

Slaley Parish Council

Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Slaley Parish Council Held on Monday 11th December 2023 at 7.30 pm in Slaley Commemoration Hall

1. Present

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

2. Apologies for Absence

Councillor Lynda Sale and County Councillor Colin Horncastle.

3. Public Participation

None.

4. Short Address by County Councillor Colin Horncastle

None.

5. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Douglas in relation to the item regarding Slaley Show – see agenda item 11 b. (Any Other Business).

6. Minutes of Meeting Held on Monday 13th November 2023

a. Approval of minutes

Councillor Storey proposed the minutes and Councillor Taylor seconded them.

b. Review of actions

The Actions Log was reviewed and appropriately updated.

c. Matters arising

No matters arising.

7. Correspondence of significant note

- i. **Karbon Homes** – Email response to Councillor Stevens regarding grounds maintenance at Parks Side, dated 29th November 2023. Raised under agenda item 9 h..

8. Approaches Made to Councillors

a. Correspondence

- i. **Mrs. Doonan – Chair of the Commemoration Hall Trustees** – contacted Councillor Stevens by text suggesting that there should be a joint discussion between interested parties regarding the Pyramid of Care Arrangements in the village. see agenda item 8 i..

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- ii. **Tynedale Hospice at Home** – contacted the former Parish Clerk, Mrs. Wilson, on 13th November who passed the email correspondence on to Councillor Stevens. It comprised a thank you note for a donation received from the Council and a request that we keep the hospice in mind for any possible future donations. This correspondence was discussed under agenda item 9 c..

b. **Personal**

- a. **Pothole reported** – Mr. Dryden reported a pothole in Slaley village to Councillor Stevens on 19th November 2023. Councillor Stevens reported it to the County Council via FixMyStreet. The report was acknowledged and repairs assigned.

9. **New Items**

a. **Review of Outstanding Actions for 2023/24** (led by Cllr Stevens)

The Actions Log was reviewed and appropriately updated.

b. **Recruitment of Parish Clerk** (led by Cllr Stevens)

Councillor Stevens advised fellow Councillors that following the agreed recruitment and interview (conducted by Councillor Sale and himself) process, the role of Parish Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer had been offered to and accepted by Mrs. S. Nixon on 4th December 2023. He is now exploring a start date with her.

Action – Councillor Stevens to establish when Mrs. Nixon is able to take up the role of Parish Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer.

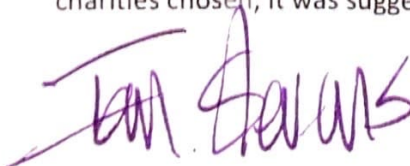
c. **Review of Annually Gifted Grants** (led by Cllr Stevens)

On an annual basis the Parish Council has gifted grants to local charities. This arrangement sits outside the new Grants Policy (September 2023) prompting a discussion around this practice and the future direction of travel in relation to it.

Councillor Taylor reminded fellow Councillors that the grants identified in the current budget for the Great North Air Ambulance, Tynedale Hospice at Home, ADAPT and West Northumberland Food Bank, had been agreed in December 2022 and therefore should be honoured. All Councillors were in agreement with this.

Action – Councillor Taylor to facilitate the payment of the charitable grants agreed in December 2022 to the appropriate charities.

Councillors also agreed that smaller charities/those whose work was recognised locally, should not have to apply for grants in line with its grants policy. Instead the Council would look to make discretionary awards as they had always done. However they believed that the community should have a greater say in the charities chosen, it was suggested by way of a different theme being chosen

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each year e.g. homelessness, suicide prevention etc. Whilst Councillors were all in agreement with the way forward, none stepped forward to progress it.

Action – All Councillors to consider if they are in a position to champion the Councils approach to discretionary grants.

d. **Agreeing the Precept for 2024/25** (led by Cllrs Stevens and Taylor)

Councillors Stevens and Taylor had met prior to this meeting to draft a provisional budget (Appendix A), to establish what funds the Council would require to conduct its business in 2024/25. A sum of circa £17,000 was identified. This provisional budget was shared and discussed with Councillors, who in broad terms agreed with it..

Councillor Stevens went on to suggest additional expenditure (Appendix B) that the Council may wish to consider during the course of 2024/25, amounting to circa £5,000.

