

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF CHOPPINGTON PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON  
TUESDAY 10 APRIL 2018 IN STAKEFORD AND BOMARSUND SPORTS AND SOCIAL  
WELFARE CENTRE**

**THOSE ATTENDING:**

Cllr H Allsopp  
Cllr A Barrell  
Cllr J Foster  
Cllr G Huntley  
Cllr A Iley  
Cllr J Rowell  
Cllr P S Vaughan, Chairman

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Mr D L Nicholson JP, Parish Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer, Ms A Brindley, Deputy Parish Clerk and County Councillor D Ledger.

**AGENDA PART 1**

**C059/17 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr K Grimes (family commitment) and Cllr L Watson (illness). The meeting accepted these apologies, agreeing they were proper reasons for absence.

**C060/17 2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY AND OTHER REGISTERABLE PERSONAL INTEREST(S)**

No declarations were made.

**C061/17 3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS.**

None received.

**C062/17 4. PLANNING MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION.**

Cllr A Iley, Vice Chairman of Planning confirmed that there were no matters requiring consideration by the Parish Council.

**C063/17 5. TO RECEIVE AND ADOPT THE MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON 5 DECEMBER 2017.**

Cllr J Foster asked that her name be added to the list of those attending. With this amendment the minutes were accepted as a true record with the Chairman being authorised to sign as such.

**C064/17 6. MATTERS ARISING.**

- 6.1 In respect of minute **C051/17** members requested that Inspector Sue Fryer be given an open invitation to attend and report to the Parish Council.
- 6.2 In respect of minute **C052/17 10.5** the Parish Clerk was asked to confirm that the allocated budget of £9,000 had not been exceeded. In response the Responsible Finance Officer reported that to date a total expenditure of £10,666 had been incurred and that once recharges to partner organisations and recovery of VAT had been made the total cost would be slightly under £8,000.
- 6.3 A member asked if our bids for schemes under Northumberland County Council's Local Transport Plan had been successful. The Parish Clerk reported that the main concerns of local residents have not been recognised through the LTP, but that discussions are taking place to see if NCC is able to address problems such as those being experienced in Morpeth Road Estate and Cleaswell where the road infra-structure is not able to cope with the levels of cars owned per household; and of the areas isolation from the cycle network. In particular reference to safety the Parish Clerk suggested we survey faded road markings and ask the Choppington Disability Group to highlight where the absence of dropped kerbs caused particular problems for those with impaired mobility.

**C065/17 7. TO RECEIVE AND ADOPT THE MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL BUDGET MEETING HELD ON 30 JANUARY 2018.**

The minutes were accepted as a true record with the Chairman being authorised to sign as such.

**C066/17 8. MATTERS ARISING.**

- 8.1 In response to a question the Parish Clerk reported that the budget had now been translated into a work programme for the year and that recruitment of a support officer for the delivery of community activities was underway. This post will deliver services previously outsourced and the resultant savings will contribute to the expanded services being planned for West Sleekburn and Scotland Gate. Members noted that the appointment process will be conducted by the Parish Clerk and Deputy Parish Clerk with final approval being delegated to the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the authority.
- 8.2 Members expressed concern that the academisation of Bedlington Community High School will result in a reduced commitment to community services and that this will have an impact on services for local children.

8.3 Members noted that the work of the Parish Council in developing community engagement and improving local service standards has gained national recognition and that the Parish Clerk has been asked to make a presentation at the launch of the Local Government Association and National Association of Local Council's best practice guide at Westminster.

**C067/17 9. TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 14 FEBRUARY 2018.**

The minutes were received by the Parish Council.

Members commented on the positive comments and praise for staff for all of their efforts to keep paths and main thoroughfares open during the extended winter period.

**C068/17 10. TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON 21 MARCH 2018.**

The minutes were received with the meeting agreeing to accept the recommendations of the Finance Committee in respect of earmarked balances.

**RESOLVED: The recommendation made by the Finance Committee in respect of the identification of earmarked balances was accepted by the Parish Council.**

**C069/17 11. ANNUAL RISK STATEMENT.**

The Parish Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer explained that each parish and town Council should have in place a system to help it to manage risk. This system will be simple for the smallest parishes and more complex for larger parish and town councils. A council's internal auditor may use this risk management system to help to identify what tests to carry out as part of the audit.

Good practice requires Clerks to both assess and manage risks; and Local Councils to consider ways to improve and document existing practices. The Parish Council has previously recognised the importance of risk management and has adopted procedures for risk assessment and management. The failure to manage risks effectively can be expensive in financial terms and also in terms of service delivery and reputation.

Members are ultimately responsible for risk management because risks threaten a council's ability to achieve its objectives. The Clerk should therefore ensure that members:

- Identify the key risks facing the council

- Evaluate the potential to the council of one of these risks taking place; and
- Agree measures to avoid, reduce or control the risk or its consequence.

Every council is different and there is no such thing as a standard list of risks. There are however a number of common themes that are likely to emerge. These might include:

- Physical assets – buildings, equipment, IT hardware etc.
- Finance – banking, loss of income, petty cash etc.
- Injury to the public – in playgrounds and recreation grounds, community buildings etc
- Complying with legal requirements – agendas and minutes, records, etc
- Councillor propriety – declarations of interest, gifts and hospitality etc

The Clerk needs to consider each of the possible risks under each of the identified schemes. For example physical assets could be lost as a result of fire or flood, damaged by vandals, stolen or simply deteriorate through lack of maintenance. All these risks can be minimised or transferred by various means such as taking out insurance, securing alarms or by regular inspection and maintenance. In addition to identifying risk, it is good practice to exercise judgement on the likelihood of the risk occurring and its potential impact. Classification need be no more complicated than high, medium or low. The public can be reassured that Members receive regular and specific training to address specific areas of concern.

There are three main ways of managing risk:

- Take out insurance
- Work with another party to reduce the risk; or
- Manage the risk yourself.

The Parish Clerk advised members that during 2017/18 officers conducted a comprehensive review of insurance and risk, meeting with representatives of Came Insurance and attending seminars run through the SLCC. The Parish Clerk presented the Annual Risk Statement for the consideration of members explaining that it was an iterative document that can be reviewed by members at any time during the council year.

In respect of the Parish Council's compliance with legislative requirements, the Parish Clerk detailed the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and the need for the Parish Council to appoint a Data Protection Officer (DPO). It was explained,

legislation does not preclude the appointment of the Parish Clerk as the DPO, but that criteria would need to be met. Guidance has been received from the National Association of Local Councils and higher level guidance will be issued in the near future by the Society of Local Council Clerks. It is thought that many local councils will appoint an external DPO and whilst this might be a convenient solution careful consideration will be required in respect of cost and the robustness of any such arrangement before being adopted by the Parish Council. The Parish Clerk will undertake training in the requirements of GDPR and the role of the DPO and this will be cascaded to all staff and members. The degree of training will be assessed on receipt of guidance from the SLCC, but is likely to cost the region of £2,500. This has been allowed for through the Parish Council's budget allocation for professional support.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1. By unanimous decision it was agreed to adopt the Annual Risk Statement (attached as Appendix 1) and authorised the Parish Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer to take all identified actions.**
- 2. Members agreed to appoint the Parish Clerk as Data Protection Officer. This appointment will be reviewed in 6 months by the Staffing Committee.**

**C070/17      12.      ROAD SAFETY.**

The Parish Clerk reported on a meeting with officers from Northumberland County Council together with the Deputy Parish Clerk and County Councillor Julie Foster. The meeting was held to discuss continuing problems caused by speeding along the entire section of Ashington Drive. A 20 MPH restriction has been introduced and whilst this has lowered average speeds there is still cause for concern.

It was explained that the problem caused by drivers was not of a degree that will cause any 'special' enforcement by the Police and that it was considered that Northumberland County Council have taken reasonable traffic calming measures. In these circumstances any improvements will in all probability have to be funded by a 3<sup>rd</sup> party.

The Parish Clerk has requested further traffic measurements be made and on receipt will seek professional opinion on what measures, if any, can be taken to improve road safety. The deployment of interactive signage might be considered at a future date as a pilot measure. The development of a pilot project will involve expenditure of up to £15,000.

**RESOLVED: Members supported the actions initiated by the Parish Clerk and agreed in principle for the allocation of future**

**funding (not exceeding £15,000) to be delegated to a working group of members composed of Cllr J Foster, Cllr A Iley and Cllr G Huntley.**

**C071/17      13.      PARISH COUNCIL SPONSORSHIP OF CHILDRENS ACTIVITIES.**

The Parish Council has an expressed priority to direct resources towards activities for children. The authority provides holiday play, youth clubs, sporting opportunities and other activities. Activities that benefit children and local residents are also provided by other agencies through fun days and other events, both within the parish and beyond. The Parish Clerk asked members to consider the criteria to be used in deciding when it is appropriate to support events organised by 3<sup>rd</sup> parties.

**RESOLVED: Members agreed that Parish Council support (staff time and financial contribution) can be given for childrens activities at events organised by partner organisations when it can be demonstrated there is direct benefit to residents of the Choppington Parish. The responsibility for deciding when support is appropriate is through resolution passed by members at a meeting of the Parish Council or at a meeting of the Finance Committee, or Community Development and Environment Committee.**

**C072/17      14.      PARISH CLERK'S REPORT.**

**14.1      Finance Report**

The Parish Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer detailed all expenditure made and income received since the last meeting. Members received the report and asked it be posted on the Parish Council website.

**14.2      Financial Performance to the end of the financial year**

Members requested consideration of this report coincides with the preparation of the end of year accounts and annual return.

**14.3      Report on items progressed under delegated powers**

Members agreed that Cllr H Allsopp, Cllr K Grimes and Cllr L Watson be appointed as trustees to the West Sleekburn Community Trust.

**14.4      Authorised persons.**

Members confirmed that the Parish Clerk and Deputy Parish Clerk are 'authorised persons' within the procedures described in Financial Regulations; 5.5, 5.6, 5.9, 5.11 and 6.2; and that these procedures extend to transactions required for the management of investment accounts. Members further agreed that the Chairman of the Council and the Chairman of the Finance Committee will be able to jointly (not severally) act as authorised persons in the absence of either the Parish Clerk/RFO or Deputy Parish Clerk.

The Parish Clerk reported that the clarification made by members will need to be reflected in the Parish Council's Financial Regulations and suggested that the Finance Committee be asked to conduct a review of regulations later in the year.

#### **14.5 Gateway/locality signage**

Members reported on the favourable comments received from members of the public and requested consideration be given to placing an additional sign at the Sheepwash entrance to the parish.

