

BRANXTON PARISH COUNCIL

Parish Council website: www.branxtonparishcouncil.org

**Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 5th December 2023
In Branxton Village Hall at 7pm.**

PRESENT: Chairman N Wood Vice-Chairman S Rudge
Parish Councillor A Darbyshire
County Councillor M Mather
Clerk I Hunter
Lesley Robson- Rural Advocacy & Inclusion Officer
3 members of the public

Public Question Time: The Chairman welcomed Lesley Robson to the meeting and asked her to give a summary of her role and an update from the recent drop-in session. L Robson explained that she is the Rural Advocacy & Inclusion Officer for the Glendale and surrounding area to look into the inequalities in our area. I am going out to communities to identify people who are isolated and disconnected as their voices need to be heard. I will be collating a gap analysis, and working with Communities Together to find residents who have issues and problems on a variety of services such as mental health, living with illness, transport & mobility, cost of living, digital inclusion, just to name a few services, and help the residents access the help they need. My role is also, to encourage Northumberland County Council to look through a rural inequalities lens when making decisions. I met with members of Branxton Village Hall Committee recently and will be working with the Hall Committee to see if we can bring more activities to the Village Hall. I am willing to support and work with Parish Councils.

Community Police – No report received.

Apologies for Absence: None

Declaration of Interest: None

Request for Dispensation: None

Minutes of the Meeting: The previously circulated Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 12th September 2023 were agreed as a true record. The Chairman signed a hard copy.

Any urgent matters arising from the minutes if not already on the agenda-

Min 644 (Min 632)- Grass cutting- The Chairman informed the meeting that he along with Parish Councillor A Darbyshire, met Northumberland County Council Neighbourhood Service Officers to discuss the grass cutting in the Parish.

The Chairman advised the meeting that the Neighbourhood Service Officers stated that grass cutting rotas could be amended to reduce the width of the grass cuts in some areas, however, this could lead to issues in the future. Parish Councillors agreed to monitor the grass cutting in 2024 and review the 2024 grass cutting at the December 2024 Parish Council meeting.

Min 645- Abandoned car-The Chairman advised the meeting that the abandoned car had been removed. County Councillor M Mather stated that Northumberland County Council Enforcement Department were able to take action, however, there is a process which needs to be followed which unfortunately takes time, therefore I reached out to the car owner, and it appears that this contact has encouraged the car owner to organise the removal of the abandoned car.

Min 646- County Councillor report- County Councillor M Mather provided the following updates:

- **Potholes-** Northumberland County Council had received additional highway funding from National Government. The funding has been used to trail cutting out and patch filling potholes in the north and the west to see if this is an improvement and cost effective. We are awaiting the results of the trail to see if this is positive or negative.
- **Bus Service-** There will be a new ticket available which will allow bus passengers go to Berwick & back for £4 return. If any resident has any issues with the current bus service, please contact me direct.
- **Storm Babet-** Northumberland County Council appears to have learnt from Storm Arwen as there was a briefing 24 hours ahead of the arrival of Storm Babet, the incident room was opened in plenty time, and all issues were logged via fix my street which was monitored 24/7 this allowed help to be deployed to where it was required, we are awaiting the results of the debrief to see if fix my street was a benefit to officers during the storm.
If you have an emergency do not use fix my street, phone 0345 600 6400.
All vulnerable residents must register that they are vulnerable with their energy supplier as this helps them receive help during emergencies.
Please report any issues during storms direct to Northumberland County Council Communities Together, the Glendale Gateway Centre will be main emergency contact point for the Wooler Ward.
- **Planning training-** I am trying to organise for Northumberland County Council Planning Officers to deliver planning training for Parish Councillors in the Wooler Ward in late January. Please can you let be know if you will attend, and if so, would you prefer a daytime or evening session.
- **Wooler Ward-** At the next Northumberland County Council elections the size of the Wooler Ward will be increased to include Hedgley, Eglington, North & South Charlton, which will mean I will have 10 Parish Councils to cover.
- **Northumberland County Council budget-** We are currently look for savings, I am asking for the budget to include funding for repairs to U & C roads. If you have any suggestions of items which you would like included within the budget or of you think something is missing, please let me know.
- **Local Transport Plan-** The funding received from Central Government only covers a small number of schemes due to the costs to deliver the schemes. However, Northumberland County Council has received extra funding which will allow for additional schemes to be delivered.

