



Broomhaugh & Riding Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held in Church Cottage, Church Lane, on Monday 11th December 2023.

Councillors present:

Cllr. Christine Howe (Chair)	Cllr. Andy Dunhill
Cllr. David Irwin	Cllr. Stephen Lightley
Cllr. Brian Singer	Cllr. Eileen Carew
Cllr. Barbara Wood (co-opted at the meeting)	

In attendance:

County Councillor Anne Dale
Mrs Catherine Harrison – Parish Clerk
2 members of the public were present

Cllr. Howe opened the meeting at 7.25 pm.

On opening the meeting, Cllr. Howe reported that Bill Cairns had sadly died. Mr Cairns had served on the Parish Council twice, finally stepping down in 2015 due to ill-health. Councillors recorded their condolences to Mr Cairns's family.

23/162 Apologies for Absence

Cllr. David McKenzie.

23/163 Declaration of Interests

Cllr. Singer declared an interest in Item 10 – the Budget and Precept Requirements as the costs for the repairs to the allotment wall would be considered and he was chair of the Allotment Association.

23/164 Co-option of Councillor

Mrs Barbara Wood had indicated a willingness to serve on the Parish Council and she was invited to give a brief personal statement outlining the experiences and skills she could offer as a councillor. A vote was held and it was unanimously agreed to co-opt Mrs Wood onto the Council. She then signed the requisite forms and was welcomed to the meeting (Proposed Cllr. Howe, seconded Cllr. Singer).

23/165 Approval of the minutes of the meeting of 13th November 2023

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

23/166 Matters Arising

- (i) *Minute 23147(ii) – Drains and Gullies.* Cllr. Dale provided an update in her report – see Minute 23/167;

- (ii) *Minute 23/147(iv) – Next Generation Flood Resilience Event.* It was reported that the postponed meeting had been rescheduled but this time it was held in Stocksfield although it had still been well attended by Riding Mill residents. Progress with developing the flood warning system was slow and hopefully more tangible ideas would be shared next year:
- (iii) *Minute 23/150(ii) – Fencing/netting at the football field.* Following concerns raised by a resident, the Clerk had explored the cost of a netting system which would stop stray balls hitting nearby properties and parked cars adjacent to the football field. The resident had agreed to pay a proportion of the costs as had the football club and it was agreed that the remaining funds would be given as a grant and taken from the Sports Club maintenance budget which had not been fully utilised this year (Proposed Cllr. Singer, seconded Cllr. Lightley).

ACTION: CLERK

23/167 **County Councillor Report**

Cllr. Dale reported on the following issues:

- (i) *Tree Maintenance* – Cllr. Dale reported that the County Council was developing a policy for how it would deal with the maintenance of trees near highways. This was particularly important because of ash dieback;
- (ii) *Blocked drains on Underwood Road* – Cllr. Dale confirmed that not all of the road was adopted highway and the section with blocked drains was likely to be owned by Wentworth Grange to which the query would be referred;
- (iii) *Grit Bin, Slaley Road* – Cllr. Dale asked the Clerk to forward her the previous emails regarding this matter and she would endeavour to progress its installation;

ACTION: CLERK/ADa

- (iv) Flooding and drainage issues, Slaley Road – Cllr. Dale reported that the County Council had scheduled work in this area in order to dig out the drains and check for broken drainage pipes elsewhere. She also noted that the Council intended to include resurfacing the first section of the Slaley Road within the Local Transport Plan next year;
- (v) Rights of Way – Cllr. Dale noted issues with the footpath to Riding Hills from Beauclerc. The flooding was being investigated by NWL to check if there was a leak but she reported that it was difficult to deal with the problem because of a number of underground pipes in the vicinity.

23/168 **Neighbourhood Plan**

Cllr. Howe reported that the County Council had confirmed that the Neighbourhood Plan had now been officially 'made' and a set of legal documents consisting of the Plan and supporting maps were available to view in the Parish Hall.

