

ROTHBURY PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of an ordinary meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 12th March 2025 commencing at 7pm in the Dovecote Room Jubilee Institute

PART I

Those Present: Cllr Old, Cllr Mrs Dawson, Cllr Gordon, Cllr Sutton

In Attendance: C Miller (Clerk/RFO), three members of the public

RPC/47/25 Apologies for absence

Apologies and reason for absence to be given to the Clerk prior to the meeting

Members accepted apologies from Cllr Devlin, due to a prior engagement

RPC/48/25 Declaration of Members Interests

Members are required to disclose personal and prejudicial interests relating to any matters to be considered at the meeting. The disclosure must include the nature of the interest. An interest must also be disclosed in the meeting if it only becomes apparent to the member during the meeting. If a member who has declared a personal interest then considers the interest to be prejudicial he/she shall declare that, and, after making any representations, answering questions or giving evidence relating to the business, the member shall withdraw from the room for the remainder of the item to which the interest relates.

There were no Declaration of Members Interests.

RPC/49/25 Meeting with Nigel Fisher of Civil Contingencies Department, County Council

Nigel Fisher welcomed to the meeting.

Discussions with the Parish Council had initially taken place 2022, and a draft Community Emergency Plan created. Relevant advice can be accessed via the website Communities Prepared, a national group that run webinars and provide useful information. Should the Parish Council agree to open an emergency shelter during times of crises, risks would need identified and a procedure established as to how this would be run. Overnight shelter would be the remit of the County Council. Northern Powergrid hold a list of priority sites to which they provide generators during emergencies, however these are only useful if connections are in place. There are other alternatives, such as a satellite system which can provide a Wi-Fi service and be run off a car / caravan battery. 999 services have authority to declare an emergency, and who would inform the County Council who would then set up an emergency centre.

Nigel thanked for attending and left the meeting at 720pm.

RESOLVED:

1.The Clerk and members to access website Communities Prepared.

2.The Parish Council to agree in due course, their involvement during times of crises

RPC/50/25 Approval of minutes of previous meeting held 12th February 2025

RESOLVED:

Members agreed that the minutes of the previous meeting held 12th February 2025 were a true record.

RPC/51/25 Garden/village maintenance and related issues

RPC/51/25/01 Monthly gardening report. Members are asked to consider report and issues arising

There were no issues arising from the gardening report, however it was noted that the white seat at Bridge end required repair.

RESOLVED:

The Clerk to liaise with Village Gardeners regarding seat repair.

RPC/51/25/02 VE Day. Members to consider options to commemorate VE Day 2025

Further to the informal discussion and site meeting, Cllr Gordon had met with the Village Gardeners, and various options discussed. As a white post had been removed further to the pedestrian crossing works, there was space to install a WW1 Lectern Cabinet near to the War Memorial. Costings of £1970.80 + VAT had been received, however cheaper options were available. The cabinet would enable a display of points of interest within the parish.

RESOLVED:

The Clerk to seek further quotations for an information board.

RPC/52/25 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/52/25/01 Members to consider the following Planning Applications received:

- 25/00196/LBC: Listed Building Consent for repairs only to Park Cottage and Garden Cottage, Cragside – the Parish Council had no comments to make on the Planning Application.

RPC/52/25/02 Members to note Approval of Planning Application received as follows:

- 24/03927/LBC & 24/03926/FUL: Cragside Visitor Centre, The Farm Cragside – Listed Building Consent for new condensing units to be installed externally on roof valley over kitchen and café area

RPC/52/25/03 Members to note Refusal of Planning Application received as follows:

- 24/02785/FUL: 4 Walby Hill, Change of use from C2 (care home to Sui Generis (6 bedroom holiday let) and installation of rooflights. The Clerk advised residents had been extremely grateful for the support from the Parish Council in opposing the application.

RPC/52/25/04 Coquetdale Neighbourhood Plan. Members to receive update.

There was no update on the Neighbourhood Plan.

RPC/53/25 Finance

RPC/53/25/01 Payments. Members are asked to approve the following payments. Chairman is asked to consider and sign the approved schedule against payments to be made.