**RESOLVED: The Parish Clerk/RFO would action those decisions recorded in minutes 14.1 to 14.5 above.**

There being no further business the meeting closed at 20.45

Chairman

Dated

**Risk Statement**

Area	Risk	Level	Control <i>(and agreed improvements)</i>
Assets	Protection of physical assets	L	<p>The Parish Council owns physical assets such as bus shelters, notice boards, planters, play equipment, portable staging, grass cutters, public seating, waste bins, War memorials, gardening equipment, security equipment, equipment for snow clearance, equipment required for the maintenance of sports surfaces, computers and related equipment, mobile sports court and specialist container and office equipment. Insurance exists in relation to 3<sup>rd</sup> party liability.</p> <p>Each asset together with their purchase price is contained in the Parish Council Asset Register. The combined replacement cost of these is in excess of £400,000. To insure for replacement will be in the region of £2,650/annum (£250 to £750 excess in respect of any claim). The Parish Council has previously resolved to make financial provision for the replacement of these assets on a cyclical basis of between 5 and 25 years dependant on the economic life of each asset. The Parish Council considers that this earmarked fund gives the most cost effective solution for cyclical and other required replacements. The necessary financial contribution to this fund is calculated on an annual basis each January and the required provision is identified in the Parish Council budget.</p> <p>Although formal transfer of Allotments from NCC has not yet taken place. Allotments are regularly inspected.</p> <p>From April 1 2013 Northumberland County Council transferred the responsibility for 4 play areas to the Parish Council. The replacement cost of equipment located in these play areas is in the region of £180,000.00. The Parish Council has previously agreed to make provision for the replacement of all play equipment on a</p>



			<p>cyclical basis (15 to 20 years). It is considered that this fund is adequate for replacement of equipment through damage/vandalism. The liability for play areas and any land when transferred to the Parish Council will be automatically covered under the existing Public Liability insurance.</p> <p>During 2016/17 a further 2 play areas were transferred to the responsibility of the Parish Council and provision has been made for their replacement as detailed above.</p>
	Security of buildings, equipment etc	L	<p>The Parish Council does not own any buildings. Office equipment is contained within a secure environment. It is anticipated that the Parish Council will own or have purview of some community buildings at some point in the coming 12 months. A separate consideration of risk will be undertaken for each building individually. Provision has been made for the mobile court and trailer to be stored in a secure area when not in use. The Parish Council in reviewing risk in April of 2016 decided that provision should be made for the mobile court and trailer on a cyclical basis with annual contributions being identified in the Parish Council Budget for 2017/18 to an earmarked fund.</p>
	Maintenance of buildings, equipment etc	L	<p>A full maintenance contract exists in respect of photocopying equipment (3 machines, 2 owned by the Parish Council, 1 on permanent loan from Newman Associates), with IT equipments being self-managed. One of these machines is scheduled for replacement and will be added to the asset register. Financial provision has been made for their future replacement through earmarked funds.</p>
<b>Finance</b>	Banking	M	<p>It is anticipated that not more than £700,000 will be held in accounts at any one time during 2018/19. Any anticipated interest/charges on our principal account are identified in the Council's budget for 2017/18. The funds held will reduce during the financial year as earmarked funds for the development of community facilities are spent. Fidelity insurance will be regularly reviewed, but will</p>

			<p>initially be set at £700,000. Members will review the level of fidelity insurance required on a quarterly basis and to direct adjustments to ensure value for money.</p> <p>Currently all funds are with one bank. Parish Council funds are excluded from the Financial Services Compensation Scheme therefore to mitigate the risk, the Parish Council has resolved to open an account through CCLA (Public Sector deposit Fund), which will ensure that a proportion of Parish Council funds are invested through over different providers.</p> <p>These investments will be made in accordance to the Parish Council's Investment Strategy, which was agreed by Council (C027/15) as part of the Governance Review process undertaken during 2015.</p>
	Risk of consequential loss of income	L	Partnership projects are funded, in part through investment from partner organisations. All activity beyond this is funded through precept income.
	Loss of cash through theft or dishonesty	H	Only small amounts of cash are handled. However, in the age of electronic banking it is considered that a Fidelity Guarantee of £700,000.00 is required (see recommendation contained in Financial Banking above).
	Financial controls and records	M	Financial Regulations were reviewed during 2015 and will be subject to a further review during 2018. Monthly bank reconciliation and quarterly budgetary control reports prepared by Clerk and reported to Council. Two signatures from five signatories on cheques. Members perform scrutiny checks by rota on a monthly schedule. Internal and external audit. All procedures and processes reviewed annually. The Parish Council has adopted an Investment Policy.
	Comply with Customs and Excise Regulations	M	<p>VAT payments and claims calculated by Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer. Open to inspection by members. Internal and external auditor to provide double check.</p> <p>The Parish Clerk and Deputy Parish Clerk have undertook VAT training during 2015 to ensure</p>