She also noted that Community Action Northumberland had recently appointed a Rural Housing Enabler and she proposed to contact him to discuss the challenges of finding a suitable site for affordable housing in the village.

ACTION: CH

23/169 **Climate Change**

Cllr. Irwin noted that a possible grant scheme had opened for new applications, the Community Energy Fund. The Fund was to help develop community energy projects, such as the hydro project idea in Riding Mill, from the concept stage through to it becoming an investable opportunity. He proposed to explore the grant scheme further and if appropriate would submit an application.

ACTION: DI

23/170 Budget and Precept Requirements

A document showing current budget spending and proposed spending for next year was received. Councillors also received a document showing spending from the Reserves, noting that £19,906 had been used to replace the weir footbridge, £3,327 used to part-pay for the new playground springers and £2,093 used for general play park maintenance. Councillors agreed that the priority for the coming year was to fund maintenance projects and to build back the reserves. After discussion the budget was unanimously agreed as follows (Proposed Cllr. Howe, seconded Cllr. Dunhill):

Budget Category	Proposed budget for 2024/25	Last year's budget
Staff Costs	£13,950	£13,200
Insurance	£1,600	£2,350
General Admin	£2,050	£1,650
Professional Fees	£1,000	£3,000
Donations/Grants	£3,600	£3,600
Maintenance	£17,800	£14,500
Capital Expenditure	£1,000	£5,150
Miscellaneous	£800	£800
Bridges sinking fund	£3,500	£3,000
Additional funds to the reserves	£4,300	-
TOTAL	<u>£49,600</u>	<u>£47,250</u>

Points to note:

- Staff Costs: This was increased to cover the anticipated national pay award for 24/25;
- Legal & Audit: This budget category was reduced. Unspent legal costs included within the 23/24 budget would be transferred to the Reserves with the expectation that the work would be completed in 24/25;
- Admin budget: this was increased to allow for increases in printing costs for the yearly newsletter and rises in subscription charges;
- Maintenance Budget: Councillors considered the basic yearly maintenance costs and, in addition, set aside funds to cover repairs to the allotment walls, additional bridge maintenance work and tree work.
- Donations: It was agreed that an award of £2,500 would be made to the Village Hall Trust to help with the upkeep of the halls and to set aside £1,100 to help smaller village groups and local charities.
- Capital expenditure projects: It was agreed to set aside £1,000 for future projects. Any additional funds required for capital expenditure projects would have to be raised from grants or fundraising;
- Councillors agreed to continue to set aside money for the future replacement of either Marchburn Lane bridge or Millfield Road bridge and agreed a budget of £3,500;
- Councillors agreed to budget £1,000 to the play park reserve fund for future updates and repairs and £3,300 would be allocated to the general reserves.

Precept Calculation

It was agreed that no funds would be taken from the Reserves and that the Precept would be set at £49,600, an increase of £2,350 (5%). This was proposed by Cllr. Howe, seconded by Cllr. Dunhill and unanimously agreed.

ACTION: CLERK

23/171 Finance

(a) *Monthly Accounts*

(i) *Payments/Receipts*

The following payments were agreed (Proposed Cllr. Howe, seconded Cllr. Dunhill)

Wel Medical – new defibrillator battery and pads	£423.42 (inc. VAT £70.57)
Northumberland CC – reimbursement of Clerk's salary + back pay	£1,597.30 (inc. VAT £2.50)
Net World Sports – ball stop net	£354.99 (inc. VAT £59.16)
Nest Pension – Direct Debit – pension contribution for November 2023	£68.37
SLCC – Yearly membership fee	£183.00
Box-it North – Yearly archive storage fees	£24.06 (inc. VAT £4.01)
Neetfleet – additional maintenance/supply plants and bulbs/play park Inspection	£220
Marchburn Lane Residents' Association – yearly frontager fee	£100
Tyne Valley Nurseries Ltd – supply of Christmas tree	£96.00 (inc. VAT £16.00)
Catherine Harrison – reimbursement of expenses (A4 paper, A3 photocopying, Mailchimp monthly subs, Catering for event)	£53.03 (inc. VAT £5.12)
Neetfleet – monthly handyman charge	£240.00

The following receipts were noted:

Riding Mill Allotment Association (yearly rent £1 x 5 years until 2028)	£5.00
Unity Trust (Bridge fund) – interest payments	£360.43

(ii) *Budget reports*

The budget reports were reviewed and approved. No new issues were identified.

