

**Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting
held on Thursday 16th January 2025 at 7:30pm.
At Wall Village Hall.**

PRESENT	Cllrs: Mark Wood Chair, Elisa Wyrley-Birch Vice-Chair, Steve Blake, Jane Michie . Clerk: Alix Pearson. Newly resident parishioners of Wall.
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NUMBER	DESCRIPTION
2701	1. Apologies for absence: Apologies were received from John Lamb and Cllr Nick Morphet.
2702	2 Declaration of interests There were no declarations of interest.
2703	3. Approval of Minutes The minutes were approved as true record of the previous meeting and signed. There were no matters arising that were not addressed in the agenda..
2704	4. Clerk's Financial Report The clerk presented the figures for Q3 and Councillors approved the expenditure. Carried Forward at 31/12/24 - £9597.50 The Clerk noted that Great North Air Ambulance Service had not yet responded to our request for an invoice for the charitable donation of £150, so this payment has not yet been made. It was also noted that the resilience grant of £915 received from NCC was considerably less than the eventual cost of the new cooker & hood purchased for the village hall. Although the Parish Council will be able to reclaim £258. VAT of the £1548 purchase price, this still leaves a £375 shortfall, to be reimbursed from Village Hall funds. Since the Parish Council had not been able to make a financial contribution to the village hall refurbishment project at the time of the grant application and £1285 was pledged and paid by the Village Society, it was suggested that the Parish Council could now make a contribution to this important project by waiving the repayment of the £375. This was unanimously agreed.
2705	5. Consideration of Precept See also minute no 2660 21st November 2024 Having previously agreed that a small increase of 2% should be added to the annual precept, pending further research, the clerk was able to present a fuller picture of the financial impact on households of a rise in precept. Working with the NCC tax base of the contribution for a Band D property, the following increases were studied and considered: 2% increase of £8744 adds £175 to income and 64p per annum to band D precept bill 5% increase of £8744 adds £437 to income and £1.88 per annum to band D precept bill 10% increase of £8744 adds £874 to income and £3.95 per annum to band D precept bill. There had been no increase in precept for more than three years, during which time inflation had increased costs of insurance, subscriptions and rents. The clerk has not claimed any pay rise. It was unanimously agreed to request a 10% increase in precept for 25/26. Clerk to send signed precept form to NCC.

2706	<p>6. Review of Planning Applications</p> <p>There had been very few planning applications or decisions since the meeting on 21st November and there was little of note to discuss.</p> <p>The vigilance against the unlawful development at Planetrees continues, see Cllr Morphet's report at appendix 1 for details. It has been decided not to pursue the prosecution of the original landowner. However, the site has now been sold so the problem of unlawful actions may not be over. The Enforcement Officer has been made aware that some kerbstones had been delivered to the site on 13th January and councillors are encouraged to observe activity on the site whilst moving around the parish. The clerk has the phone number of the enforcement officer if any further potential infringements are observed</p> <p>Cllr Blake reported that he had undertaken an extensive review of the current planning guidance covering the installation of PV panels and ASHPs in a conservation area. All councillors were very interested in his findings and the clerk agreed to place a link to the guidance on the front page of the Parish Council website.</p>
2707	<p>7. County Councillor's Report</p> <p>Cllr Morphet's comprehensive report appears at Appendix 1</p>
2708	<p>8. Chair's Maintenance Report.</p> <p>Of the maintenance actions identified at November's meeting, the following had been completed:</p> <p>Cllr Blake had cleared the fell steps and was warmly thanked for his efforts.</p> <p>Cllr Lamb provided the Christmas tree, which was decorated with lights, the electricity for which was provided by parishioners in Falster Cottage. Cllr Lamb removed the tree after 12th night. Cllrs extended their thanks for all contributions and the Chair has a bottle of wine for Falster Cottage.</p> <p>Still outstanding is strimming required around benches and bus shelter. Fred Wyrley Birch to assist Cllr Wood in achieving this.</p> <p>The drain on Old Lane has been attended to by Highways, with the result that although there was still some water spill to freeze on the A6079, this was a welcome improvement.</p> <p>There is some anecdotal evidence that the flooding on the back green may have abated. Councillors will continue to monitor the situation. .</p> <p>Chris Mowatt is still to trim the wildflower area and once this has been done, Cllr Lamb & Cllr Wood will remove the overhanging branches.</p> <p>The tree felling at Valley View had been fully investigated. The tree, although apparently on the verge, was in fact on land owned by Valley View, the boundary fence having been erected on level land some distance from the actual property boundary. Valley View is outside the conservation area and the trees were of small girth, so there was no unlawful action.</p> <p>The remaining debris from the tree is still on Highways land. Cllr Wood has spoken to the residents who assured him that they were expecting a contractor to come and remove it.</p> <p>The clerk had received a complaint from a resident about dog poo near their property. The dog warden was contacted and provided some large poo stickers which the clerk delivered to the property.</p> <p>Fix My Street has several reports of road flooding at Dunkirk. Councillors may wish to understand this problem more clearly when considering the 26/27 LTP priorities.</p> <p>The date for the 2025 litter pick is 5th or 12th April, depending on the date of the plant sale.</p>

