



Broomhaugh & Riding Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held in the Parish Hall, Millfield Road, on Monday 12th July 2021.

Councillors present:

Cllr. Christine Howe (Chair)
Cllr. Pam Bridges
Cllr. Brian Singer
Cllr. David Irwin

Cllr. Andy Dunhill (attended via Zoom)
Cllr. Stephen Lightley
Cllr. Eileen Carew
Cllr. David McKenzie

In attendance:

County Councillor Anne Dale (until Minute 21/68)
Mrs Catherine Harrison – Parish Clerk
6 members of the public were present.

Cllr. Howe opened the meeting at 7.55 pm.

21/58 Apologies for Absence

Cllr. Mills.

21/59 Declaration of Interests

Cllr. Dunhill declared an interest in Item 9 – Sports Club, as he was a member.

21/60 Approval of the minutes of the meeting of 10th May 2021

It was agreed that the minutes of the Council meeting were a true record and duly signed off by Cllr. Howe (Proposed Cllr. Howe, seconded Cllr. Irwin).

21/61 Matters Arising

- (i) *Minute 21/45(i) – car parking on grassed areas.* Cllr. Dale was dealing with the issue and had written to Karbon Homes. One of the mitigating reasons for the problem was cars parking across a dropped kerb creating access issues. Cllr. Dale would explore whether to install additional road markings or a disabled parking bay. Councillors also noted that cars were parking near the speed camera and Cllr. Dale agreed to refer the complaint to the enforcement team;

ACTION: ADa
- (ii) *Minute 21/45(vi) – Survey of trees.* Report awaited. This matter was deferred to a future meeting;
- (iii) *Minute 21/46 – Maintenance of stiles.* Cllr. Dale reported that the land agent for the Allendale Estates had agreed to deal with the stiles on the estate which were in a poor state of repair. It was also hoped that the stiles would be replaced with gates which would improve access.
- (iv) *Minute 21/50 – Heritage Trail.* The Clerk reported that a planning application had been submitted to allow for the installation of two heritage trail signs. The outcome of the application should be known shortly.

21/62 County Councillor Report

Cllr. Dale reported on the following issues:

- (i) *Parking at Broomhaugh.* Cllr. Dale was hopeful that Northern Gas Networks had finished the pipe renewal in the village although she was waiting for confirmation. Once she was sure the roadworks had finished she would work with residents to look at the parking issues in Broomhaugh;
- (ii) *Pedestrian Crossing:* Cllr. Dale noted that this work had been delayed because of the roadworks. She had now been given a date for its installation in September;
- (iii) *Ash tree dieback:* Cllr. Dale had arranged for an officer to view problem trees in the village which were on County Council land (Church Lane and Whiteside Bank);
- (iv) *Thompson's proposed quarry at Anick:* Cllr. Dale had spoken to the relevant officer at the County Council who had confirmed that should the proposed quarry go ahead, vehicles would not be routed through Riding Mill but via the A69;
- (v) *Land opposite the Old Tavern:* Cllr. Dale noted that she had received complaints about the land. She acknowledged that it was unsightly but as it was secure and not causing a highways issue, there was nothing which could be done in terms of enforcement;
- (vi) *Covid-19:* Cllr. Dale reported that this ward was now classified as a high risk area which she felt was due to the rapid spread of Covid through many of the local schools. She advised local residents to maintain social distancing to stay safe.

21/63 **Stability of bankside in Marchburn Woods**

The Clerk reported that a local resident had reported a landslip near his home on land belonging to the PC. The landslip had caused earth to be washed away from under the root structure of two large multi-stemmed beech trees. The land had been previously surveyed by a Geotech engineer so the Clerk had sent him photos and he advised that the trees should be pollarded low to the ground before there was any further land movement. This work had been arranged with the tree surgeon and would be undertaken shortly. The Clerk noted that there were a number of springs on the hillside also, drainage channels had been dug by residents living in nearby properties. One channel was open and it had been suggested that a drainage pipe should be installed and the channel back-filled. It was agreed to monitor the hillside and take further advice if necessary.

