

# Broomhaugh and Riding Parish Council



## Minutes of the annual Parish Meeting

Monday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2021, 7.15 pm, held on Zoom

**Present:** Cllr. Christine Howe (Chair), Cllr. Andy Dunhill, Cllr. David McKenzie, Cllr. Eileen Carew, Cllr. Brian Singer, Cllr. Pam Bridges, Cllr. David Irwin, Cllr. Jill Mills, County Councillor Anne Dale, Mike Smith (Chair of the Village Hall Trust) and Stephen Lightley.

In attendance:

Mrs Catherine Harrison – Parish Clerk

---

### 1. Apologies

Ms Jennifer Ainsley, Executive Headteacher, Corbridge & Broomhaugh First Schools.

2. **Minutes of the 2019 annual Parish Meeting**, which had been displayed on the ridingmill.org website in draft form since June 2019, were agreed to be a true record. It was noted that there had been no annual Parish Meeting in May 2020 due to the Covid pandemic.

### 3. Matters arising from the previous Minutes

There were no matters arising although it was noted that the Minutes alluded to the pedestrian crossing being installed in autumn 2019. This work was still outstanding..

### 4. Broomhaugh CE First School Report, Ms Jennifer Ainsley, Headteacher

*Written report received and noted with thanks.*

## SCHOOL INFORMATION 2021

Below is the most recent school information for your information:

<b>Current number on roll</b>	70	<b>% of SEND pupils (Special Education Need / disability)</b>	12%
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4-9	<b>% of disadvantaged pupils</b>	6%

Our annual report this year reports on a year like no other, but as Executive Headteacher of Broomhaugh and Corbridge First Schools I continue to be proud to work with a team of fully dedicated teachers and governors to ensure the best education and social experiences for our children, enabling them to flourish and be self-confident, proud members of their community. This has never been truer than over the past 18 months as we have engaged in a blend of in-school learning as well as remote and blended learning for our children and their families. We are dedicated and committed to seeing our school thrive.

We welcomed a more 'normal' Autumn term and both embraced and enjoyed having all children back in school where they belong. We were thrilled with how well our families had juggled their working commitments to continue to support us in providing an excellent, broad curriculum, even in

challenging times. Unfortunately, another lockdown in January meant we had to go back to managing the various situations for key workers and families at home but again, we are so proud of staff, children and their families for all they have done. This time around we were able to be much more prepared and engagement levels were very high through our online Google Classroom provision.

Our staff team have been, and continue to be, fantastic and have continually adapted to the changing circumstances, as have we all and we are very proud of the provision our children have continued to receive. We truly hope that the rest of this academic year and beyond will continue to be stable, with school fully open allowing the children to flourish and take their place as the heart of the school.

We are currently in the process of consulting on making our soft federation arrangement of shared leadership formal, through forming a hard federation with Corbridge CofE First School. We have seen so many positive benefits in working together and know that this has enabled us to be stronger. We look forward to continuing this positive relationship moving forwards.

#### **STAFFING UPDATES**

In July 2020 we said goodbye and a big thank you to Mrs Amanda Yates from our teaching team. She served at Broomhaugh CE First School for 16 years and has touched the lives of many children and their families as a fantastic class teacher. She is especially remembered for her singing and acting and we thank her for the impact she had on many children and families during her time at BFS.

In September 2021 our lovely Mrs Reed will begin her maternity leave as her new baby is due early in autumn term. We wish her well and send our congratulations.

In September 2021 we will also be welcoming a new Executive Deputy Head Teacher who will be appointed in the coming weeks. Mrs Sarah Gray will be leaving us at the end of the summer term as she is moving to Dubai with her family to begin a new chapter of their lives. There is no question her skills and amazing presence will be a huge miss in school as she has been a driving force in so many accomplishments for our school over the last two years. We cannot thank her enough for all she has done and will continue to achieve over this final summer we have together. We wish her all the best for her new adventure overseas.