A discussion ensued around how the predicted expenditure of circa £22,000 (£17,000 + £5,000) might best be met and whether any percentage change to the precept (currently £13,400) in the light of this total should be made. Councillors took opposing views. With a projected carry over of circa £18,500 from 2023/24 and an unchanged precept being paid into Council funds in 2024/25 two Councillors believed that seeking an increase in the precept was unwarranted, given the potential level of expenditure and the funds available. The opposing view was that the Council should raise the precept marginally in order that it could meet the proposed levels of expenditure whilst maintaining a 'healthy' level of contingency, for any emergency that may arise. Further, that by increasing the precept by small incremental amounts over time, when additional funding was required a larger one of increase could be avoided.

(Council vote!)

A vote followed, to ensure the Council took a decision about 2024/25 funding and with the Chairman's casting vote, **A MOTION** not to increase the current precept in 2024/25 above was carried. Slaley Parish Council therefore record that the precept for 2024/25 will remain, as this year, at £13,400.

Action – Councillor Stevens to advise Northumberland County Council of the Parish Councils funding/precept requirements for 2024/25.

e. **Advertising Policy** (led by Cllrs Stevens and Douglas)

Councillor Stevens presented a revised advertising policy to Councillors via email on 26th November 2023 and requested that it be approved at this meeting.

 Tom Stevens 08/01/24

(Council vote!)

THE MOTION to approve the policy was unanimously carried.

f. **Town and Parish Council Conference 2023** (led by Cllr Taylor)

Councillor Taylor provided Councillors with a paper capturing the highlights of the conference (Appendix C).

g. **Parish Council Notice Board** (led by Cllr Douglas)

Councillor Douglas presented a paper to Councillors via email on 30th November 2023, regarding the purchase of a new notice board. Following a thank you for her work Councillors discussed the paper.

It was noted that the WI were raising funds for a community notice board and that perhaps the Parish Council could contribute to its cost and subsequently use part of it. Councillor Stevens advised that he had already made such an approach and that the WI had stated that they did not wish to go down that route.

Given the cost of new notice boards, Councillors agreed that the existing one should be maintained for as long as possible and provision be made for a lock.

Action – Councillor Stevens to undertake on-going maintenance of the Parish Council notice board.

h. **Grounds Maintenance** (led by Cllr Stevens)

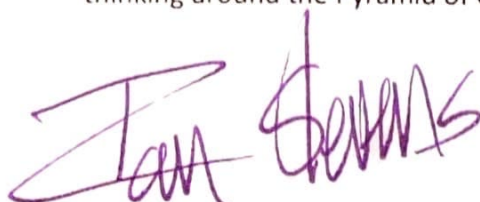
The issue of grass cutting in the village is yet to be resolved by Councillors. This is partly due to a lack of understanding about how Karbon Homes, the legal owners of the land at Parks Side fit into the equation in relation to grass cutting there.

Councillor Stevens shared the last piece of correspondence received from Karbon Home stating that they believed the grass at Parks Side was cut by the Parish Council through mutual agreement. Current Councillors could not recall the history behind this claim. Councillor Taylor offered to do some research to provide Councillors with a better understanding of this issue.

Action – Councillor Taylor to review the history of grounds maintenance at Parks Side and the relationship between Karbon Homes and the Parish Council in this respect.

i. **Sub-committee Report – Pyramid of Care** (led by Cllrs Douglas, Stevens and Taylor)

At the Councils November meeting (minuted item 9 d.), it was agreed that a sub-committee (comprising Councillors Douglas, Stevens and Taylor) should progress thinking around the Pyramid of Care in the Parish, with particular focus on the

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Commemoration Hall acting as a Resilience Hub. Councillor Stevens, via a schematic (Appendix D) shared the sub-groups outputs.

Action – Councillor Stevens to share the outputs of the sub-group with the Commemoration Halls Chair of Trustees.

j. **Parish Council banking arrangements (led by Cllr Taylor)**

At the Councils October meeting (minuted item 11 c. ii.), Councillor Taylor agreed to explore the concept of transferring funds from its 'chequing' account, into an interest yielding one. In a paper sent to Councillors via email on 18th November 2023, Councillor Taylor set out potential options for them to consider.

Councillor Taylor was thanked for her paper and recommendations. On being queried as to whether the Council could legally move funds into an interest yielding account, Councillor Taylor advised that she had taken advice and that it was permissible.

(Council vote!)

A MOTION to transfer £7,500 into a fixed term account and £7,500 into an instant account with Lloyds Bank was unanimously passed.

