

# Slaley Parish Council

## Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Slaley Parish Council Held on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> October 2023 at 7.30 pm in Slaley Commemoration Hall

### 1. Present

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

### 2. Apologies for Absence

County Councillor Colin Horncastle.

### 3. Public Participation

None

### 4. Short Address by County Councillor Colin Horncastle

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

### 5. Declarations of Interest

- i. Agenda item 8d., (Pyramid of Care) - Councillors Stevens, Taylor and Douglas – all Commemoration Hall Trustees.
- ii. Agenda item 8e., (Community Play Area signage) Councillor Stevens – school governor.
- iii. Agenda item 12., (AOB, Snack&Chat grant application) Councillor Douglas – associated with Snack&Chat.

### 6. Minutes of Meeting Held on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> September 2023

#### a. Approval of minutes

Minor amendments were made to the September draft minutes which went on to be proposed for approval by Councillor Storey. Councillor Taylor seconded.

#### b. Review of actions

The Actions Log was reviewed and appropriately updated.

Councillors **AGREED** that in future the Actions Log would not be published with the minutes.

#### c. Matters arising

- i. **Parish Council Notice Board** – minuted item 9 f..

Councillor Storey inspected the board and reported at the meeting that it needed replacing because it was in a poor state of repair.

**Action** – Establish the cost of a new notice board.

 13/11/2023.

## 7. Correspondence of significant note

- a. **Karbon Homes** (email dated 27/09/23) – minuted item 8d. of 9<sup>th</sup> August 2023 Parish Council meeting, in relation to maintaining the green space outside the houses at Park Side. Karbon Homes state that this is not theirs but the Parish Councils responsibility.

Councillors were surprised by this response and believed Karbon Homes had confused ownership and responsibility for the land. Councillor Stevens was asked to seek further clarification.

**Action – Councillor Stevens to follow this item up with Karbon Homes.**

## 8. Approaches Made to Councillors

- a. **Correspondence**

None.

- b. **Personal**

None.

## 9. New Items

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

The Actions Log was reviewed and appropriately updated. The following emerged for noting:

- i. **Advertising Policy** - minuted item 8 i. of the Annual Slaley Parish Council Meeting of 9<sup>th</sup> May 2023.

Councillor Douglas advised that she had completed a review of the Policy. Councillor Stevens has suggested some amendments, which he will make prior to presenting the revised Policy at the December 2023 Parish Council meeting.

**Action – Councillor Stevens to present an updated Advertising Policy at the Parish Council meeting of 11<sup>th</sup> December 2023.**

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

Councillor Stevens presented a recruitment plan to fellow Councillors which they broadly agreed with and helped develop. There was division over whether another advert in the Hexham Courant would be value for money/would reach the target audience, especially when other social media advertising platforms existed. Councillor Stevens was asked to use his discretion in this area and Councillors went on to **AGREE** that a fund of £300 be put at his disposal to deliver an advertising campaign. Councillor Stevens pointed out that exploring advertising options might extend the recruitment timeline – this was noted and accepted.

**Action – Councillor Stevens to progress the recruitment of a new Parish Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer.**

Jan Stevens 13/11/23

c. **First Aid Training (led by Cllr Douglas)**

First Aid training in previous years has been organised by the Parish Clerk on behalf of the community. In the absence of a Clerk this year, Councillors had decided not to progress this initiative in 2023. Cllr Douglas had requested a review of this position.

Councillors held a brief discussion, but without understanding the costs and previous financial arrangements relating to this training, it was curtailed.

**Action – Councillor Stevens to carry this item over to the November Parish Council meeting.**

**Action – Councillor Douglas to provide financial information to the November Parish Council meeting regarding this item.**

d. **Pyramid of Care (led by Cllr Stevens)**

Slaley Commemoration Hall now has the capability of offering itself as a place of refuge during periods of community crisis, e.g. prolonged disruption to amenities. Trustees of the Hall have queried how those who may be in need of such a facility during a period of crisis should best be alerted to its availability. It was suggested that this should fall with the bailiwick of the Parish Council. This agenda item sought to explore this proposal.

The history of the Pyramid of Care was briefly outlined. Councillors **AGREED** that the Parish Council should take the lead in ensuring a viable mechanism existed to advise the community when the Commemoration Hall went into 'Resilience Hub' mode and that this should be done in conjunction with other interested parties.

**Action – Councillor Stevens to carry this item forward to the November Parish Council meeting to allow a plan of action to be discussed.**

e. **Community Play Area Signage (led by Cllr Stevens)**

In May 2023 Councillors reviewed the risk assessment for the Community Play Area. It was agreed that a sub-committee would review the emerging risk mitigation measures. This committee is yet to meet (due to a lack of Councillors and no Parish Clerk) but there is a pressing need to bring signage for the Play Area, up to a modern acceptable standard to better highlight the risks and the responsibilities held by individuals relating to the use of this area.

Councillors **AGREED** to fund a new sign (circa £138 inc. VAT), relative to the proposals put forward by Councillor Stevens at this meeting,(with some minor amendments), recognising that it formed a key element of the mitigation measures in the Play Area risk assessment.

