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**Broomhaugh & Riding Parish Council**

Minutes of the Council meeting held on Monday 8th February 2016 in Church Cottage, Church Lane, Riding Mill.

**Councillors present:**

Cllr. Andy Dunhill (Chairman) Cllr. Malcolm Reid

Cllr. Jill Mills

Cllr. Brian Singer

**In attendance:**

Mrs Catherine Harrison – Parish Clerk

Public (3): Mr D McKenzie, Mrs J Rowntree and Mrs L Stephenson.

Cllr. Dunhill opened the meeting at 7.45 pm.

16/01 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllr. Eileen Carew, County Cllr. Anne Dale and Mrs Pam Pryor, Chair of the VHT.

16/02 **Declaration of Interests**

Cllr. Dunhill declared an interest in Item 4(i) Football Field as he played cricket at the ground.

No other disclosures of personal and prejudicial interests on matters to be considered at the meeting were given.

16/03 **Approval of the minutes of the meeting of 14th December 2015**

It was agreed that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 14th December 2015 were a true record and duly signed off by Cllr. Dunhill.

16/04 **Matters arising**

1. *Minute 15/102(ii) - Football field.*

It was reported that discussions had been held with the Cricket Club re day-to-day management of the football field and plans were being made to publicise its availability come the summer.

Moles continued to be a problem on the sport fields and it was agreed to purchase a number of traps. An article highlighting the issues would be written for the Parish News.

**ACTION: CH/BS**

1. *Minute 15/102(iv) – Play Park*.

Cllr. Dunhill reported that Martin Stewart (the handyman at Stocksfield) had agreed to perform a quarterly inspection of the Play Park with the first such inspection to be undertaken shortly.

1. *Minute 15/102(v) – WW1 Memorial Panel.*

It was noted that the War Memorials Trust had confirmed that they were willing to consider a grant application from the Parish Council to help restore the WW1 Memorial Panel which would hopefully cover the cost of 75% of the restoration. The application needed to be submitted by the end of March and the Clerk and Cllr. Singer were currently working on this. An application for funding would also be made to the Community Chest Fund.

1. *Minute 15/102(vii) – The Spinney*

Cllr. Dale had contacted the County Council about installing a safety barrier in front of the gate to the Spinney and had been told that it was not possible as the barrier had to be set back 500mm from the kerb edge which would block the entrance. Cllr. Reid had measured other similar structures in the village in the same lane and found that they were not set back this distance. He requested that this be raised again with the Officer and that the PC should insist a barrier be installed on safety grounds.

**ACTION: CH**

To improve safety as an interim measure it was agreed that the grit bin be moved so that children could walk on the grassed area rather than the road to access the Old Playground when exiting the Spinney.

**ACTION: CH**

1. *Minute 15/107 – Bridge surveys*

It was noted that the surveys had been delayed until the March Burn flow rate and level had dropped sufficiently to allow safe access for the engineers.

1. *Minute 15/114(ii) – Landslip on footpath to Corbridge.*

Cllr. Dunhill reported that he had met with Cllr. Dale, Maurice Hodgson, Chair of Corbridge PC and Tim Fish, NCC Countryside Officer, to review the landslip on the footpath to Corbridge. The section of the footpath over Farnley Scar was now legally closed and access steps had been removed to deter people still trying to use the route. The land was still unstable and it was not simply a case of reinstalling the path 5 metres further back. Negotiations were ongoing with the landowners but these would take some time. He felt confident, however, that the County Council understood the importance of this footpath and would do all it could to get it re-established.

16/05 **Landscaping by the ramp**

Cllr. Reid reported that initial quotes from contractors for landscaping and turfing the area beside the ramp and generally removing brambles along the footpath had been too costly to pursue. He therefore proposed so ask for volunteers to undertake this work under the supervision of a local nurseryman, Brian Thompson. He proposed to undertake the work in two phases: Phase 1 – area immediately adjacent to the ramp; Phase 2 – improvements to the area along the footpath to incorporate a section of edible fruit trees and bushes. He presented the plan and budget breakdown of £400 (in addition to the cost already set aside for screening bushes to the adjacent property).

