

Minutes of Rothbury Parish Annual Assembly held on Wednesday 10th May 2023 at 7pm in the Dovecote Room Jubilee Institute, Rothbury

Those Present: P Colquitt (Chairman), A Arkle, C Dawson, M Milne, S Bridgett, A Milne, J Sutton, C Miller (Clerk), six members of the public

1/23 Apologies for Absence

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2/23 Minutes of Previous Meeting held

Wednesday 11th May 2022

It was resolved that the minutes of the previous meeting held 11th May 2022 be accepted as a true record.

3/23 Matters arising from previous meeting held Wednesday 11th May 2022

There were no matters arising from the previous meeting held Wednesday 11th May 2022.

4/23 Parish Council Chairman Report

Parish Council Chairman report as follows.

Welcome to the 2023 Annual Assembly of Rothbury Parish. My term as Chairman commenced in May 2022 and during the last year the parish council has continued to support our community across a number of important lines of development:

- Community engagement - with the first and middle schools, veterans, Northumbria Police and other local groups
- Supporting the vulnerable - working with NCC and local volunteer groups
- Supporting young people - local school pupils, army cadets and bike track
- Representing our parishioners - Borderlands Place Programme
- Improving the built environment - traffic management and signage
- Building resilience to crises in our community - in order to better withstand extreme weather and other emergencies
- Supporting and enabling local events - Queen's Platinum Jubilee, 40th Anniversary of Falklands War, Remembrance Day, King's Coronation
- Maintaining our town - Rothbury Cemetery, trees, green spaces
- Plus many other activities to help improve our local area

Community Engagement

Good relationships were established with the head teachers of both our local schools during several school visits. This has enabled the parish council to directly support the first school with funding to enable the acquisition of an outdoor shelter for their Forest School activities and other community use. It also allowed us to signpost the middle school to a contact in the Greenpower Education Trust in order to acquire a Goblin G2 electric kit car which can be built, dismantled and rebuilt by pupils as a project within the design and technology/science curriculum. The parish council has reached out to local veterans and veteran's groups through the veterans working group in order to harmonise activity in support of the military

veterans and their families within our area. The parish council has also linked in with Northumbria Police in order to improve their engagement and presence within the town, holding several meetings with the police, who have been receptive to parish council input and have committed to attending our meetings on a quarterly basis.

Community Support

The parish council has worked to fill gaps in support for our parishioners, brought to the fore during the cost of living crisis. Grants to the Lunch Club and Northumberland Communities Together (this grant was matched by NCC) have been provided to supply articles for vulnerable Rothbury pensioners. During the winter, the Lunch Club distributed cold weather articles, including oversize hoodie blankets, draft excluders, blankets and hot water bottles for more than 2 dozen of our parishioners (due to other external funding, Rothbury residents received articles of slightly more value than that contributed by RPC). The parish council also supported several local community events, including those for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee (historic talks and trips to WW1 practice trenches) and King's Coronation (village picnic and walking trail app, which is free to download). RPC also continues to support local groups (eg Christmas Lights Committee) in accordance with our established grant awarding policy.

Borderlands Place Programme

The Rothbury Board of the Borderlands Place Programme includes 2 representatives from RPC, who have contributed to the fact-finding, analysis and shaping activities. This will enable capital investment in our town of up to £3 million to enhance the economic infrastructure needed to ensure the sustainability and growth of Rothbury. Key themes identified from the residents' survey included lack of parking, transport and general infrastructure, public facilities (eg toilets), and a paucity of retail, affordable housing and leisure facilities. The state of the roads, traffic and accessibility also featured heavily in people's feedback. There was also general support for a focus on our youth and consensus that we should preserve the existing nature of the town. A place plan is in development by NCC and eligible projects should be identified in the coming months to secure Borderlands investment.

Crisis Response Working Group

The working group has built community resilience by creating a framework for future crises (eg extreme weather similar to Storm Arwen). They have documented roles and standard operating procedures, which have been reviewed, ratified, trained in and practiced by key stakeholders during incremental training events attended by emergency services, NCC, UK military contingency personnel, Rothbury GP surgery, local volunteer groups and representatives from other parish councils from the valley. They continue to work closely with the NCC Civil Contingencies Team to keep abreast of changing threats and trends, and receive updates on best practice. Training needs analysis has enabled further top-up training activities to be conducted in June and a big training event in October 2023, engaging emergency services and local volunteers. The October training will benefit from the key learnings from ongoing NCC resilience exercises and the scenario and main events list will be written by the NCC Civil Contingencies Team.

Veterans Working Group

The group continued to liaise with veterans and provided opportunities for them to support our community. This has enabled fund-raising for the Rothbury Army Cadet Force detachment from a screening of a film to mark the 40th anniversary of the Falklands War and from sponsored flag-flying on the parish flagpole. Members of the group also delivered the kit car to the middle school in March and will assist in the first build day for pupils on Monday 15 May. They will also assist with the school's entry for the

Greenpower Education Trust NE competition at Gateshead Stadium in June. The ceremony to commemorate the anniversary of the end of the Falklands conflict and Remembrance Day road closures and traffic management were also facilitated by group members. The group's work will culminate with the installation of Rothbury First School's outdoor shelter later this year, and veterans will assist with that group activity - the yurt is to be named after Rothbury's Hounam family, who's members served with distinction in both world wars.

Traffic Management/Village Signage Working Group

In response to enduring issues in the town with traffic and parking spanning a number of years, the parish council has set up a new working group to focus on key areas of concern. These include parking on the village green, Bridge Street and the bridge, pinch-points/pathways/traffic control in the west of Rothbury, the new COOP (including traffic congestion, danger spots and siting of both bus stops), signage to help direct traffic/exploit existing parking (from town centre to Haugh), a zebra crossing, chicanes and speed restrictions, and pedestrian access on the fringes of the town (Beggars Rigg, Football Club). The output from these investigations will be a written report and formal presentation to RPC and NCC with proposals for improvements.

Maintenance of our Townscape

RPC continue to maintain the village greens and trees within the conservation area. Significant work has been conducted in the centre of Rothbury to remove deadfall and steward the mature trees, resulting in major visual and safety improvements to the village centre. Whitton Bank Cemetery has also been maintained to a high standard. The new bike park opposite the hospital has also been maintained and it has been resolved by the parish council to relocate the youth shelter from Riverside to the park. Discussions about the safety of bike park users on the nearby road have also resulted in some adjustments (eg cutting back hedges to improve driver visibility) to safeguard users as far as we can. The parish council also receives planning applications from NCC, providing feedback where appropriate to balance the social, economic and environmental needs for Rothbury.

I would like to thank all councillors and the clerk for their hard work and support, and to the village gardeners, cemetery workers and outside contractors who have maintained the parish environs to such a high standard during the last year.

5/23 Public Participation

Parishioner requested further information regarding the Parish Council Veterans Working Group. P Colquitt replied there was a need for veterans, their families and serving soldiers who are not looked after in the valley and it had been created to link into other veteran groups. Further parishioner stated he had contacted P Colquitt for advice due to becoming homeless but had not received any assistance. P Colquitt replied he had not been contacted in an official capacity and became aware the parishioner had resolved his homelessness issue.

Parishioner wished to praise the current condition of Whitton Bank Cemetery, adverse comments had been received for many years and in his opinion the cemetery is currently in the best condition it has ever been in.

Parishioner asked how many people had logged onto the Walking App, P Colquitt replied hundreds of people had downloaded the App with no adverse comments received.

6/23 Any Other Business

There was no other business and the 2023 Annual Parish Assembly closed at 720pm.

Claire Miller, Clerk to Rothbury Parish Council

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