

Broomhaugh & Riding Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council held on 8th March 2010 in the Supper Room of the Parish Hall at 7.45pm

Present: Councillors Tulip, Mills, Reid, Dunhill, Eakins, Heslop and Stephenson.

Also present were Cllr Anne Dale, 10 members of the public (most who left after the item on Millfield Road). PC Sharon Lowden was in attendance for most of the meeting. She gave a brief presentation about the changes in local coverage and said that she would be willing to hold surgeries in the Parish Hall. This kind offer was accepted.

1. **Apologies:** None
2. **Minutes of last meeting:** These were agreed as a true record.
3. **Matters arising:**
 - a) Grass cutting at Broomhaugh: Mr Alan Thompson had agreed to continue doing the grass cutting round the planters at the Broomhaugh end of the village. He was thanked for his efforts.
 - b) Annual Parish Meeting: this was confirmed as 20th May in the Millennium Hall at 7.30pm. Speakers from the Hexham Beekeepers Association will give a talk.
 - c) TPOs: Cllr Dale had talked to the Planning department and they promised that TPOs would be forwarded to Councillors for consideration in future.
 - d) Potholes: some of the repairs had been done, but rather poorly and the Highways Authority are way behind. The ones just before Farnley Gate have been done, as a result of submissions to ask@northumberland.gov.uk.
 - e) Cllr Stephenson raised the matter of a letter from a member of the public in which she felt the first paragraph specifically was an attack on her integrity on this matter; to quote: "I note your comments concerning the participation of a parish councillor who is a resident and property owner in this road. Whereas this councillor has, on some occasions, declared a personal interest in this matter and has then withdrawn from discussion of it, I feel it appropriate to record that her personal discretion has not extended beyond the confines of council meetings. Over the past few months, when discussions of this matter have been an ongoing topic on the parish council agenda, this councillor has seen fit to approach a number of the road's residents and made strenuous efforts to coerce them into accepting the parish council's financial terms for securing the road's adoption. Her reported comments to these residents seem to reveal that, in this matter, she has acted with the full knowledge and perhaps the support of, the Chairman and Vice-Chairman. I would be interested to have your views on the propriety of this conduct". Cllr Stephenson went on to say that since receiving this letter she had visited 20 of the 22 homeowners in Millfield Road. She did not visit the writer of the letter and one other resident. Of the 20 homeowners she had visited, not one had thought that Cllr Stephenson had attempted to coerce them in any way whatsoever. She asked that the matter be referred to our solicitors, with a request that the writer of the letter be asked to substantiate these allegations. However, in conjunction with the comments also made by Cllr Reid: "This PC has a history of councillors only serving for short periods. Now that I have been on the council for 2 years and acting Chair for a short period, it is quite apparent to me why this has been happening. Defamatory and demonstrably untrue statements are regularly made about councillors to third parties by a very small number of parishioners with apparent impunity. Normal standards of

courtesy are not observed. We have a responsibility to bring the Council to full strength so that it can fulfil its functions well by creating a climate in which parishioners wish to serve, so we need to address this vexatious behaviour. We need to establish that high standards of conduct are expected of all members of the community – not just councillors. I request agreement of the Council for legal advice to be sought about some recent examples. I suggest that the cost of seeking legal advice will be money well spent.” After some discussion, it was agreed by the Council to forward the letters to Wardhadaway solicitors asking for advice from their litigation department.

4. **Millfield Road:** the request forms had been returned to the Legal Services department at County Hall and Mr Rickitt sent the following letter: “ My analysis is : Option 1 (£2000 contribution) – six; Option 2 – other contribution (less than £2000) – two; Option 3 – No contribution – Ten.”

(There were three non-returns and the Parish Council and VHT are to be added to the first option. One further late addition to Option 1 was received in the post and forwarded). “Please let me know whether the Parish Council intend to proceed with the works in the light of this outcome.

I have spoken to my colleagues in the Highways & Transport Service and, if you decide not to proceed with the works, then we will withdraw the estimated figures. In addition I must make it clear that is highly unlikely that the County Council will devote resources in the future towards issues concerning the adoption of Millfield Road or its state of repair unless there are pressing safety reasons for us to do so.”

Having received what is essentially a no vote, the Parish Council reiterated its earlier resolutions: that the parish council will implement the installation of the turning head beside the Parish Hall, bridge works to reduce to 3 tonnes; and the Parish Hall car park. The Parish Council also re-iterated that the upkeep of Millfield Road remains with the frontagers. The Parish Council formally rescinded the resolution of December 2004 and relinquished their temporary adoption of insurance liability for Millfield Road with immediate effect.

Cllr Dale pointed out that the County had put a lot of time and effort over the last 5 years on this matter. Cllr Tulip noted that he hoped that in the future, the residents of Millfield Road would come forward to address the issues.

5. **Parish Plan:** Cllrs Eakins and Reid had been through the existing Parish Plan to identify the outstanding issues which should be looked at further. Of the three noted, a pedestrian crossing, a 20mph speed limit on side roads in the village and more parking outside the village shop, the first two were suggested for ongoing work. It was suggested that a working group for each issue be set up with at least one Councillor on each. A village wide perspective would be taken and each issue would be tackled by looking at the current relevance of the issues; an in-depth look at any work that has been done on the matters to date would be reviewed; and possible solutions with or without sources of funding would be looked at. Volunteers were asked for and Cllr Dale suggested that Alan Bawn of the County Council be involved in both issues. Cllr Tulip already holds a lot of paperwork which can be forwarded to the working groups. Cllr Dunhill agreed to lead on the crossing working group with Cllr Reid also expressing interest. Cllrs Stephenson and Heslop indicated they would work on the speed limit one. Cllr Eakins would coordinate the work of the groups.
6. **Himalayan Balsam:** Cllr Reid suggested the Parish Council need a group of volunteers to work on this. Although the Parish Council could endorse the treatment of the Himalayan Balsam, it was agreed that village volunteers should do the work. Permission of the landowners (Styford Estates) would be needed (MA) and the correct timing of the methodology would be chased up with the

Tyne Rivers Trust who were advising on the issue. A call for volunteers could go into the Parish news and also be asked for at the meeting with Tyne Rivers Trust to be held later in the week in the Parish Hall.

7. **April meeting:** because of the timing of Easter, it was agreed to cancel the April meeting. Cllr Tulip has suggested a change to Parish Council meetings, for fewer in total. It was agreed to consider this issue at a later date.

8. **Correspondence:** a) general

9. **Finance:**

a) Approvals: subject to a number of minor amendments the financial Regulations, the asset List and the Risk Assessment were approved for the year 2009/2010.

b) The audited accounts for 2008/2009 had been received from BDO and were accepted by the Parish Council. The comments made in the report re timing of approvals and S.137 donations were also accepted. With respect to the comments on accurate budgeting, the Council felt that the comments were unjustified in view of the nature of complaints that had been made to the Auditors. The Clerk would write to them, enclosing the type of budgeting that now occurs.

c) The financial statement and receipts were accepted.

d) The following payments were authorised:

M F Anderton Salary/Feb	£407.74
M F Anderton Expenses/Feb	£36.06
BDO Audit	£614.53
RM Allot. Assn./Insurance	£57.75
T Smith/fence at weir	£360.73
NCC/grass cutting	£1,286.47
Northumbria Water	£8.65
Radio Pages/website	£284.08

e) Grass cutting quote: the quote received from the County Council was for only £13 more than this year and it was agreed to accept this. Included in the letter would be the request by the Parish Council to use weedkillers in as few areas in the village as possible.

f) The S.137 donations were again deferred owing to the tightness of funding until the precept was credited to the account.

10. Minor matters:

Cllr Dunhill suggested a clean- up day. The state of the village was not too bad but a clean up would be desirable. Cllr Stephenson expressed reservations concerning the health & safety aspects. It was agreed to select a date at the May meeting for early in June.

Cllr Dale reiterated there was funding available for the School safety route plan as part of the possible speed limit restriction. Cllr Stephenson suggested talking with the Chair of school Governors.

Some more dropped kerbs would appear in the village .

The school warning sign was often hidden by vehicles and it was agreed to put up notices to try and prevent this.

The Church Lane road sign needed replacing and Cllr Dale agreed to follow up on that.

It was noted the bill for the upkeep of the website did not include all the work for the church at this time. A new management system for the site was being considered which would be easier.

Moles were a problem again in the Play Park. It was agreed to look into this (this has subsequently been dealt with).

Cllr Tulip announced he would be resigning from the Council, for personal reasons, with immediate effect. On behalf of all Councillors, Cllr Eakins thanked him saying that he had been an excellent Chairman. As the vice- Chair will be busy for a few weeks, Cllr Mills agreed to act as Chair in the meantime.

Meeting closed at 9.10pm