# Broomhaugh and Riding Parish Council

**Minutes of the annual Parish Meeting**

Monday 28th April 2014, 7pm, Parish Hall, Riding Mill.

**Present:** Cllr. Malcolm Reid (Chair), Cllr. Andy Dunhill, Cllr. Jill Mills, Cllr. Eileen Carew, Cllr. Eileen Ewen and Cllr. Bill Cairns and County Councillor Anne Dale, together with 19 members of the public.

In attendance:

Mrs Catherine Harrison – Parish Clerk

Steve Robson – Northumberland County Council

Neil Turnbull – Northumberland County Council

**The meeting commenced with a talk on “Low cost housing – what it could mean for Riding Mill” given by Steve Robson, Senior Planning Officer and Neil Turnbull, Affordable Housing Officer, from Northumberland County Council. Their presentations are attached as appendices to these minutes together with a summary paper of the discussion.**

**At the end of the discussion, Cllr. Reid encouraged residents to write to the Parish Council with their views to help guide the Planning Sub-Committee’s response to future planning applications.**

**1. Apologies**

 Brian Singer and Jen Stephenson

**2. Minutes of the 2013 annual Parish meeting,** which had been displayed on the ridingmill.org website since last May, were agreed to be a true record.

**3. Chairman’s report**

*TRANSPARENCY*

*There have been 2 main drives of the PC this year – to make the work of the PC more visible and relevant to villagers, and to widen villager participation in PC and County Council decisions.*

*To these ends we have been submitting a regular PC entry to the Parish News and keeping the website up to date. Correspondence from villagers is itemised in the Agendas for meetings and consultations from the County Council are put on our website as soon as we receive them, so that individual villagers can participate before the closing dates.*

*These improvements have been hugely facilitated by the unsung heroine of the PC, our new Clerk, who has brought us into the 21st century with her website management and has undertaken the challenging tasks of rationalising our filing system, and making our accounts more intelligible.*

*We are also grateful to Josh Turner for extending the information on the website, such as including new walks.*

*Parish Councils as local authorities are excluded from the FSCS £85,000 guarantee should a bank collapse. We are therefore in the lengthy process of spreading our reserves between banks.*

*ROAD SAFETY*

*The PC always places a high priority on road safety. This year the footpath from the Sandy Bank junction into the village was widened and new warning signage put in place at the most popular crossing place on the Main Road.*

*The reliability of the speed activation signs causes concern and their performance and location are under review, as is a potential traffic slowing gateway at the East end of the village.*

*The glass-panelled bus shelter at the West end is finally in place at a difficult location for sight lines.*

*To improve pedestrian access to the station from Station Close, an opening was made in the Dene Terrace wall where it is adjacent to a path owned by the PC, and an agreement has been reached with all but one of the residents of Dene Terrace over responsibility for the wall.*

*Work has also been done to protect one wall of the Pack Horse Bridge, which was experiencing water damage.*

*Improving the lighting on the footpath from Broomhaugh to the station is an issue we have not yet resolved.*

*ENVIRONMENT*

*A description board about some migrating aquatic species was erected by the Tyne Rivers Trust near the weir and rock cascade. A river watch group is in the process of being established with one villager trained by the TRT.*

*The PC has adopted a policy of encouraging memorial donations to be in the form of trees and bushes with edible fruit on PC land. Following this, a villager came forward to serve as a Councillor to co-ordinate garden shares between people with more land than they can manage and people with more muscle than land. Hopefully these last two will only be the first tentative steps towards creating a more resilient community as we face the challenges of both adapting to and mitigating climate change.*

 *COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP*

*The PC has lost the valued services of Cllr Peter Howe, but also gained 2 new councillors and this has spread the geographical location of councillors more evenly. There are still 2 places unfilled for people who can see ways they could contribute to the life of the village through serving as councillors.*

 *OTHER*

*A team with members from the PC and other villagers put in a lot of time to respond to the CORE STRATEGY consultation.*

*The PC contributed to MEMORIALS FOR BOBBY. There is still no news on the future of the shop.*

*The PC has been involved in getting RESTITUTION OF DAMAGE caused by utilities in Millfield Road.*

*The PC welcomes the achievement of the TENNIS CLUB in restoring their facilities and creating an all-purpose sports facility, and is involved in finding a meeting of minds over the usage of the new facility.*