The Clerk reported that the Tyne Rivers Trust, the Geotech engineer and the Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Team at the County Council, had all confirmed that the process occurring on the hillside was natural erosion and that there was very little which could be done about it other than monitoring and eliminating potential risk e.g. restricting access if the problem worsened.

21/64 **Neighbourhood Plan**

Cllr. Howe reported that there was now a steering group to oversee the work. The group included the leader from each of the subgroups along with herself and Cllr Irwin. The elected chair was Matthew Warner.

The first task of the group had been to identify a planning consultant to work with the village. Three consultants were selected to tender following recommendations made by the local authority Neighbourhood planning team and others. The steering group evaluated the tenders on an agreed scoring system, and Jo-Anne Garrick was chosen. This decision had been endorsed by the parish councillors via email but Cllr. Howe now asked for the decision to be ratified at the meeting. She therefore proposed that Jo-Anne Garrick be appointed to assist with the neighbourhood plan. This was seconded by Cllr. Bridges and unanimously agreed.

A grant to help fund the work had been submitted to Locality and the parish council had been successful in securing a sum of just over £9000. The grant would help fund community engagement/exhibitions and the work of the specialist planning consultant to put together the policies that are legally required and any technical support. There was also the intention to carry out a housing needs assessment.

The first meeting with the consultant would take place on 19th July. It was hoped that the steering group would gain advice on how to progress the ideas each sub-group had put forward so far.

Cllr. Howe also reported that she hoped the first community engagement event would be held in September, once the Housing Needs Assessment had been completed.

21/65 **Climate Change**

Cllr. Irwin summarised a report he had circulated which outlined the current energy usage by residents and ideas for how it could be reduced e.g. new houses needed to be much more energy efficient than current housing stock, owners of older housing should be encouraged to explore all possible means of improving energy efficiency with a focus on reducing gas consumption, and finally, the village should investigate the scope for developing community generation facilities. Living close to the Tyne, he suggested a project to install a hydro-electric generator adjacent to the pumping station should be explored.

To progress this idea, Cllr. Irwin asked for the endorsement of the parish council so that he could enter into discussions with the Environment Agency. He acknowledged that there would be lots of constraints to overcome but he felt that the project had potential. It was also noted that a similar scheme at Hexham which had previously been rejected was now being reviewed.

He also proposed that the parish council agree to sign up to the County Council's Climate Action Plan.

These proposals were seconded by Cllr. McKenzie and unanimously agreed. Cllr. Howe asked that some consideration was given to wind power within the report simply for completeness even if it was not practical. Councillors were very supportive of the plans outlined and Cllr. Irwin was thanked for his efforts.

ACTION: DI

21/66 **Sports Club**

Cllr. Howe confirmed that Phase 1 work had been completed to allow the use of the new toilets (excluding the external cladding) and the changing room extensions would be finished hopefully in the next four weeks. The scheme was well behind the target programme and the builder had apologised for taking on too much work, which along with the current material shortages and staff Covid problems had been the main problems.

During the works, the parish council had been contacted by Osbit asking which drains the pavilion would be connected to. It had been assumed that the existing manhole was connected to the mains, but older villagers recalled a septic tank. This had now been discovered well below the existing ground level and to all intents and purposes covered up, with no record of its existence. The tank should be capable of taking all the waste from the new toilets, sinks, and showers, but this had to be verified. It had therefore been agreed that the tank would be emptied and jetted to ensure the soakaway performed as it should. The local firm carrying out the work would also provide a report on the state of the tank and a price to lift the inspection cover to ground level.

The Clerk confirmed that these additional expenses would be met from the maintenance budget rather than from capital expenditure. She also confirmed that the project was running close to budget with only some minor additional expenditure relating to asbestos removal. If the septic tank was found to be unsuitable then the parish council would need to raise additional funds to connect the drains to the mains.

Yearly grant: The Clerk confirmed that she had not received a copy of the club's accounts for last year although the document was expected imminently. Once received, it would be circulated to councillors.

