

# ROTHBURY PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes of an ordinary meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> January 2025 commencing at 7pm in the Cheviot Room Jubilee Institute**

**Those Present:** Cllr Devlin (Chairman), Cllr Old, Cllr Mrs Dawson, Cllr Sutton, Cllr Gordon

**In Attendance:** C Miller (Clerk), two members of the public

**RPC/01/25                    Apologies for absence**

Clerk reported no apologies had been received.

**RPC/02/25                    Declaration of Members Interests**

There were no Declaration of Members Interests.

**RPC/03/25                    Meeting with Majorie Davy of Natural England**

The meeting with Marjorie Davy would be held at a later date.

**RPC/04/25                    Approval of Minutes of previous meeting held 11<sup>th</sup> December 2024**

**RESOLVED:**

Members agreed that the minutes of the previous meeting held 11th December 2024 were a true record.

**RPC/05/25                    Garden/village maintenance and related issues**

**RPC/05/25/01                Monthly gardening report. Members are asked to consider report and issues arising**

- 1.The bin installed at Cowhaugh Car Park had been unbolted, removed from its base and removed.
- 2.The tarmac pavement around the War Memorial is a slip hazard in frosty, icy and snowy condition.
- 3.Problems are occurring at the War Memorial due to cars driving and parking on the pavement. Gardeners recommend bollards be placed.

**RESOLVED:**

The Clerk to contact gardeners to consider options for replacement bin at Cow Haugh car park. Members to discuss at next RPC meeting 12/2/25.

The Clerk to contact County Council in relation to ongoing issues at the War memorial.

**RPC/05/25/02                Members to approve submission of planning application for tree works on village green**

The Clerk advised two Cherry Trees No's 38 & 39, located on the green at Stephenson Terrace required crowning.

**RESOLVED:**

Members agreed the Clerk would submit a planning application to County Council for tree works within a conservation area.

**RPC/06/25                    Planning**

*Public comments can be submitted via Northumberland County Council website:*

*Northumberland.gov.uk/Planning.aspx or via post to: Development Control, County Hall, Morpeth, NE61 2EF*

**RPC/06/25/01                Members to consider the following Planning Applications received as follows:**

CLlr Devlin declared an interest.

- 24/04155/S106A: Land East of Whitton View – Modification of S106 agreement dated 7.8.24 on 23/-3886/FUL in order to change trigger points for delivery of affordable houses.

**RESOLVED:**

Clerk to contact County Council and seek clarification on the reason for the modification.

**RPC/06/25/02            Members to note Approval of Planning Application received as follows:**

- 24/02573/FUL: Antons Leap, Hillside – Two storey extension to front, garage extension, new roof, cladding to walls, new windows and doors

**RPC/06/25/03            Coquetdale Neighbourhood Plan. Members to receive update.**

Nothing to report.

**RPC/07/25                Finance**

**RPC/07/25/01            Payments. Members are asked to approve the following payments. Chairman is asked to consider and sign the approved schedule against payments to be made.**

<b>PARISH COUNCIL BANK ACCOUNT</b>				
<b>PAYABLE TO</b>	<b>DETAILS</b>	<b>AMOUNT (GROSS)</b>	<b>NETT</b>	<b>VAT</b>
Jubilee Institute	Additional meetings/training, November	£60.00		NIL
UCCT	November shoppers bus	£80.00		NIL
Employee	Salary	£1106.20		NIL
Nest	Pension, 3/2/25	£118.37		NIL
M Evens	December maintenance, village	£1024.00		NIL
D Nicholson	Expenses, August to November	£262.50		NIL
Clerk training	Introduction to CILCA 12/3/25	£60.00	£50.00	£10.00
T W Alderson	Quicklinks, bolt	£9.20	£7.67	£1.53
<b>BURIAL BANK ACCOUNT</b>				
<b>PAYABLE TO</b>	<b>DETAILS</b>	<b>AMOUNT (GROSS)</b>	<b>NETT</b>	<b>VAT</b>
Employees	Salary	£2052.83		NIL
Nest	Pension, 3/2/25	£185.85		NIL
M Evens	December maintenance, Whitton Bank cemetery	£576.00		NIL

Youngs Electrical Contractors	Electricity failure, cemetery lodge	£184.89	£154.08	£30.81
	Electrical testing and minor repairs, cemetery lodge	£246.00	£205.00	£41.00
Chirnell Construction	Works to alleviate damp, Cemetery Lodge	£400.00		NIL

**RESOLVED:**

Members approved the payments.

**RPC/07/25/02**

**The following payments have been made as per Financial Standing Order 5.6: Continuing Contracts and Obligations. Members to note payments. Chairman is asked to consider and sign the approved schedule against payments made.**

<b>CEMETERY BANK ACCOUNT</b>	<b>DETAILS</b>	<b>AMOUNT (GROSS)</b>	<b>NETT</b>	<b>VAT</b>
Anglian Water	Quarterly water bill	£88.21		NIL
Ebay	Smoke detectors	£31.44	£26.19	£5.25
Lloyds Bank	Service Charges, 17/12/24	£8.50		NIL
	Service Charges 19/11/24	£25.85		
<b>PARISH BANK ACCOUNT</b>				
UNITY BANK ACCOUNT	Monthly bank charges 31/12/24	£6.00		NIL

**RPC/07/25/03**

**Budget requirements. Members are asked to approve budget requirements 2025-2026**

Members considered projections 2024-2025, budget figures 2025-2026 and executive summary.

**RESOLVED:**

Members approved the budget 2025-2026.

**RPC/07/25/04**

**Precept requirements. Members are asked to approve precept requirements 2025-2026 - Parish Precept - £70,000; Burial Precept - £40618**

Members considered the precept requirements - £70,000 Parish Precept; £40618 Burial Precept - and executive summary.

**RESOLVED**

Members approved the precept requirements.

**RPC/07/25/05**

**Bank reconciliations. Members are asked to consider the most recent bank reconciliations**

Members considered the bank reconciliations.

**RESOLVED:**

Members agreed the most recent budget/actual spend figures and bank reconciliations were a true record.

**RPC/07/25/06                    Bike Track. Members to consider correspondence from Northumberland Estates in relation to increase in annual rent for bike track**

Northumberland Estates had advised the bike track rent would be increased from £250 to £319.66/annum.

**RESOLVED:**

Members accepted the increase.

**RPC/07/25/07                    Members to note acknowledgement of grant from Rothbury Wrestling Academy**

Members noted the acknowledgement of grant from Rothbury Wrestling Academy.

**RPC/08/25                    Parish Council Governance Review. Members to receive update on next steps for Governance Review**

The Clerk confirmed governance reviews had been arranged for Friday 10<sup>th</sup> January 930am, to consider internal controls, and Monday 13<sup>th</sup> January 1pm to consider operational structure. Reviews to be held in Parish Council office.

**RPC/08/25/01                    .gov email addresses. Members to receive update on creation of Parish Council and Parish Councillor .gov email addresses.**

The Clerk advised there was no update on the creation of .gov email addresses.

**RPC/09/25                    County Councillor update. Members to receive update.**

The Clerk advised no response had been received from the County Cllr regarding the request to forward a written report if he was unable to attend a Parish Council meeting.

**RPC/10/25                    Borderlands Place Programme. Members to receive update.**

Board meeting to be held February 2025.

**RPC/11/25                    Telegraph Lines Village green. Members to receive update on objection submitted to Fusion Fibre.**

Fusion Fibre wished to apologise for the unnecessary confusion caused by the installation of the pole, and had refined their processes. A wayleave agreement is to be supplied for the Parish Council to consider.

**RPC/12/25                    Internal Audit**

**RPC/12/25/01                    Engagement of internal audit services year ending 31.3.25. Members are asked to consider independent report into the procurement process carried out by the Council.**

The independent report had indicated the process carried out by the Parish Council to recruit an internal auditor year ending 31.3.25 had been correct.

**Executive Summary**

- 1.1. In order to assess its procurement of Internal Audit services for the 2024/25 financial year, Rothbury Parish Council engaged the Local Government Resource Centre (LGRC) to undertake an independent review.
- 1.2. The aim of this review was to engage the expertise of an experienced practitioner who would discuss with the Clerk to explore the complaint made to the Council, assess the relevant documentation and make a report to the Council.
- 1.3. It is the opinion of LGRC that after assessing the Council's documentation that a fair opportunity was provided to a range of potential suppliers including the company which undertook the internal audit in 2023/24. Therefore, it is

recommended that the complainants be advised that a review has been undertaken which has concluded that adequate opportunity was given to the supplier in question.

