



Broomhaugh & Riding Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held in Church Cottage, Church Lane, on Monday 11th March 2024.

Councillors present:

Cllr. Christine Howe (Chair)

Cllr. David Irwin

Cllr. Eileen Carew

Cllr. Stephen Lightley

Cllr. Brian Singer

Cllr. David McKenzie

Cllr. Barbara Wood

Cllr. Ellen Rutherford

In attendance:

County Councillor Anne Dale (until Minute 24/27)

Mrs Catherine Harrison – Parish Clerk

2 members of the public were present

Cllr. Howe opened the meeting at 7.40 pm.

24/20 Apologies for Absence

Cllr. Andy Dunhill.

24/21 Declaration of Interests

Cllr. Singer declared an interest in matters relating to the Allotments (Item 4i) as he was chair of the Allotment Association.

Cllr. Rutherford declared possible interests in matters relating to the sports field and the hydro-generation project.

24/22 Approval of the minutes of the meeting of 12th February 2023

It was agreed that the minutes of the Council meeting and the confidential Council meeting were a true record, subject to an alteration to Minute 24/06(ii) requested by Cllr. Dale, and were duly signed off by Cllr. Howe (Main meeting - Proposed Cllr. Howe, seconded Cllr. McKenzie, Confidential meeting – Proposed Cllr. Howe, seconded Cllr. Irwin).

24/23 Matters Arising

- (i) *Minute 24/05(iv) – Allotment Wall repairs.* The Clerk reported that the contractor had adjusted the quote to distinguish between the area which Northern Gas Networks (NGN) would pay for and this cost had been approved by NGN. The contractor hoped to start the work in June/early July and the resident who first raised the concern had been informed;
- (ii) *Minute 24/12(b) – Investing in a fixed rate bond.* The Clerk reported that there had been a difficulty opening a fixed-rate account with the banks previously identified, as the banks didn't consider the parish council a business nor was it a charity, and therefore was ineligible. The Clerk therefore recommended that a second account with Nationwide be opened which

would pay 4.25%, fixed for one-year and this was duly agreed (Proposed Cllr. Howe, seconded Cllr. Lightley);

ACTION: CLERK

- (iii) *Minute 24/14(iii) – Land north of the Old Tavern House.* As requested, the Clerk had contacted the owner of the land north of the Old Tavern House to establish what his plans were now that the planning application had been withdrawn. He had confirmed he was reviewing the comments made by Network Rail and would look to submit revised plans by the summer. In the pre-meeting discussion, a resident had raised concerns about the fencing around the site but Cllr. Howe confirmed that this had previously been addressed by the Highways Department and was considered acceptable so no further action could be taken;
- (iv) *Minute 24/17(iii) – Community Emergency Plan.* The Clerk reported that she had drafted a Community Emergency Plan, a copy of which had been given to the Village Hall Trust for comment and input;
- (v) *Minute 24/17(iv) – Maintenance of BT Exchange building.* The Clerk reported that she had followed up the residents' complaints with BT and had been informed that a contractor had visited the telephone exchange site and had trimmed back bushes near the footpath and bridge. It was not considered a particularly thorough job but councillors agreed not to take any further action and would monitor how BT maintained the site over the coming months.

24/24 **County Councillor Report**

Cllr. Dale reported on the following issues:

- (i) *Ultrafast broadband* – Cllr. Dale continued to raise the issue of finding a company to install ultrafast broadband in Riding Mill. She noted that a number of companies had ceased trading as they were not paid until the first connection was made and installation costs to rural areas were technically difficult. Cllr. Dale offered to raise the problem with Building Digital UK which councillors were happy to endorse.
- (ii) *Potholes* – Cllr. Dale continued to report problems with the region's roads and was pressing the County Council's leaders to do more to address the issue;
- (iii) *Miscellaneous* – Cllr. Dale noted that she had dealt with a number of issues raised by Riding Mill residents including complaints about not being able to have medicines delivered and requests for information about how much money had been spent by the County Council in certain areas.

ACTION: ADA

24/25 **Hydro-generation on the Tyne**

It was reported that the application for funding from the Community Energy Fund to look at the feasibility of installing hydro-generation at the existing weir on the Tyne had been successful subject to additional written support from Northumbrian Water. The grant was for £29,900 and would initially be used for the feasibility study and for Environment Agency fees. Cllr. Howe reminded everyone that this project would fulfil objectives set within the Neighbourhood Plan and the Community Actions and Councillors congratulated Cllr. Irwin for his hard work.

It was also noted that a letter had been received from the Secretary of the Salmon and Trout Conservation Northumbria Group and that Cllr. Irwin had met with him for a useful discussion. It had been agreed that the Group would be consulted during the feasibility study.

24/26 **Climate Change**

No new village issues were noted although a discussion was held about the installation of solar panels on church buildings nationwide which was of interest as many of these buildings were Grade II listed.

