

Slaley Parish Council

**Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Slaley Parish Council
Held on Wednesday 9th August 2023 at 8 pm
in Slaley Commemoration Hall**

Present: Councillor Ian Stevens, Councillor Stella Douglas, Councillor Debra Taylor and Councillor Jon Storey.

1. Apologies for Absence

Councillor Lynda Sale and County Councillor Colin Horncastle.

2. Public Participation

None.

3. Short Address by County Councillor Colin Horncastle

Due to the absence of County Councillor Colin Horncastle there was no address.

4. Declarations of Interest

Councillors Stevens, Douglas and Taylor, declared an interest in agenda item 8i.

5. Minutes of Meeting

i. Approval of minutes

The minutes were proposed as a true record by Cllr Taylor and seconded by Cllr Storey.

ii. Review of outstanding actions

The Actions Log was reviewed and appropriately updated.

iii. Matters arising

None

iv. Review of Outstanding Actions From Previous Parish Council Meetings

The Actions Log was reviewed and appropriately updated.

It was agreed that whilst the Parish Clerk would maintain a complete actions log, only outstanding items would be brought to the attention of Councillors at future meetings.

Action – Cllr Stevens to progress.

6. Correspondence

- a. Email to Police Constable Paul Davies – 20th July 2023, with regard to progress being made with the Speed Awareness Initiative locally. Response of the same date identified that vetting of candidates was taking longer than expected and no timescale could be put on when this would be completed.

Action – Cllr Stevens to follow up with PC Paul Davies and raise the issue with County Councillor Colin Horncastle.

- b. Post Van – 20th July 2023. Email sent (by Cllr Stevens) to the six parish councils which cover the areas the post van visits, requesting an update on any action they may have taken with the Post Office regarding it being 'off the road' for extended periods. Two responses to date, both stating no action taken.

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- c. Email sent to Glen Harrison, Highways Maintenance Senior Team Leader, Tyne Valley, Northumberland County Council by Cllr Stevens, dated 21st July 2023. It addressed the following minuted items:

- 2. iii. of 12th July 2023
- 5 of 9th May 2023

As of 2nd August no response received.

Email also copied to County Councillor Colin Horncastle and Guy Opperman MP on 23rd July 2023.

Councillors noted that within a week of Glen Harrison being contacted a road sweeper had spent a full day in the village removing road grit.

Post meeting note – reply received from Guy Opperman on 10th August offering to ‘prod’ Northumberland County Council at our request. No other replies forthcoming.

Action – Cllr Stevens to follow up.

- d. Highwaysprogramme@northumberland.gov.uk – 26th July 2023. Submission of items for consideration in the County Councils Local Transport Plan Capital Programme 2024/25.

Councillors noted the submission of the correspondence.

- e. Temporary Traffic Regulation Order (TTRO) 134980542, B6309 Linnels Bank, Hexham. Issued 27th July 2023. Provides notification of road closure between the hours of 07:30 and 17:00 on 02 - 06/10/2023, for plain out and patching works.

Action – Cllr Stevens to raise awareness of this closure through an item in Slaley News and Hexham Notes.

Action – Cllr Taylor to raise significant TTROs with Councillors in the absence of a Parish Council Clerk.

7. Approaches Made to Councillors

- a. Cllr Stevens was approached by two residents regarding a new planning application for Town Foot Caravan Park. See agenda item 9.
- b. Cllr Douglas was approached by the chairperson of Slaley Community Shop requesting that a link to their Facebook page be placed on the Parish website. Councillors **AGREED** that this would be appropriate.

Action – Cllr Douglas to facilitate this request.

8. New Items

- a. **Review of Annual Parish Meeting Minutes (led by Cllr Stevens)**
Actions reviewed and Actions Log updated appropriately.
- b. **Review of Annual Parish Council Meeting Minutes (led by Cllr Stevens)**
Actions reviewed and Actions Log updated appropriately.

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c. **Parish Clerk – Probationary Period** (led by Cllr Stevens)

Cllr Stevens advised that following Clare Loughlin's three month probationary period as Parish Clerk/RFO and in the light of conversations with fellow Councillors he had taken the difficult decision not to renew her contract with the Council. He said that he had formerly written to Clare in that respect and that his letter had been acknowledged on 2nd August 2023. He went on to state that Clare would obviously be paid in relation to her time with the Council, but that this would be upon the return of papers she had held for it. A condition that she was aware of.

From the ensuing discussion the following actions arose:

- i. **Action – Cllr Douglas** to calculate monies owed to Clare.
- ii. **Action – Cllr Stevens** to add the replacement of the Parish Clerk and RFO on to the **September 2023 agenda**.
- iii. **Action – Cllr Stevens** to advertise for a new Parish Clerk/RFO in the **September 2023 edition of Slaley News**.

d. **Grass Cutting** (led by Cllr Stevens)

A lengthy discussion was had about the cost of grass cutting in the village, the locations it took place at and the frequency. Opinions were divided in relation to giving some currently mowed areas over to rewilding. There was also concern over how lucrative a mowing contract would be if less was undertaken. Councillors felt that a key piece of the jigsaw was to understand the responsibility Karbon Homes had for maintaining the green space at Park Side and that this should be understood before progressing the issue further.

