

Broomhaugh and Riding Parish Council



Minutes of the annual Parish Meeting

Monday 14th May 2018, 7.30 pm, Parish Hall, Riding Mill.

Present: Cllr. Andy Dunhill (Chair), Cllr. Jill Mills, Cllr. Eileen Carew, Cllr. David McKenzie, County Councillor Anne Dale and Pam Pryor (Chair of the Village Hall Trust), together with 25 members of the public.

In attendance:

Mrs Catherine Harrison – Parish Clerk

Mr Brian Tilley – guest speaker

Before the formal meeting began the attendees enjoyed a talk on ‘Tynedale in the Great War’ delivered by Brian Tilley, retired deputy editor of the Hexham Courant.

1. Apologies

Cllrs. Reid, Howe and Singer, and Ms Jen Stephenson, Headteacher, Broomhaugh First School.

2. **Minutes of the 2017 annual Parish Meeting**, which had been displayed on the ridingmill.org website in draft form since last June, were agreed to be a true record.

3. Matters arising from last year’s Minutes

There were no matters arising to note.

4. Broomhaugh CE First School Report, Ms Jen Stephenson, Headteacher

(delivered by Cllr. Dunhill in Ms Stephenson’s absence).

It has been a very interesting year at school!

As most of you will be aware the last few months have been incredibly difficult with the Local authority consulting on changing the structure of education in the West. Although Broomhaugh was not earmarked for closure there was the potential for us to become a Primary school or to expand having to absorb children from a nearby school closing. Our parents, Governors (chair in particular) and staff worked tirelessly to make our opinions heard and to support other schools under threat. We were so relieved when we heard that the County had decided to make no changes in this area but do feel for our colleagues in the Haydon Bridge area who do face changes. The past few months have used up so much time through meetings, discussions etc so we would like to say a thank you to parents and Governors and to the Parish Council who also responded to the consultation documents - now it’s back to the day job.

As you will recall we have had a very small Reception class this year and so at present only have 66 pupils on the roll. But the school has been in the difficult position of being over subscribed for Reception places next September - we had 21 families who put Broomhaugh as a first choice with

only 15 places on offer. We have also had applications for places in other year groups so we are anticipating having more than 70 pupils next year (our maximum is 75).

Our out of hours club Squirrels is also facing a difficult time as they too are heavily oversubscribed. This wrap round care is essential to parents of the school and we are searching for a third member of staff so that we can increase the number of children who can use this club. Despite advertising we still have no applicants - but are continuing to search.

School is always busy - the curriculum is challenging to make sure that we present it in a way that is exciting and engaging for the children. One of the advantages of being in a small school is that staff know the children well and they work hard to make sure that every child is making the best possible progress in a relaxed, happy atmosphere. We have just finished our outdoor maths week, have had a day of digital leaders training for years 3 and 4 and are looking forward to visits to places such as Carlisle Castle and Beamish museum. We try to support events happening both in the village, local area and in the Hexham partnership of schools. We will be sending pupils to plant flowers at the Daft as a Brush charity headquarters next week and 4 pupils will be attending a pupil voice conference held for all schools in the Hexham area.

There will be exciting changes at school in September as pre school will be moving onto the school site. We have been working on this transition for some time now. In September, children who attend Riding Mill pre school will be based in a yurt as part of an outdoor setting. This very much ties in with the whole ethos of the school as we try to use the outdoors as a learning environment as much as possible. The pre school will still be managed by the very able committee that they have but we are extremely grateful to Carole Smith for stepping in to be their chair as she has provided a close link between us as a Governor of Broomhaugh. Again I have to say thanks to all who have worked so hard in establishing the facilities for this move - Rob Archer, also one of our Governors, has been co-ordinating builders etc to make this move achievable.

It is a privilege to work at Broomhaugh - as always I am continually amazed at the dedication that staff, Governors and parents show to the school as they work tirelessly to ensure that we try to provide the best possible education for the young people in our care. My thanks go to them as well as thanks to the Parish Council, other village people and Councillor Anne Dale who are so supportive of all that we do.

5. Village Hall Trust Report, Mrs Pam Pryor, Chairman & Secretary

Sometimes you have a year when you achieve all your goals; sometimes you have a year when you just get on with living and enjoying what you have; this year the Village Hall Trust has had a year of planning, preparation and we now await ACTION STATIONS.

At last year's meeting I told you that one of our aims was to dismantle the two wooden sheds behind the Parish Hall and replace them with a garage built on solid foundations within tasteful landscaping. We also wanted to use our hard-earned grant funding monies to undertake internal work in both our halls. Anything worth waiting for takes time and, thanks to Jason Tennet at In-Architecture in the village, planning permission was granted in January this year so, despite the fact that work wasn't undertaken in 2017, we were not full of false promises.

The dismantling of the sheds and building of the garage is currently out to tender and plans for the fitting of new kitchens in both halls plus the upgrading of the Store Room in the Parish Hall have been drawn up and costed. The latter awaits the external work quotation, and opinions on the kitchen plans prior to development will be sought from the main users.

All of the above couldn't happen without the hard work of my husband, Andy, who will be furious with me for mentioning him but he has contacted charitable trusts nationwide to try to obtain the

best for our village – almost £70,000 to date. For example, you asked for handrails from Millfield Road down to the Parish Hall as the driveway can be slippery in winter. He sourced a charity who offers grant funding specifically for health and safety and they paid the whole of the £1,296 bill from Debmatt to carry out this work. We didn't have to contribute a penny.

We also managed to purchase the 150 new chairs for the Parish Hall which I mentioned last year. The whole of the £3,192 was grant funded. Monies are also in place to purchase new chairs for the Millennium Hall as 12 disappeared some years ago and many are in poor condition. We have to use 12 old chairs from the Parish Hall to ensure the 60 seating capacity is possible.

Of course, we thank these benefactors enormously on behalf of the village.

What do we offer on our premises on a regular basis? In the Parish Hall we have a Café twice weekly, Carpet Bowls, Spanish classes, Karate, the Choral Society, Relax Kids, Table Tennis, Tyne Valley Youth Theatre, Pilates, Gym, Yoga, Photography, Badminton, Drama, Pot Luck lunches to which everyone is invited, Craft classes, WI, over 50s exercise classes, Bridge, emotional and physical healing and support groups. You can even have a monthly haircut.

In the Millennium Hall we offer Youth Theatre, Relax Kids, Table Tennis, Pre School, Beavers, Art classes, Happy Hounds dog classes and Nia dance classes. In addition to the above, where space is available, we take private bookings from weddings to funerals and lots of children's parties. It sounds hectic and it is, but remember that we are not running hotels – these are community buildings. We deal with a lot of wear and tear. People expect good value for money and reasonable prices but we need also to make our premises safe, comfortable, warm, welcoming, clean and tidy which can be expensive.

With regard to maintenance of our village halls, I thank our Caretaker/Manager, Suzanne Barker, so much for her conscientiousness in preparing our premises each morning for the busy day ahead. Suzanne is still working as Head Teacher at Riding Mill Pre School. When she applied for the job with the Trust, she expected to be leaving last July 2017 but kindly agreed to continue both positions until the Pre School moves to Broomhaugh First School in September 2018. She has had an extremely challenging year but worked tirelessly to treat everyone fairly and not let anyone down. I have worried that she has been doing too much but her heart will always be with the children she has taught so she has managed to balance both positions amazingly. Thank you Suzanne. Although the Trustees realise that working in our halls will not be as vocational as working with the children, we hope you know that everything you do will be appreciated and there are lots of ways we can develop our halls to offer you a fulfilling role. With your Food Hygiene, Health & Safety, Safeguarding certificates, we feel sure you will be able to bring our halls to recognised national Hallmark standards.

So looking ahead, we await notification of the cost of the new garage. If our projections are correct, we hope to be able to complete this work during the summer/early autumn. Once figures are known, we could go ahead in August, when our halls are slightly quieter, with the upgrading of the kitchens at both halls. We will shortly be holding a meeting with the designer and anyone is welcome to attend to offer their opinion. Already I am anxious in this respect. Some people have said we should raise the level of the floor in the Supper Room, kitchen and corridor to the same height as the main hall, thus losing the step down at each side, prior to the fitting of a new kitchen but this is a huge undertaking and extremely expensive as doors will need to be lifted etc. Some people have asked that the Supper Room becomes a larger kitchen and the kitchen is used for storage. Some people would hate to lose the Supper Room.

Quite frankly, it is impossible to please everyone so let us decide based on hall usage. There are very few occasions when the kitchen isn't large enough. We can't lose the Supper Room to provide a

larger kitchen based on one wedding a year when professional caterers are called in, or several large fundraising events when lots of volunteers are in the kitchen and it's all hands on deck.

The plan, so far as the Parish Hall is concerned, is to take the weight out of the cupboards and put the bulk of the capacity 160 crockery/cutlery items into the newly upgraded Store Room between the main hall and kitchen. This will be shelved out, equipped with washing machine and huge fridge/freezer, replastered and redecorated with new flooring. New units, cooking range, worktops etc will refresh the kitchen and be health, hygiene and safety friendly. The new kitchen in the Millennium Hall is an easier job but new units and a double sink will certainly improve conditions there.

If there is any money left in the pot, we will redecorate as much as possible of both halls, leaving a good working balance in the current account for emergencies and to start the next financial year.

We need to be looking for new bookings to take the place of the Pre School in the Millennium Hall as this hall has barely broken even for many years. Please spread the word wherever you can and give them my name.

Later in the year, we need to appoint new Officers as Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary. Rosie has held office for almost 20 years and me a mere 13 years. I can't thank Rosie enough for supporting me so long when she has been intending to pass on her books each AGM. Her records have been exemplary but the busier the halls, the larger the number of entries so it's time for her to enjoy a long overdue retirement.

As far as I am concerned, I know that there are people in the village with more vision and expertise than me. Please let me know if you would be interested in hearing more about these voluntary roles. To start with, Rosie and I can help you as you learn more about the importance of our community buildings in the village. With Suzanne maintaining our premises, a new team can be established. Many hands will make lighter work. Put your name *forward* and help us move on.

Now the thank yous.

Firstly, can I thank the Parish Councillors and Councillor Anne Dale for supporting the work of the Trustees and for your generous donation from the precept and Community Chest every year. We hope you know that we use your money wisely. Can I also take this opportunity of thanking you for appointing Catherine Harrison so many years ago. Her work is meticulous, always discreet, diplomatic and helpful and very few people know how much she achieves behind the scenes. She is your hidden treasure and a gift to our village.

I also can't emphasise enough the importance of the volunteers in our village. They are amazing and selfless people. The Café volunteers, the gardening volunteers, the fundraisers and supporters of our events and clubs. You make Riding Mill the popular village it is and are the reason why we are proud to live here.

In response, thanks were recorded to Mr & Mrs Pryor for the enormous amount of work they do on behalf of the Village Hall Trust and for the wider village.

6. County Councillor's Report, Cllr. Anne Dale

I was honoured and delighted to be elected to represent you again on the County Council last May. Working together for the benefit of the community is so important to me and I work with the Parish Council, the school and other partners to take forward new projects for the village and manage issues when they arise. Thank you all for your help and support over the last 10 years, it is very much appreciated.

The following is a brief annual review for 2017-2018. I have kept the information to items which are relevant to you in the village and also west of the County. Please do contact me if you would like more detailed information or would like to discuss anything further.

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL'S LOCAL PLAN 2010 TO 2030.

Since writing to you last year the County Council's Local Plan/Core Strategy which had been submitted to Government for inspection has been withdrawn by the Council and a Local Plan/Core strategy is being written. It is important that everyone does respond to the public consultation when it takes place especially relating to the preservation of the green belt in the village. Without a Local Plan in place the village is at present vulnerable to unwanted planning applications.

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PRESSURES.

Northumberland is the largest local authority by land with the lowest population. There were 10,300 children living in poverty last year per Government statistics and this number is growing and more and more children are requiring intervention by social services. In April 2017 there were 4,135 children in need. With the growing ageing population in the area there are further financial pressures on social services especially as in the west of the County there are areas of rural deprivation and there is a high cost of delivering these services to rural areas. Since 2012 and up to 2020 the Council's loss of **revenue** funding and underfunded financial pressures from Government equates to an **annual loss of £178.3million to our revenue budget**. Local authorities are legally not able to use **capital for revenue funding**. However like the late Tynedale District Council the County is able to invest capital to make revenue savings and it has a secure Treasury Management Strategy which is closely monitored and reviewed by the Council's external auditors.

The Council's external auditors, Ernst and Young (ey) audit statement to the Council for the year ending 2016/17 showed the Council to be in a **strong financial position**.

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL CAPITAL INVESTMENT IN HEXHAM AND PRUDHOE.

I am pleased that all the work started in 2013 by the Council has now come to fruition; the new Hexham House wedding venue has been opened, improvements have been made to the Queen's Hall and I work continuously to ensure that the County Council provides good service centres in Hexham and Prudhoe. The Council has been investing in the west since 2013 including the new bus station, the new fire station, investment in tourism such as the Sill amongst other projects. The issue about parking in Hexham is under review again.

The Local Tynedale Area Committee has given financial support for locally led projects through the Community Chest such as the Parish Hall and the new play equipment in the park.

The government is providing funding for road improvements on the A69 at Brockbushes.

WORKING WITH THE COUNTY COUNCIL.

I am one of seven independent councillors and we all vote individually and in very different ways. I challenge and work to improve on the policies of the Council rather than opposing good initiatives for political purposes. To this end I have always supported policies that will deliver for the residents I represent. I will continue to challenge and hold the Council to account.

THE FUTURE DELIVERY OF EDUCATION IN THE WEST OF NORTHUMBERLAND.

The delivery of education in the area has been under considerable pressure, discussion and debate over the last few months. The three tier system has worked well in Hexham and Prudhoe for many years where we have two of the best high schools in the North East along with many outstanding and good first and middle schools. It is very clear from the response to the Council's consultation on the future delivery of education in the west that the people want to retain the present three tier system. I would like to warmly thank everyone and especially Jen Stephenson and the school's

Governing Body who worked so hard to ensure that so many people responded to the consultation. They thoroughly scrutinized and challenged the consultation document in some detail and we are all delighted with the outcome.

I enjoy working with our first schools on the mapping project and more about this will unfold soon.

SUPERFAST BROADBAND.

I was delighted that the Council continue to support my broadband initiative and it is steadily being rolled out in the rural areas of the village. Please do let me know if you would like any further information.

LOCAL ITEMS OF INTEREST

Road safety measures and improvements.

The County Council highways department has finalised the design of the new road safety improvements for the village. Following consultation there will be a permanent 20 mph speed limit introduced outside the school beginning at the bottom of Whiteside Bank and finishing at the end of Church Lane to the west. There will be an 20 mph speed limit at the beginning and end of the school day on the A695 together with flashing warning and speed monitoring signs, road surface signs and a new gateway at the western entrance to the village. A 20mph permanent speed limit will also be introduced on Sandy Bank. Funding has also been made available for the design of the proposed pedestrian crossing at the junction of Millfield Road and the A695.

Highways Maintenance and environmental issues.

There has been ongoing issue with potholes over the area during the winter months and this continues. There is only one gulley cleaner for the whole of the western area which stretches from the Scottish borders to the Durham and Gateshead borders and the Council need to consider this situation and provide more resources to ensure that all gullies are kept clear to allow the water to get away. Please do let me know if you require further grit bins. There are certain criteria which have to be met before the Council will provide them but the Parish are able to provide them as well.

I am still working with the County Council Rights of Way officer on the present closure of the **ROW from Riding Mill to Corbridge** due to the landslip. Unfortunately the work will take some time as changes to Rights of Way are complicated and we need to work with all the landowners to make this succeed in reasonable time.

I am still working with the County Council and the Environment Agency on flood prevention and more information should be available soon from the Environment Agency.

New lighting in the village.

As you will be aware new LED lighting has been introduced into the village by the County Council. There have been some issues which have taken some time to resolve but hopefully the situation will improve in the near future.

I am very privileged to serve you and take up your concerns and help whenever I can. Please do let me know if you would like any further information on any topic or if you have any concerns by either ringing me on 01434 673326 or emailing me at Anne.Dale@Northumberland.gov.uk

7. Chairman's report, Cllr. Andy Dunhill

I would like to begin this report by thanking my fellow Councillors for their support, Anne Dale our County Councillor & most importantly Catherine Harrison, our Clerk, who tries to ensure that we all do what we should, when we should.

One of our main roles is to maintain & enhance the village primarily the PC's assets for the benefit of the community. This includes – Grass cutting; Upkeep of the many benches we own; The Play Park; Two road bridges; Two foot bridges; Six Bus Shelters; The Weir; The banks of the Marchburn adjacent to PC land; The Spinney; The Old Play Ground & a lot of trees.

We've had a busy year, one in which some of the initiatives we've been working on for a few years have come to fruition. Our main achievements during the year have been:

- *Bus Shelters* – Installation of two new ones. The first at the west end of the village opposite the Slaley road junction & the other opposite the Wellington.
- *Tree Work* – Stage 2 of the work detailed in the arboricultural report commissioned in 2016
- *Marchburn River bank* – Contract awarded to Tyne Rivers Trust to undertake stabilisation of the bank by the double tennis courts adopting an environmentally friendly technique.
- *Marchburn Lane Road Bridge* – Following a survey by Civil & Structural engineers contractors were instructed to undertake maintenance work to ensure the stability of the bridge. This has required a narrowing of it whilst allowing access for all vehicles. Most of the work done was underneath the main structure.
- *Weir Footbridge* – As part of the same contract some of the main timbers were replaced & stabilisation of the bridge supports.
- *Old Play Ground* – Repair of a central section of the tarmac including ground works following minor subsidence, leaking water & breakup of the tarmac surface.
- *The Nick* – Erection of a mirror in the field on the north side of the A695 to help traffic exiting the Nick.
- *Litter Pick* – This annual event was on Saturday morning 24 March. Thanks to the 21 volunteers who between them collected over 30 bags of rubbish mainly from around the village & towards the roundabout on the A68
- *WW1 Memorial Panel* – Work on the panel was completed and it has been placed in the Parish Hall. It is to be rededicated as part of the WW1 Commemorations in November
- *The Play Park* – The addition of new play facilities in the park including provision for older children & disabled access. The majority of the cost was covered by grant assistance secured by the Riding Mill Play & Regeneration Group

Other tasks include - Appointment of a gardener to look after the Edible Garden, the Planters on Marchburn Lane & the Gateway entrance in Broomhaugh; The grass cutting contract was put out to tender & re-awarded to the same contractor; Refresher Defibrillator training; Charitable awards through Section 137 contributions; The Newsletter. This is in addition to the usual administrative functions undertaken throughout the year

I would like to thank all those who helped on the Litter Pick Day; the walkers on the Footpaths Group; the members of the Regeneration Group plus, anyone I've forgotten.

The next year – there's lots to do.

- *Western Gateway* – We are working with the County to put in place a Gateway similar to the one at the east end of the village to help slow traffic entering the village
- *Pedestrian Crossing* – We submitted this to the County through the Local Transport Plan & it was approved in principle. Maybe we'll get one

- *The Spinney* – Plans have been drawn up in conjunction with the County to alter the entrance to make it safer. We hope to have this work done when the County puts in place the 20-mph speed limit along Church lane.
- *Mill Pond* – We're starting to look into the feasibility of creating this into a village pond that enhances the village rather than being something we all just walk past
- *Tree Work* – The final stage 3 work detailed in the arboricultural survey
- *Millfield Road Bridge* – Periodic inspection by Civil & Structural Engineers. The aim for the future is to bring both this & Marchburn Lane bridge into line on a rolling 5 year inspection & maintenance cycle.
- *Marchburn Lane Bridge Street Light* – Following consultation with residents we have secured agreement with the County Council for them to install one additional light to help residents walking in the area in the dark.
- *Old Play Ground* – Resurfacing of the tarmac where it has started to break up
- *The Weir* – Tyne Rivers Trust have recommended further work to aid the flow of the burn

We do have vacancies on the PC so would welcome more help. Please contact one of us if you'd like to see what it's all about & how much fun it can be.

8. Financial Statement

A draft financial statement for the year ending 31st March 2018 was presented. It was noted that the figures were unaudited as yet. The accounts would be available from 4th June until 13th July for public scrutiny and anyone wishing to see them should make an appointment via the Clerk.

9. Minor Matters

(i) World War One Commemorations

Geraldine Bruce kindly outlined plans to commemorate the end of World War One in November. A group of residents were coordinating a number of events including poppy displays at various locations around the village, art work in the Church and an exhibition in the Parish Hall. Geraldine was also preparing a map showing where known soldiers had lived in the village.

Residents could take part in a number of ways:

1. creating a tribute on the street where they live;
2. contributing artwork;
3. loaning memorabilia from the Great War for the exhibition.

Further details would appear in the Parish News later in the year.

On Remembrance Sunday, there would be the usual church service and laying of wreaths, followed by a procession via the poppy displays to the Parish Hall, where the restored memorial panel would be rededicated by the vicar.

(ii) New Football team for Riding Mill

Mark Robinson explained how he had recently moved to the village and, after discovering that there was no football team, had decided to start a Sunday morning league team (Mark has been actively involved in football in the Tyne Valley since childhood). Working with the Sports Club, he had formed the Riding Mill Football Club and gained sponsorship from Fentimans. The Club had gained affiliation with the FA and was currently waiting to be adopted into the Hexham league.

Mark was congratulated for his initiative by all present and wished success. It was suggested that, should he need additional sponsorship, he should speak to Dr Trapp at Osbit Power.

Cllr. Dunhill closed the meeting at 9.40 pm and thanked all those who had participated.