(b) *S137 Grants*

A paper was received detailing requests for funding from voluntary organisations and local village clubs and groups. It was agreed that priority would be given to local groups and the remaining funds distributed evenly between the other applicants as detailed below. When considering the local groups, councillors did note the requests for larger awards but felt unable to differentiate between the applications which were all equally worthy. (Proposed Cllr. Howe, seconded Cllr. Irwin):

- Riding Mill Pre-School (£127.50)
- Tuesday Drop in Group (£127.50)
- Parish Hall - Garden Invaders (£127.50)
- Broomhaugh First School (£127.50)
- Tynedale Hospice at Home (£60)
- Sport Tynedale (£60)
- Great North Air Ambulance (£60)
- Citizens Advice Northumberland (£60)
- Age UK Northumberland (£60)
- St Oswald's Hospice (£50) – given in remembrance of Suzanne Barker
- Macmillan Cancer Support (£50) – given in remembrance of Suzanne Barker

ACTION: CLERK

c) *Holiday let accommodation*

Cllr. Irwin raised the issue of holiday-let properties within the village. The owners of these properties did not pay council tax, instead they paid business rates for which they often received business rate relief. No proportion of the business rates was paid to the Parish Council through the Precept and he therefore proposed that the owners of holiday-let accommodation should be asked for a voluntary contribution to help maintain amenities (this model was used in other Northumberland villages). Councillors unanimously agreed to this suggestion and it was agreed to request a voluntary contribution of £50/year per property and that this would be introduced in the next financial year.

ACTION: CLERK

23/172 General Village Maintenance

- (i) *Handyman*: The Clerk confirmed that the handyman had undertaken the following work during November: cleared leaves and swept footpaths, cleared gravel from the bus shelters and footpaths near Riding Grange, cut back branches overhanging road signs and mirrors. He had also removed summer bedding plants and replaced with plants and bulbs for the spring, cut back ivy overhanging the footpath near Dene Terrace, trimmed the area of PC land on Millfield Road and undertaken a quarterly play park inspection.

No other maintenance matters were raised.

23/173 Planning

Planning applications - it was reported that:

- (i) the following new planning applications were under consideration:
- 23/04348/LBC – 2 Hollin Hill Terrace. Roof work. PC – no objection;
 - 23/04291/FUL – Greenlea, Millfield Road. Loft conversion. PC – no objection;
 - 23/03963/PRUTPO – 4 St James Close. Tree work on unregistered land adjacent to property. PC – no objection;
 - 23/04156/PRUTPO – Hazel Rigg, Millfield Road. Tree work. PC – no objection.
- (ii) no planning applications had been granted permission in the previous month;
- (iii) the following application had been withdrawn:
- 23/03805/FUL – The Hemmel, Broomhaugh. Replacement of single storey extension with new garden room.

23/174 Correspondence

No additional correspondence matters were considered.

23/175 Minor Matters

Allotment wall repairs: Cllr. Dunhill reported that he had reviewed the wayleave agreement for the Gas Governor Housing situated at the allotments noting that it was an unusual arrangement which should have been dealt with via a lease rather than a wayleave. The wayleave agreement was poorly worded but he believed that Northern Gas Networks should be responsible for the section of wall which enclosed the land used for the Gas Governor House. The Clerk was therefore asked to write to Northern Gas Networks and ask them to fund this section of the repairs.

ACTION: CLERK

23/176 Date of Future Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Parish Council should be held on Monday 12th February 2024 (the January meeting was cancelled due to the likely lack of business so shortly after Christmas).

Meeting closed at 8.30 pm