*We have given support to the re-opening of GILSLAND STATION to give direct public transport access to one of the best sections of the Roman Wall to Riding Mill residents as well as to visitors from much further away.*

*We are grateful to Linden Stephenson for ensuring that our FACILITIES are well maintained.*

*My fellow Councillors have done a superb job in operating the PC as a team with DEVOLVED RESPONSIBILITIES, especially at times when I have not been here. Some matters, for which Councillors have done a lot of unstinting work, must remain confidential. I am very grateful to Vice-Chairman Andy Dunhill and all the other Councillors for their invaluable work over the year.*

 **Questions following report:**

Mrs Rowntree queried why the PC had made an opening in Dene Terrace wall as she believed the wall did not belong to the PC. Cllr. Reid reiterated that ownership of the wall was undefined and that he felt that the best workable solution had been achieved.

**4. County Councillor’s Report (Cllr. Anne Dale)**

*It has been a busy and challenging year and the time seems to have flown. I was delighted to be re-elected as your County Councillor last May, it is a privilege to be able to continue to serve and work with you.*

*BUDGET*

*The Council has agreed its budget for the financial year 2014/15. It includes funding for the new Prudhoe High School, a new Hexham bus station, a new Fire Station at Hexham, repair of Ovingham Bridge, free parking in Hexham, highways infrastructure, education and a further investment of £600k for pothole repairs. There is a rise in Council tax of 1.99%. Over the next three years further savings/efficiencies of over £130m are required.*

*CORE STRATEGY*

*As the Core Strategy for the next 20 years emerges developers are taking the opportunity to put forward building sites. There is a housing need in Northumberland of 24,000 over the next 20 years. Please do take time to read the document when it is out for consultation. Support of any recommendations is always helpful and as well as any objections you may have.*

*HIGHWAYS.*

*Over the last year the works to the Nick and the A695 were completed and seem to have worked.*

*The A695 has been resurfaced and I am seeking further information about the change in speed limits to the west of the village.*

*I am delighted to have been able to help to fund the village hall extension, and the new bus shelter.*

*The Council reviewed the western bus shelter outside the Duke of Wellington but there was no other site that met the criteria.*

*The capital funding I received for a safe Pedestrian access from Sandy Bank has been finished and it has also helped drivers to access the A695 more safely. The extension to the footpath has provided safer access especially for children and older people.*

*The fence on the railway bridge on the A695 has been mended and the retrospective planning application for the new bridge at Underwood is under determination at the present time. However the County have removed the 3 ton sign on the bridge at my request and it has been sited near the access to the A695 together with a sign showing a narrow road.*

*Draft plans and designs have been drawn up by the County for the village gateway entrance to the east of the village. This is to improve the road safety in this area. However it is only a first draft and I will consult with the residents together with the Parish Council.*

*Speed gun used throughout the village and I have some names of residents of Riding Mill who would like to be a volunteer – and I am looking for more. You will be trained!*

*I am always pleased to work so please do contact me if you would like any further information or wish to discuss anything further.*

Cllr. Dale also reported on

1. a request to remove a section of double yellow lines on the main road to allow cars to park on the verge – this had been rejected by the County Council;
2. a meeting she had held with the Chief Executive of the North East Ambulance Service following residents’ letters warning of emergency vehicles trying to cross the bridge in Millfield Road. She would pass the letter of response from the Ambulance Service to the Clerk for tabling at the next PC meeting.

 **Questions following report:**

1. Speed limits introduced on the road to Corbridge were confusing – Cllr. Dale had been unaware that the County Council planned to install these new signs. There was general agreement that the speed limit should be reduced for the entirety of the road and a full discussion should take place at the next Parish Council meeting.

**Action: Clerk**

1. Proposed changes to Hexham bus station – Cllr. Dale was involved in ongoing discussions about the changes to the bus station. The County Council would be liaising with local villagers and she advised the PC to wait until the full options were published and then respond.

**5. Financial Statement**

A draft financial statement for the year ending 31st March 2013 was presented. It was noted that the figures were unaudited as yet. The accounts would be available from 12th May until 9th June for public scrutiny and anyone wishing to see them should make an appointment via the Clerk.

