

**NEWTON ON THE MOOR AND SWARLAND PARISH COUNCIL
MAY 2016**

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held at 7.00pm on Wednesday 25th May 2016
in Jubilee Hall, Newton on the Moor.

Members of the public present:

Mr R Brotherton, Mrs H Handyside, Mr G Anderson, Mrs S Richardson, Ms S Spurling, Mrs S. Stanley, Mr G Cunningham, Mr C Heal, Mr D Rixon, Mr K. Walters, Mr S Woolfrey, Mr A Vaggs, Mrs V Vaggs, Mr B Long, Mr M Shipley, Mr C Potts,

Cllr R Ryan was Chairman for the meeting.

The Clerk was in attendance.

1. **Minutes of the Meeting held on 27th May 2015** were summarised by the Chairman and were accepted and signed as a correct record of the meeting.

2. **Chairman's report:** Councillor Ryan out the report (see p 1217) produced by Cllr David Francis which was accepted.

3. **Committee and Representatives' Reports**

a. Vyner Park Charity Management Committee An update was presented by Cllr R Brotherton who thanked the members of the Vyner Park Management Committee for their hard work over the past year, and the wide spectrum of local volunteers who have helped with the events like the Fun Run and the Firework Night which was attended by over 500 adults and children.

Once again, thanks have to be given to the Percy Wood Retreat for sponsoring the fireworks. Thanks also to Phil Baron for tennis which is going from strength to strength to Greg Anderson, the Park Steward for his work in maintaining Vyner Park, and to Councillor Thorne for his £10,000 contribution for works to update Vyner Park, from NCC's small grants scheme.

The Nelson's café is very successful due to the hard work of the 'crew', and the licence agreement has been recently extended. A premises licence has been obtained so now alcohol can be served with meals.

The Shepherds Hut set up in November 2015 and run by Becky Bagnall has provided a very useful shop.

The financial report for the Vyner Park Charity is currently in draft.

b. Joint Cemetery Committee report (see p1219) was presented by Cllr G Anderson and was accepted.

c. Swarland Village Hall report was presented by Mr Steven Woolfrey (see p1220) and was accepted.

d. Any other reports – None presented.

4. **Any Questions, Comments or Resolutions**

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- Mrs Vaggs asked for clarification on the 'disposal dump' works mentioned in the Cemetery Report. It was explained that this was for disposal of waste flowers etc and further that this work, and the repair of the railings will be carried out by the ex-offenders scheme in the current financial year.
- Mr Rixon said that a petition has been circulated around Newton on the Moor by Mrs Oliver regarding road safety. Residents have made it clear that they don't want double yellow lines or speed bumps. A pedestrian connection between the main village down to the Cook & Barker is sought.
- Mr Rixon has written to MP Anne-Marie Trevelyan about condition of junction with the A1 (from NotM). He has had a response that it is assumed that resurfacing works will be done as part of the major works planned by Highways England shortly. Mr Rixon will provide a copy of the response to the Clerk.
- Mrs Vaggs said that NCC had resurfaced Old Park Road but pointed out that the last stretch to North Lodge had not been done. She complained that although it was less than a week since the works had been done a pothole near the 'Leander' clump of trees was already opening up. Mrs Handyside said that she was concerned about the 'cliffs' at the side of the road which posed a potential hazard. It is felt that the road is not suitable to take diversions when A1 works are done. Cllr Ryan agreed to take these issues up with NCC.
- Mrs Vaggs complained that the drain that appears to be blocked, and which is causing water to flow down Old Park Road near her home, has not been addressed. She asked if the Parish Council will take this up with NCC – agreed.
- Mrs Vaggs said that the yellow adverts from Percy Wood (that she mentioned at April's meeting) do not seem to have reduced in number. Mr Heal said that he had brought this up with Percy Wood, and some had been removed.
- Mrs Vaggs asked why County Councillor Thorne doesn't put an item in the Column when he has one in each issue of the Longframlington Newsletter/Magazine. Mrs Stanley said that the last contribution from Cllr Thorne had been October 2015 and a request was regularly sent by the Editor including for the June 2016 edition.
- Mr Walters commented that NCC had publicised the high quality repairs to be done to roads by new equipment they had purchased but the patches in the Parish just seem to be roughly done with shovels. He asked if the PC would ask NCC to inspect the work recently done in the Parish and ask why they apparently waste money on poor quality repairs.
- Mr Rixon asked about publicity of the new bus service, which he had been unaware of. The Clerk responded that information/phone calls had been made to the users of the old service, and posters put up on the PC noticeboards and website. Mr Rixon suggested leaflets and a poster in Jubilee Hall, and others suggested an item for the Gazette – Agreed.

