

Minutes of the meeting of Elsdon Parish Council held in the Village Hall on Thursday 11 July, 2013

Present: Councillors Colby (Chair), Maddison, White, Simmance and Tait. Clerk Martin Chilvers. Rob Mayhew (NNPA), Paul Aldsworth (Morrison Utility Services) (until 8.40pm) and Parishioners A. Colby, M. J Tait, R. Arthur, J. Tait, D. Coles and D. Renton

1. Underground electric cabling project

The Chair introduced Rob Mayhew (RM) and Paul Aldsworth (PA) before providing a brief background of the project. The Chair then opened the floor for questions.

There was a question regarding the new street lighting some of which has not as yet been connected. PA advised he would look into to the matter particularly the one outside 4 Crawford Crescent which was mentioned. RM advised that when all 14 connected Northern Powergrid (NPG) would remove the redundant poles. Those that are used by others e.g. BT would be cut down to the height of the equipment and BT would adopt the pole.

A question was asked as to why BT was not involved in the project so their cabling could also go underground. RM responded saying that BT were not regulated in the same way as other service providers and as it is an expensive project BT had decided not to go ahead.

PA provided an update advising that apart from a very few properties including Braeside, Church, High Moat Farm all properties would be connected very soon. It would be the 'overhead' team that complete those properties requiring work. He explained that progress had not been as fast as hoped due to a number of reasons including the 'notice' running out mid project. Cllr Tait highlighted that there were still a number of properties in Crawford Crescent not yet connected. Some of these have elderly people living there who are wondering what is going on as communication has been very poor.

Mr Arthur praised the work of Morrison's workforce that had to contend with poor weather to dig the cables. He believed that the blame of the poor handling of the project should lay with NNPA and the Parish Council. Cllr Maddison responded advising that the Parish Council had been left in the dark as much as the residents on the project. The Parish Council had not been consulted over and above a proposal being tabled at a meeting with details and an outcome promised by NPG but never materialised.

RM reported that the cost of the project in Elsdon was approximately £146,000 and across the park £460,000 was set aside for similar work.

Questions then turned to the apparent poor planning and original, as well as ongoing, communication with the residents of Elsdon. PA provided apologies for Gary O'Brien and Alan Dobson who had advised they would attend to provide an update. The Chair highlighted this as an example that no one in charge of the project accepted responsibility and would not provide progress reports. There was disappointment and frustration that when advised the ultimate responsibility lay with Northern Powergrid there had been no contact from the company or visit to Elsdon before or during the project. RM advised he would provide feedback to Paul Nicholson of NPG and the Chair spoke on behalf of the community when asking for contact and an explanation from Mr Nicholson.

2. Apologies: There were no apologies.

3. Minutes of the April meeting: The minutes of the previous meeting was accepted as a true record and signed by the Chair.

4. Matters arising:

- a) The Clerk read an email he had received from NCC advising work to repair the eroded Burn was due to start week commencing 22 July.
- b) As mentioned within item one the replacement street lighting should be completed in August. It was agreed Duncan Wise, who would be attending the August meeting, could provide an update on this matter linking to the dark skies initiative.
- c) There has been no response to the letter sent to NCC regarding the TV signal in Elsdon. The Clerk was asked to send a copy again including new Council Leader and Cllr Bridgett.
- d) There was further discussion how best to communicate across the Parish matters of interest and news. It was agreed that for emails these must be blind-copied but still required the recipient permission. It was agreed further investigation would continue to cover different channels of communication.
- e) The Clerk reported he had received no response to date following the feedback provided regarding the petition on the state of the local roads.

5. Finance:

- a) The Chair and Vice-Chair signed a letter instructing Barclays Bank to transfer the balance of the savings account to the current account.
- b) The Clerk provided an update on the problems he had experienced with Barclays Bank regarding the change of signatories on the account.

6. Planning:

- a) 13NP0034: Construction of general purpose farm building and pole barn for storage of farm equipment and hay: Hillhead, Elsdon, NE19 1BP: Mr Tait explained reason behind proposal as storage during bad weather. He advised it would be timber built so look like a stable and it would have sky lights facing where people could see them. Additionally it would be located below the ridge so out of sight for most. After discussion it was agreed there were no objections.

7. New business:

- a) The Clerk went through the code of conduct points. It was agreed by all councillors to adopt the code.
- b) Mr Coles explained the request for a helicopter to land on the village green in August relating to a family matter. Whilst in principle there was no objection there was concern over the safety aspect as it was close to the road. An alternative proposal was identified and will be discussed for possibly landing on private land away from roads and the public.

8. Any other business:

- a) Cllr Maddison advised that there was going to be an Elsdon Community Heritage Group Archaeology Event on the last weekend in July. This would be undertaken by residents of the village who have signed up as members of the Group. They will be working under the supervision and guidance of professional archaeologists. A request was made for funding to provide for the tools that could then be used for future digs. It was agreed to assess the request at the next meeting.

9. Date, time and place of next meeting: The next meeting will be on 8 August, 2013 starting at 7.30pm at the Village Hall, Elsdon

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