**6. Report from the Village Hall Trust**

**(Pam Pryor, Chairman & Secretary of Riding Mill Village Hall Trust)**

*The last twelve months have certainly been challenging. Our Village Halls have been busier than ever which certainly places demands on our volunteers and our one paid member of staff, Val Thompson, our caretaker/cleaner. Nevertheless, it is not the regular hall users who provide sufficient income to maintain our buildings – it is the occasional bookings, such as weddings and parties, which provide the income to enable the Trustees to be proactive. Without the occasional bookings, fundraising is crucial and, of course, this places extra pressure once again on our volunteers.*

*For this reason, the Trustees are particularly grateful to Councillor Anne Dale, the Parish Councillors and Northumberland County Council for their tremendous and generous support. It really feels as though we are working as one large team, with the common goal of providing the best facilities and the friendliest environment for the villagers of Riding Mill.*

*With the devastating loss of Bobby Turner in September last year, and the subsequent closure of our village shop, villagers, particularly the elderly, mourn their very dear friend, to whom they turned daily, for a chat more than provisions; the children miss their end of school 'pick 'n' mix' rewards and we realise that what Bobby provided was a safe haven – somewhere you could go for staple items, groceries you had forgotten to buy elsewhere, but mostly somewhere you could go for a guaranteed laugh.*

*What Bobby and Frank provided cannot be replaced in the same way but, until the shop is re-opened, the Trustees are anxious that the village halls, as well of course as our churches and schools, make villagers feel comfort, friendship and support.*

*The Cafe in the Foyer, open every Monday and Friday morning, is usually buzzing. If anyone has had a lonely weekend or is expecting a quiet weekend, at least they are guaranteed good company at the beginning and towards the end of the week.*

*As well as the many kindnesses Bobby showed from behind the counter of his shop, he is also greatly missed as a long-standing Trustee, representing the Choral Society. His knowledge was vast and his advice was therefore even greater.*

*Bobby's departing coincided with the resignation of Linda Shepherd as the Chairman of the Trust. Linda's talent for fundraising, by organising events and catering, and her comfort in making decisions, meant she was an act which no-one wished to follow. In the absence of a successor, having been cajoled by Bobby eight years ago to become Secretary, I therefore felt I should step up to the plate although recognising that I wouldn't be able to work in the same way as Linda. Some prefer front of house – I prefer the sink!*

*Thankfully, the Trustees and volunteers offered me their support and we have been working as a large team, playing to individual strengths.*

*David Niven kindly agreed to continue as Vice Chairman and has been working extremely hard on the extension to the Parish Hall to provide extra storage for our growing number of clubs. Building work should commence in July/August and be completed in early September.*

*Elaine Raeburn and Jean Latham also work extremely hard organising the rota of staff for the Cafe and, as Garden Invaders, (a title bestowed upon them by past Chairman, Pam Niven), Elaine and her husband, Martin, look after the land surrounding our Parish Hall, which is no small job! We are also grateful to Alan Thompson, our Caretaker's husband, for cutting the grass and undertaking many jobs behind the scenes.*

*As I am sure that there will be unforeseen expenditure with the building of the extension, the Trustees will continue to be very careful with the bank balance but, in future, it is the intention that our hall users, who have regularly contributed to fundraising, provide the Trustees with a 'wish list' – requests which will enhance our halls, make their Clubs run more efficiently and probably benefit other hall users too. Recently we have had some blackout blinds fitted to prevent the Drama Club from having to hang dark curtains during their productions (which were not fire retardant and were therefore a hazard). Having purchased the projector and screen last year, now hirers wishing to provide PowerPoint presentations or the Photographic Society wishing to show their skills, can do so without any lighting problems!*

*We have also recently had Wi-Fi installed. Many of our young Mums are 'working from home' so they said they would be happy to work in the Parish Hall while the Cafe is open and have a coffee with friends at the same time. The facility has already attracted businesses from surrounding areas to hold all day training sessions.*

*The Trustees have also been conscious that we are not providing sufficient entertainment for the youngsters in the village. We were investigating the possibility of starting a Youth Club in the Parish Hall but, after spending quality time chatting to the children, it seems that they are really looking for an Internet Cafe (somewhere they can meet under cover (not just on the school bus), swap electronic games, have a snack and drink, all of course under supervision)! My next meeting with the children is on Wednesday this week, to move the idea forward. They will be presenting me with their written suggestions.*

*The Flat above the Parish Hall is occupied by the former tenant's sister. Our only complaint is the state of the garden as the tenant asked for the responsibility of the area to be added to the tenancy agreement for her own use. The Trustees are resigned to the fact that we may have to spend some money improving the area before it is more manageable for a single parent.*