#### **KEY DEVELOPMENTS**

The Shared Leadership of Broomhaugh and Corbridge Church of England First Schools has now been in place for 2 years. Children from both schools continue to benefit through additional experiences and shared resources. This year has seen both schools invest in staff development through training staff as Forest School leaders and the organisation of character education through Commando Joe's. We have also implemented new English resources and planning support which re-focuses our teaching on the power and love of reading. All feedback so far is extremely positive and will have a direct, positive impact for all pupils. We are also thrilled that sports clubs have been able to start back up and to try and compensate a little for what our children have missed, we have provided the opportunity for every child in school to access a free extra-curricular club. We continue to have specialist teaching through Sports specialists, music specialist, ICT technician support. We have also invested further in to our computing resources with the purchase of a half class set of laptops and iPads. The financial savings resulting from the shared leadership and joint procurement have also allowed us to focus the little money we have directly to areas which have clear benefit for our children. Staff continue to benefit from working together and sharing skills across the schools and staff professional development opportunities are enabling us to grow and flourish.

We strive every day to follow God's guidance on our journey of growth and dedication to being the best we can be.

*Councillors noted that the number of SEND children had risen to 12% of the school roll which was a large increase from the previous report. It was reported that the criteria had been extended and would therefore identify more pupils.*

## 5. **Village Hall Trust Report, Mike Smith, Chairperson**

*Written report received and noted with thanks.*

Life during lockdown has been extremely frustrating for everyone connected with the VHT.

We have not been able to have any activities in either hall, but we are looking forward with confidence to the relaxing of the rules on 17 May and then in June so that we can start again to provide services and meeting places for the village community.

This does not mean that the Trust has been idle.

We have signed up to the 2021 Village Halls Domesday Book and are looking to add our halls to the Northumberland Village Halls Portal website. This will link to the profile we already have with our own website, allowing the general public to access information about our halls and their facilities online.

At the Parish Hall, essential tree felling and a general tidy up at the site have been completed and the Supper Room and the stage front in the hall have been 'spruced up'.

The electrical and fire checks in both halls have been carried out in accordance with insurance requirements and outside, the Garden Invaders continue to maintain the environs of the Halls and we are extremely grateful for their efforts.

At the Millennium Hall, in March this year an independent, professional survey was undertaken on the oak tree that sits behind the building. The conclusion of the report was that, erring on the side of caution, the tree should be 'removed forthwith'. This confirmed the professional advice we had twice received in April and August 2020.

The work to the tree was arranged for 3 April but, as a result of an objection to this essential work to safeguard life and buildings, we had to postpone the operation. This came at some cost to the VHT, as we had to pay the workmen who came and were idle for three hours.

Now a lawyer has been engaged by the objector, which will mean further expense is likely before the failing tree is safely dealt with.

This VHT report to the annual parish meeting deals with this matter at some length in order to set the record straight in the light of so many rumours circulating in the Village.

On a more positive note, thanks to Suzanne and Ian Barker, Judy Wilthew, Philip Latham and Colin Craig-Gilby for their ideas, support and tireless work and to Alan and Val Thompson and the rest of the Garden Invaders for their brilliant efforts.

We would also like to thank the Parish Council and Northumberland County Council for their financial support over the past twelve months. We are sincerely grateful.

## 6. **St James's Church Report, David McKenzie, Church Warden**

*Written report received and noted with thanks.*

When we locked our doors at the beginning of the pandemic, in common with every other church, we were looking at an uncertain path ahead. When would we meet again to worship? When could we meet face to face? How could we best support those in the community who were most vulnerable? There was much discussion behind the scenes and a lot of support offered by the Diocese of Newcastle and by the National Church of England.

The period between the first lockdown and summer was, as we all know, difficult. However, by August, by when there was a loosening of restrictions – perhaps unwisely as it turned out – we were able to offer live worship in the fresh air of our new graveyard. The pure joy and relief of being back together face to face was palpable. By early November, our indoor services were halted again, though now we embraced the technology

offered by Zoom and continued to offer online worship until early December, when we again returned to the church building for the Christmas period. From January we continued with Zoom services as the building again closed, reopening again on Easter Sunday. We hope that this is now the pattern for the future, with our Wednesday services continuing on line, certainly in the medium term.