10. Finances (led by Cllr Taylor)

a. Outgoings between 6th November and 3rd December 2023			
• Grant – Northumberland National Park Mountain Rescue Team	£400.00		
• First aid course	£683.00		
• Hire of Commemoration Hall	£32.00		
• (Cllr) Jon Storey – Defibrillator battery	£267.60		
• (Cllr) Jon Storey – Defibrillator pads	£71.94		
		Total	£1,454.54
b. Income between 6th November 2023 and 3rd December 2023			
• None		Total	£0.00
		ACCOUNT BALANCE Total	£20,365.25

c. **Financial Overview of Council funds**

Councillor Taylor advised that the Councils current funds were in a 'healthy' state and the rate of spend is lower than predicted because no Parish Clerk has been in post since 21st July 2023.

Jon Stevens 08/01/24

11. Any Other Business/Urgent Matters

Three items were raised under Any Other Business:

- a. Email from Will Wearmouth, from the office of Guy Opperman MP, dated 7th December 2023. The email offered support to the Parish Council regarding concerns they first raised in June 2023 about the poor service being offered by the post van at the time.

Action – Councillor Stevens to respond to Will Wearmouth appropriately.

- b. Email from Mrs. S Douglas, Vice Chair of Slaley Show, dated 7th December 2023, identifying concerns the Show Committee had regarding its financial standing and consequently the ability to run it in future years.

Councillors agreed that they would do all it could to support this community institution through any difficult times that may lie ahead. Mrs. Douglas (Councillor Douglas) expressed her thanks regarding this statement of intent and agreed to approach the Council if and when the need arose.

- c. A letter was received from the Parish Clerk of Healey Parish Council, dated 6th December 2023, accompanied by a £50 cheque relative to their renting of space on the Slaley Parish Council website (www.slaley.org.uk) for the year 2023/24.

Action – Councillor Taylor to pay the cheque into the Councils bank account.

12. Date of Next Meeting

Monday 8th January 2024.

The meeting closed at 21:10

Tom Stevens 08/01/24

Slaley Parish Council - Draft Budget 2024/25

7/12/2023

Precept	Precept 24/25	Spend - year to date	Percentage of section budget	Notes
Operational Costs				
Clerk - Salary	£4,640.64	£0.00		£11.59 per hour + 10% 7 hours * 52
Clerk - home working allowance	£100.00	£0.00		
Clerk - Travel	£100.80	£0.00		45p per mile. 16 mile round trip 12 times a year + 2 extra estimate, assuming we need a third party to process this
Clerk - Payroll	£200.00	£0.00		
Clerk - Phone costs	£100.00	£0.00		
Insurance - Came & Co/Gallagher	£667.00	£0.00		assumes 15% increase on 2024/25
NALC	£200.00	£0.00		10% increase on last year assumed
Commemoration Hall Hire	£240.00	£0.00		assumes 2.5 hours @ £8 per hour per month
Slaley Community Web Page	£300.00	£0.00		£264 in 2023/24 - assume a 13.6% increase for 2024/25
Grass & Snow			0.0%	
Parish Grass Cutting	£1,850.00	£0.00		£1680 in 2023/24. 10% increase assumed for 2024/25
Parish gnt & snow clearing	£150.00	£0.00		Funding to allow the Parish Council to support anyone clearing snow locally on behalf of the community
Church Grass	£100.00	£0.00		Uncertain at the time of creating this budget as to whether the Parish Council should be making any contribution to grass cutting at the church (money transferred from grants to cover this expenditure)
Community Play Area			0.0%	
Community Play area within school grounds annual inspection	£100.00	£0.00		10% increase assumed for 2024/25
Community Play area within school grounds public liability insurance	£440.00	£0.00		10% increase assumed for 2024/25
* Community play area within school grounds weekly inspection by NCC, * items @ 95p per item per week	£1,050.00	£0.00		Looks like the spend in 2023/24 will be £950, 10% increase assumed for 2024/25

Sam Jones 08/10/24

Determining the Precept 2024/25

Slaley Parish Council Spending

This paper briefly sets out some proposals for spending in 2024/25 above and beyond those which we are, or wish to be committed to as a Council, e.g. grass cutting together with some thinking around those too.

1. Thinking Around Existing Commitments

Councillors Taylor and Stevens have drafted a preliminary budget for 2024/25. It takes into account existing costs that the Council incur and uplifts those to reflect existing inflationary trends and forecast assumptions.

It also embraces new budgetary items not previously captured by the Parish Council. Some of those items are yet to be agreed by the Council, but they provide a helpful inputs to the level of potential spend for the financial year 2024/25 should they be.

The expenditure and income captured in the preliminary budget should be sufficient to allow Councillors to take a view on the level they believe the precept should be set at for 2024/25. However, additional items put forward by Councillors for funding in line minuted item 9 e. of the Parish Council meeting, dated 13th November 2023, must also be taken into account.

