

BROOMHAUGH & RIDING PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Parish Council Meeting held in the Parish Hall on 14th February 2011 at 7.45pm

Present: Cllrs Mills (in the Chair), Reid, Dunhill and Eakins. County Councillor Dale was present and 3 members of the public.

1. **Apologies:** None.
2. **Declaration of Interests:** None recorded.
3. **Minutes of the previous meeting** were agreed as a true record.
4. **Matters arising:**
 - a) Road matters: Cllr Dale updated members on the requests she had made regarding necessary road repairs following the bad weather. She had had a meeting with Cllr Mills and a representative from the County Council in December. Currently there is no Inspector for the County so that repairs cannot be assessed. The portfolio holder from County Hall, responsible for Highways etc. who was taken round the area by Cllr Dale, insisted the roads were not strategic. However, Cllr Dale pointed out that cleaning the gullies and ditches would save significant funds in the future. She will follow up on the matter with the Director, Andy Rutherford at the next Area Committee meeting.
 - b) Cllr Dale suggested waiting for a County report to be completed before asking for double yellow lines in Church Lane, leaving scope to extend the lines further along the road.
 - c) Weir: The deadline for members of the public to return with proposals if they wished to look after the weir was next month's Parish Council meeting. Cllr Reid agreed to put a reminder on the Parish Hall notice board and onto the website. Cllr Eakins suggested asking someone from the Environment Agency to come and explain the options for the weir to Councillors, at the next meeting if possible. Alternatively Cllr Reid had suggested a meeting with councillors at the weir during the day. MR
 - d) Trees: the tree over the Weir was still there. The Clerk had requested the members of the village whose land it was to remove it, offering our Handyman's help if necessary. There had been no reply and she would follow up the request. Cllr Reid agreed to try to remove the tree stuck in the Stepping Stones before asking Styford Estates to deal with it.
5. **Handyman Report:** The Handyman had already worked the hours for the winter months and there was nothing further to report.
6. **Opencast Mining Application at Whittonstall:** Tuesday after the Parish Council meeting was the closing date for responses to the above mining application and the East Tynedale Forum had requested that Council consider the matter. So far 9 Parish Councils had replied, 8 of which were against the proposal. Cllr Reid summarised a number of points that were of concern such as the environmental impact, the length of working hours, the proximity to housing and the school (Cllr Dale declared an interest as Chair of the Governing Body of the school). Cllr Reid also felt that with security of fuel being a long term issue, easily accessible supplies from open casting should be held in reserve for a future time. Only proper planning objections could be raised and this excluded increased traffic on the A68/A69 being public highways. However, it could be requested heavy traffic should be restricted through the local villages such Riding Mill and Stocksfield. It was agreed that Cllr

Reid would draft the response to the County Council planners and to the Chair of the East Tynedale Forum.

MR

7. **Financing of the Parish Hall Car park and Turning head:** Before discussing the costings, new plans, which had kindly been drawn up by Fred Tulip were given to Councillors to consider prior to a new, or amended planning application for 6 parking bays including one disabled parking bay which would allow enough space for vehicles to turn. A low retaining wall and flower beds would act as a barrier between the car park and the Parish hall lawn. A retaining wall was needed because of the requirement for drainage on the site. Liability for a Turning Head would be avoided providing an area for occasional turning without specifying the purpose. Mrs Shepherd was asked her view. Copies of the plans would be given to the VHT to consider in the near future.

Cllr Reid suggested using some of the reserves the Council currently hold but Cllr Eakins pointed out that a deficit budget had been agreed which would deplete the reserves by some £10,000 in the next financial year. As a Charity, the VHT could apply for funds to Cllr Dale, the Community Chest or the Lottery and the Council could contribute as well. The improved Disabled access might well attract funding. It was agreed that the VHT's approval would be sought for the changes; the planning application would then be made; the costs of doing the work would be revisited, including as a Health & Safety measure another street light.

8. **Traffic Matters:** a) Flashing safety signs: Cllrs Mills, Reid and Dunhill had met with Stefan Bell from the County Council about the sighting of such safety signs. The preferred sites for the signs, which would flash with 30mph and Slow signs would be near Bobby's shop for traffic going East and at the bottom of Whiteside Bank for traffic going west on the A695. Two quotes have been received and a third is being produced. Cllr Dale noted that she had offered to contribute £4000 towards the costs.

b) Road signage at Millfield Road: changes were requested to the siting and number of signs warning of the bridge restriction so that drivers can see the warnings before they have turned into the road. The proposals are with the County Council for consideration.

c) An extra light on the Millfield Road bridge would make the restriction safer. Cllr Dale will check on who would be liable for the costs. If it comes up in the TRO (Temporary Restriction Order) consultation by the County Council on the changes, they may consider paying for it.

9. **Standards Committee dismissal of complaint by Mr B Young and Mr R Tully against former Councillor Mrs Linden Stephenson:** Cllr Mills readout the formal notice concerning Mrs Stephenson:

'On Thursday 16th December, the Standards sub-committee of Northumberland County Council met to consider an investigation report arising from complaints received from Mr R Tully and Mr B Young of Riding mill concerning allegations that former Councillor Linden Stephenson of Broomhaugh & Riding Parish Council had failed to comply with certain provisions of the Parish Councillors Code of Conduct namely (i) that she used or attempted to use her position as a member to confer an advantage or disadvantage for herself or other persons and (ii) she had sought improperly to influence a decision in business of her authority where she had a prejudicial interest.'

The sub-committee, having fully considered the investigation report, concluded there was no evidence that the member had been guilty of the conduct complained of and, as a consequence, they made a finding of acceptance, thereby accepting the Monitoring Officer's finding of no failure to comply with the Code by the Member. Dated 7th January 2011.