ACTION: CLERK

Alcohol licence: The parish council was aware that the Club was serving alcohol at social events at the pavilion. It was suggested that the club obtain legal advice to ensure that they were not breaching licencing requirements. Long term, the parish council would prefer the Club to apply for a licence and would support them in such an application. The Clerk was asked to write to the Club.

ACTION: CLERK

21/67 **Spinney Improvements**

Further to the last meeting (Minute 21/54(iii)), a paper was received outlining the costs for the proposed improvement works to the Spinney. Cllr. McKenzie explained that he felt that the Spinney was becoming overgrown and would support the removal of some of the holly trees and self-seeded saplings. He also felt that some improvements to the paths by the entrances were needed to stop it becoming muddy and ensuring it was easily accessible. The costs outlined were within the budget agreed for the project so councillors agreed to accept the proposals (proposed Cllr. Howe, seconded Cllr. Bridges).

ACTION: CLERK

21/68 Review of current Policy Documents

The following policy documents were received and reviewed.

- the Business Continuity Plan
- the Financial Risk Assessment including supplementary paper

The Clerk explained that, as requested, she had updated the Business Continuity Plan to include emergency numbers should there be a catastrophic failure of one of the bridges. She had also updated the procedures to be followed for any major incident on PC land. These possible events were reflected in the Financial Risk Assessment which had also been updated. The supplementary paper was noted. It was agreed to accept the new policy documents (proposed Cllr. Howe, seconded Cllr. Irwin). Safeguards to ensure that grant conditions were met (including by 3rd parties) would be deferred to a meeting at which Cllr. Mills could be present.

ACTION: CLERK/JM

21/69 Consultations

It was noted that the County Council was consulting on proposed modifications to the Northumberland Local Plan (<https://northumberland-consult.objective.co.uk/portal/planning/localplan/main-mods>). Responses were required by Wednesday 4th August. It was agreed that the planning sub-group would review the document and decide if a response was necessary.

ACTION: PLANNING SUB-GROUP

21/70 Finance

i) Monthly accounts

The following payments were authorised (Proposed Cllr. Howe, seconded Cllr. Irwin):

Down to Earth – plants for containers	£135.86
JR Robson – glass for bus shelter	£356.40 (VAT £59.40)
In Architecture – architect fees – sports pavilion	£1800 (VAT £300.00)
Office Depot – ink cartridge	£29.52 (VAT £4.92)
Seymour Gardens & Tree – maintenance of edible garden	£34.00
Sandy Bank Residents' Association – contribution to Nick Insurance	£209.15
Nicholson Construction – Inv. 3 sports Pavilion	£7200.00 (VAT £1200.00)
R & J McGlen – reimbursement for broken windscreen	£75.00
NCC – planning fee	£231.00
T Bell Horticultural Services – grass cutting	£440.00
ME Stewart /Neetfleet – repairs and materials	£135.00
St James PCC – additional pages in Parish News	£90.00
Christine Howe – reimbursement of equipment to remove asbestos dust	£92.47
Catherine Harrison – May salary + home allowance	£514.29
RM Village Hall Trust – yearly grant	£3000.00
Yearly transfer to Bridges Fund	£3100.00
EuroPC – laptop for Clerk	£419.99 (VAT £70.00)
Unity Trust Bank – quarterly bank charges	£18.00
Nicholson Construction – Inv 4 sports pavilion	£3,720.00 (VAT £620)
The Play Inspection Company – yearly play inspection	£81.00 (VAT £13.50)
David Ballantyne – tree work	£800.00
Martin Stewart/Neetfleet – additional maintenance	£120.00
J R Robson – new glass for bus shelter	£356.40 (VAT £59.40)
Catherine Harrison – June salary + home allowance	£514.29
Catherine Harrison – reimbursement of expenses (Zoom subscription 2 x £14.39, Postage £7.02, Ink cartridges £56.67, Envelopes £4.99, NALC training courses 3 x £5, Case for laptop £14.99, Office software £30.00, CCTV sticker £2.72)	£160.17 (vat £18.04)
Standing Orders/Direct Debits:	
Martin Stewart/Neetfleet – monthly handyman payment (June)	£160.00
Martin Stewart/Neetfleet – monthly handyman payment (July)	£160.00