*Last New Year's Eve, many villagers bemoaned the fact that a ceilidh had not been organised in the Parish Hall. This year, we will rectify the situation and a band has already been booked.*

*Finally, once again I give my sincere thanks to the Parish Councillors, Councillor Anne Dale, Northumberland County Council and to the many volunteers from our village who, you may remember from last year's Olympics, were also called the Game Makers. Your amazing support ensures our village halls are community buildings, used every day in every possible way. Because of their success, we have been approached by the Fire & Rescue Service to offer our facilities, in case of need, as a Rest & Rescue Centre should problems occur in our vicinity (for example providing temporary accommodation to the homeless following the flooding in Morpeth in 2008).*

*We are also able to apply for a Hallmark accreditation – a nationally recognised quality standards scheme for community buildings which confirms that the management team is acting according to the Charities Commission and which gives all its users the confidence and comfort that they are supporting a safe and secure environment.*

**Cllr Reid, on behalf of the Parish Council and all the residents of Riding Mill, thanked Pam for the tremendous work she does not only for the VHT but in writing her weekly column for the Hexham Courant. This was endorsed by everyone at the meeting.**

**7. Broomhaugh CE First School Report**

 (Elaine Ryder, School Governor, gave the report on behalf of Jen Stephenson)

*First of all I give my thanks to Elaine Ryder as a School Governor, for kindly agreeing to read this out and my apologies for having a prior arrangement.*

*I am glad to inform everyone that school has reached its capacity, we have 75 pupils in school and are, unfortunately, in the position of having to turn away any new families who move into the area. We are also pleased to announce that we have 15 new starters in September and so it looks as if we will continue to be full. This is a good situation to be in as once again funding from the County Council is at a low ebb and a lot of funding depends on school numbers. As a school we have to carefully manage all our finances to ensure we are able to provide the resources to deliver an exciting stimulating curriculum with adequate adult/pupil ratios.*

*You may have read recently that many schools in this area are not receiving a favourable report from Ofsted (the body that inspects all schools) As a school we are doing our best to provide every child a curriculum that not only suits their skills and knowledge, but stretches and challenges them too. We are lucky enough to have a happy school where the majority of children are excited and keen to learn. A lot of the work in school is undertaken through topics and over the past year we have covered such areas as recycling, India, pirates, Victorians and toys and inventions. The youngest children enjoy their time outside and we are continuing to develop our outdoor area as well as making numerous walks around the village environment.*

*Just before Easter we had our SIAMs Inspection. This is, as a Church school, the inspection of the teaching of Religious Education and the distinctive Christian ethos of the school. We are very proud to announce that we received an ‘Outstanding’ grade.*

*I am also very grateful to the staff for running after school clubs such as gardening, outdoor games, sketching, dance and choirs.*

*The PTA work hard for us and this year they have bought new ICT resources as well as a new outdoor shed and notice boards. Our out of hours and breakfast club Squirrels, continues to provide an invaluable service for parents who work. We are pleased to say that we have recently had some evenings when all 16 places at Squirrels have been taken. In the same week as our SIAMs inspection Ofsted inspected Squirrels and we are pleased to say they received a ‘Good’ grade (the second highest).*

*We are sad to say that, as many of you will already know, we had a break in in the early hours of Good Friday morning. The burglars attempted to break into the school safe, if only they had known! The safe is always empty apart from one week in the year when the Spelling Test for the Year 1 children is locked away according to government rules.*

*We would like to thank the parents, children, Governors and villagers for all their help, support and interest that they show in the school and we would like to thank the Parish Council for their continued support.*

**8. Minor Matters**

Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam – Sally Rogers reported that she and two other residents had been trained to monitor the water quality of the Marchburn once a month and also to inject pesticides to remove Japanese Knotweed. A lot of time had been spent removing Himalayan Balsam to encourage more native flora to return. The long term plan was to clear the river further up stream if a larger group of volunteers could be found. It was noted that there was a problem of Knotweed on the river banks at Broomhaugh. Sally could borrow equipment from the Tyne Rivers Trust if the Parish Council would pay for the pesticides to treat it. Anyone interested in helping with this work was asked to contact Sally by email on sallyrogers@fsmail.net.

**The Meeting closed at 9.00pm**