PARISH COUNCIL BANK ACCOUNT				
PAYABLE TO	DETAILS	AMOUNT (GROSS)	NETT	VAT
UCCT	January shoppers bus	£64.00		NIL
Northumberland Estates	Six months rental, bike track	£159.83		NIL
Employee/HMRC	Salary	£1106.20		NIL
Nest	Pension, 1/4/25	£118.37		NIL
M Evens	February maintenance, village	£940		NIL
Clerk's & Council's Direct	Freemanship Scroll	£139.80	£116.50	£23.30
Robson and Cowan	Stihl Lawnmower	£515.83	£103.17	£619
EON	Electricity, interactive signage	£79.41	£75.63	£3.78
Northumberland County Council	HR SLA 24/25 Retainer Fee + 1 Occupation Heath appointment + 15 minutes of time	£350.40	£292.00	£58.40
BURIAL BANK ACCOUNT	DETAILS	AMOUNT (GROSS)	NETT	VAT
Employees	Salary	£2052.83		NIL
Nest	Pension, 1/4/25	£185.85		NIL

M Evens	February maintenance, Whitton Bank cemetery	£216.00		NIL
EON	Electricity, cemetery	£100.00	£95.34	£4.77

RESOLVED:

Members approved the payments.

RPC/53/25/02 **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.**

BURIAL BANK ACCOUNT	DETAILS	AMOUNT (GROSS)	NETT	VAT
Northumberland County Council	Garden waste service, Whitton Bank Cemetery	£104		
Spar, Shell garage, 12/2/25	Fuel, unleaded	£26.34	£21.95	£4.39
	Fuel, diesel	£25.96	£21.63	£4.33
PARISH BANK ACCOUNT				
Northumberland County Council	Garden waste service, village centre	£109		
Unity Bank	Monthly bank charges	£6.00		

RESOLVED:

Members noted the payments.

RPC/53/25/03 **Bank reconciliations. Members are asked to consider the most recent bank reconciliations**

Members considered the most recent bank reconciliations.

RESOLVED:

Members agreed the bank reconciliations were accurate.

RPC/53/25/04 **Financial reports. Members are asked to consider the most up to date budget and spend figures**

Members considered the most up to date budget and spend figures.

RESOLVED:

Members agreed the most up to date budget and spend figures were accurate.

RPC/53/25/05 Review of Insurance Cover. Members are asked to consider current insurance cover

Members considered the current insurance cover as follows:

Employers' Liability - £10m; Public and Products Liability - £10m; Fidelity Guarantee - £250K; Libel and Slander - £250K
Officials Indemnity – £500K; Personal Accident - £100K; Legal Expenses - £250K; Data Breach Response - £25K

Cemetery Lodge - £448,279; Cemetery Sheds - £72182; Walls, Gates and Fences - £36,000; Mowers and Machinery - £30,300

RESOLVED:

Members agreed the current insurance covers were sufficient.

RPC/53/25/06 Schedule of Payments. Members are asked to approve schedule of regular payments for the forthcoming financial year ending 31.3.26

Members considered the Schedule of Payments for the forthcoming financial year ending 31.3.26

RESOLVED:

Members approved the Schedule of Payments for the forthcoming financial year ending 31.3.26.

RPC/53/25/07 Northumberland County Council. Subscription to People and Cultures. Members to be advised the retainer fee 2025-2026 will be £326/annum (current fee £310)

Members noted the subscription increase.

RPC/54/25 Borderlands Place Programme. Members to receive update

A positive Committee meeting had been held with progress being made. Highways Department were in favour of timed bays / permit parking, and encouraging vehicles to the Haugh Car Park,

RPC/55/25 Pedestrian Crossing. Members to receive information in relation to road markings, inclement weather concerns

Some road markings had been installed, with zig zag markings outstanding. Anti slip surface to be installed next month. The drainage did not appear to be fulfilling its purpose, with surface water evident. Usage data for the crossing had been published on social media.

RPC/56/25

Internal Audit

RPC/56/25/01

Internal Audit year ending 31.3.24. Members to review Action Plan and consider outstanding recommendations as follows.

Members had been furnished with the up to date Action Plan, further to the internal audit year ending 31.3.24. The following outstanding matters were considered.

1.Council owned device with back-up/cloud storage restricted to Rothbury Parish Council business. The Clerk to give verbal update

Further to discussions between the Clerk and Chairman, a new user account for the Clerks lap-top could be created for Rothbury Parish Council work only, with a separate licence for MS Office 365, linked to the new gov.uk email address. All files would be saved and uploaded to the cloud avoiding them being saved permanently on the hard drive.

RESOLVED:

Members agreed the above would be actioned, further to the gov.uk email address / website being established.

2.Authorisation stamp for invoices. Members are asked to consider alternative option of invoice header sheet

Members considered the invoice header sheet, which would be completed by two Cllr's for every payment.

RESOLVED:

Members approved the invoice header sheet.

3.Review of GDPR arrangements. The Clerk to give verbal update.

The Clerk advised the internal auditor is to review the Council's current policies and advise accordingly.

4.Review of passwords security/access arrangements for business continuity purposes. Members are asked to consider to Business Continuity Plan.

Members considered the Business Continuity Plan

RESOLVED:

Members agreed to adopt the Business Continuity Plan, once the office filing cabinet and .gov.uk email addresses / website had been set up.

5. Review of general and earmarked reserves. Members are asked to consider Reserve Policy.

Members considered the Reserve Policy.

RESOLVED:

Members approved the Reserve Policy.

6. Asset Register values contained in Annual Return. The Clerk to give verbal update.

The clerk had contacted the External Auditor. The process was ambiguous and it appeared the current system where each constituent parish of the Joint Burial Committee include their share of the assets on their annual return could continue. However the JPAG regulations contained contrary advice whereby the lead Parish Council should include the total of the assets relating to Whitton Bank Cemetery in their annual return. At the present time the Clerk advised continuing with the current system.

7. Charitable trust and burial land. The Clerk to give verbal update.

The Clerk reported the internal auditor was to advise on the point relating to a charitable trust / burial land.

8. Annual Councillor training in the Code of Conduct. Members are asked to consider Training and Development Policy

Members considered the Training and Development Policy

RESOLVED:

Members approved the Training and Development Policy.

RPC/56/25/02 Internal Audit year ending 31.3.25. Members to receive update from the Clerk

The Clerk had had an initial meeting with the Internal Auditor and who was to produce an interim audit report.

RPC/57/25 Governance Review. Members are asked to consider adoption of the following documents/policies

1. Communications Policy

Members considered the Communications policy

RESOLVED:

Members agreed to adopt the Communication policy, once the gov.uk email addresses had been set up.

2. Expense Policy

Members considered the Expense policy

RESOLVED:

Members approved the Expense policy.

3. Equality & Diversity Policy

Members considered the Equality and Diversity Policy

RESOLVED:

Members approved the Equality and Diversity Policy.

4. Accessing advice, including in exceptional circumstances

Members considered the procedure to access advice.

RESOLVED:

Members approved the procedure to access advice.

RPC/58/25 Freemanship Award agreed April 2024. Members to confirm arrangements for refreshments for award ceremony

Members considered arrangements for refreshments.

RESOLVED:

- 1.Members approved a budget of £250.
- 2.The Clerk to ask family about possible publicity / photographs of the event.

RPC/59/25 Proposed bridleway creation and footpath stopping up south-east of Rothbury. Members to consider County Council consultation

Cllr's Devlin and Gordon had walked the proposed route with a resident, with the consensus being it would probably be an improvement, subject to the erection of new signage etc. However, it was clear from the state of the track that tractors and other heavy farm machinery use part of the new route, which would be incompatible with horses, cyclists and walkers, creating a mud bath at times. The clerk had contacted the County Council to seek clarification in relation to heavy farm machinery using the new route.

RPC/60/25 Village Entrance Signage. Members to discuss developer obligations in relation to signage

The Clerk advised the following had been reported at the Parish Council meeting held 10/1/24.

RPC/08/24 To receive County Councillor update: County Council Enforcement Team were involved in the development near to the Middle School, as the contractor had not met all of their Section 278 obligations in relation to completing the estate/village gateway.

RESOLVED:

The Clerk to contact County Council Enforcement to request an update, copied into the County Cllr.

