

- (iv) *Minute 23/175 – Allotment Wall repairs.* Following Cllr. Dunhill's suggestion at the last meeting, the Clerk had contacted Northern Gas Networks. Although not accepting liability for the wall, they had agreed to make a contribution to its repair as a community gesture.

24/06 **County Councillor Report**

Cllr. Dale reported on the following issues:

- (i) *Footpath alongside the Tyne to Corbridge* – Cllr. Dale reported that whilst some progress had been made on this matter, the County Council's Countryside team did not have the necessary staff resources to pursue this further. The Parish Council was extremely keen for the footpath to be reopened and offered whatever assistance Cllr. Dale felt necessary. Cllr. Dale promised to raise the issue at the next Tynedale Area committee;
- ACTION: ADa**
- (ii) *Full fibre broadband* – Cllr. Dale noted that the current scheme to bring full fibre broadband to parts of the Tyne Valley including Riding Mill had been scrapped. She believed that the government instead planned to reinstate the voucher scheme and further details were awaited;
- (iii) *Highways/potholes* – Cllr. Dale reported on the poor state of the roads. Potholes were being repaired on the A roads within 24 hours but those on estate roads were not being dealt with at the current time. She highlighted that poor maintenance was causing a lot of the problems with drainage ditches not being cleared nor gullies. This meant that there was standing water on the roads which caused the potholes and any which were repaired quickly reappeared. Cllr. Dale planned to raise the issue at the next Tynedale Area committee.

ACTION: ADa

24/07 **Neighbourhood Plan**

Housing: Cllr. Howe reported the housing group continued to pursue opportunities for housing in the village. The appeal by the applicant to the Planning Inspectorate with regard to the development by the Manor House had been dismissed. The Inspector's report had placed a high level of importance on the views of the Conservation team. Cllr. Howe had contacted the Neighbourhood Planning team to establish whether it was likely that this site could ever be used for housing and the advice was the owners would have to engage fully with planners during a pre-App stage. Cllr. Howe also reported on a meeting she had held with Community Action Northumberland's Rural Housing Enabler, Vince Walsh, who she had found to be very helpful and knowledgeable and who had good contacts with the local housing providers. She also noted that a housing developer had signed an option on the possible development site at Broomhaugh. She, together with Cllrs. Dunhill and Wood, had met with the developer. He had indicated that he was willing to include the Local Plan requirement for affordable house i.e. 30%, should planning permission be given, and that he viewed the site as a long term proposition that might only be fulfilled when the NCC Local Plan was next reviewed.

Community actions: Cllr. Howe had measured the garden area by the MUGA court and thought that it was possible to install an outdoor table tennis table in this area, together with a small seating shelter and some outdoor pieces of fitness equipment. Some councillors expressed reservations about the shelter and table tennis table but it was agreed that Cllr. Howe should put together a concept scheme that could then be shared with residents for their views.

ACTION: CH

24/08 **Tyne Valley Cycle Superhighway: Riding Mill Options**

A paper was received which had been prepared by Cllr. Irwin outlining options for improving cycle routes to Corbridge and Stocksfield. Cllr. Irwin noted that it was important to have ideas documented so that when funding opportunities came along the Parish Council was ready to apply. Cllr. Irwin was congratulated on the paper which all councillors were happy to endorse. It was

agreed that the document would be displayed on the website and should be shared with Northumberland County Council and the local MP.

ACTION: CLERK

24/09 Website / Possible council name change / New web address and/or site

The Clerk reported that the government via NALC continued to promote the idea that all councils should use a .gov.uk web address which was considered to show residents that they were dealing with a trusted UK public sector organisation. If the Parish Council applied for such a web address, it would be allocated broomhaughandridingpc.gov.uk which might be considered quite cumbersome. Often residents (and other bodies including sometimes the County Council) referred to the Parish Council as Riding Mill Parish Council and councillors considered whether they should apply to change the name of the council. It was agreed that the Clerk should prepare an article to share with residents and that an online poll should be carried out. A discussion was also held about whether the current website needed an update and whether the Parish Council should use alternative companies to host its website and/or email addresses as, if all councillors moved to a .gov.uk email address, the fees would increase considerably. It was agreed to consider this again once a decision on a possible name change had been made.

ACTION: CLERK/DI

24/10 Climate Change

- (i) It was reported that Cllr. Irwin has made an application for funding to the Community Energy Fund. If successful, these funds would be used to look at the feasibility of installing hydro-generation at the existing weir on the Tyne. The decision on the application would be known later in the month.
- (ii) Home Energy and Electric Vehicle Event held by Hexham Town Council. Cllrs. Howe and Dunhill had attended the event organised by Hexham Town Council for residents and had found it informative.

24/11 Insurance

It was reported that the insurance cover had been increased for the weir footbridge resulting in an additional charge – see Minute 24/12(i).

24/12 Finance

(a) *Monthly Accounts*

(i) *Payments/Receipts*

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

Trevor Bell Horticultural Services – parish grass cutting and football field	£630.00
Northumberland County Council – reimbursement of Clerk’s Dec salary	£1097.40 (inc. VAT £2.50)
Unity Trust Bank – Quarterly bank charges	£18.00
Neetfleet – Handyman materials	£20.00
Natural Ability – maintenance of edible garden	£72.00
RM Village Hall Trust – room hire	£10.00
RM Outdoor Pre-school – S137 donation	£127.50
RM Village Hall Trust – S137 donation to hold on account for Drop in group & Garden Invaders (£127.50 each)	£255.00
Age UK Northumberland – S137 donation	£60.00
Northumberland Citizens Advice – S142(2A) donation	£60.00
Great North Air Ambulance – S137 donation	£60.00
Sport Tynedale – S137 donation	£60.00
Tynedale Hospice – S137 donation	£60.00
St Oswald’s Hospice – S137 donation	£50.00

Macmillan Cancer Support – S137 donation	£50.00
Clear Insurance Management Ltd – additional insurance for weir bridge	£78.36
NCC for Broomhaugh First School – S137 donation	£127.50
Northumberland County Council – reimbursement of Clerk’s Jan salary	£1097.40 (inc. VAT £2.50)
Northumberland County Council – grit bin and installation	£300.00 (inc. VAT £50.00)
Neetfleet – additional maintenance (Replace bus shelter roof, wash bus shelters and remove graffiti, replace reflectors on planters, repair fence on Millfield Road	£715.00
Northumberland County Council – removal of speed signs and posts	£300.00
Catherine Harrison – reimbursement of expenses (signs for bridge and planter, Mail chimp monthly subs, shovels for grit bins, reflectors for planters)	£89.19 (inc. VAT £14.89)
Standing Orders/Direct Debits:	
Nest pension – December pension contribution	£36.50
Neetfleet – monthly handyman payment (paid in arrears to cover Dec)	£240.00
Nest pension – January pension contribution	£36.50
Neetfleet – monthly handyman payment (paid in arrears to cover Jan)	£240.00

The following receipts were noted:

Triodos Bank – quarterly interest payment	£52.84
Unity Trust Bank (Bridge fund) – interest payment	£213.83

(ii) *Budget reports*

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

(b) *Investing in a Fixed Rate Bond*

As interest rates had improved, it was suggested that the Parish Council should reinvest the funds held in the bridge fund to take advantage of these new rates. Councillors agreed that the Clerk should investigate investing in a two-year fixed rate bond (Proposed Cllr. Howe, seconded Cllr. Dunhill)

ACTION: CLERK

24/13 **General Village Maintenance**

- (i) *Handyman:* The Clerk confirmed that the handyman had undertaken the following work during December and January: erected and then dismantled the Christmas tree and lights, swept and cleared leaves from footpaths and cleaned road signs. In addition to his monthly duties, he had repaired the paling fence on Millfield Road, washed the four glass bus shelters and removed graffiti, replaced the reflectors on the flower planters on Marchburn Lane and had replaced the roof on the bus shelter at Broomhaugh;
- (ii) *Meeting with County Council’s Bridge Inspector:* Cllr Howe reported on a meeting she and the Clerk had held with the County Council’s bridge inspector. He had reviewed both Millfield Road and Marchburn Lane bridges and had assessed their condition as satisfactory. There were areas of metalwork which needed painting and he offered to recommend some contractors who would be able to do this work;
- (iii) *Additional work:* Cllr. Carew requested that the bushes by the entrance to Riding Grange be trimmed back as they were obscuring sight lines.

ACTION: CLERK

24/14 **Planning**

Planning applications - it was reported that:

- (i) the following new planning application was under consideration:
 - 24/00293/FUL (24/00294/LBC) – 3 Hollin Hill Terrace. Internal works to create an ensuite bathroom. PC – no objection
- (ii) the following planning applications had been granted permission:
 - 23/03862/FUL – Woodside, Sandy Bank. Double garage and store;
 - 23/04348/LBC – 2 Hollin Hill Terrace. Roof works;
 - 23/04156/PRUTPO – Hazel Rigg, Millfield Road. Tree works;
 - 23/03964/PRUTPO – 9 Church Close. Tree works.
- (iii) the following planning application had been withdrawn:
 - 23/02585/FUL – Land north of Old Tavern House. New build 2-storey house with undercroft parking.

It was agreed that the Clerk should write to the owner to establish what further plans he had for the site.

