

Broomhaugh & Riding Parish Council

Minutes of the Annual parish meeting, held at 7.30pm in the Millennium Hall, Church Lane on 20th May 2010.

Present: Cllrs Mill, Reid, Eakins, Heslop, Dunhill and Stephenson. County Councillor Anne Dale was in attendance with 14 members of the public and a member of the Press. Also in attendance for part of the meeting was Mrs Jen Stephenson, Head Teacher and Mr Colin Weightman MBE and Mr David Pearce of the Hexham Beekeeper's Society who gave the first presentation.

1. **Mr Pearce gave a detailed presentation** on the life cycle of the Bee, assisted by Cllr Stephenson on the computer. He gave an overview of the life cycle, the long history from prehistoric times, the many uses of beeswax in healing and he explained how the bees and the hives work. He also explained the problems recently suffered by Bee colonies, particularly relating to the Varoa mite which is wiping out whole colonies of bees throughout the country, having started in the south of England. It was introduced in 1992 and reached Northumberland in 1997. He gave details of bee friendly plants which are essential to the pollination cycle and the future of the food chain. Some of the species mentioned are being looked at for inclusion in the Spinney. One of the plants gives cause for the Parish Council to reconsider matters as Himalayan Balsam is recommended as being very beneficial to Bees, bearing in mind the vast numbers wiped out in the last three years in particular. Cllr Mills thanked the speakers for their attendance and interesting presentation.
2. **The minutes of the 2009 APM** were agreed as a true record.
3. **Broomhaugh & Riding First School Report:** There are 61 children on the roll at present with 17 coming in the summer with only 13 being lost to the Middle School. Staff illness has given problems at the beginning of last year with frequent supply teachers. This is now over and the school is running well. The school cook also retired after 30 years and although there were problems finding a suitable replacement, a good cook is now in post. There is more equipment in the school grounds and more teaching is done outside when practicable. The curriculum is undergoing changes, which are temporarily halted owing to the change of Government, which is working to encourage them to think for themselves. There are still many after school activities including football sponsored by Newcastle United FC Community football. The Squirrels Club is still going from strength to strength with many volunteers helping keep it open from 8.00 in the morning to 5.45 in the afternoon. Just under 50% of the children are from the village which does cause traffic problems at the beginning and end of the school day. The school is trying to encourage car sharing and for people resident in the village to walk to school. Many of those from out of the village participate in school activities and the school remains grateful to parents and to the parish council for their continuing support.
4. **Chairman's report:** The Chairman, Cllr Mills, began by thanking Fred Tulip for his hard work in the previous two years, following his retirement from the Council for personal reasons. The Covenants Policy, redeveloped following advice from the District Auditors and begun under Cllr Tulip's chairmanship, was now in the public domain. It is not yet quite complete as points still arise which need to be include in the final version. The subject of the Weir has come up recently as the sides are being undermined. There are a number of choices to make and a lot of money has already been spent on it in the past. The options will be investigated further. Allied to this, fallen trees are causing a problem: not when they fall on the amenity land but when they fall in the Burn, disrupting the flow of water. Himalayan Balsam is deemed to be a problem in the village and a removal party is being organised by Cllr Reid to take it on. It may be that this might need to be reconsidered following the earlier talk on Bees. Japanese Knotweed continues to grow and is still a problem. It has been found on land over 100 yards away from where it was being treated near the tennis courts which demonstrates how easy it can be to spread it. The council will continue to monitor the situation.

There had been a request from a member of the public for a road sign to indicate Broomhaugh at the east end of the village. Unfortunately, as this would entail changing signage to quite a long way out of the village at the Council's expense, this was deemed too expensive to follow through.

A number of recurring issues with roads have been looked at: there are now new safety mirrors opposite Wentworth Grange at Broomhaugh and at Hollin Hill. Pot holes have been repaired – to some extent. The more serious ones have had more major surgery. Solutions to slowing down the traffic coming to the A695 from the Slaley road, where it intersects with the Nick, are being looked at. The Council is considering one option of placing interactive solar powered speed warning signs. The details are being evaluated. A pedestrian crossing is still thought necessary and the Council has recently undertaken its own traffic survey to provide figures to the County Council. The Chairman also mentioned the recent attempts to have Millfield Road adopted, following significant input over some years by both the Parish Council and the County Council. The final solution was rejected by the frontagers and the matter will not be revisited by the County Council in the near future. The Play park continues to be monitored and a mole infestation was partially removed at some expense. The Spinney committee have met and put forward proposal to open up a walking footpath, in a circular route through the Spinney. The Council are also trying to ensure that weedkillers are not used in grass cutting by the County Council where it can cause damage to further growth. It is acceptable only against concrete or brick for example. Allied to this there will be a Clean Up day on the 19th June. Cllr Stephenson is helping organise this.

Finally, the perennial subject of dog mess came up at the recent Council meeting and has coincided with a consultation from the County Council about making 4 byelaws against the matter uniform across the County.

5. **County Cllr Dale's report:** Cllr Dale reported that the first full year of the new authority had seen many changes. A senior management review had seen 6 senior directors put in place and the Parish and Town Councils being asked to take over many of the services that the District Councils used to perform. It has been difficult getting things done as people change from one day to the next when ringing about a problem. Some of the matters she has dealt with in the last year include: gritting of roads, salt bins, potholes, dropped kerbs, sewage problems, speeding on the A695 after the speed camera by calling out the police with a radar gun, fly tipping, litter, gully maintenance, planning and dog fouling. At the County Council, Cllr Dale is Chair of Audit so has oversight of all aspects of matters at County Hall. Much is related to performance management which is not high enough at present. She can provide some money towards capital projects although the future of that sum is not guaranteed with the current economic climate.

6. Mrs Linda Shepherd, Chair of the Village Hall Trust, gave the following report:

The past year has been momentous for the Trust. In June 2009, we closed the Parish Hall for work to begin on our new extension. We were given back the Hall on January 11th and held a Coffee Morning to mark the occasion on January 12th. In the meantime, demand for the Millennium Hall was huge and some organisations went outside the Village to keep up their activities.

Thanks must go to everyone for their patience – the job over-ran by a good six weeks but I hope you agree that it has been worth it! Eric Rosby and his men deserve a thank you too – the job was done at cost.

As well as now having a Hall which is accessible to disabled people and therefore fulfilling legal requirements, we have a super foyer which is being used as a Café three times each week which is generating income for the Halls. The Supper Room, Kitchen and Main Hall have been refurbished and look lovely.

The Millennium Hall is being used primarily by Pre School – seven sessions each week - and also by three other groups which do not meet every week.

The Parish Hall is used much more, demand is huge and the Bookings Secretary has a task trying to accommodate everyone. We have three weddings this summer – one of which is being catered for by the Dotty Cooks. There is a new Photographic Society, the Community Education Group based at the High School in Hexham are using the Hall for Pilates and the Bridge Club is hoping to use the Hall on Friday afternoons. We still have a few daytime sessions free and weekends are often available for bookings.

The flat has a tenant and the rent pays for our Caretaker who I wish to thank for her dedication. Val works hard and is a leading light in the success of the Coffee Shop and, Alan, her husband, is doing a lot in the garden and regularly picks up the paintbrush. In four months, the Coffee Shop has made almost £1,000 for the Trust and if you have popped in, I am sure you will agree that it gives much more than money to the Village.

Renting out the flat saves the Village Hall Trust money – we no longer pay electricity, gas, water, telephone and Community charge bills thanks to Pam Pryor for managing the tenancy.

We used the Probation Service who supply workers on Community Service to decorate the flat prior to its occupation and they are returning soon to paint the exterior of both Halls.

From April last year, the Dotty Cooks have raised £1,870 for the funds – this does not include catering for events like the Craft Fair which raised over £3,000.

We have had donations from several Hall users (but not all). Tiny clubs like Badminton and The Get Dancing Group have held events which raised in excess of £200 each. The Bridge Club, who do not even use the Hall, have given us almost £700 and Judith Anderson's wonderful 'Riding Mill's Got Talent' concerts raised over £800.

The Trust is extremely grateful to Councillor Anne Dale who has procured funds for us and the Parish Council for your generosity and support which we hope is ongoing!

All I can say, as Chairman of the Village Hall Trust, is a huge thank you to all who have helped us over the last, sometimes difficult, year. I hope that our Halls continue to fulfil the needs of the community.

7. **The financial statement** was presented for information.
8. **Millfield Road:** As the result of a letter being put through letterboxes across the village concerning Millfield Road, the Chairman allowed further discussion on the matter. The letter writers felt the majority of the village were unaware of the problems associated with Millfield Road. It was pointed out that the whole village had had matters explained when a previous attempt, five years ago, to get the road adopted, had been made. There was quite a lot of discussion on the matter which essentially covered points raised at many meetings already in the past. The Chairman allowed the matter to run for awhile before drawing it to a close.

With no further business under AOB, the meeting closed at 9.45pm after the Chairman thanked everyone for attending.