RPC/61/25 Northumberland County Council. Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981. Definitive Map and Statement of Public Rights of Way. Members are asked to note receipt of the following Definitive Map Modification Orders.

- 1.From Footpath No 27 in the Parish of Thropton, in a south-easterly, westerly and south-easterly direction by Brae Head, Gimmerknowe and The Quarries to join the Westhills-Rothbury road, west of Newcloud House.
- 2.From Bridleway No 28 in the Parish of Thropton, north of Brae Head, in a southerly direction to the former Cartington parish boundary, east of Brae Head. Thereafter, as a 2.74m wide path, in a south-easterly, easterly and north-easterly direction by Ship Crag to join Bridleway No 6, at the former Cartington parish boundary
- 3.From Footpath No 26 in the Parish of Thropton, east of Glitteringstone, in a south-easterly direction to the former Cartington parish boundary. Thereafter as a 0.76 to 1.22m wide path, in a south-easterly direction crossing Footpath No 5 to join the High Street west of The Bank
- 4.From Bridleway No 28 in the Parish of Thropton, south of Chapel Hill, in a north-easterly, easterly, southerly and easterly direction by Primrose Cottage and crossing the Debdon Burn to join the Rothbury – New Moor House road, South of Debdon Plantation
- 5.From Bridleway No 4, south of the Cairn, in a south-westerly direction to join Bridleway No 12 in the Parish of Thropton, north of Brae Head
- 6.From the Blue Chirnells – Primrose Cottage road, west of Crocky’s Heugh, in a westerly direction to join Footpath No 29, in the Parish of Thropton
- 7.As a 6.75 to 9.25m wide byway open to all traffic, from a point on the U4066 road, at the junction of Wagtail Lane and Wagtail Road, 10m north of No 15 Lordenshaw Drive, in a south-easterly direction for a distance of 520m to a point 210m north-west of Wagtail Farm. Thereafter as a 5m wide, unsurfaced byway open to all traffic, in a general south-easterly direction for a distance of 45m, to join Public Footpath NO 45, at the ramp leading up to a former bridge over the now dismantled railway, 170m north-west of Wagtail Farm
- 8.From the southern end of Byway Open to All Traffic No 40 (The Wagtail Road) at the former British Railways, in a south-easterly direction by Craghead, to join Footpath No 6 in the Parish of Brinkburn
- 9.As a 2.74m wide path, from a junction with Bridleway No 4 at the former Cartington parish boundary, in an easterly direction to a point of 290m north of a property known as “The Stell.” Thereafter, as a 3m wide woodland path, in a north-easterly then south-easterly direction for a distance of 60m, to the former parish boundary, 290m north of a property known as “Southgate.” Thereafter, as a 2.74m wide metalled path, in a south-easterly, easterly, then north-easterly direction to a point 260m north of a property known as “Arrochar.” Thereafter, continuing as a 3m wide path, in a north-easterly direction, to a point 290m north of a property known as “Edgecombe,” then continuing in a north-westerly, north-

easterly then general south-easterly direction for a further 660m, to a junction with Bridleway No 29, 170m north-west of a property known as "Addycombe."

10.From Footpath No 26 in the Parish of Thropton, east of Glitteringstone, in a south-easterly direction to the former Cartington parish boundary. Thereafter as a 0.76 to 1.22m wide path, in a south-easterly direction crossing Footpath No 5 to join the High Street west of The Bank.

11.From Footpath No 5 south-west of Addycombe, in a north-easterly direction, crossing the former Cartington parish boundary, to join the Rothbury – New Moor House Road, south of Moor Lodge

12.A 1.5m wide moorland path, for a distance of 260m, from Footpath No 7, 135m north of Blaeberry Hill, in a north -north-easterly direction to a junction with Bridleway No 6, 30m west of the Coplith Burn. Thereafter as a path, in a north-easterly direction to join the Black Chirrells-Primrose Cottage road, north-west of Primrose Cottage

13.A 3m wide path, from Bridleway No 29, 170m north-west of Addycombe, in an easterly direction along a metalled track for a distance of 170m to join Footpath No 10, 135m north of Addycombe