The following receipts were noted:

Triodos - quarterly interest	£1.29
Football Foundation – part payment of Sports Pavilion grants	£13,409.00
Northumberland County Council – payment for use of Old Playground	£50.00
RM Tennis Club – Yearly rent	£25.00

RM Sports Club – Yearly rent	£25.00
Groundworks – grant for Neighbourhood Plan	£9004.00

(ii) *Budget report*

The budget report was received and accepted (proposed Cllr. Howe, seconded Cllr. Bridges). No particular issues were identified although the capital expenditure budget was misleading as most of these funds had been taken from the Reserves. The Clerk would liaise with Cllr. Lightley to explore whether there was a better way to present this data.

ACTION: SL/CLERK

21/71 **General Village Maintenance**

- (i) *Handyman* - the Clerk reported that the handyman had re-stained the village seats including the one on the road to Broomley, cut back vegetation in the Play Park and inspected the equipment, repaired the fence at Broomhaugh, swept footpaths, repaired a broken seat, cleaned the gutters at the bus stops and cut back foliage in numerous locations;
- (ii) *Drains* – poor drainage remained a problem throughout the village. After heavy rain, stones and grit were washed up on footpaths causing trip hazards. The County Council had cleared the drains nearest the old graveyard but as one was just a sink hole it would quickly refill and the problem would return. Long term the parish council would like to see repairs made to the drainage network in the village.
- (iii) *Maintenance of Trees* - the Clerk reported that the tree surgeon had begun to remove some of the badly affected ash trees. The trees had been difficult to climb as the disease had made them very brittle. The trees were being prioritised but there was a lot of work to be done over the next few years. All the trees being removed were close to footpaths or roads. Trees in the central area of the wood would be left;
- (iv) *Play park* – the annual inspection report was received and noted. No major issues had been identified and the handyman would deal with some of the minor work such as tightening fixings and trimming vegetation. A priority in the next few years would be to start raising funds for the replacement of the older pieces of equipment which were going to become costly as they needed more frequent repair;
- (v) *Damage to bus shelter* – it was noted that one of the panes in a bus shelter had been smashed for a second time. The police had been informed but as no one had seen the incident and no CCTV footage was available very little could be done. The cost of replacing the glass was below the insurance excess figure;
- (vi) *Weeds* – NCC had treated the weeds in some areas very successfully. It now needed a road sweeper to visit the village to remove the dead plants from the gutters.

21/72 **Planning**

Planning applications

- (i) it was reported that the following planning applications were under consideration by the County Council:
- 21/01502/FUL – West Lodge, Millfield Road. Demolition of outhouse and construction of single storey rear extension. PC – no objection;
 - 21/01496/FUL – Whitewood, Sandy Bank. Construction of two storey extension, 1st floor side extension and single storey rear extension. PC – comments submitted re the sustainability of the uPVC cladding and a request for improved energy efficiency to be incorporated into the plans;
 - 21/01688/FUL – 8 Hollin Hill Terrace. Retrospective permission for installation of a new boiler and minor internal building works. PC – no objection;
 - 21/02077/FUL – Land south east of the Manor House. Proposed construction of 12 dwellings, creation of new access, car parking and soakaways. PC – objection;

In the pre-meeting discussion, local residents had asked that the parish council write again to the County Council to include additional objections raised by parishioners and suggested that the parish council's opening statement be amended as they felt it implied support for the development. They also felt that

the parish council should have referred to the recent village survey where residents had indicated that they would be in favour of affordable housing but not larger properties. This development fell into the latter category and therefore the objectors felt that the parish council was not representing the village preference in its response. Cllr. Dale explained that the village survey would be given no weight by the planners until a referendum had been passed. Cllr. Singer expressed his opinion that the parish council had referred to the survey in its comments to the planners. A discussion also took place about the number of possible houses as residents had found a report which suggested there were sufficient houses in this area for certainly the next 5 years. Cllr. Howe explained that as part of the Neighbourhood Plan, the parish council would be undertaking a Housing Needs Assessment which would provide an accurate picture of the housing needs. It was noted that the PC would not be amending its response unless new information was submitted by the applicant.