Meeting finished at 19.50

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(2) Newton on the Moor and Swarland Parish Council, Annual Report May 2016

Over the past year, the PC (parish council) has continued in its roles of promoting our communities' interests, directly providing a modest range of local services and activities, and supporting action by other groups and organisations.

The planning system has provided us with challenges. We have not been entirely happy with changes in the County Council's Development Management system, which have hastened decision-making, possibly at the expense of downgrading the input which we and NCC's own elected members can contribute: a matter of prioritising 'efficiency' over 'quality' in determining planning applications. Further delays in the completion of the new county-wide local development plan have been disappointing, particularly as we are currently without clear 'lines on maps' to guide where development may or may not be allowed, in our two main villages.

We have continued to work with a variety of responsible bodies to improve or retain important local services. By the end of the year, Newton on the Moor had at last joined with Swarland in having access to Superfast Broadband. Following the loss of our scheduled bus services several years ago, we have been commissioning and paying for a once-a-week bus service, on a Thursday, to Alnwick. However, the costs per head were very high, and so that particular arrangement was not sustainable. This service is now being replaced by a new scheduled bus service, commissioned by NCC, with much greater passenger capacity, and therefore with scope to market it much more widely to our local residents. We are pleased with this development.

Following the closure of the parish's only shop/Post Office two years ago, Swarland Club very effectively took-over and sustained the PO and the provision of newspapers, eggs, milk etc. This service is now very well established. Over the past year, we have at last been able to breathe new life into the facilities at Vyner Park, whose management has been re-integrated into a single, new charity, led by a dedicated committee, and with a forward-looking development plan and methodology in place. The advent of Nelson's (a new, locally-run small business) has transformed the whole VP area, generating renewed use of and interest in the facilities and, we hope, ensuring a more sustainable future for the recreational facilities. In turn, this has encouraged new activities and enterprises to emerge, such as the Shepherd's Hut store. We hope that people will come forward with proposals for further activities and enterprises which can make good use of the facilities, while not detracting from the basic community and charitable ethos of Vyner Park.

Over the year, we have also continued to support our village halls and other local services, as well as pursuing the perennial concerns of traffic management, drainage, environmental matters etc. We are also seeking a modest change in our

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parish boundary, to ensure a more-effective governance of the neighbourhood which is sandwiched between our two main villages.

We made (for us) a significant increase in our Council Tax precept last year of £4000, in order to address a backlog of maintenance work on our property. Now, we have been able to reduce the precept for the new year by £2000. Our 'Band D-equivalent' precept is still one of the more- modest ones in Northumberland.

On behalf of the Parish Council, I thank all those who, in different ways, continue to make the effort to improve our communities. This includes not only local people but also local businesses and key bodies such as the County Council, schools, police, and others.

David Francis, on behalf of the Parish Council, May 2016

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3b - FELTON CEMETERY JOINT COMMITTEE – ANNUAL REPORT 2016

The Joint Committee consists of five Parish Councillors, two from Felton, one from Thirston and two from Newton on the Moor and Swarland.

Basic funding comes from the three Parish precepts, with payments requested according to numbers on the electoral roll.

Running costs include maintenance of equipment and wages of staff – increased yearly under NJC regulations. Income is from burial fees and £20 from the War Graves Commission. However notification was received this year that the £20 payment is to cease.

