

# Slaley Parish Council

## Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Slaley Parish Council Held on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> April 2024 at 19.30 in Slaley Commemoration Hall

### 1. Present

Councillor Ian Stevens, Councillor Stella Douglas, Councillor Debra Taylor and County Councillor Colin Horncastle.

### 2. Apologies for Absence

Councillor Lynda Sale.

### 3. Public Participation

Mr. R. Thompson (of Slaley Parish).

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

Councillor Horncastle provided an overview of some of the County Councils current and future activities. He also highlighted a grant of £10,000 that he had bestowed on Slaley First School for IT equipment. In addition he referenced the state of road surfaces and potholes. This led to a discussion during which Councillor Stevens requested that Councillor Horncastle played a more active role in addressing concerns of Slaley Parish community in relation to these issues. Councillor Stevens emphasised that:

- concerns raised about Coal Road had not been adequately addressed (despite Councillor Horncastle approaching Councillor Riddle on 15/02/24)
- an email sent by him, dated 20/03/24, to Councillor Riddle regarding road issues remained unanswered. Councillor Horncastle responded by stating that he would speak to Councillor Riddle about Slaley related issues on 09/04/24

#### **Action – Councillor Horncastle.**

Councillor Stevens went on to request that appropriate feedback regarding the issues raised about roads by the Parish Council and individual members of the Parish be provided. He highlighted the number of complaints being directed at the Parish Council in this respect and their inability to address them because of the lack of input from the County Council.

### 5. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Stevens, declared an interest in minuted item 9 c i., stating that he was a member of the Leek Club.

### 6. Minutes of Meeting Held on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2024

#### **a. Approval of minutes**

Councillor Taylor proposed the minutes and Councillor Douglas seconded them as a true record of the meeting.

**b. Review of actions**

The Actions Log was reviewed and appropriately updated – See Appendix A.

**c. Matters arising**

- i. Noting that minuted item 6 c i., was now resolved Councillors requested that Councillor Stevens formerly thank Mrs. K. Stevens, and Ms. S Richardson for their help in cutting the hedge at the Townhead, B6306 junction on 31/03/23.

**Action – Councillor Stevens.**

- ii. Minuted item 9 d. Councillor Stevens advised that following a discussion with the Parish Council’s former Clerk, Mrs. P. Wilson, he had established that the:
  - small wooden slide in question belonged to the school
  - large climbing frame at the top of the school field was a community asset acquired through a Northumberland County Council 106 grant. Thus there was no single recognised owner

**7. Correspondence of significant note**

- a. **From: Mr. D. Innes, Slaley Leek Club** – grant application via email dated 28/03/24. See also agenda item 8 c. i..
- b. **From: Mazars Accountants** – notification (via email dated 27/03/24) of the requirement to complete the 2023/24 Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) by 30/06/24. Councillor Stevens acknowledged receipt of the correspondence as requested therein on 28/03/24).
- c. **From: Emperor Developments, Affordable Housing** – a request (via email dated 27/03/24) from Emperor Developments that Slaley Parish Council provide a statement or letter supporting the pre-planning application for additional proposed affordable housing in the village. See also agenda item 8 i..
- d. **From: Mrs. L. Watts, Slaley Women’s Institute** – grant application via email dated 23/03/24. See also agenda item 8 c. ii..
- e. **From: Councillor Douglas in her guise as Chair of Slaley Show** – email dated 21/03/24 thanking the Parish Council for their financial support in relation to Slaley Show and how it has encouraged other grant bodies to support it.
- f. **To: Northumberland County Council Planning Enforcement Team** – via email (dated 19/03/24) Councillor Stevens requested feedback on the visit that had been made to Townfoot Caravan Park the previous week.

**8. Approaches Made to Councillors directly**

**a. Correspondence**

- i. **From: Northumbrian Water** – email dated 29/03/24 highlighting the work Northumbrian Water will be carrying out at the sewerage treatment works in Slaley, circa June 2024.

