# Broomhaugh and Riding Parish CouncilLogo final design (2) (2).jpg

**Minutes of the annual Parish Meeting**

Monday 27th April 2015, 7pm, Parish Hall, Riding Mill.

**Present:** Cllr. Malcolm Reid (Chair), Cllr. Andy Dunhill, Cllr. Jill Mills, Cllr. Eileen Carew, Cllr. Brian Singer, County Councillor Anne Dale, Pam Pryor (Chair of the Village Hall Trust) and Ms Jen Stephenson (Head teacher, Broomhaugh CE School), together with 10 members of the public.

In attendance:

Mrs Catherine Harrison – Parish Clerk

Mrs Gemma Brown – Hexham Courant

Peter Rutherford – Northumberland County Council

Inspector Julie Cole and Sgt. Gary Simpson – Northumbria Police

**1st Presentation**

**The meeting commenced with a presentation by Peter Rutherford, a Planning Officer from Northumberland County Council outlining the merits of a Neighbourhood Plan. His full presentation can be found on the website** [**www.ridingmill.org**](http://www.ridingmill.org)**.**

**Key matters raised:**

* Neighbourhood plans can cover any matter important to the local community i.e. might just cover one topic e.g. planning or could cover a host of topics e.g. planning, renewable energy, sustainable construction, employment, commerce, health etc.;
* A plan would provide vision, objectives and strategy for the community covering at least a 15 year period;
* A plan would be prepared in consultation with those who live, work or operate in the area. A consultation would be held and amendments made to the initial plan. It would then be submitted to NCC who would publicise the plan for a minimum of 6 weeks so that people can make representations. It would be examined and a decision made as to whether the plan could be put to a referendum. In a referendum at least 50% of those who voted would need to support the plan for it to be accepted and for it to become part of NCC’s Development plan;
* Preparing even a simple one topic Neighbourhood Plan can be both costly and time consuming. Most plans take 2-3 years to develop;
* A plan could help influence future planning decisions. Currently Riding Mill and Broomhaugh are included within the Central Delivery Area for housing. 1120 homes have to be built in this whole area over the plan period, 2011-2031.

**Comments from residents:**

* A survey of housing and business needs might be a useful means of identifying whether a plan would be useful;
* Green belt – boundaries are meant to be very long-term and we should not be considering allowing development in these areas.

**Way forward**

* