

Newton on the Moor & Swarland Parish Council

DRAFT 2 Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held in Swarland Village Hall,
Swarland
Wednesday 22nd May 2024 7PM

1.	<u>Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting 26th May 2023</u> – These were agreed as a true record.	
2.	<u>Matters arising from the Annual Parish Meeting 26th May 2023</u> – No matters arising.	
3.	<p><u>Chairman’s Report:</u> - Cllr Francis opened his report by explaining the role of the Parish Council. The Parish Council represents the community in influencing decisions eg to Northumberland County Council (NCC), provides a voice for the community, organises and provides services, promotes and supports actions by the wider community, responds to current demands and plans for the future. In the past year there was relief when the NCC Local Plan was finally approved and it is becoming evident that its policies are being used now to prescribe decisions.</p> <p>A Neighbourhood Plan Group was formed in 2023 and it has made significant progress quite quickly. It is expected that the first draft for public consultation in the Parish will be available in the next couple of months.</p> <p>The Parish Council has worked with Forestry England in connection with Swarland Woods on their plans for felling. FE has been encouraged to liaise with Coquet Squirrel Group and Swarland 1st School.</p> <p>In 2023, the Parish Council helped celebrate resident Arthur Scott’s 100th Birthday by planting a tree.</p> <p>The Parish Council supports action being taken to control climate change and has facilitated the formation of SNAC which is run by volunteers. One great achievement has been the launch of the bus service in the Parish. SNAC has also made progress on recycling locally, hedgerow work and water quality monitoring.</p> <p>Support is also given by the PC to assets in the community like Swarland Village Hall and the Jubilee Hall in the form of grants and help on VAT. It has been heartening also to see the Vyner Park Charity go from strength to strength.</p> <p>Recently the PC has been looking at car parking issues in Newton on the Moor, with problems occurring occasionally in connection with Jubilee Hall events. In connection with road safety the PC has also engaged with National Highways over safety on the A1. Dualling is still proposed but some junctions on stretches already dualled are dangerous. The PC has been advised that NH depends on government allocating new capital funding for the works needed. Regarding speeding, County Cllr Trevor Thorne has made a commitment to fund interactive speed monitors in both villages depending on results of monitoring. Statistics are currently being collected in Newton on the Moor.</p>	

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	<p>The issue of the condition of the estate roads in Swarland (Nelson Drive etc) continues. The roads have deteriorated and are not at an adoptable standard. The current NCC Head of Highways has confirmed that in the next month he wants to have a meeting to look at funding and to talk to the PC about improvements. This has been a long struggle over 30 years.</p> <p>The Parish Council reduced the size of its precept (the amount of Council Tax is requires from residents) in 2023/24 and has kept it at this same level for 2024/25.</p> <p>Cllrs were very sad to lose Carolyn Letts and Liz Clark as Councillors. The two vacancies have been advertised and it would be good to see volunteers coming forward.</p> <p>Finally, Cllr Francis thanked everyone on the Parish Council and the Clerk, for their efforts over the past year.</p>	
<p>4.</p>	<p><u>Public Questions, Comments or Resolutions.</u></p> <p>a. <u>Estate roads</u> – A resident commented that that the roads were a disgrace and that visitors to the area are shocked. He said he felt that NCC had let residents down and that the roads should have been dealt with as houses were built.</p> <p>Cllr Francis said that the PC had asked NCC for a condition on the application for the Nelson Drive development to make up the road from the development to the end of the road but the condition had not been made.</p> <p>b. <u>Policy on Building in the countryside</u> – A member of the public commented that there was a new Policy document permitting farmers to develop land without planning permission. Cllr Francis said part of this had been ‘permitted development’ for some years.</p> <p>c. <u>Draft Minutes for PC meeting 24.4.24</u> – Two members of the public (not electors in the Parish but Cllr Francis explained they could speak with the consent of the meeting – which was given). With reference to the draft minutes, one said that matters covered in 6h were in the wrong section and should have been under a later agenda item.</p> <p>At 6h, at the meeting Cllr Francis had said who had attended an informal meeting on 28th March but the minutes just say Parish Chairs and other reps. The Clerk responded that the minutes are not a verbatim record. Cllr Francis asked if the two members of the public had any substantive questions? Cllr Rixon pointed out that it was up to Parish Cllrs to agree the accuracy of the draft minutes.</p> <p>One of the members of the public then said that the draft minutes (6h) said that the ‘decision to buy the benches had not been minuted’ whereas what they had actually said at the meeting was that the ‘cost of the benches had not been minuted’. They were concerned about governance and that money had been spent without people being aware. Cllr Francis said that it was up to the electors of this Parish to say if they wanted to continue on this issue. The Clerk will be responding to requests that these members of the public had already made. The Chairman closed the meeting after there was no g further business raised by electors.</p>	