**Note:** The Parish Council responded to planning application for this work with 'No Objection' on 28/03/24.

b. **Personal**

- i. Townfoot Caravan Park – Councillor Stevens was contacted by phone and email (on 19/03/24) by a Parish resident regarding tree felling at the site. Councillor Stevens advised that the Parish Council awaited feedback from the planning enforcement team regarding this issue, in terms of what action could be taken.

9. **New Items**

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

Review and update of actions log See Appendix B.

The action related to minuted item 7 c. of the Councils September 2023 meeting is to be closed. This will allow Councillor Stevens to take forward a new action relating to the Northumbria Police Services Speed Watch initiative.

**Action – Councillor Stevens.**

b. **Recruiting a new Parish Clerk/RFO (led by Cllr Stevens)**

Mrs. S. Dalglish of Haltwhistle, approached Councillor Stevens in March with a view to taking up this role. Following his conversation with her, Councillors Taylor and Douglas have also met her, via Zoom. With a view to progressing Mrs. Dalglish's application Councillor Stevens has been asked to send her some appropriate literature and request that she come to see the Parish and meet some of the Councillors before the end of April.

**Action – Councillor Stevens.**

c. **Grant Applications (led by Cllr Stevens)**

To coincide with the current grant application window, two applications were received.

- i. Slaley Leek Clubs application for £433 was **APPROVED** unanimously without provision.

**Action – Councillor Stevens to advise the Secretary of the Leek Club of the Council's decision.**

**Action – Councillor Taylor to prepare funds for release.**

- ii. Slaley Women's Institute application for £300 was **APPROVED** with two proviso's:
  - recognition of the grant awarded be referenced on the noticeboard itself
  - that an assurance be given that the glass to be used would be break resistant

**Action – Councillor Stevens to advise the applicant of the conditions relating to the grant.**

**Action – Councillor Taylor to prepare funds for release following assurances in relation to the provisions raised by Councillors.**

***Post meeting note:*** The applicant provided the assurances required on 09/04/24.

- d. ***Approval of Parish Council Risk Assessment (led by Cllr Stevens)***  
Councillor Stevens sought approval of the updated Parish Council risk assessment. It was unanimously **APPROVED**.

**Action – Councillor Stevens to uplift the revision date on the Parish Council risk assessment.**

- e. ***Food Hygiene Course (led by Cllr Douglas)***  
Councillor Douglas has been approached by a number of residents with a request that the Parish Council facilitate a food hygiene course at Slaley Commemoration Hall.

Following a discussion, Councillors felt that Parish Council involvement in facilitating an online course for which no financial support had been sought was outside their remit.

**Action – Councillor Douglas to provide feedback to those that had approached her.**

- f. ***Parish Council/Community Interaction (led by Cllr Stevens)***  
Councillor Stevens proposed that a trial of a Parish Council ‘surgery’/drop-in event be conducted for a period of four months from June 2024, at Slaley Community Shop, with a view that it would provide Slaley residents with another mechanism to interact with their Council. The proposal included the following, that the surgery:

- i. be held monthly, on a Monday, two weeks prior to a Parish Council meeting, in order that any items to be addressed by Councillors can appear appropriately on the agenda
- ii. runs between 10:30 and 12:00
- iii. be advertised both prior to its being held and whilst in session
- iv. concept be reviewed following the trial period, to determine its value

The proposal was unanimously **APPROVED**.

Councillors discussed holding surgeries in other parts of the Parish but concluded that the feedback from the trial should be assessed first before rolling the concept out further.

**g. Feedback From Year End and Transparency Course (led by Cllr Stevens)**

Councillor Stevens feedback three key learning points from the NALC approved Year End and Transparency Course he attended on 19/03/24. They were:

- that it was good practice, for the sake of transparency, to have draft meeting minutes in the public domain until such time that they are approved – at which point they can be substituted
- an individual within the Council should always be appointed as the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) to ensure there is no dubiety in how the Councils finances are managed. Whilst ideally this would not be a Councillor (because of the other duties they needed to perform) they nonetheless can hold the role.