10. **Implementation of Vexatious correspondence Policy in a particular case.** Cllr Mills read out a draft letter to Mr Brian Young from the Parish Council declaring that correspondence from him was vexatious and the reasons why, in accordance with the Council's Vexatious correspondence Policy. Cllr Reid pointed out that between 2003 and 2010, an average of 21 letters a year from him had been received by the Council. In response therefore to a letter received on the 13th December last, it was proposed that the Policy be implemented and that the following letter be sent to Mr Young. Cllr Mills declared an interest in respect of one aspect of the letter referring back to 1972/3 when her husband, G.G.Mills had been the Councillor whose firm had acted for the Council; Cllr Dale pointed out that there were no regulations applying to Councillors in those days.

'Dear Mr Young

The Parish Council has voted to declare that your correspondence with it, or any member of it or the Clerk, is vexatious.

This is as a result of your letter to the Chairman dated 13th December 2010, which deals with four matters, all of which you have raised in the past and to three of which you have received replies.

They are:

1. Your claim that the Riding Mill Estate Company made a "gift" to the Parish Council of roads in the village including Millfield Road. You raised this in your letter of 2nd October 2010 to which the Chairman replied on 10th October 2010. You wrote again on 28th October and the Chairman replied on 23rd November 2010.
2. Your complaint against the Parish Clerk, first raised on 26th April 2010 to which the Chairman replied on 1st June 2010. You wrote again on 5th June, and the Chairman replied on 9th June. You wrote again on the 24th June and 31st July 2010, to which the Chairman replied in a letter also dated 31st July 2010. You wrote again on the 15th August 2010 and the Chairman replied on 17th August. You wrote again on 25th August.
3. Your suggestion in your letter of 28th October that a former Councillor in 1972/3 may not have declared an interest in work for the Parish Council, (for which he charged only his firm's expenses), although you have no evidence of this negative. The Chairman in her letter of 23rd November dismissed your suggestion.
4. Your demand in your letter of 3rd November 2010 that the Chairman should give you assurances about the confidentiality of letters you had sent to the Parish Council. The Chairman is not in a position to give any such assurance, in view of the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act.

The grounds on which the Parish Council has resolved that correspondence with you is vexatious are that (a) the requests for information and action you have requested can fairly be seen as obsessive

(b) the requests are harassing the Council

(c) the requests are designed to cause disruption or annoyance and

(d) the requests lack serious purpose or value.

In accordance with the Parish Council's policy as to vexatious correspondence, it has been resolved that during the period of 6 months from today, between Parish Council Meetings it will deal with only the first fresh item in the first letter, email or other form of correspondence from you to the Clerk, the Chairman or any Councillor.'

Cllr Mills proposed that the Council's policy be implemented in respect of correspondence received from Mr Young. Cllr Reid seconded the motion and it was passed by the councillors, with one abstention. It was agreed that the letter be sent. MA

11. **Planning:** Considered by Northumberland County Council: the following were granted consent under delegated powers:

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| 20100503 | Certificate of lawfulness; 1 The Bungalow, Broomhaugh |
| 20100695 | Extension at Riding Hills Farm, Main Road |
| 20100722 | changes to Old Tavern House |
| 20100914 | Conversion at Woodbine House/Cottage |
| 20100509 | demolition and rebuild at Staward, Long Rigg |
| 20100973 | Extension at 4 Burnside, Mill Close |
| 20101030 | Loft conversion at Summerhill, Long Rigg |

Granted conditional permission by the Development Control Committee;

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| 20100652 | Agricultural storage unit off the A68 |
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12. **Correspondence:** General file, including a list of correspondence received in the last month. (List placed on Notice Board with minutes). It contains two consultations.

13. **Finance:**

a) The receipts and financial statement were accepted. The budget was similar to the previous month and is break even. A £50 cheque made under S.137 to Mencap in June has not been paid in. It is presumed lost. There was also an uncleared payment of £140 to Darren Johnson.

b) The following payments were authorised:

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| VHT, Rent | £48.00 |
| Darren Johnson (2 months - Nov/Dec) | £140.00 |
| NCC (Dog waste bin) | £324.22 |
| RM Allotment Ass. Insurance | £75.25 |
| T Smith, fence on station footpath | £250.00 |
| NALC, training | £10.00 |
| Darren Johnson (Jan) | £70.00 |
| M Reid, reimbursed expense for Spinney | £37.50 |
| NCC, grass cutting | £1,332.00 |
| MAnderton (Salary, expenses plus Extra time) | £501.96 |
| Viking/paper/printer cartridges | £140.03 |

14. **Minor matters:**

a) The Annual Parish meeting will be held on 12th May in the Parish Hall;

b) Concern was expressed about door to door salesmen thought to be young offenders being bussed in and possibly causing malicious damage in the village. Some older villagers had felt this intimidating. Cllr Dale said she would check the position with the Police;

c) The new Cricket Club lease has finally been signed and agreed;

d) The Council have have replied to a consultation on the Fire Service Draft Implementation and Protection Strategy;

e) Cllrs Eakins and Reid reported that they had attended the Big Society Day in Hexham. This was well organised and covered a lot of issues. However, it was not clear what, if anything, the Government's current initiative would actually achieve. Voluntary and community working is already well established in West Tynedale without central government help;

f) Requests about recycling bins in parts of Broomhaugh are still being followed up by Cllr Dale.

The meeting closed at 9.40pm. The public and the County Councillor left the meeting.

Confidential matters: Pursuant to section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 it is resolved that, because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the public and the press leave the meeting during consideration of these items. (To consider legal matters).