14.A 1.5m wide path, from Bridleway No 6, 260m north of a property know as "Arrochar," in an easterly, then general southerly direction, to join Bridleway No 29, 70m north of High Heatherlea

15.From the Rothbury – Cambo road, south of the Whitton Burn, in a south-easterly direction crossing the Pike Sike to join Bridleway No 7 in the Parish of Brinkburn

16.From Bridleway No 46, west of Pike Sike, in a south-easterly direction to the former Mount Healey Parish Boundary, joining Footpath No 9 in the Parish of Brinkburn

17.From the Rothbury – Pauperhaugh road, west of Cragend, in an easterly direction, crossing the Black Burn by the footbridge, to join Footpath No 2 in the Parish of Brinkburn

18.From Bridleway No 1 in the Parish of Brinkburn, in a north-easterly direction to join Bridleway No 2 in the Parish of Longframlington

RESOLVED:

Members noted the modification orders.

RPC/62/25 Road diversions within Coquetdale. Members to discuss problems when several roads closed simultaneously

The Clerk had contacted County Council Highways in relation to recent simultaneous road closures, however no response had yet been received. Problems continued due to the road closure at Swindon.

RESOLVED:

The Clerk to place road closures on the agenda for the next Coquetdale Cluster meeting to be held 1/4/25.

RPC/63/25 Members to consider British Legion proposals for North East England Field of Remembrance, Saltwell Park, Gateshead

CLLr Gordon declared an interest.

An email had been received via Northumberland County Council from the County Chairman of the Northumbria Royal British Legion regarding the proposal for a North East England Field of Remembrance at Saltwell Park, Gateshead. The Parish Council were being invited to provide an item for the field, to include the name of the parish. The N.E. Field of Remembrance would be planted up on the 31st October 2025 with the actual Remembrance service being held on the 1st November 2025. All would be welcome to attend the service on the day. The field would then be open for a further two weeks.

The British Legion Rothbury Branch had met with a Whitton & Tosson resident who could assist with a suitable display.

RPC/64/25 Creation and installation of poppy themed display. Members to consider suggestion for display at Armstrong Cross

Further to above proposal, the Whitton & Tosson resident had advised the Rothbury Branch of the British Legion they would be willing to assist with the creation and installation of Poppy themed displays in Rothbury during October / November. The area around the Armstrong Cross had been suggested as a suitable location as it sits between the church and war memorial.

RESOLVED:

The Clerk to invite resident to the next Parish Council meeting to discuss the two proposals.

RPC/65/25 2025 Parish Council Elections. The Clerk to advise on procedure

The Clerk advised that the Notice of Election will be published on Thursday 20th March which officially opens the election period and from Friday 21st March to Wednesday 2nd April, the Returning Officer can accept nomination forms which must be delivered by hand to County Hall Morpeth, or the Lindisfarne Centre Alnwick, between the times of 10am and 4pm.

If an informal check is not requested, no appointment is necessary to formally submit nomination forms, however it is recommended to book an appointment via telephone 01670 624811.

Further information is available via the following link:

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/elections.aspx>

RPC/66/25 British Telecom, Digital Voice. Members to note public meeting 17/4/25 10am to 4pm Jubilee Institute

Members noted the public meeting in relation to digital switchover of land lines.

RESOLVED:

The Clerk to publicise via noticeboard, website and facebook page.

RPC/67/25 To receive urgent items/items for next Meeting

There was no urgent items / items for next meeting.

RPC/68/25 Date of next meeting

The next meeting of Rothbury Parish Council will be held on Wednesday 9th April 2025 commencing 7pm 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.

RESOLVED:

Members agreed to enter private session.


CLlr Gordon declared an interest and left the meeting.

RPC/69/25 Members to receive verbal report relating to a legal matter

The Clerk advised the situation had receded and at the present time it was not necessary to follow the solicitors recommended action.

RESOLVED:

1. Members approved delegated authority to the Clerk, Chairman and Vice Chairman to action the solicitors recommendation, in the event the situation should escalate.
2. Members agreed if the matter were to become more complex the Council would be required to re-consider and approve a course of action at a properly convened meeting.



Claire Miller, Clerk/RFO

The meeting closed at 830pm