- **Inequalities-** The next meeting will be held in Wooler on 6th December, we are using the inequalities lens to look at rural issues in the Wooler Ward.
- **Fix my street-** Please use fix my street to report any Northumberland County Council issues, from highways to neighbourhood services, plus many other services.
- **County Councillor small grant funding-** I have allocated £5K of my small grant funding to the Recreational Group to help with improvements to the play area.

Min 647- Annual Insurance Premium- Parish Councillors ratified the payment of £192.85 to Northumberland County council for the 2023/24 Insurance premium.

Min 648- Clerk's Salary Annual review

- Parish Councillors considered and agreed the previously circulated NALC 2023/24 National Pay scales for the Clerk (SCP 16), which came into effect as of 1st April 2023.
- Parish Councillors agreed the additional payment of 14.25 hours @ £1 per hr to cover the hours already paid since 1st April 2023.

Min 649- Financial Statement-

- Bank Balance £1133.15 Includes £291.88 for defibrillator

Min 650- Accounts for Payment –

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|---------------------|---------|--|
| • Northumberland CC | £192.85 | Annual Insurance premium |
| • E I Hunter | £ 61.33 | Clerk's Salary 4.25 hours @ £14.70 per hr + 14 25 hours back pay |
| • HMRC | £ 15.40 | PAYE |

Min 651- Correspondence

- **NCC-** North Northumberland Area Committee presentations
- **NCC-** Email letter from Leader and Who's Who information.
- **Citizens Advice-** Invite to AGM 8/12
- **EBDA-** Email request for nominations for EBDA 2023 award
- **GNAA-** Request for a donation
- **NCC-** Northumberland Open Space Assessment - Town/Parish Council Survey 22/12
- **Resident-** Email- local issues- See Min 652

Min 652- Local Issues- Parish Councillors considered the following issues raised by a resident via email:

- Request for a Pedestrians in the Road sign on the bad bend by Marmion. County Councillor M Mather agreed to contact Northumberland County Council again about a warning sign for the bend at Marmion as well as Branxton Hill as this is part of the battlefield trail and is well used by visitors.
- Request for a mirror on the bend by the well. Parish Councillors agreed the Clerk check with the Parish Council Insurance provider if there would be any liabilities on the Parish Council if the Parish Council purchases and installs a mirror.
- Request for No Overnight Camping signs in the Monument car park. Parish Councillors agreed the land belongs to Ford & Etal Estates, however, agreed everybody should monitor the area in 2024, and if there are any issues of waste

being left in the car park, this should be reported on fix my street, and Northumberland County Council will deal with the waste.

- Request for a Stanley Court sign by the new houses at the east end of the village. County Councillor M Mather reported, the signage will be erected by the developer once the roads etc have been brought up an agreed standard and adopted by Northumberland County Council Highways Department.
- 30mph signs by Stanley Court need moving further back from the estate- County Councillor M Mather reported, this should be put forward for consideration in the 2025/26 Local Transport Plan.
- The state of the surface in the Church car park, due to large vehicles turning in the car park. Parish Councillors agreed the car park is owned by Ford & Etal Estates.
- The Chairman agreed to update the resident.

Min 653-Conclusion of Annual Audit 2022/23-

- Parish Councillors agreed the conclusion of the Annual Audit for 2022/23
- Parish Councillors approved the Parish Council's Annual Accounts

Min 654- Highway signage

- Parish Councillors agreed County Councillor M Mather request a sign for Children Crossing the road to the Play Area.

Min 655- Budget & Precept for 2024/25

- Parish Councillors received and considered the in-year budget update.
- Parish Councillors considered the previously circulated draft budget for 2024/25. Parish Councillor S Rudge proposed adding £300 to the budget for a donation to the Recreation Group to cover the annual insurance premium etc. The Chairman raised concerns that the request was only being tabled at the meeting. Parish Councillors agreed the Clerk draft the possible precept figures for band A-D properties in Branxton in 2024/25. Parish Councillors also, agreed to call an extraordinary meeting in January to agree the 2024/25 budget.
- Parish Councillors agreed to defer the setting of the precept for 2024/25 until the extraordinary meeting in January 2024

ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

An Extra Ordinary meeting will be held on 15th January 2024 at 7pm to set the budget & precept for 2024/25.

The next Parish Council will be held on 12th March 2024 at 7.00 p.m. in Branxton Village Hall.

Meeting closed at 8 p.m.

Chairman_____

Ch's Initials_____