2. Possible New Funding Opportunities

a. *Public bike repair stand with pump - £1,194.00*

What is this?

A public bike repair stand with integrated pump provides a convenient and easy to use facility for cyclists to carry out bike maintenance and repairs.

As can be seen from the photo, the repair stand holds the bike by the stem of the seat, allowing the cyclist to freely work on repairing the bike without a problem.

The tools provided with the repair stand are high quality and heavy duty (replacement packs are available). The tools are housed inside the repair stand

Why am I suggesting this?

A significant number of cyclists pass through or ride near Slaley without stopping. Appropriately advertised, a facility like this bike stand might prompt cyclists to stop in the village and use it as a cycling hub.



Tom Stevens 08/01/24

That has the potential to make the village more vibrant and with strategic positioning increase potential trade at the shop, pub or both.

b. Community pride - £734

What is this?

The approach to the village of Slayey, compared to other villages could be considered a little lack lustre. This proposal is about installing planters at either end of the village and planting them up at least twice, if not three times a year, spring, summer and winter.



The proposal is based on:

- Three, commercially acquired planters - £454
- bulbs and plant for planting (three planters, three times per annum) - £200)
- soil and compost - £80

Why am I suggesting this?

I am suggesting this to:

- enhance the visual impact of the village
- foster an enhanced level of pride in the village/Parish amongst the community

c. Parish Day - £1440

What is this?

This would be an organised event to bring people in the Parish together to promote neighbourliness and a sense of community. It could comprise of a quintessential afternoon tea in the Commemoration Hall, combined with other events and activities in the village which could involve the church, pub and shop. *This is not a rival to the Slayey Show.*



The financial cost of this event would be made up of the following:

- publicity – £120
- food – £300
- contribution to WI for preparing the food – £100
- hire of Commemoration Hall (actual event and planning) – £350
- decoration and bunting - £210
- hiring in some small attractions e.g. bouncy castle - £360

Tom Stevens 08/01/24

Why am I suggesting this?

A Parish event has the potential to bring the community together. In doing so new friendships may be made and an enhanced level of community spirit may pervade as a legacy, a legacy which may lead to individuals becoming more involved in community activities and volunteering

d. Dark Sky initiative - £370*What is this?*

The bottom line of this initiative is to identify whether residents of Slaley would wish to see the street lighting extinguished overnight (once safety factors had been taken into consideration) and whether there was any discernible economic and/or The environmental advantage to doing this.



Costs associated with this initiative are potentially:

- publicity – £120
- hire of the Commemoration Hall for community meetings – £150

Why am I suggesting this?

I am suggesting this because:

- it aligns with the Parish Councils environmental credentials
- there is a potential saving in the cost of electricity for the county
- those who wish to view the night sky with more clarity could do so because of the absence of light pollution

e. Slaley Show - £1000*What is this?*

The Slaley Show with its 161 year history needs no introduction. It's ongoing success is dependent upon volunteers and the funds that it can raise. Given that the show is a significant part of community life a level of financial support, on an annual basis, by the Parish Council would seem appropriate.

*Why am I suggesting this?*

The show is and has been a significant part of community life in the Parish. It is visited by many residents together with their families and friends, which in turn keeps Slaley on the map and brings additional revenue to the village its surrounds and those who live and work here.

Jan Davies 08/01/24

Feedback from NCC's Town and Parish Council Conference

Thursday, 5th October 2023 @ County Hall, Morpeth

Event attended by 70+ councillors from across the region. Chance to meet representatives from local organisations and hear from NCC. Plan to repeat the session in spring 2024 with a focus on housing.

Sessions

- **Environment & Climate Change - Nick Johnson, Senior Project Manager, Climate Change**
NCC's current climate change plan is due to be reissued as it covered 2020 – 2023. The new targets will include NOx emission targets for 2024 and CO2 up to 2030.
- **Local Services Update - Paul Jones, Director of Environment & Transport**
 - Mainly spoke about the new Fix my Street app. They had received over 14,000 reports in the first five months of operation compared to 5.9 for whole of previous year.
 - Reports can be logged directly by users or via the customer services team at NCC.
 - Prioritising and filtering logged incidents is a challenge.
 - Reporting available for each local area within the system – so we can receive a daily report for South Tynedale
- **Leader's Q&A - Glen Sanderson, Leader of the Council**
Main discussion around services and developments in the urban areas of Ashington and Bedlington, including new Northumberland Line from Ashington/Blyth into Newcastle.