This was felt to be a workable solution and was therefore unanimously agreed (proposed Cllr. Singer, seconded Cllr. Dunhill). Cllr. Reid proposed to hold the first community gardening session on Thursday 10th March and would be seeking volunteer helpers.

**ACTION: MR/CH**

16/06 **Threatened legal action by Mr R Tully re the Maintenance & Adoption of Millfield Road, Riding Mill**

Cllr. Dunhill gave the following report:

In June 2014 the PC received a letter from Mr R Tully’s solicitors threatening to take legal action against the PC unless it took over the maintenance of Millfield Road & carried out whatever work was necessary to ensure adoption of the road. (This was in parallel to similar action against Northumberland County Council re adoption of the road).

The PC’s firm position, based on legal advice, is that it has no responsibility for either routine maintenance of the road or work to bring it to adoption standard.

The PC then received a further letter from Mr Tully’s solicitors on 28 September 2015 stating that as the dispute had not been resolved – “...our client has proposed to enter into alternative dispute resolution with you (and the Council)...” (meaning the County Council) “...in an attempt to negotiate a settlement to this dispute...” “...to avoid the necessity for our client to commence proceedings”. At no time was it made clear with exactly what proceedings the PC was threatened.

We were required to confirm our agreement within 7 days. This was on the basis that – “Clearly, should our client’s invitation be unreasonably refused by you then our client reserves the right to show this letter to the Court on the question of costs and in particular cost sanctions” i.e. the PC could be involved in paying Mr Tully’s legal costs (even though it had not been made clear the exact nature of the legal remedy he was seeking).

This letter was immediately passed to the PC’s Solicitors (Wardhadaway) to act on our behalf. To protect the PC’s position three PC representatives (Andy Dunhill, Brian Singer & Jill Mills) attended the meeting although in the event only the legal advisers actually met. Our legal adviser made the PC’s position clear in accordance with the correspondence which had already passed between Wardhadaway and Mr Tully’s solicitors.

At this point in time neither we nor our solicitors have received any information as to whether this threatened legal action is ongoing or has been withdrawn; accordingly the PC has had to make provision in its precept budget for further significant legal costs.

16/07 **Tree Survey**

Our insurers advised that if a PC had responsibility for trees then an arboricultural report should be commissioned once every 5-10 years to help limit any risk. The Clerk had obtained two quotes from local consultants to undertake such a survey which were considered at the meeting. After discussion it was unanimously agreed to appoint Tyne Valley Woodland Consultancy to undertake the survey (proposed Cllr. Singer, seconded Cllr. Mills).

**ACTION: CH**

16/08 **Vehicle Activated speed signs – maintenance contract.**

The Clerk reported that she had been approached by Broomley and Stocksfield PC. They owned two SWARCO speed activated signs and it was suggested that if these two signs were incorporated into our maintenance contract with SWARCO there would be a reduction in maintenance costs per sign each year for both PCs. This seemed a sensible suggestion and was therefore unanimously approved (proposed Cllr. Reid, seconded Cllr. Mills).

**ACTION: CH**

16/09 **Riding Mill Play & Regeneration Group**

It was noted that the group had recently met and agreed to open a bank account – a requirement for grant applications. The PC was asked to consider a request to give an initial grant of £100 to the group to help open the account which was unanimously agreed (proposed Cllr. Reid, seconded Cllr. Mills).

**ACTION: CH**

A further application for funding would be received in due course once the full plans had been agreed and costs established.

