

**MINUTES OF THE CHOPPINGTON PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON
WEDNESDAY 10 APRIL 2019 IN STAKEFORD AND BOMARSUND SPORTS AND
SOCIAL WELFARE CENTRE**

THOSE ATTENDING:

Cllr E A Barrell
Cllr J Foster
Cllr G Huntley
Cllr A Iley
Cllr J Rowell
Cllr P S Vaughan
Cllr L Watson

IN ATTENDANCE:

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

AGENDA PART 1

C058/18 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr K Grimes (holiday) and Cllr L Watson (prior engagement). The meeting accepted that these were proper reasons for absence.

C059/18 2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY AND OTHER REGISTERABLE INTEREST(s)

None received.

C060/18 3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS.

None received.

C061/18 4. PLANNING MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION.

The Clerk reported that Earth Balance has informed the Parish Council that the trustees do not consider it appropriate to appoint a 'community trustee'. Earth balance gave a commitment to consider such an appointment at the meeting held to discuss the planning application for the Proton Treatment Centre.

Earth Balance has requested a meeting with the Parish Council to discuss local (Neighbourhood) plans. The Parish Council will be in a position to discuss its evolving Neighbourhood towards the end of the next council year. A similar request has been made to East Bedlington Parish Council.

RESOLVED: Members agreed that because of common and shared interest, a joint meeting be held with Earth Balance together with East Bedlington Parish Council.

- C062/18** **5. TO RECEIVE AND ADOPT THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON 5 DECEMBER 2018.**
- It was confirmed that the minutes would be amended to show the Cllr J Rowell had been in attendance. The meeting received the minutes agreeing they are a true record of proceedings and authorising the Chairman to sign as such.
- C063/18** **6. MATTERS ARISING.**
- There were no matters arising.
- C064/18** **7. TO RECEIVE AND ADOPT THE MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL BUDGET MEETING HELD ON 23 JANUARY 2019.**
- The meeting received the minutes agreeing they are a true record of proceedings and authorising the Chairman to sign as such.
- C065/18** **8. MATTERS ARISING.**
- There were no matters arising.
- C066/18** **9. TO RECEIVE AND NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 13 FEBRUARY 2019.**
- The minutes were received with Members agreeing that they could be placed in the public domain.
- C067/18** **10. 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 financially and in terms of reputation and service delivery.
- Members are ultimately responsible for risk management as the failure to manage risk impairs 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 2018/19 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.**

C068/18 11. RESPONSIBLE FINANCE OFFICER'S REPORT.

1. Finance Report

Members received a report from the RFO on the expenditure made and income received since the last meeting of the Parish Council. The meeting agreed to place this information on the Parish Council website.

2. Financial Performance to the end of the financial quarter.

Members noted there were no matters requiring detailed examination or referral to the Finance Committee.

3. Investment Strategy.

The Responsible Finance Officer reported a review of the Parish Council's investment strategy and sought comments on for consideration by the Parish Council at a future meeting. Members were encouraged to contact the Responsible Finance Officer after the meeting.

C069/18 11. PARISH CLERK'S REPORT.

1. Contractual obligation.

In June 2018 the Parish Council was recognised by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and the Local Government Association (LGA) as an example of best practice (exemplar) for its work delivering community services. Several local councils have requested Choppington Parish Council's support in the preparation of development and improvement

plans. The Parish Clerk asked that delegated authority be given to the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Council to consider/approve such requests.

RESOLVED: Members agreed to the requested delegation of responsibility.

2. Staff Training Plan 2019/20.

The Parish Clerk detailed the priorities for staff training for the Council Year 2019/20.

RESOLVED: Members noted and expressed approval for the suggested approach.

3. MATTERS TO REPORT.

The Parish Clerk reported on various meetings attended on behalf of the Parish Council.

Agenda – Part 2.

No matters for consideration.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 20.45

Chairman

Date

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 3rd 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 £220,000.00. The Parish Council has previously agreed to make provision</p>

			<p>for the replacement of all play equipment on a 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 2019/20 financial provision has been made for the replacement of 3 play areas in line with the schedule 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 2019/20 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>
Finance	Banking	M	<p>It is anticipated that not more than £700,000 will be held in accounts at any one time during 2019/20. The budget set by the authority for 2019/20 does not anticipate any interest/charges on our principal account. The funds held will reduce during the financial year as earmarked expenditure for the development of community facilities are made. Fidelity insurance will be</p>

			<p>regularly reviewed, but will 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 held in 2 accounts, Unity Trust and CCLA (Public Sector deposit Fund). Parish Council funds are excluded from the Financial Services Compensation Scheme and deposits with CCLA are made to mitigate risk.</p> <p>These investments will be made in accordance to the Parish Council's Investment Strategy, which was originally 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 are currently being reviewed. 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 weekly basis. 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 undertake VAT training on an annual basis to ensure compliance and realisation of any financial benefit. The Parish Council has</p>

			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.
Liability	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).

Employer Liability	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 authority in respect of legislative changes, increased responsibility/liability and to protect the authority from any legal actions mounted
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			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 staffs 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 4 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 all staff will be undertaken during the course of the next 12 months.
Legal Liability	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 reporting via the Minutes	M	Council meets quarterly and receives and 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.
Councillor Propriety	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.