Currently lacking an RFO, Councillor Stevens proposed that Councillor Taylor be identified to this role until one was appointed. Councillors unanimously **APPROVED** this proposal

- all transactions of £100 or more must be made visible to the public

**h. Timings of Parish Council/Related Meetings in May 2024 (led by Cllr Stevens)**

The timings of the three meetings ‘involving’ the Parish Council on 13/05/24 were agreed as follows:

- Annual Parish Meeting – 18:30
- The Parish Council Annual General Meeting – 19:00
- The Parish Council’s scheduled May Meeting – 19:30

**Action – Councillor Stevens to publicise meetings.**

**i. Slaley Housing Needs Assessment (led by Cllr Stevens)**

Imperator Developments have requested that Slaley Parish Council provide a statement/letter supporting the pre-planning application for additional proposed affordable housing in the village. Councillors agreed that they could support the application in principle but they were unwilling to endorse the proposal outright without first consulting with community members.

**Action – Councillor Stevens to respond to Imperator Developments with their broad support for affordable housing.**

*j. Town and Parish Council Conference (led by Cllr Douglas)*

Councillor Douglas who attended this conference on 14/03/24 on behalf of Slaley Parish Council advised that it had been somewhat disjointed but that she had been involved in discussions around the appointment of Parish Clerk's and building regulations enforcement.

Councillors thank Councillor Douglas for attending the conference on their behalf.

## 10. Planning Applications

- a. **Proposal:** Variation of Condition 3 (Time Constraint on Occupancy) on approved application T/90/E/256 - to allow the site to be open all year around.  
**Location:** Townfoot Cravan Park, Slaley, Hexham, Northumberland, NE47 0BQ.  
**Applicant:** Mr. J. Miller.  
**Application:** No. 23/02649/VARYCO.  
**Status:** PERMITTED.
- b. **Proposal:** Removal of Condition 2 (dwelling is required in the interest of agriculture) on approved application T/79/E/340.  
**Location:** Trygill Farm Cottage, Slaley, Hexham, Northumberland, NE47 0BY.  
**Applicant:** Anne Lumley.  
**Application:** 24/00916/VARYCO.  
**Status:** Observations required by 16/04/24.

Councillors had no objection to this proposal.

**Action – Councillor Stevens to respond to Northumberland County Council Planning Team accordingly.**

- c. **Proposal:** Change of use of land from agricultural to sewage treatment works, new vehicular access, installation of kiosk, fencing/gate, associated works and landscaping.  
**Location:** Sewage Works Hexham Northumberland NE47 0BL.  
**Applicant:** C/O Agent.  
**Application No.:** 24/00791/FUL.  
**Status:** The window for comment for this application was between 12/03/24 and 02/04/24. This fell outside the Parish Council's meeting cycle so the issue was dealt with via email by the Chairman and fellow Councillors. No objections were raised and the planning team at Northumberland County Council were advised of this on 28/03/24.

## 11. Finances (led by Cllr Taylor)

A brief overview of the Parish Council's finances is shown in Appendix C.

Councillors noted that the first half of the precept payment, totalling £6,700, for 2024/25 had arrived that afternoon. Councillor Taylor advised that she would take care to accrue interest on that money through the Council's online interest account whilst at the same time appropriately managing all its financial outgoings.

In relation to the Council's finances Councillor Taylor shared the following:

- due to an accounting oversight an invoice relating to the inspection of play equipment in the Community Play Area had been paid twice. She went on to say that the sum involved, £311.47, was now being refunded by Northumberland County Council
- the end of year accounts and a bank reconciliation had been finalised. Councillor Taylor acknowledged the support of Mrs. K. Stevens with these tasks

**Action – Councillor Stevens to acknowledge the help of Mrs. K. Stevens.**

- the VAT refund claim documentation had been completed and was ready to send to HMRC

**Action – Councillor Taylor to progress.**

Following Councillor Taylor's update, Councillors thanked her for embracing the Council's finances in lieu of a Responsible Finance Officer this year.

