chris France who have continued to attend our meetings and provide us with good advice, enthusiastic support, and the odd nudge in the right direction. It has been much appreciated by us all, but particularly me!

I feel that our little team of councillors has worked together efficiently and with good humour through some very difficult times over the last 4 years and I for one have nothing but praise for their dedication and hard work. Thank you to you all, those that are staying and those that like me are standing down. Who knows, some of us may live to take up the fight again, never say never!

Last but not least I would like to thank our Parish Clerk, Martin Chilvers without whom we would be lost. He has composed letters, sent reminders and investigated topics in a way that is above and beyond the meagre salary that we have paid to him. Quite literally we could not have functioned without him. Thank you for all the late Thursday nights and the extra hours that you have put in behind the scenes.

Good luck to the new Parish Councillors. I know that you will work closely together for the good of the residents of the whole Parish, as they say, without fear or favour. Enjoy the opportunity. I'm sure that even those of you who thought that you knew everything that there was to know about Elsdon Parish will discover a few surprises along the way.

Financial Report:

The Clerk provided an update on the Parish Council finances. Opening balance on 1 April, 2016 was £3,404 and closing balance on 31 March, 2016 was £3,961. Income was £2,564 that included £1,500 precept as well as £299 wayleave from BT Openreach and £138 wayleave from Northern Powergrid. Additionally there was a 'special' payment of £528 from Otterburn Camp as payment for the repairs to the village green caused by an army vehicle. Expenditure during the year totalled £1,908 including £750 Clerk salary, £120 room hire, £273 Insurance and £528 to Mr Dodd for undertaking the aforementioned

repairs to the village green. The statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statements were agreed for 2015-16.

Reports from County Councillor and questions: Cllr Bridgett was not in attendance. Cllr Bolam provided an update on local tree felling by Forestry Commission. In some locations this is causing damage to peat bogs and the National Park is also concerned about not only the damage being caused as part of the extraction but the wagon routes and damage being caused to the roads that are unable to cope with the weight and width of the vehicles.

Any other business:

There was no business raised.

Meeting closed at 7.20pm