Marketplace area for local organisation to engage with Councillors

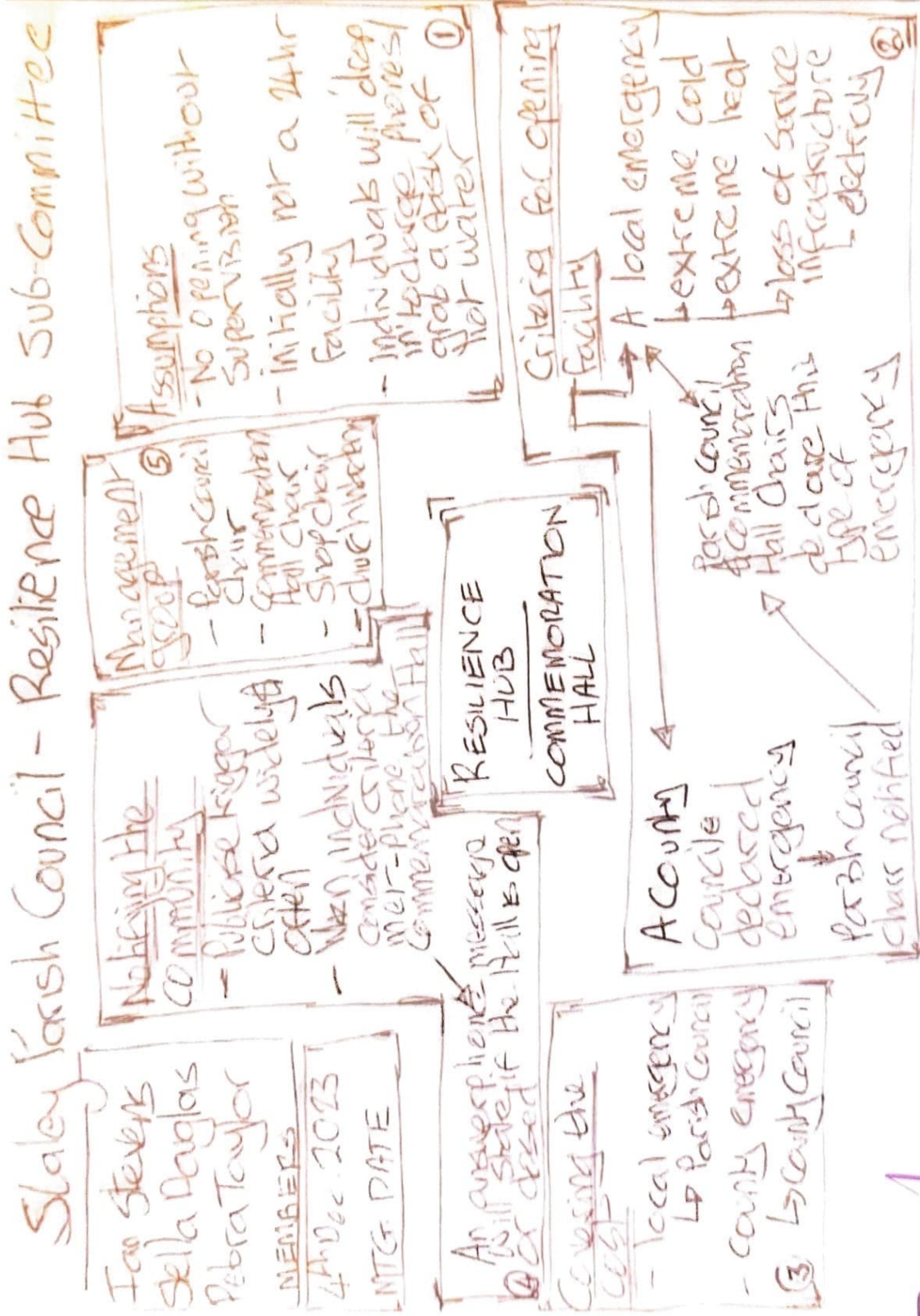
Discussions included:

- Conversation with CAN about resilience/emergency hubs which has led to Q&A Zoom scheduled for 12th December.
- CAN – Domestic Carbon Reduction Scheme: Initial conversation about a local Slaley event to help people reduce their carbon footprint by improving insulation and looking to new heating systems.
- Archives Services – in discussion with them about digitising images from local collection of faring photographs.

Debra Taylor for Slaley Parish Council

Glen Sanderson 08/10/24

Schematic of key points generated by the 'Resilience Hub' sub committee



Jan Dennis 09/01/24