The continuity of worship has only been possible because of the tireless efforts of our Lay Minister, Gwyn McKenzie, who has planned and led the majority of services in this period, but we are also most grateful to the visiting priests who have, whenever possible, presided at our Eucharist services. We have been delighted to welcome our friends from Riding Mill Methodist Church who have joined us – and continue to join us - for services on both Sundays and Wednesdays whilst their building has remained closed – for the time being. It is particularly lovely to welcome Revd Marie Beard, our Methodist minister, to lead our worship whenever her diary allows.

It is very pleasing to note that our attendance figures have been very much the same as before the pandemic struck and are now set to rise as 'new normality' approaches in June.

It will be two years on June 9th since Revd Lesley Chapman presided over her last service in Riding Mill. This intervening period has been very productive for our church as the work of our Vision Group, launched by Revd Chapman in 2018, has developed and progressed. The PCC has continued this work and is now in a position to report the findings and first recommendations to the Annual Parochial Church Meeting on May 30th.

The Group was tasked with revisiting the relationship between St James's Church and the community it serves both now and in years to come. Many people have been consulted during this process, both within the congregation and within the community in general. The findings make really interesting reading and will inevitably help shape what we do and how we do it in future. We are most grateful to all those who have contributed to the Vision in any way.

Part of the responsibility of a Christian community is to help care for God's creation. St James's Church takes this commitment increasingly seriously. We are now in the process of working towards being an Ecochurch, for which registration as such will mean meeting stringent requirements. These can be visited on our website. Our Green Group has some really interesting ideas. If you would like to join, please just ask!

As part of our commitment to the environment, we are in the process of redeveloping our new graveyard, which I am sure has not evaded anyone's attention! We have removed the bank of conifers bordering the west perimeter of the graveyard after taking professional advice. These trees were potentially dangerous in the wrong weather conditions and posed a hazard to the school building and of course to the children too. We have removed decades of unusable grave spoil (actually a mere 65 tons of it!) along the eastern perimeter. This area is now being converted into a Quiet Space which will link directly into the Spinney and be available for use by anyone in the village seeking somewhere to reflect, to pray or just to be. In the autumn we will be planting eco-friendly native small trees and shrubs around the perimeter, along with wild-life friendly planting in the planters. Because of the inherent dangers posed by graveyards, children will only be allowed to use the Space if accompanied by an adult. The village has no need for a second play park!

The new Quiet Space will also be used for outdoor worship, including as part of the licencing of our new priest, Revd Diana Johnson, who will be joining us officially from mid-July. Revd Johnson will find a very warm welcome in Riding Mill as she relocates from Cambridgeshire. We know that Revd Diana will be a blessing not simply to the St James's Church congregation, but to the whole community of Riding Mill.

There are exciting times ahead for our village church, which offers a new vision for all and a new priest to guide and walk with us in what is to come. Anyone is welcome to join the journey.....

## 7. County Councillor's Report, Cllr. Anne Dale

*Written report received and noted with thanks.*

Writing my Annual Report this year has been hard. This past year saw a dramatic change to our everyday lives when the COVID-19 pandemic hit our country. From March 23<sup>rd</sup> the village, like the rest of the country, went into lockdown and everything apart from the delivery of essential services came to a halt. The last year has been difficult for everyone and COVID 19 will have affected us all in many and different ways. I would like to thank those who have helped in the community during these difficult times and especially Suzanne, Janet and Catherine and all of you who have looked after neighbours, friends, relations and those in need.

I have missed seeing you during these times but keeping safe has been so important to all of us. It has therefore been difficult to keep you all informed of everything that is going on in the village, however my Annual Report is always an opportunity to keep you up to date. Working together for the benefit of the community is so important 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.

The following is a brief update.