- 21/02027/FUL – Wentworth Grange. Renovation of dementia unit. PC – no objection although would like to see the work improve the energy performance of the building;
- 21/02321/FELTPO – The Vicarage. Removal of ash tree. PC – no objection
- 21/02165/ADE – advertisement consent for two new information boards and leaflet dispensers. PC was the applicant.

(ii) it was reported that the following planning applications had been approved by the County Council:

- 21/01481/FUL – Swallow Cottage, Sandy Bank. Construction of detached garage;
- 21/01597/FELTPO – Millstones, Mill Close. Removal of ash tree.

(iii) Fold House (20/01932/FUL)

It was noted that an appeal has been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate. The parish council would be invited to comment once a start letter had been issued.

21/73 Correspondence

- A resident had written to the parish council regarding pavement parking. This had been referred to Cllr. Dale for comment.
- Mr Pryor had written to the parish council on behalf of the Rotary Club offering to donate oak saplings to the Parish. It was agreed that the Clerk would write to accept the donation of trees if a suitable location could be found.

ACTION: CLERK

21/74 Minor Matters

(i) Himalayan Balsam: The Clerk reported that over 10 residents had taken part in the Balsam bashing day organised by the Tyne Rivers Trust. Volunteers from the Trust had also joined residents and great inroads had been made on tackling the balsam along the March Burn especially in the area near the Tyne. Mrs Stephenson was thanked for her help in organising this event and for tackling other areas further up the burn. It was agreed that the Clerk would ask the handyman to cut a path through the brambles near the MUGA court to create a route through to the burn.

ACTION: CLERK

(ii) Newsletter: The Clerk reported that she proposed to delay the newsletter until September so that she could include photos of the completed sports pavilion;

(iii) Tennis Club – a quote was received for paving work to the entrance area on Millfield Road. The parish council had previously agreed to contribute to the works. Councillors felt that the specification was unclear which made differentiating between the two quotes difficult. The Clerk was asked to obtain more information.

ACTION: CLERK

(iv) New tennis facilities at the Sports ground: In the pre-meeting discussion, Mrs Stephenson suggested that the parish council should explore purchasing the field adjacent to the sports field at Broomhaugh. She suggested that the land where the MUGA court was currently

situated be sold off for housing which would fund the purchase of the field. Councillors felt unable to comment as the proposal had not been discussed with the Tennis Club. It was suggested that Mrs Stephenson write to the PC and the matter would be discussed with the Club.

- (v) Natural Ability Handyman Service – the Clerk reported that the parish council had been approached to see if it could offer a local charity an opportunity to work in the village. The charity worked with people with learning disabilities and were looking for gardening or litter picking projects. The Clerk was asked to contact the charity to discuss ideas.

ACTION: CLERK

21/75 Date of Future Meeting

The meeting was provisionally arranged for Monday 13th September. This was dependent upon the Clerk securing a large room for the meeting. If necessary, the meeting might be moved to Wednesday 15th September. The Clerk would confirm the date with councillors in due course.

21/76 Confidential Matters – Clerk’s appraisal/contract

In a confidential section of the meeting, the Clerk’s yearly appraisal was discussed together with the number of hours she worked. After discussion, it was agreed to increase her weekly hours from 8 to 15 as this was felt to more accurately reflect the time she worked. It was also agreed that in future her salary would be paid via the payroll services offered by Northumberland County Council. It was noted that by increasing her hours, the parish council would become liable for National Insurance and pension contributions.

Public Meeting closed at 9.10 pm.

Draft