**Action – Councillor Stevens to progress design and purchase of the sign.**

f. **The Parish Plan (led by Cllr Douglas)**

As per minute 11 of the Parish Council meeting minutes dated 9<sup>th</sup> August 2023 (Action Log Reference 20), this item was placed on the agenda for further discussion. This is also in line with the review date in the Yearly Planner.

*Jim Stevens 13/11/23*

Following a discussion about both the Parish and Neighbourhood Plans, Councillors **AGREED** that neither could be meaningfully progressed until a new Parish Clerk was securely in post and ideally the Council was up to 'full strength'. In line with the Yearly Planner the position in relation to both plans will be reviewed on a quarterly basis.

g. **Heritage Asset Register** (led by Cllr Taylor)

Update on progress to date.

Councillor Storey has spoken to Ian Hancock of the local history group who has expressed a tentative interest in progressing the Asset Register on behalf of the Parish Council. Councillor Taylor agreed to make a more formal approach.

**Action – Councillor Taylor to formally approach the local history group to establish their willingness to progress the Asset Register on behalf of the Parish Council.**

h. **Helen and Olwen Savage** (led by Cllr Storey)

Councillor Storey updated fellow Councillors on the arrangements being put in place for the departure of Helen and Olwen.

i. **Financial Contributions Made to the Parish Council Website** (led by Cllr Douglas)

Increasing the financial contribution to the Slaley Parish Council website by Healey Parish Council (who also post on it) was discussed. This in the light of the increasing cost of maintaining the website. Councillors **AGREED** however that the financial contribution currently made should remain the same for the coming financial year.

## 10. Planning Applications

The following planning application was advised to the Parish Council but came outside its meeting schedule and therefore could not be discussed. It was therefore dealt with in correspondence (original email to Councillors dated 14<sup>th</sup> September 2023).

*Location:* The Coach House East Woodfoot Hexham Northumberland NE47 0DF  
*Application No.:* 23/03379/VARYCO

*Variation of condition 2* (approved plans) pursuant to planning permission 21/03340/FUL to reduce scale of proposed extension.

Councillor Stevens advised that he had expressed **NO OBJECTION** on the Councils behalf (based on their feedback to him) on the morning of 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2023, but that just hours later the application had been withdrawn by the applicant.

*Tom Stevens 13/11/23*

## 11. Finances

### a. *September outgoings up to 4<sup>th</sup> October 2023*

• Hextol Foundation – printing of September Slaley News	£57.85
• Slaley Commemoration Hall – September Parish Council Meeting	£16.00
• Hextol Foundation – printing of October Slaley News	£54.75
• Procut invoice	£840.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>£968.60</b>

### b. *September income up to 4<sup>th</sup> October 2023*

• Northumberland County Council – Precept	£6,700.00
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### c. Councillor Taylor gave an update on the Parish Councils' finances. Key points of note were:

- i. that an invoice for \$463.99, purporting to be from Norton Internet Security was considered to be SPAM. Councillor Stevens advised that on checking the Parish Councils bank account, there was no unusual activity to report.
- ii. a balance in the Councils' current account of over £20,000.  
It was queried whether some of these funds could be transferred into an interest yielding account.  
**Action – Councillor Taylor to explore the possibility of transferring some or all of the Councils funds into an interest yielding account.**
- iii. year to date spend is around £4,000. This is considered to be on the low side reflecting no salary being drawn by a Parish Clerk.
- iv. No invoice appears to have been received relative to the inspection of paly equipment in the Community Play Area.
- v. **Action – Councillor Stevens to establish if any invoices have been submitted for this work.**
- vi. Grass-cutting costs are higher than budget because the Parish Council had hoped Karbon Homes would take responsibility for this at Park Side.
- vii. There would be higher than expected printing costs because the Parish Council had agreed to finance the printing of Slaley News during 2024.

 13/11/23

## 12. Any Other Business/Urgent Matters

### a. Grant Applications – Raised by Councillor Stevens

Councillor Stevens advised that he had received two grant applications in line with the new Grants Policy, one relating to Snack&Chat and the other from the Northumberland National Park Mountain Rescue Team. He stated that neither met the criteria set out in the Grants Policy and went on to explain why. He therefore requested Council guidance on whether the applications should be put forward for review at the November Parish Council meeting.

Following a lengthy discussion, Councillors **AGREED** that despite the applications falling outside the scope of the policy they should be reviewed and the oversights relating to them considered as a 'learning experience' relating to the bedding in of a new policy.

The discussion also highlighted that:

- i. greater diligence needed to be exercised by Councillors when reviewing draft documentation to ensure it was fit for purpose. It was considered that this would be best achieved in future by collectively reviewing draft documentation at Parish Council meetings.
- ii. more publicity should be given to the Policy ahead of the next call for applications, potentially via a 'flyer' in Slaley News.

**Action – Councillor Taylor** to assess the most appropriate publicity for the next round of grant applications early in 2024 and action appropriately.

## 13. Date of Next Meeting

Monday 13<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

*Meeting closed at 21.25*

*Tom Stevens 13/11/23*