EV Charging points – Cllr. Dale was asked to find out if the bid for funding to help install EV charging points in Riding Mill had been successful as the last communication about the matter had been in July 2023.

ACTION: ADA

24/27 **Review of Policy Documents**

The following documents were reviewed and updates noted. The documents were then unanimously readopted:

- Financial Risk Assessment (Proposed Cllr. Howe, seconded Cllr. McKenzie), Supplementary risk paper was noted;
- Asset Register (Proposed Cllr. Howe, seconded Cllr. Lightley);
- B&RPC Continuity Plan (Proposed Cllr. Howe, seconded Cllr. McKenzie).

24/28 **Finance**

(a) *Monthly Accounts*

(i) *Payments/Receipts*

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

Northumberland County Council – reimbursement of Clerk’s salary	£1097.40 (inc. VAT £2.50)
CommuniCorp – Subscription to Clerks & Councils Direct	£15.50
Catherine Harrison – reimbursement of expenses (Mail chimp monthly subs, stationery – Minute book)	£18.71 (inc. VAT £3.12)

Standing Orders/Direct Debits:

Nest pension – February pension contribution	£36.50
Neetfleet – monthly handyman fee (paid in arrears to cover February)	£240.00

There were no receipts to note.

(ii) *Budget reports*

The budget reports were reviewed and approved (Proposed Cllr. Howe, seconded Cllr. Lightley). No new issues were identified.

(iii) *Standing Orders and Direct Debits*

The Clerk presented a paper detailing all regular Direct Debit and Standing Order payments which were noted and reapproved (Proposed Cllr. Howe, seconded Cllr. Lightley).

24/29 **General Village Maintenance**

(i) *Handyman:* The Clerk reported that during February the handyman had cleared leaves and swept footpaths. He had also cleaned various road signs and had removed any obstructions obscuring them;

(ii) *Asset Review* – Cllr. Howe confirmed that she and Cllr. Dunhill had completed a full review of all PC assets at the beginning of February. Minor repairs had been identified and the Clerk would inform the handyman. Various issues had been identified at the sports field but, since the inspection, she was pleased to report that the gate and some of the fencing had been repaired. Cllr. Howe noted that the outfield benches at the sports field were in a poor state of repair and could be replaced by one or two memorial benches should any requests be received. It was agreed that the Clerk would highlight this in the next Parish News;

ACTION: CLERK

(iii) *Trees* – The Clerk reported that the tree surgeon continued to undertake priority tree work identified following the latest tree inspection. He had removed a dead alder tree and a fallen elm tree near the bridge to the double tennis courts and had removed a number of ash trees in Marchburn Woods. As requested, the tree surgeon had inspected the oak trees close to

the double tennis courts and advised minimal trimming. The Clerk would liaise with the Tennis Club following his recommendation. He had also inspected the ash trees on the Nick and had noted that there were seven ash trees to be removed, some of which were in a very poor condition. Two of the trees were incorporated into the nearby homeowner's fence, and the Clerk was asked to alert them to the problem and ask if they would make a financial contribution towards the work.

ACTION: CLERK

24/30 **Planning**

Planning applications - it was reported that:

- (i) the following new planning application was under consideration:
 - 24/00750/FUL – 12 Church Close. Demolition of garage and construction of 2-storey side extension. PC – will make comment about loss of parking;
- (ii) the following planning applications had been granted permission:
NONE
- (iii) the following planning application had been refused
 - 23/03963/PRUTPO – Land south of 4 St James Close. Tree work.

24/31 **Correspondence**

A resident had written about the stability of the bankside in Marchburn Woods and it had been agreed to discuss this under confidential matters.

24/32 **Minor Matters**

- (i) *Annual Parish Meeting* – the Clerk reported that she was still seeking a speaker for the annual Parish Meeting and was currently waiting to hear back from the Northumberland Wildlife Trust.

ACTION: CLERK

24/33 **Date of Future Meeting**

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Parish Council should be held on Monday 8th April.

Public meeting closed at 8.25 pm

24/34 **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.

Summary of decisions:

- (i) *Hydro-generation on the Tyne / Method of tendering for the contract for the feasibility study*
Agreed: That due to the specialist nature of the work, Standing Orders should be suspended and that an engineering consultancy company, Renewables First, should be appointed to undertake the work (Proposed Cllr. Irwin, seconded Cllr. Howe);
ACTION: DI
- (ii) *Stability of bankside opposite Cartref*
Agreed: An up-to-date report should be commissioned to investigate the stability of the bankside (Proposed Cllr. Howe, seconded Cllr. McKenzie)
ACTION: CLERK
- (iii) *Issues at the Sports field*
The current position was noted.

Confidential Meeting closed: 9.25 pm