2709	<p>9. Village Hall Report Cllr Blake made the following VH Report to Parish Council:</p> <p>The kitchen improvements are almost completed, some minor electrical works and making good remain. The new cooker is installed as are a new worktop and cupboards on the south west wall, a fridge and pie warmer procured and a plate warmer, which will double as a cupboard is to be installed. The crockery and some utensils were rationalised and rearranged to protect the drawers which were overloaded.</p> <p>A safebox containing the controller for the new screen and projector has been installed. Bookings that specify use of the AV kit will be given a pass code.</p> <p>Old Years night was unfortunately cancelled due to a sudden bereavement. It was missed and the trustees passed on their commiserations.</p> <p>A quote for refurbishing the gent's toilets was obtained; this led to a discussion about a wider project that examined the viability of refurbishing both loos and the entrance. This will be considered; meanwhile a rejigged quote for the men's loo will be obtained, and a heater installed in the women's loo.</p> <p>A planning application for the installation of solar panels on the hall roof has been submitted by Northumberland Community Energy Ltd. This takes us a step closer to the installation of panels and batteries, and cheaper electricity.</p> <p>Bookings are similar to last year, with the omission of Old Year's Night. The majority of the bookings continue to come from within the village</p> <p>The Hall's finances remain healthy, the major challenge is the price of electricity, This can be borne in the near term and hopefully will be mitigated by the installation of solar panels in due course. Any significant delay, might however mean the rental costs will go up.</p> <p>Two Trustees stated their intent to resign from the management committee.</p> <p>It is with some sadness that we note the closure of the village WI branch which has been in existence since 1918.</p>
2710	<p>10. B4RN Update There has been no recent communication from B4RN.</p>
	<p>Date of next meeting Thursday 20th March 2025 at 7.30pm.</p> <p>The meeting ended at 8.40pm</p>

COUNTY COUNCILLOR UPDATE FOR WALL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING 16/1/25

1) I'll start with an update on **the glamping site on Brunton Bank**. The Planning Enforcement officer had told me that she was planning to prosecute the landowner, but she's now decided that because the illegal entrance has re-vegetated and is difficult for vehicles to use it's now unnecessary to pursue prosecution. I think the fact that the previous landowner is thought to have left the UK and the new landowner hasn't been identified yet is another reason behind that decision. Apparently it takes the Land Registry around 6 months to disclose the identity of new landowners. The Enforcement officer was told that someone visited the site on Monday with some kerbstones, so she called in the next day to fix the Enforcement Notice to a fence post in the hope that they'll see it when they return. She's also asked the Highways Maintenance officers to phone her if they see anyone on the site, and she'll drive straight over if they do. She'd be happy to take a call from any parish councillor who sees anyone on site too. Her name is Alex Campbell and her number can be obtained from the clerk.

2) **The Advanced Stop Lines for cyclists** at each end of Chollerford Bridge won't be installed until June or July now. That's because the traffic calming work at New Houses has been delayed until then, and the two jobs are going to be done at the same time. The Highways officer who'll be overseeing the construction told me that the delay is because the job hadn't been issued to him until December and he'd struggle to find the staff and arrange the traffic management during the winter months. The New Houses residents are very disappointed, but the Highways officer has agreed to prioritise the work over other jobs in the Humshaugh ward. I told the cabinet member for transport how disappointed I was, and he told me that there was nothing that he could do to get the work done any sooner.

3) My ecologist friend hasn't managed to get out to have a look at **the species-rich grassland site**, but I think it's fine to leave it until September. The Barrasford site didn't get cut at all last autumn, because Neighbourhood Services didn't manage to do it. We're going to cut and rake that site in March to try to get back on track, but I don't think it's necessary to do that in Wall.

4) We'll be getting an update on **the Local Transport Plan programme** at Tynedale Local Area Committee on 11th Feb, and I'll let you know if anything's changed. We're currently waiting for them to make decisions on whether to improve the footway between the lay-by and Low Brunton and whether to implement traffic calming measures on the A68 at Beukley. They'd originally ruled the traffic calming measures out on the basis that there hadn't been any serious collisions, but I reminded them about the fatal collisions in 2023 and 2024 and they agreed to reconsider their decision. I was hoping to get an update at Tuesday's LAC meeting, but didn't. Also, don't forget that Community Speedwatch opened to applications on January 2nd. It closes to applications on Sunday 26th, so you'll need to be quick if you want to sign up.

<https://careers.northumbria.police.uk/volunteering/police-support-volunteers/#speed>

5) I had an excellent response to my request for **suggestions for bus service improvements**, and I've submitted them to the transport officers now. I'll let you know if I get any feedback.

6) **The Warmer Homes scheme** is still open for applications, but will be closing as soon as the funding runs out - unless the council is successful in securing another government grant. I expect to have a full update on this in time for the next parish council meeting.