			compliance and realisation of any financial benefit and have received refresher each year since then. The Parish Council has retained the services of an external VAT adviser to support the council when required.
	Sound budgeting to underpin annual precept	M	Reports to Council contain examination of Financial and Resource implications. Council receives and considers detailed budgets as part of its annual consideration December/January. Precept derived directly from this. Income & Expenditure against budget reported to Council every quarter.
	Complying with borrowing restrictions	L	No borrowing has been made by the Parish Council to date. However appropriate borrowing for the development of community facilities has been considered and might be transacted during the period 2018/19.
<b>Liability</b>	Risk to third party, property or individuals	M	Public Liability insurance in place. Existing cover of up to £10m.
	Legal liability as consequence of asset ownership	M	Assets owned are contained in the Asset Register and include street furniture. The mobile court is owned by the Parish Council and will be operated on our behalf by a third party with all necessary liability insurance.
	Libel and Slander	M	Members and clerk - standard cover up to £250,000 (This cover extends to the Deputy Parish Clerk and other staff).
	Officials Indemnity	M	Cover for members and clerk for any negligent act, accidental error or omission committed - standard cover up to £500,000 (This cover extends to the Deputy Parish Clerk).

<b>Employer Liability</b>	Comply with Employment Law	M	Advice sought from National Association of Local Councils when required. Existing insurance cover up to £10m in respect of most aspects. Potential cover in respect of Tribunals is limited to £50k. The Parish Council is classed as a Larger Local Council and has made budget provision to obtain, when required, legal advice to support the
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			authority in respect of legislative changes, increased responsibility/liability and to protect the authority from any legal actions mounted against the authority. Provision has also been made to support the development of staff. This is to be 'purchased' to meet the needs identified in each member of staff's development plan through internal delivery and external providers.
	Comply with Inland Revenue requirements	M	Northumberland County Council undertakes all payroll functions on behalf of the Parish Council. Internal and external auditors carry out annual checks.
	Compliance with Pension Fund requirements	M	The Parish Council has 3 employees. It is anticipated that all employees will be members of the Local Government Scheme. Necessary policy reviews and statements are prepared under the direction of Northumberland County Council which administers the scheme.
	Safety of Staff and Visitors	M	Parish Office located within Stakeford and Bomarsund Sports and Social Welfare Centre, a community building. The Parish Council is becoming engaged on an increasing basis in organising events where health and safety process and procedures are required in both planning and delivery. Risk grows with activity and the Parish Council has commissioned support both legal and technical consideration in terms of legislative change and increased regulatory requirements. This is through contract to an external provider.  Training in respect of risk assessment was undertaken by Parish Council employees and relevant contractors during 2016/17 and additional training for staff will be undertaken during the course of the next 12 months.
<b>Legal Liability</b>	Ensuring activities are within legal powers	H	Clerk clarifies legal position on any new proposal ensuring legal authority. Legal advice to be sought when necessary.
	Proper and timely	M	Council meets quarterly and receives and

	reporting via the Minutes		approves Minutes of meetings held in interim. Minutes made available through website.
	Proper document control	L	Leases and legal documents held in the Parish office. Key documents to be stored at bank or at solicitors. Compliance with the requirements of GDPR, FoIA and other requirements will be demonstrated.
<b>Councillor Propriety</b>	Registers of Interests and gifts and hospitality in place	M	Register of interest completed. The acceptance of gifts and hospitality is not encouraged and there is a requirement to declare any gifts or hospitality (over £50 in value) as and when received. This requirement extends to members and employees and is reviewed annually.