Discussion was held about how the documentation associated with the Council's finances was central to signing off the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) and the part an internal audit had to play in it too. From that:

- Councillor Stevens asked that all Councillors review the Accounting Statement at Appendix D in order that it may be signed off at the May Parish Council meeting. Any issues with it should be raised with Councillor Taylor ahead of that time

**Action – All Councillors.**

- Councillor Douglas highlighted the need to name an internal auditor at the beginning of each financial year. Councillors agreed that Mrs. M. Weatherley should be approached

**Action – Councillor Stevens to approach Mrs. M. Weatherley.**

## 12. Any Other Business/Urgent Matters

- a. **Councillor Storey** – Just hours ahead of the meeting Councillor Storey tendered his resignation from the Parish Council with immediate effect. Councillors expressed sadness at losing such a valuable Councillor and wished him well for the future.

**Action – Councillor Stevens to approach Mr. Storey in an attempt to ascertain if his resignation was due to any Council related issues.**

**13. Date of Next Meeting**  
Monday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2024.

***The meeting closed at 21:34***

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ACTIONS LOG FOR SLALEY PARISH COUNCIL MEETING OF 11<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2024

Log Ref.	Minute Ref.	Action	Owner	Due Date	Complete Y/N
1	3	Contact County Councillor John Riddle in relation to the state of the roads in Slaley Parish. <b>Update 08/04/24</b> – Email sent to Councillor on 20/03/24. Await reply.	IS	08/04/24	Y
<i>Minuted item 6 c. i below, is a matter arising from the Parish Council meeting minutes of 12/02/24</i>					
2	6 c. i.	Progress the issue of the overgrown hedge at the Townhead/B6306 junction (see also minuted item 8 i. from the Parish Council meeting of 13/04/23). <b>Update 08/04/24</b> – Hedge cut on 31/03/24.	IS	08/04/24	Y
3	8 a. i.	Complete insurance pre-renewal questionnaire.	IS	02/04/24	Y
4	8 a. ii.	Contact Mrs. Pepy's regarding her email to the Council.	IS	08/04/24	Y
5	9 b. i.	Contact neighbouring Parish Clerk to determine their interest in becoming the Clerk for Slaley Parish Council.	SD	08/04/24	Y
6	9 b. i.	Follow up on the outcome of Councillor Douglas' action under this item (9 b.i.). <b>Update 08/04/24</b> – Councillor Stevens has approached a potential new Clerk/RFO	IS	08/04/24	Y
7	9 c.	Contact the Chair of the Commemoration Hall Trustees to update her of the Parish Council's position in relation to supporting the concept of it being an Emergency Hub.	IS	08/04/24	Y

APPENDIX A

Log Ref.	Minute Ref.	Action	Who	Due Date	Complete Y/N
8	9 d.	Contact the Mrs. Wilson to help establish ownership of the play equipment at Slaley First School.	IS	08/04/24	Y
9	9 e.	Councillor Douglas to progress delivery of the first aid course scheduled for 16/04/24.	SD	16/04/24	Ongoing
10	9 f.	Review documentation as set out in Appendix E of the minutes for this meeting (11/03/24).	DT, LS & IS	08/04/24	CLOSED
11	9 g.	Review Parish Council risk assessment.	ALL	25/03/24	CLOSED
12	9 h.	Review Parish Council Asset Register.	ALL	25/03/24	CLOSED
13	9 i.	Act as administrator for the Parish Council Gmail account.	IS	Ongoing	Y
14	12 b.	Publicise the need for photo ID to vote at the upcoming elections on 02/05/24.	DT, SD & IS	08/04/24	Y