### **HIGHWAYS AND FOOTPATHS.**

The introduction of the speed reduction measures outside the school on Church Lane has at last been finished and new white lines are in place and old ones repainted. The safety measures around the entrance to the Spinney are also now complete. The one outstanding scheme is the installation of the new pedestrian crossing and I am waiting to hear from the Council with a date. I am always pleased that the Parish Council and residents are keen to be involved with consultation and often good ideas are put forward. The gateways at the east entrance of the village are often quoted as an excellent scheme. The County Council is having to manage their work whilst the utilities continue with their works, whether Northern Gas, NWL or Comex the work and the traffic lights seem endless. The Council's Streetworks Department are always proactive and helpful and will monitor any problem and deal with them when necessary.

Signage in the village is very important and once all the highways work has taken place I will work with the Parish Council to review the signage and remove any unnecessary signs and the old speed activated signs if they are no longer in use.

Works continues with the County Council Rights of Way officer on the ongoing closure of the Right of Way (ROW) from Riding Mill to Corbridge due to the landslip some years' ago. Unfortunately, this type of work does take a considerable amount of time as it involves working with different landowners and there are legal requirements to meet too. Work will continue with the County Council ROW officer to address any concerns raised about footpaths in the area.

There is a gap in the continuous footpath on the A695 between Riding Mill and Stocksfield and the County Council has agreed to undertake some work in this area.

There are various parking issues in the village which I will begin to address once all restrictions are lifted. I continue to monitor highways maintenance issues including flooding, gullies and potholes and ensure that the appropriate work is undertaken.

### **DEVELOPMENT CONTROL (PLANNING) AND THE DRAFT LOCAL PLAN**

The County Council has still no Local Plan in place and are awaiting the outcome from the Inspector. I have objected to the proposals put forward by Government in their two White papers on the future of planning. The proposal that the Government will decide where large housing development should take place is undemocratic taking all powers away from the Local planning Authority and

Parish Councils and residents will be given little say into how their village develops. I was pleased to be able to help the Chair of the Parish Council Christine Howe to start the Parish Neighbourhood Plan, it is an essential tool for the future development of the village. The planning application for the Fold House was turned down by the County Council and I would like to thank everyone who took so much time to write in with very sound and well researched reasons for refusal.

The new Hexham High School is to be welcomed and all present and future students will be able to enjoy and appreciate their new working environment. I continue to work with our local schools and they have all had the opportunity to take part in tree planting. Thank you also to the teachers who have over the past year worked hard to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the students in their care. I know that everyone will continue to help and support them to ensure that everyone remains safe now restrictions are being lifted.

#### **NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL.**

The County Council now holds meeting virtually through Zoom and these can be viewed on their You Tube site. The Council officers are all working from home and I hold regular update meetings with them. The Council staff has remained resilient throughout and locally the officers continue to work on highways maintenance, refuse collection, public protection (including rat infestation), planning applications and enforcement. The weather conditions have recently caused a lot of problems on the highways. The Council as reported in the press is going through difficult times and high level investigations are ongoing. It is so important that everyone works together for the benefit of the residents of the county. I address all COVID-19 related issues in confidence and the workload is very broad ranging from all the funding streams available to help with the elderly, etc.

#### **MEMBERS SMALL SCHEME ALLOWANCE**

**Sports Pavilion.** The proposed alterations to the pavilion are moving forward. Everyone has been working so hard together to take forward the project, apply for funding and managing planning matters. Thanks must go to everyone who has had an input but especially Kathie Keady and Christine Howe and members of the sports clubs. I was pleased to be able to help with a grant of £6,000 from my Members' Small Scheme Allowance. A further grant of £2,000 out of my members scheme allowance was given to the **Riding Mill Heritage Group History Trail** to provide the Boards for the Village History Trail, and further funding provided to the school and pre-school for the environment and outside projects.

Although restrictions have meant that groups were unable to meet up it has been amazing what can take place with the use of ZOOM, email and the telephone. The Parish Council meetings are so helpful especially when we all have the opportunity to work together and the residents have an opportunity to join in if they wish. I do think that this will continue into the foreseeable future. Thank you also to all the Parish Councillors who are always so proactive and helpful to work with and to the Clerk, Catherine who is always there to help and advise.

I am so looking forward to the time when all restrictions are lifted and normal life can resume. With the role out of the vaccination I hope that we can look forward to a brighter spring and summer but in the meantime, I hope that you all keep safe and well and I look forward to seeing you soon.