1.4. The report has identified a range of matters, which Council may wish to consider prior to future allocation of Internal Audit services in order to improve the process. These are set out in section 4 of the report and are of an advisory nature only.

### **Recommendations**

**Timing of procurement** – September is half way through the financial year, so is a little late to be starting the procurement for internal audit services.

***It is recommended that future procurement be commenced in the first quarter of the financial year.***

**Procurement Advertising** – The advert approved by the Council had no timetable or closing date on it.

***It is recommended that future adverts are clear in regard of when the Council expects to consider any proposals.***

**Contract Length** – as has been stated earlier in the report, there is a shortage of suitably experienced and qualified internal auditors in the sector, which can make finding a contractor challenging. It is noted that the Council awards a contract for a single year.

***It is recommended that consideration be given to a longer contract, three years is not unusual.***

### **RESOLVED:**

The Clerk to inform complainants of the review outcome.

The Clerk to display review outcome on Parish Council website.

**RPC/12/25/02                      Internal audit year ending 31/3/24. Members to consider the following recommendation included within the Action Plan**

**1.As a high priority it is recommended that the councils data is processed and stored on a council owned device with back-up/cloud storage restricted to Rothbury Parish Council business. This applies to all documentation and communications including emails and telephones.**

Members considered the recommendation. The Clerk advised a Council the size of Rothbury should have its own council owned device.

### **RESOLVED:**

Members agreed Cllr Devlin would compile an option report for consideration at next meeting.

**RPC/13/25                      Coquetdale Amateur Dramatics Society. Member to receive request for use of Parish Council Office.**

Due to new challenges this year relating to Safeguarding requirements, additional changing rooms were required for the CADS performance dates.

### **RESOLVED:**

Members agreed to give permission to use the Parish Council office 2025 only, as the room had not yet been equipped in order to store Parish Council papers.

**RPC/14/25                      Pedestrian Crossing. Members to receive information in relation to road markings, inclement weather concerns**

County Council, had advised zig-zag road markings were programmed that should solve the parking problem. Comments relating to water/ice had been passed to the area office.

**RESOLVED:**

The Clerk to re-report Health and Safety issues to County Council.  
The Clerk to request a copy of the plan showing the final layout including markings.

**RPC/15/25                      Freemanship Award agreed April 2024. Members to receive update.**

The Clerk had received no response from Cllr Bridgett, following a request for an update to the wording for the scroll for Dr Angus Armstrong.

**RESOLVED:**

Members agreed the Clerk would contact Mrs Armstrong.

**RPC/16/25                      Mentoring. Members to confirm Clerk mentoring until end of the Council year**

Members confirmed Clerk mentoring until end of the Council year.

**RPC/17/25                      To receive urgent items/items for next Meeting**

There were no urgent items/items for next meeting.

**RPC/18/25                      Date of next meeting**

The next meeting of Rothbury Parish Council will be held on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> February 2025 commencing 730pm in the Dovecote Room, Jubilee Institute.

**PART II**

**The Council is invited to consider the following resolution: That under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item on the agenda, as the item involves the discussion of confidential information.**

**RPC/19/25                      Members to receive verbal report relating to complaint received since previous meeting**

Cllr Devlin advised a complaint had been sent to him as Chairman, made on behalf of a local organisation.

Cllr Gordon declared an interest and left the meeting.

Cllr Devlin advised the complaint, which makes reference to issues from the past 18 months, was being dealt with as part of the Parish Council Complaints Procedure.

The Clerk advised she had taken legal advice about an employment and data breach matter, and would be submitting a personal complaint to the head office of an outside organisation.

**RPC/20/25                      Members to approve authorisation and budget for the Parish Clerk to seek professional advice on a legal matter**

Further to several pieces of recent correspondence received, members agreed professional advice was required.

**RESOLVED:**

Members approved a budget of £500.

Members agreed the Clerk would seek professional advice on a legal matter

C. Miller

Claire Miller, Clerk/RFO

The meeting closed at 755pm

DRAFT