ACTION: CLERK

A letter from a resident had been received with concerns about the long term stability of the road should the site be left as it was. The query had been referred to the County Council.

- (iv) the appeal to the Planning Inspectorate with regard to the proposed housing development by the Manor House had been dismissed.

24/15 **Meetings to attend**

Councillors noted that the County Council would be holding a Town & Parish Conference on Thursday 14th March at County Hall. Any councillor wishing to attend should inform the Clerk.

ACTION: ALL

24/16 **Correspondence**

A resident had written about the state of the ash trees on the approach to the station and this query had been referred to Cllr. Dale as the County Council owned the land.

24/17 **Minor Matters**

- (i) *Annual Parish Meeting* – it was agreed that this year's Parish Meeting should be held on Thursday 16th May at 7 pm in the Parish Hall. Councillors agreed that a guest speaker should be invited and the topic should be Ecology;

ACTION: CLERK

- (ii) *Litter Pick* – it was agreed to hold this year's litter pick on Saturday 23rd March at 10 am. The Clerk would publicise the event.

ACTION: CLERK

- (iii) *Community Emergency Plan* – the Village Hall Trust had been made aware of an initiative by the County Council where each community would be asked to prepare a Community Emergency Plan. For example, it might include a plan for a power outage for a prolonged period affecting a large number of residents. In such a case, the halls or sports pavilion might be utilised as refuge centres. It was agreed that the Parish Council would be best placed to draft such a plan working closely with the VHT;

ACTION: CLERK

- (iv) *Summer Fair* – the Clerk reported that she had had very little interest following her appeal for volunteers to come forward to form a Summer Fair committee. Councillors agreed that they would not pursue the matter further at this time but would support the initiative if volunteers came forward;

- (v) *Bleed Kits* – it had been suggested that the Parish Council might wish to install an emergency bleed kit somewhere in the parish (similar to the defibrillator, it was suggested that they were installed outside a public building and could be used in an emergency if someone had an accident and was bleeding profusely). Councillors thought that it might be more appropriate to have one at the sports pavilion and the Clerk was asked to send the information to the Sports Club;

ACTION: CLERK

- (vi) *Maintenance of BT Exchange building* – the Clerk reported that two residents had complained about the state of the grounds of the BT exchange building and she had contacted BT's property asset team. They had agreed to send someone to inspect the site and the Clerk would report back to a future meeting;

ACTION: CLERK

- (vii) *Measures to support species and habitat* – in the pre-meeting question time, a resident had asked if the Parish Council could request owners undertaking changes to their properties to consider ensuring fences had small holes left at the base to allow hedgehogs (and other animals) to pass under and also, to include special solitary bee bricks in extensions or new builds to help support lone bees. Cllr. Howe offered to check the design code within the Neighbourhood Plan as she felt that this was already covered and would then report back to the resident.

ACTION: CH

24/18 **Date of Future Meeting**

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Parish Council should be held on Monday 11th March.

It was also agreed that due to the availability of the Clerk, the July meeting should be rescheduled for Monday 15th July.

Public meeting closed at 9.15 pm

- 24/19 **Confidential Matters:** Pursuant to section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 it was resolved that, because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the public and press leave the meeting during consideration of the following items.

Overview of decisions

- (i) *The award of the grass cutting contract for 2024-26:*
Resolved: to reappoint T Bell Horticultural Services (Proposed: Cllr. Howe, seconded Cllr. Dunhill);

ACTION: CLERK

- (ii) *To appoint a contractor to undertake repairs to the allotment wall:*
Resolved: To appoint T Lincoln to undertake the work subject to final confirmation of the price and references (Proposed: Cllr. Howe, seconded Cllr. McKenzie);

ACTION: CLERK

- (iii) *Sports field Issues:*
Matters were noted and the Clerk would provide an update at the next meeting;

ACTION: CLERK

Matters relating to the Tennis Club – A letter was received from the Tennis Club after publication of the agenda containing confidential financial information. It was agreed to consider the letter at the meeting but that any financial decisions would have to be ratified at the March meeting.

(iv) *Request to cut back trees overhanging the double court:*

Resolved: That Cllrs. Howe and Dunhill should inspect the trees and would advise the Clerk if the trees should be trimmed. (Councillors noted that the recent surveys had found no safety issues with the two trees);

ACTION: CH/AD/CLERK

(v) *Request for financial assistance to help with the maintenance of the MUGA court:*

Councillors noted that this request had not been received by the required deadline (end of October 2023) and that next year's budget had already been agreed which meant funding was not available. However, it was agreed that the Clerk should direct the Club to apply for any S106 funding which was currently available (approximately £1,100).

ACTION: CLERK

Confidential meeting closed at 9.50 pm