Adopted by resolution of the Parish Council

10 April 2018

**Reported Income and Expenditure**

Issued	Reference	Transaction	Jan to March 2018	
			Debit	Credit
01/01/2018	Std Ord	PFC school sports programme	1110	
02/01/2018	301310	PC/RFO reimbursment storage rental	255.3	
04/01/2018	301311	Queensbury - street furniture repair/mtce	15306	Recharge
04/01/2018	301312	NCC salaries Nov/Dec	23491.55	
10/01/2018	Std Ord	Members functional support	350	
11/01/2018	DD697ST107	British Telecom	92.28	
12/01/2018	301313	British Gas West Sleekburn Village Hall	72.35	xfer West Sleekburn
12/01/2018	301314	PFC - mobile court deployment	360	
12/01/2018	301315	United Carlton Office Systems photocopying	100.35	
13/01/2018	Std Ord	Microsoft licences	20.99	
25/01/2018	301322	SLCC fees	300	
25/01/2018	301322	Total business group photocopying	22.24	
25/01/2018	301318	COF stationery requisites	32.37	
25/01/2018	301319	Falon Nameplates - memorial signs	631.2	
25/01/2018	301320	NCC contracts	60498.54	
25/01/2018	301321	SLCC fees	225	
25/01/2018	301323	Stakeford Welfare - shared contract	25	
30/01/2018	301324	Stakeford & Bomarsund Welfare SLA	6679.75	
30/01/2018	301325	DB Computer Support Services	65	
30/01/2018	301326	Bad Apples NE - holiday play scheme	640	
12/01/2018	301316	BCHS youth worker fees	1138.56	
17/01/2018	301317	Energy 365 - website uploads	81.6	
17/01/2018		Room hire SPS		1803.05
17/01/2018		Recharge wreath expenditure		102.00
01/02/2018	Std Ord	PFC - mobile court deployment	1110	
06/02/2018	301327	Northumbrian Water - Allotments	11.94	
06/02/2018	301328	Bad Apples NE holiday play	690	
08/02/2018	301329	CALC - Vat Training	120	
08/02/2018	DD715ST108	British Telecom	89.84	
10/02/2018	Std Ord	Members functional support	350	
12/02/2018	301331	Information Commisioners Office - fees	35	
12/02/2018	301332	PFC mobile court holiday play	540	
13/02/2018	Std Ord	Microsoft licence	20.99	
13/02/2018	301333	United Carlton Office Systems - photocopying	19.88	
13/02/2018	301330	PFI Sign Solutions deposit gateways	5333	Function
20/02/2018	301336	D A Johnstone Ltd - track improvements	4200	
22/02/2018		NCC - contribution EB bus shelter		4214.00
05/03/2018	301337	H Dixon Fitness - older persons activities	200.00	
05/03/2018	301338	DB Computer Support Services install/repairs	80.00	
05/03/2018	301339	Coastline - office requisites	35.98	
05/03/2018	301340	Queensbury - bus shelters repairs	721.48	
05/03/2018	301341	United Carlton photocoping	88.56	
05/03/2018	301342	Glasdon - new litter bins	5240.01	
06/03/2018	301343	PC/RFO reimbursement	321.65	
06/03/2018	301344	Bad Apples - holiday play	875.00	
26/03/2018	301345	Bad Apples - holiday play	875.00	
12/03/2018	301346	NCC Salaries Jan/Feb	22693.93	
20/03/2018	301347	PFC - FA Girls football costs	143.10	
20/03/2018	301348	DB Computer reconfigure office computers	200.00	
20/03/2108	301349	Queensbury - bus shelters repairs	210.48	
20/03/2018	301350	PC/RFO reimbursement	920.55	
20/03/2018	301350	PC/RFO reimbursement	325.75	
21/03/2018	301351	Councillor reimbursements May-Aug	153.13	
21/03/2018	301352	Councillor reimbursements May-Aug	154.13	
21/03/2018	301353	Councillor reimbursements May-Aug	155.13	
21/03/2018	301354	Councillor reimbursements June-Mar 18	393.75	