Transactions January to March 2019
Expenditure

Transaction Detail	Date	Expend	Payee Name
Youth/community sports /mobile court	06/01/2019	1,583.50	PFC
Allotment signs	07/01/2019	72	Phillips Design Ltd
Postage Stamps reimburse	08/01/2019	58	DPC
Travel expenses staff	08/01/2019	216.45	PC/RFO
Photocopying	08/01/2019	152.34	United Carlton Office Systems
Allotments	08/01/2019	90.97	Northumbrian Water
Services for older people	08/01/2019	75	Heather Dixon Fitness Instruct
Website design	08/01/2019	297.6	Energy 365
Telephone/broadband	08/01/2019	92.83	British Telecom
IT/Functional Support	10/01/2019	393.75	Members
IT/telecoms	10/01/2019	20.99	PC/RFO
			Stakeford & Bomarsund
Rent and room hire	15/01/2019	3,626.50	Welfare
IT support	15/01/2019	264.65	DB Computer Support Services
VAT advice	16/01/2019	750	The Parkinson Partnership LLP
Older persons activity room hire	16/01/2019	360	Choppington Primary School
IT support	21/01/2019	240	DB Computer Support Services
Gritting equipment	23/01/2019	6,519.70	Glasdon UK
Pit tub restoration	23/01/2019	396	Morpeth Welding Ltd
Mail response services	28/01/2019	61.99	Royal Mail
ICT support and office 365 licenses	30/01/2019	229.98	DB Computer Support Services
Staff training - reimburse	05/02/2019	422.7	PC/RFO
Training and development	05/02/2019	819.21	Soc of Local Council Clerks
Fencing at West Sleekburn	06/02/2019	2,808.00	G Youll and Son
Youth/community sports /mobile court	06/02/2019	1,583.50	PFC
IT/Functional Support	10/02/2019	393.75	Members
IT/telecoms	10/02/2019	20.99	PC/RFO
			Information Commisioners
Data protection fee	11/02/2019	40	Office
			Northumberland County
Payroll	11/02/2019	40,971.46	Council
Holiday youth activities	13/02/2019	289.2	Bad Apples NE
Alarm activations	18/02/2019	30	Delta One Security Services Ltd
Reimburse licence/craft youth/older activites	19/02/2019	149.85	CDO
			Motion Picture Licensing
Umbrella licence to 9/4/20	19/02/2019	197.76	Compa
			Stakeford & Bomarsund
Window cleaner reimburse	19/02/2019	325	Welfare
Stationery	21/02/2019	16.78	Coastline
			Mick Whitfield Building
Installation litter bins	26/02/2019	168	Services
Photocopying	26/02/2019	11.17	Total Business Group
Photocopying	26/02/2019	152.12	United Carlton Office Systems
Mail response services	27/02/2019	2.04	Royal Mail
Finance software	27/02/2019	1,004.40	Rialtas Business Solutions Ltd
Construction works	27/02/2019	9,180.00	G & B Civil Engineering
Travel expenses/ILCA training	28/02/2019	175.05	F/AO
Travel expenses staff	28/02/2019	254.65	PC/RFO

Telephone/broadband	28/02/2019	91.92	British Telecom
Legal publications	28/02/2019	63.7	Soc of Local Council Clerks
West Sleekburn Village Hall	06/03/2019	206.73	Northumbrian Water
Equipment maintenance	06/03/2019	275.25	Greenlay Ltd
Youth/community sports/mobile court	06/03/2019	1,583.50	PFC
IT/telecoms	10/03/2019	20.99	PC/RFO
IT/Functional Support	10/03/2019	393.75	Members
Youth work - reimburse	07/03/2019	123.4	CDO
Telephone/broadband	11/03/2019	89.53	British Telecom
Refreshments re training	14/03/2019	108	Hartford Catering Northumberland County
Wild flower seeds	14/03/2019	616.99	Council
Lock repair	14/03/2019	70	Bradleys Master Locksmith Ltd Stakeford & Bomarsund
Room hire for meetings	14/03/2019	290	Welfare
Microphone system reimbursement	20/03/2019	79.7	DPC
Skip hire	20/03/2019	245	PS Services
IT network upgrade	25/03/2019	1,921.84	DB Computer Support Services
Office fixtures - reimburse	26/03/2019	2,765.00	PC/RFO
IT equipment - reimburse	26/03/2019	600.91	PC/RFO
Multiple goods reimburse	26/03/2019	1,910.68	PC/RFO
Confidential waste disposal	26/03/2019	72	Restore Datashred
West Sleekburn Village Hall	26/03/2019	247.85	Npower Northumberland County
Payroll	29/03/2019	26,704.55	Council
IT support	31/03/2019	129.99	DB Computer Support Services
Office furniture	31/03/2019	852	Coastline
Refreshments re training	31/03/2019	90	Hartford Catering
Members training	31/03/2019	720	NAC Northumberland County
Local services contracts	31/03/2019	14,557.76	Council
Photocopying	31/03/2019	51.36	United Carlton Office Systems
Travel expenses staff	31/03/2019	522.4	PC/RFO
Bank charges	31/03/2019	33.6	bank
Allotments	31/03/2019	169.55	Northumbrian Water Stakeford & Bomarsund
Room hire for meetings	31/03/2019	95	Welfare
Electrical upgrade	31/03/2019	950	Greenacre Electrics
Play area Church Avenue	31/03/2019	6,000.00	Kompan
Travel expenses staff	31/03/2019	40.5	PC/RFO Stakeford & Bomarsund
Office rental	31/03/2019	2,924.00	Welfare
Youth club provision	31/03/2019	1,020.00	A Allman
Alarm activation	31/03/2019	30	Delta one securities
Older persons activities rent	31/03/2019	315	Choppington Primary School
Travel expenses staff	31/03/2019	23.4	F/AO
Allotment refund	31/03/2019	10.83	Turnbull
Total		141,534.56	
Income			
Payment on investment		63.19	
Refund - Wreath		17	

Interest on investment	65.41
Interest on investment	60.67
Refund - Wreath	17
Refund shared expenses	725.5
Total	948.77