The Remembrance Service last November went very well, with a large number of people attending St Michael and All Angels Church, and an even greater number congregating at the War Memorial for eleven o'clock and the two minute silence.

Repainting of the railings and emptying of the dump box had to be postponed this year due to the bad weather but these works should take place in the near future.

It was agreed that the parish council contributions would be increased this year due to a reduced bank balance at the end of the financial year. Fees have been slightly increased on last year.

The risk assessment has been reviewed and revised in time for the annual audit and monthly checks are being undertaken on the grave stones.

Thanks are offered to the caretaker/gravedigger who does an excellent job, and to the Cemetery Clerk who spends much unpaid time in keeping records in order and answering enquiries from family historians, also to our (shared) Parish Council Clerk for her attendance and help at all times.

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3c - Swarland Village Hall Charity.

Chairman's Report for Year Ending 31st March 2016.

I am happy to report that 2015/16 has been another successful year for the Hall. We have continued to make improvements to the fabric of the building and facilities and seen a marginal increase in hire.

Listed below are a number of highlights from the year:

- In 2012/13 the Hall applied for and was awarded, a grant from the Big Lottery fund for a variety of improvements and installing a new sound system. In the financial year 2015/16 we applied for a further grant to replace and improve rotten and badly worn doors and to replace a couple of rotten windows. I am happy to report that we were awarded a grant of £7,800 from the Big Lottery fund in February and, with an additional contribution from Hall reserves, we plan to carry out the work in the summer of 2016. This work will further improve the Hall and make it a more attractive and safer place for our Users.
- As some of you may be aware the Hall ran a Winefest on 19 March 2016, after a gap of a year or so from the previous event. This was a very well attended evening and raised £410 for Hall funds – the highest we have raised to date with this event. Although the Hall has not yet formally decided to do so, I suspect that it will be running the event again next year.
- Bookings for the Hall have shown a marginal increase compared to previous years. We now have a number of main User organisations including Bowls, Craft Club, Karate and Archery. In fact Archery is continuing to use the Hall into the summer, reflecting demand for indoor shooting. Enquiries in March also suggest that another organisation will be starting up in 2016/17 and to facilitate this the Hall elected to take out a music licence with the PRS in April. We have also had a number of private booking during the year, suggesting the facilities are at a level to attract such events.
- The Hall Committee meets 10 times a year and we spend a lot of time dealing with ongoing repairs and maintenance, typical of a wooden-framed building over 70 years old. This year we have had a number of minor electrical issues causing us to initiate a formal electrical survey of the Hall. While nothing serious was detected we may well be undertaking some electrical upgrades next year. Also during the year 2015/16 we obtained quotes for painting the outside of the Hall, repairing the shared disabled ramp wall and improving drainage on the North side of the building. Repairs to the disabled ramp wall are ongoing and we expect the other two projects to be initiated later in the next financial year. All of this takes time to organise and money and could not be implemented without members of the Committee devoting their personal time as well as financial help from the PC.

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I would like to thank each and every member of the Committee for their help and support, and, in particular, the Treasurer (Malcolm Nesbitt), Secretary (Bryan Stanley), Caretaker (Arthur Scott), Dave Chambers (Deputy Chairman) and Jack Dobson. A lot of work is carried out outside of the Committee meetings, which is vital for the functioning of the Hall. Without it, progress would be very slow and probably unacceptable to our customers – the people of Swarland and Newton-on-the-Moor. This year I must also thank all those who helped with the Winefest – this event was organised almost entirely by volunteers independent of the Hall Committee.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank again the Parish Council for its continued financial support. Without its annual grant of about £1800, the Hall would struggle to survive, particularly in the current financial environment.

Finally, I would like to thank the Users of the Hall for using our facilities and choosing to base their organisations in Swarland Village Hall. The Hall is not the only facility in the area and I like to feel we offer a friendly and pleasant environment, competitively priced for the area.

As a Committee we strive to provide a facility for the Village and would always welcome any feedback or suggestions for future improvements.

Steven G Woolfrey

Chairman Swarland Village Hall Charity –2015/16