Action – Cllr Stevens to approach Karbon Homes to establish their responsibility for maintaining the green space at Park Side.


e. **Grants Policy** (led by Cllr Taylor)

After discussion, Councillors **AGREED** to:

- i adopt the Grants Policy following a small amount of editing.
Action – Cllr Taylor.
- ii publish the Policy on the website.
Action – Cllr Douglas.
- iii advise the Parish of the new Policy via Slaley News and advise that paper copies were available (to avoid digital exclusion).
Action – Cllr Stevens.

f. **Review of Parish Council Meeting Dates** (led by Cllr Stevens)

At the Annual Parish Council Meeting (May 2023) it was agreed to hold the Parish Council meetings for 2023/24 on the second Wednesday of each month. In practice this was hampering attendance by Councillors and it was **AGREED** following discussion that meetings from September 2023 onwards, would move to the second Monday of each month. A full list of revised dates for 2023/24 appears at Appendix 1.

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g. **Yearly Planner** (led by Cllr Stevens)

Councillors reviewed the Planner and updates were noted.

Action – Cllr Stevens to update the Yearly Planner, a copy of which appears at Appendix 2.

h. **New System Launched For Street Repairs** (led by Cllr Stevens)

Cllr Stevens brought this new system to the attention of Councillors. It was agreed the Parish should be made aware of it through Slaley News.

Action – Cllr Stevens to include details in the September edition of Slaley News.

i. **Parish Council Contribution to Commemoration Hall Wi-Fi Costs** (led by Cllr Stevens)

With the stated aim of the Commemoration Hall Trustees being, that the Hall should be economically self-sufficient, Councillors, following a discussion **AGREED** funding from the precept would be withdrawn in its current format (automatic renewal each year), from 31st March 2024. This decision would of course not preclude Trustees seeking funding via the Councils Grant Policy.

Action – Cllr Stevens to write to the Chair of the Commemoration Hall Trustees to appraise her of the Council's decision.

9. **Planning Applications**

Variation of Condition 3 (Time Constraint on Occupancy) on approved application T/90/E/256 – to allow the site to be open all year round. Town Foot Caravan Park, Slaley, Hexham Northumberland, NE47 0BQ.

There was general disquiet amongst Councillors (in line with that felt by many residents) about the Variation before them. A long discussion ensued from which it was agreed that Councillors would state their objection to the proposal.

Action – Cllr Stevens to set out Council's objections and post them on Northumberland County Councils Public Access System by 15th August 2023.

Post meeting note – Objection posted on 14th August 2023, the grounds for which can be found at <https://publicaccess.northumberland.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=consulteeComments&keyVal=RXY4HFQSJ6100>

10. **Finances**

Cllr Taylor presented the Councils finances to Councillors. All was in order and a bank balance of £16,799.53 was recorded.

Of note however were the following:

- i a significant increase in costs associated with the hosting of the Parish Council website. Despite this being the case, it was **AGREED** that Healey Parish Council would not be asked to increase their contribution until 1st April 2024. A further discussion will be required to determine the level of that revised contribution.

Action – Cllr Stevens to bring this issue forward as an agenda item at the Council's October 2023 meeting.

- ii the budget for the grass cutting and 'snow' provision was likely to be exceeded this year.

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- iii a current underspend in wages exists because the Council was without a Parish Clerk/RFO between April and mid-May and the time the 'probationary' Clerk (see item 7 c.) has been with it is yet to be paid.

Cllr Douglas raised the issue of financing the ongoing printing of Slaley News. Councillors agreed to address this in detail at their September 2023 meeting.

Action – Cllr Stevens to bring this issue forward as an agenda item at the Council's October 2023 meeting.

11. Any Other Business

- a. Attendance at the Town and Parish Councils Conference on 5th October 2023 was discussed. It was agreed that Cllr Taylor and Cllr Stevens would attend on the Councils behalf.
- b. In follow up to an article in Slaley News (July/August 2023 edition), titled "Warmer home grants from Northumberland County Council", Cllr Taylor requested that she be able to use the Parish Council email address in a follow up article. Councillors **AGREED** to this.
- c. With reference to the Yearly Planner (see item 8 g.) Councillors requested time to discuss the Parish Plan at their October 2023 meeting.

Action – Cllr Stevens to bring this issue forward as an agenda item at the Council's October 2023 meeting.

12. Date of Next Meeting

Monday, 11th September 2023.

Meeting closed at 21.33

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