### Outstanding actions from previous Slaley Parish Council meetings – 2023/24

Log Ref.	Mtg. type	Mtg date	Minute Ref.	Action	Owner	Due date
1	SPC	08/01/24	12 a.	<p>Appropriate payments to be made to Slaley Show - £750 by financial year end 2023/24 and £500 at the beginning of financial year 2024/25.</p> <p><b>Update 08/04/24</b> – Second payment in hand</p>	DT	12/04/24 First payment made
3	SPC	13/10/23	9 g.	<p>Formally engage with the local history group in to establish their willingness to progress the Asset Register on behalf of the Parish Council.</p> <p><b>Updated 08/04/24</b> – No further progress. DT to nudge.</p> <p><b>Updated 11/03/24</b> – Meeting held with DT and SD in attendance with Mrs. P. Wilson and Mr. I Hancock. Agreed actions being progressed by the latter, with a catchup being scheduled for early April.</p> <p><b>Updated 12/02/24</b> – Meeting confirmed for 25/02/24 with DT attending on the Parish Councils behalf</p> <p><b>Updated 08/01/24</b> – A suggested meeting with the History Group to discuss this issue has had to be rearranged.</p> <p><b>Updated 11/12/23</b> – Progress being made. DT continues to pursue the issue.</p> <p><b>Updated 13/11/23</b> – Action has been taken but DT needs to encourage the local history group to progress this item further.</p>	DT	On going

Log Ref.	Mtg. type	Mtg date	Minute Ref.	Action	Owner	Due date
4	SPC	11/09/23	7 c.	<p>Discuss Speed Awareness Initiative with Northumbria Police Service regarding the slow pace with which it is progressing in Slaley.</p> <p><b>Updated 08/04/24</b> – With no meaningful action forthcoming, Councillors agreed to close this action but set a new one for Councillor Stevens to pursue – see item 9 a. of the minutes for the meeting of 08/04/24</p> <p><b>Updated 11/03/24</b> – Remains outstanding from <b>04/10/23</b>.</p>	CH	CLOSED

SPC – Monthly Slaley Parish Council meeting

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Slaley Parish Council Banking Transactions 12<sup>th</sup> March to 8<sup>th</sup> April 2024

<b>CURRENT ACCOUNT</b>		
<b><u>Outgoings</u></b>		
• T P Jones Accountants – Payroll services		£103.00
• Hextol Foundation – Slaley News April Edition		£54.75
• Hextol Foundation – Slaley News March Edition		£54.75
• Procut Grounds Maintenance – Grass cutting		£882.00
• NALC – Training course (Councillor Stevens)		£30.00
• Hire of Commemoration Hall		£16.00
	<b>Total</b>	£928.00
<b><u>Income</u></b>		
		None
	<b>ACCOUNT BALANCE</b>	<b>Total</b>
		£566.65

<b>INSTANT ONLINE INTEREST ACCOUNT</b>		
<b><u>Income</u></b>		
• Interest at 1.3% (added 11 <sup>th</sup> March 2024)		£16.60
<b><u>Outgoings</u></b>		
		None
	<b>ACCOUNT BALANCE</b>	<b>Total</b>
		£15,047.07

## Accounting Statement 2023/24

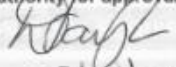
## Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2023/24 for

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2023 £	31 March 2024 £	
1. Balances brought forward	12,807	12,375	Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Value must agree to Box 7 of previous year.
2. (+) Precept or Rates and Levies	12,762	13,400	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.
3. (+) Total other receipts	3,431	737	Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.
4. (-) Staff costs	4,800	1,429	Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include gross salaries and wages, employers NI contributions, employers pension contributions, gratuities and severance payments.
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	0	0	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).
6. (-) All other payments	11,825	8,345	Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cashbook less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).
7. (=) Balances carried forward	12,375	16,738	Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) - (4+5+6).
8. Total value of cash and short term investments	12,375	16,738	The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – To agree with bank reconciliation.
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	19,788	19,788	The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.
10. Total borrowings	0	0	The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).

For Local Councils Only	Yes	No	N/A	
11a. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)				The Council, as a body corporate, acts as sole trustee and is responsible for managing Trust funds or assets.
11b. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)				The figures in the accounting statements above exclude any Trust transactions.

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2024 the Accounting Statements in this Annual Governance and Accountability Return have been prepared on either a receipts and payments or income and expenditure basis following the guidance in Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices and present fairly the financial position of this authority.

Signed by Responsible Financial Officer before being presented to the authority for approval

  
Date 5/4/24

I confirm that these Accounting Statements were approved by this authority on this date:



as recorded in minute reference:



Signed by Chair of the meeting where the Accounting Statements were approved