I hope that I have been able to cover the important issues that have occurred over the last year and if you would like any further information on any topic, also if you have any issues you would like to raise, please either email at [Anne.Dale@Northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:Anne.Dale@Northumberland.gov.uk). or telephone me on 01434 673326.

---

*Cllr. Dale updated those present with the news that she had been advised that the order for the pedestrian crossing was to be placed in May 2021 and installation should follow shortly thereafter.*

## 8. Chairman's report, Cllr. Christine Howe

*Written report received and noted with thanks.*

Since I took over last year in order to allow Andy to spend more time in France, a lot has happened. Unfortunately, Andy's optimism about a restart after the first lockdown was short lived.

The good work started by Catherine, the Parish Clerk and Suzanne at the Parish Hall continues and will hopefully become less of a burden shortly. Thanks go to everyone who has helped make the time more bearable, from the village shop to the litter pickers.

Let's keep this village vibe going!

Parish meetings held on zoom tended to be a little shorter but we have still managed to achieve a lot this year:

**Neighbourhood plan:** Our desire to have a say in our development resulted in a survey of the village from what we liked about our village to what was disliked about the village. A 54% response was excellent and again thanks to all who responded.

We have now set up sub groups to provide evidence based aims to improve the village and translate these into planning policies which will accompany the Local Plan. We will be tendering for a planning consultant shortly.

**Sports Club:** Having raised funds for the rear extension to accommodate much needed toilets with the help of Active Northumberland, Anne Dale's members fund,

the cricket club and our own funds, we unexpectedly received funding from the Football Association via our team to commit to further extensions to provide additional changing space and showers.

The cricket club have also provided nets, scoreboard and picnic tables to enhance their facilities. Their ECB backed All Stars children's taster cricket will start on 7<sup>th</sup> May and will be a welcome addition to the village.

**Mill Pond:** Tyne Rivers Trust finalised their report on the Mill Pond and leat restoration project and we opted to take the project forward step by step. Tests were carried out to prove the land was not contaminated. We then arranged for the Tyne Rivers Trust volunteers to carry out some clearing of the leat and pond area, in order to establish whether or not a viable pond would naturally occur. This work was put off when we went into lockdown and is currently timetabled for later this year. Inevitably this has overlapped with our own tree surveys which have identified several trees dying and/or suffering from ash dieback and this work is ongoing.

**Village Trail:** The regeneration sub group have been continuing to fine tune the map of sites and buildings of interest in the village, and have reached the stage where we can get a specialist company on board to put together the actual signs. We are proposing 2 locations- the Parish Hall and the Old Playground which will include leaflets with further information about each location. Planning permission is currently being sought and the signs will be funded via Anne Dale's member's fund.

**Spinney:** The local authority has finally implemented the traffic calming measures around the school access; and we have installed a gate to the Spinney itself to comply with H&S rules for when children are visiting. The church intends to install a gate access in the NE corner to link with the new proposed peace garden.

**Traffic calming:** The, long anticipated, pedestrian crossing is scheduled to be installed in May close to the Wellington where schoolchildren are dropped off by the school bus.

It is hoped that this will have a further traffic calming effect.

**Tree planting:** By the time you read this, the parish clerk will have acquired 105 trees (Hazel, Crab Apple, Birch and Willow) from The Woodland Trust for planting around the village. Many will go to replace those lost in the Marchburn woods. Thanks go to the scouts and others who have volunteered to help with the planting.

Although a little late in the year to be planting (the delivery was delayed) we are hopeful the latest rainfall will help, and we will be monitoring the trees.

Regulations permitting, we will be back to normal meetings shortly.

Thank you all for your support throughout the year.

**9. Financial Statement**

The unaudited financial statement for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 was received and noted.

[NB: The PC accounts would be available from 7<sup>th</sup> June until 16<sup>th</sup> July for public scrutiny and anyone wishing to view them could make an appointment via the Clerk].

**10. Minor Matters**

There were no matters to note.

*Cllr. Howe closed the meeting at 7.27 pm.*

Draft