

ULGHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council held in Women's Institute Hall

Monday 21st October 2024

Councillor J Scott (in the Chair)

Councillors: P Barton, G Brown, H Shaw, D Wilson

Also in attendance: 18 parishioners

46/24 Questions from Parishioners

A resident living to the rear of the tennis court requested permission to cut back a sycamore tree to the rear of their property, permission previously granted 5 years ago. There is no TPO so yes permission granted on this occasion.

A resident wanted to know the relationship between the Parish Council (PC) and Ulgham Community Benefit Society (UCBS). Response, UCBS is a separate entity from the PC but does work closely with the PC. Two councillors are on the management committee and abstain from decisions when require.

A lengthy discussion followed around The Forge and ACV. The owner stating she was angry and not frustrated as described in the previous minutes. Two residents asking on what mandate the ACV has been requested, concerns that with an ACV the property will stay the same and potential buyers may be threatened by the ACV, although acknowledging that a community facility would be good for the village.

Whilst the PC acknowledged that there are residents who do not wish the ACV to be requested to be renewed, there are many others that have stated they are in favour of retaining it. An ACV mitigates against the risk of full development of the site and losing the asset altogether, it does not stop a sale and the premises do not have to be sold to UCBS. Two interested parties have been introduced to the owner over the last month, both wishing to maintain the premises as a pub/restaurant and have no issue with the ACV remaining in place.

A resident highlighted that a developer has already proposed a compromise, whilst the PC are aware of the proposal, communications have ceased with proposed developer with both the PC and UCBS. There was further speculation on what kind of development may be proposed, accommodation ranged through family homes, executive homes, affordable homes, bungalows, flats.

It was discussed that pubs are currently failing, finding it difficult to stay open in this current climate. However community pubs are still thriving, there are currently over 180 in the country. A resident who has worked in the industry for many years

can appreciate both sides of the argument, he has offered to help UCBS if and when required.

47/24 Minutes

To approve the Minutes of the Monthly meeting of the Parish Council held on Monday 16th September 2024.

28/24 Roundabout cost remains outstanding. ACTION Deb Wilson

44/24 Northumberland water - there has been survey work undertaken regarding sewerage, it is currently with the team to come up with a plan. The issue is too much surface water/flow coming into the system. They are likely to upgrade pipework. Affected houses will be notified when a decision has been made.

RESOLVED: The minutes be approved

48/24 Planning

- (i) Pine Grange - retrospective planning application for unauthorised works was granted on 4th October 2024. There has been no notification or communication with either the parish council or the neighbours of the property. ACTION Deb Wilson
- (ii) 'Stopping up order' on the 'Fence' - Cllr David Towns is chasing for an update.

49/24 Correspondence

(i) Invite to CAN AGM, Monday 18th November 9:30am-12pm. Longhoughton Community and Sports centre - booking required.

(ii) Police Report - no crimes reported 10th August - 5th October. Lauren our Neighbourhood Police Officer is unable to make our meetings due to shift pattern, but suggested she visit Rendezvous to meet villagers.

(iii) Alncom - contacted again re leaflets, they will again get back to me hopefully in time to be distributed with our next newsletter, there has been an increase in enquires, presumably following our last newsletter.

(iv) Email from resident detailing strong feelings around an ACV - concerns raised regarding overall state and future of the Forge site and the impact on our village and community. Suggesting a survey in relation to The Forge, and challenging the Parish Council's communication and engagement with residents. Councillors will reflect on the email and respond in due course.

(v) Email regarding using Facebook for notifications for Agenda and Minutes. The decision was to refrain from using Facebook for Parish Council business.

(vi) Request from UVA for contribution to Fireworks. Decision to replicate last years donation of £200

50/24 Reports from Ulgham Village Groups

(i) UVA - busy preparing for Firework night - a thank you to those that have offered to help. The containers are starting to be cleared for the winter.

(ii) Meadows - nothing to report

(iii) UCBS -

Since our last PC update on the 16th Sept 2024 there is very little further to report. A "For Sale" sale notice was erected last Thursday (17th October) with a contact number only, a browse of the internet was unable to find any evidence of wider marketing. The current asking price is as yet not confirmed as marketing details are not widely available, the original asking price was formally stated to be £500K back in Sept 2023.

There have been two interested parties referred on to the owner within the last month, the one mentioned in the last update plus one other, both interested in purchasing the Forge to run as a pub/restaurant. It is understood one has made an offer and awaiting a response, the other is hoping to arrange a viewing as soon as possible.

There has been no further communications with Sincera with regard to a compromise solution, and their current position is unknown.

There has been some suggestion on the Ulgham Village Together facebook page that we are not keeping members upto date. UCBS are not the owners of the Forge and do not have open access to all the facts, the owner is at liberty to keep all their dealings confidential if they wish and not obliged to share any communications and or progress. We do our best to try and understand what is going on, but will only report on confirmed facts to shareholders and not be drawn by rumour and speculation. UCBS policy is not to respond to comments on Facebook or similar social media, as they often lead to escalations and fuel misinformation.

A Shareholder update has been issued earlier today outlining some options for debate and consideration going forward.

UCBS has now been established for just over one year and as such will be looking to organise an AGM, hopefully this will be within the next couple of months.

If the new ACV does not get applied in November this year, or at any point is lifted, then it is highly likely a Change of Use application would be successful and the whole plot could be sold and developed, in which case UCBS would fold and all funds returned to Shareholders.

UCBS politely request if residents have any questions, they approach one of the Management Committee directly or email UlghamCBS@gmail.com

51/24 Accounts for Payment - to authorise payment of the following:

(i) Greenleaf - £210 now £128

(ii) Ulgham PCC - £495

- (iii) SLCC £80 subscription (Society for Local Council Clerks)
- (iv) Payment to UVA to go towards Firework display - £200

52/24 Reports from Chairman and Members

Following a conversation between Cllr Scott and Cllr Wilson at the recent Town and Parish Conference with Mark Harrison from Neighbourhood Plans, it has been proposed that Ulgham Parish Council take advantage of the support offered by NCC and scope our own Neighbourhood Plan. This would mean engaging with our local community and undoubtedly include attitudes around The Forge site.

4 volunteers for the Speed Watch are now fully trained, we have one more who needs their final session. The speed gun is thought to be in Ponteland, we are currently waiting for it to come to Morpeth station. A speed gun had been purchased between three parish councils (including Ulgham) some years ago. The cost had been over £2000 at the time. Although some training had been carried out, because of "lack of Police assets" at the time, the gun had been "withdrawn" and has not been seen or used since. One of the volunteers suggested we 'bought one off our own'.

Cllr Shaw attended the recent NALC meeting, given the situation with Widdrington Parish Council, who are now understood to be joining with Cresswell, conversations around policies to support councillors facing bullying are being looked into. It is evident there is a lack of funding for support for Town and Parish Meetings.

53/24 Date of next meeting

Monday 18th November 2024 at 7.00 p.m. in the WI Hall.

SIGNATURE:

DATE: