

## Dalton Piercy Parish Council

### Meeting Minutes 12<sup>th</sup> December 2024

The meeting commenced at 7.00pm on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> December 2024 at Elwick WI Hall, The Green, Elwick

**Present:** Councillors: Ireland (Chair), Noble, Savage, Middleton and Timothy  
Clerk: Charlie Porritt  
Hartlepool MP: Jonathan Brash  
Also present: Seven (7) Members of the public

Prior to the official start of the official meeting it was agreed that Hartlepool's newest MP, Jonathan Brash, would address the public and give the public an opportunity to ask him questions. Mr. Brash is eager to hear from Parish residents about their issues. He believes Hartlepool is a Borough, not just a town, and aims to represent all areas equally.

Mr. Brash left the meeting at 7:40pm.

1. **Apologies:** Councillor Mike Patrick, Ward Councillor Andrew Martin-Wells.

2. **Declaration of interests:** Councillor Lyn Noble – Item 10.

**Councillor Vacancy:** Two applications were received to fill the vacancy left by Cllr Rushworth's resignation. One application was withdrawn before the meeting, making a vote unnecessary. Councillors unanimously agreed to elect Mr. Colin Grylls. **Action:** Clerk to send Mr. Grylls the official documentation to sign. Once returned and witnessed, Mr. Grylls will officially join DPPC.

**Minutes of 14th November 2024:** Several amendments were requested, including the clerk numbering the pages in the future. The amended minutes were then agreed. **Action:** Chair to sign once Clerk has made the required changes.

5. **Matters Arising:** Cllr Timothy suggested Ward Councillors and MP Brash be contacted to request their assistance in getting HBC's enforcement team to recover the much needed non-payment of rates from illegally built properties in Dalton Piercy, as this would be beneficial to the village and the revenues of the Borough. Suggestion welcomed but no decision made.

6. **Ward Cllr Report:** Clerk read out the report received from Ward Councillor Andrew-Martin-Wells, as follows:

1. **Attendance:** Cllr Martin-Wells will not attend this or future parish meetings due to personal family matters and he requests residents' concerns be brought to him two weeks before parish meetings for sufficient addressing time. He will forward any information related to Dalton Piercy to the clerk.
2. **Elwick By-pass:** The road's detailed design is ongoing, involving National Highways and landowner negotiations. If discussions stall, HBC may consider a compulsory purchase order.

Other information provided was not relevant to Dalton Piercy.

7. **Chair's report:**

1. **S106 Monies:** She has been informed by the Finance Director that DPPC will not receive interest on the £66,641.92 payment. Cllr Noble disputes this and believes the original agreement should be checked. **Action:** Cllr Ireland to query the original terms and report back.
2. **HBC Budget:** Attended the recent HBC Council Finance and Policy Committee meeting where it was announced there was a £4 million deficit in the 2025 budget, though HBC officers are hopeful that the government would soon announce better Local Government settlement, plans were in place to make internal cuts rather than cutting public services.
3. **Parish Liaison Meeting:** Speeding in DP was raised. All Hartlepool parishes share the concern. HBC has no funds but is open to DPPC funding their own measures. Cllr Ireland considers this double taxation. Chair urges residents to report traffic incidents to improve prioritisation.
4. **Speedbumps Estimate:** Received a £10-15,000 estimate for speedbumps in 2023. **Action:** Clerk has emailed Peter Frost at HBC for more up-to-date figures.
5. **Speeding on side roads in village:** Keiron Bostock will visit Dalton Piercy to review the need for further signage, particularly at Highgate Meadows, to give a quote. Awaiting the site visit for further updates.
6. **Pharmaceutical Questionnaire:** Chair received a questionnaire for residents to inform pharmacy services. **Action:** Chair to forward the questionnaire to Clerk; Clerk to post on DPPC Website; Cllr Noble to post to parish notice board.
7. **Playground Relocation:** Received correspondence from three residents about relocating the playground. Chair proposes a public consultation to gauge views of all residents and provide full costings. **Action:** Cllr Ireland to prepare a proposal for a future meeting.
8. **Neighbourhood Services Committee Meeting:** Cllr Noble attended but has nothing to report as there was no information relevant to Dalton Piercy.

8. **Personnel Committee Report:** Nothing to report.

9. **Maintenance Committee Report:**

1. **Trees:** Crown uplift done on trees on the green; those in Abbots Lea still in progress.
2. **Weed Control:** Cllr Noble feels HBC should manage weeds. DPPC took over because HBC wasn't previously keeping up.
3. **Flower Tubs:** Meryl Gardens quote accepted; work pending. Unadopted flower tubs to be removed. £55 per year per pot budget accepted. **Action:** Cllr Middleton to liaise with Meryl Gardens.
4. **Batts Maintenance:** Clearing delayed by a storm. Tree work finished, path clearing scheduled for 13.12.2024. Meadow maintenance contracted to R Caygill.
5. **Pond:** Cllr Noble bought pond dye for a year's treatment, starting in March 2025.
6. **Allotments:** Storm-damaged fence needs replacement. **Action:** Cllr Noble share info for G. Bell to fix; Clerk then to arrange.
7. **Trough Replacement:** Insurance claim opened; Clerk needs price for like-for-like replacement. **Action:** Cllr Noble to source prices.
8. **Christmas Tree:** Lights checked and working. Tree needs trimming for Christmas 2025. **Action:** To be arranged.
9. **Carols around the Tree:** Christmas Eve at 4:00pm. **Action:** Cllr Noble to provide details; Clerk to post on DPPC Facebook and website.

10. **Dalton Piercy Village Hall Trustees Report:** Cllrs Noble and Patrick have been working with a 'mentor' from the National Lottery Fund to navigate the funding process. They will meet her again on Tuesday, 17th December 2024, to complete the paperwork, which will inform the next steps. Status: Ongoing.

11. **Future Dalton Piercy Committee Updates:** Councillor Noble proposed abandoning all Dalton Piercy sub-committees due to the small size of the parish. She felt that all issues are addressed at monthly parish meetings making separate formal committees unnecessary. The proposal was unanimously agreed.

12. **Red Gap Application:** No further update. Decision still pending.

13. **Parish Banking Signatories:** Clerk reviewed past minutes and found NatWest unsatisfactory in updating signatories. Currently, Cllr Noble handles all online payments. Proposed another application to NatWest; if unresolved by February, seek alternative banking. Unanimously agreed.  
**Action:** Cllr Noble to request immediate action from the bank or provide info to the clerk to action.

14. **Finance Report.**

The following financial transactions between 13.11.2024 and 10.12.2024 were presented and accepted as **accurate**.

<b>Receipts</b>	<b>£</b>
N/A	0.00
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>0.00</b>
<b>Payments</b>	<b>£</b>
Clerk's Payroll (CP)	301.60
Clerk's Payroll Backpay (SV)	102.02
Clerk's Broadband Allowance (SV March-Oct Inclusive)	140.00
Clerk Broadband (CP)	20.00
Leaving Flowers for Clerk	14.00
Compost for Flower Tubs	13.00
Pond Dye for 2025	75.60

Bank	Forvis Mazars – External Audit Fees (2024)	378.00
	Meryl Gardens (Trees in Batts)	1,660.00
	<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>2,704.22</b>

Balance as of 10.12.24 is as follows: Current Account - £11,494.16 Savings Account - £45,872.97

These balances were accepted as **accurate**.

**Parish Accounts Investigation:** Clerk checked all transactions and receipts since 01.04.2024. The cash book and budget spreadsheets have been updated based on invoices, emails, and bank statements. This information was shared with the chair before the meeting and circulated during the meeting. It was accepted as accurate, despite a recent bank reconciliation being missing, with no pending payments or unrepresented cheques. Clerk proposed in future to provide actual against budget as 'calendar monthly', alongside monthly transactions still in usual 'meeting to meeting' format if agreed by councillors. No decision made yet.

**Transaction Queries:**

03.04.24 - £11.37: Payment for anti-littering signs. Cllr Noble believes the invoice was provided to previous clerk but went missing. **Action:** Clerk to document the missing invoice.

05.04.24 - £10.00: Payment for Councillor Middleton's training. Invoice is believed to exist. **Action:** Cllr Ireland to request copy from CDALC.

28.04.24 - £15.98: Invoice for a portable SD card found, but no payment evidence. Believed to have been paid by previous clerk, Sandra. **Action:** Clerk to confirm who paid and arrange recompense.

**Unpaid Salary:** Previous clerk not paid for October. Unanimously agreed payment is due. **Action:** Clerk to contact the accountant to arrange payment.

**15. 2025/2026 Budget projections:**

**Precept Increase:** Councillors unanimously agreed to increase the precept by 2% for the 2025/2026 financial year, following HBC recommendations.

**Election Costs:** Clerk spoke to Lorraine Bennison at HBC. Currently, HBC covers ward councillor election costs, but this may change. DPPC will need to cover costs for Parish Council member replacements. A reserve of at least £10,000 is advised.

**Budget:** The 2024/2025 budget has not been fully spent. Maintenance projects estimated at £3,000 are pending. An underspend is likely, helping build reserves for future projects. Cllr Ireland projects a £3,000 surplus by year-end.

**Public Query:** A member of the public questioned the precept increase given current reserves. Cllrs Noble and Ireland explained that DPPC had had no reserves a few years ago, and had to delay invoice payments until the new precept was received.

#### *Project Proposals:*

1. **Allotment Fencing Repair:** Councillors unanimously agreed to prioritize the repair of the allotment fencing, arranging it promptly without waiting for January's meeting, provided the quotation is under the £3,000 maintenance allocation.
2. **Rotten Cart Repair:** Cllr Noble suggested repairing the rotten cart in the village.
3. **Post Box Repainting:** The post box needs repainting.

**Digital Mapping Subscription:** DPPC spends £120.00 annually on Pear Technology's 'Digital Mapping' subscription, which hasn't been fully utilised for over 5 years. Councillors voted to cancel the service as it brings no benefit. **Action:** Pear Technology to be contacted to cancel the subscription.

**Playground Inspection:** Report received for annual inspection; invoice expected soon. Budget for inspections to remain the same for 2025/26.

**Legal and Professional Fees:** Budget to remain at £600.00, though currently unused, it's expected to be needed soon.

**Final Budget Decisions:** Delayed until January meeting due to time constraints requested by the Chair.

16. **Speeding:** Topic covered under Chair's report.

17. **Parking and vehicle access surrounding the Village Green:** The need for parking bays had been outlined by Cllr Timothy at a previous meeting. **Action:** Cllr Timothy to take charge of investigating project costs instead of the clerk.

18. **Matters of concern to councillors:** Cllr Middleton suggests DPPC develop a policy for electric vehicle charging points in Dalton Piercy, anticipating future needs. **Action:** Cllr Middleton to draft a plan for Cllr Noble to present at a Neighbourhood Planning meeting. Cllr Middleton will also attend the meeting.

#### **19. Public Forum:**

1. **Budget Concerns:** Resident requested a rebate if funds are not spent. Excess funds are deducted from the next year's precept. Resident suggested spending all funds before increasing the precept.
2. **Cost of Precept:** Resident queried the high precept despite Dalton Piercy being small. The chair explained that fixed costs make the burden higher in areas with fewer houses.
3. **Pot Holes:** Tarmac lifting causing pot holes. **Action:** To be brought again to attention of Keiron Bostock to inspect.
4. **Driveway:** Resident will provide paperwork for driveway repairs.

5. One resident concerned they couldn't find a record on Government's website to prove DPPC had applied for land swap; advised that DPPC have the signed legal documents to prove it has been done. **Action:** Cllr Timothy to email details of documents to clerk.
6. *Order of Agenda:* One resident was unhappy with Public Forum's move to the end of the agenda, though others present preferred it at the end. It will stay at the end for now.
7. *Meeting Minutes:* Resident unhappy about delayed minutes. Clerk apologized, citing illness.
8. *Grass Cutting in the Batts:* Resident concerned about grass cutting risking daffodils. Advised to await the scheduled cut.
9. *Tree Replacement:* Resident concerned about tree felling. Replacement trees to be discussed at the next meeting.
10. *Speed Awareness:* Residents want a 20mph speed limit sign for Highgate Meadows. [Reported under Chair's report].

**20. Correspondence:**

1. *Path Across Village Green:* Resident queried the minutes' accuracy about needing an Act of Parliament for a path. Clerk clarified minutes reflect what was said. Councillors believe temporary structures (e.g., Hexapath) don't require an Act, but permanent ones (e.g., concrete path) do. **Action:** Councillors and resident to research further.
2. *Tree Safety Concern:* Resident concerned about tree safety over the footpath during storms. Councillors stated the trees are HBC's responsibility. **Action:** Clerk to inform the resident who to contact.

**21. Planning applications:**

1. [H/2024/0180](#) / [H/2024/0210](#) / [H/2024/0359](#) – No objections

**22. Date of Next Meeting:**

7.00pm, Thursday January 16th 2025 at Elwick WI Hall

Meeting closed at 9:42pm