16/10 **Finance**

(i) *Monthly expenditure*

The following payments were authorised:

Marchburn Lane Residents’ Association – S137 £60.00

RM Table Tennis Club – S137 £150.00

Core Music – S137 £60.00

Tynedale Hospice at Home – S137 £60.00

Community Action Northumberland – S137 £60.00

Sport Tynedale – S137 £60.00

Northumberland CAB – S137 £60.00

Age UK – S137 £60.00

Great North Air Ambulance – S137 £60.00

Royal British Legion – S137 £60.00

The Stephen Carey Fund – S137 £100.00

RM VHT – room hire £48.00

Radio Pages / Dave Porter – web hosting and domain name renewal £129.00

Halls of Heddon – 5 laurel trees £199.95

Catherine Harrison – December salary + £10 home allowance £403.01

Invotec Solutions – grit bin and salt £169.20 (inc £28.20 VAT)

Stuart Burns – tree works £120.00

Tyne Valley Lawncare – mole catcher £40.00

Office Depot (UK) Ltd – ink cartridges £76.08 (inc £12.68 VAT)

Catherine Harrison – January salary + £10 home allowance £403.01

Catherine Harrison – reimbursement (£14.04 postage,

£17.00 land registry fees, £12.00 light bulbs for defibrillator) £43.04

Brian Singer – expenses £8.30

**Standing Orders:**

Homevend (January 16 Invoice 64) £80.00

Homevend (February 16 Invoice 65) £80.00

The following receipts were noted:

RM Allotment Association - rent £39.12

Interest - Unity Trust current account £11.80

Interest – Triodos reserve account £22.82

(ii) *Budget report*

A report showing overall budget spending for the financial year was received. A number of budget categories were overspent for the reasons outlined in previous meetings. No new matters of concern were raised.

b) *Future Audit Arrangements*

It was reported that the current external auditor’s role would finish in 2017. A new audit procurement body had been created – Smaller Authorities’ Audit Appointments Ltd (SLAAA). Councils could make their own audit arrangements or could choose to use the arrangements procured by SLAAA.

It was unanimously agreed that the PC would use the arrangements procured by SLAAA and no further action was required at this time.

16/11 **Handyman**

It was reported that the Handyman had cut back shrubs in the Play Park, the Spinney, around the weir area and near the entrance sign to the village at Broomhaugh. He had also tidied the approach to the station clearing leaves and cutting back shrubs. This accounted for his January and February payments.

16/12 **Planning**

It was reported:

1. that the following planning applications were under consideration by NCC:

16/00083/FUL – Lyndale, Millfield Road. Extension. PC – no objection

16/00075/FUL - Construction of single storey dwelling, Land south of Tudor Mount, Church Lane – PC – comments re energy efficiency and water runoff. Overall, no objection.

16/00056/FUL – 16 Station Close. Extension. PC - no overall objection although concern was expressed about the loss of a garage which could result in extra on street parking.

1. that the following planning applications had been approved by NCC

15/04031/COU – Station House, Change of use

15/03706/ADE – Northumbrian Water. Erection of signs

15/04084/LBC – 1 Hollin Hill House. Listed building consent

16/13 **Correspondence**

It was noted that:

1. One item of correspondence relating to Station Close had been referred to Cllr. Dale;
2. A letter from Mr Young regarding the grit bin in Millfield Road had received a response;
3. A further item of nuisance mail relating to dog fouling had been received.

16/14 **Minor Matters**

1. *Broomhaugh First School - Board of Governors*

Cllr. Dunhill reported that he had been approached by the Chair of Governors and asked to highlight a vacancy on the board which could be filled by a member of the PC or other community minded resident. Anyone interested should obtain further details from the school website or contact Elaine Ryder.

1. *Water leak, Old Playground*

It was reported that the County Council was investigating the water leak in the centre of the Old Playground as it was causing water to flow onto the highway. Hopefully they would redirect the leak into the drains but this would undoubtedly have a cost implication for the PC.

1. *Annual Litter pick*

It was agreed to hold the annual litter pick on Saturday 19th March from 10 am until 12 pm. The Clerk was asked to publicise the event in the Parish News.

**ACTION: CH**

16/15 **Annual Parish Meeting**

If a room was available, it was agreed to hold the annual Parish Meeting during the week commencing Monday 18th April. It was agreed that the topic to be discussed should be “Recreation Opportunities for Young & Old” and the Clerk was asked to contact clubs in the village to ask for their input.

**ACTION: CH**

16/16 **Date of Future Meeting**

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Council should be held on Monday 14th March 2016.

Meeting closed at 9.00 pm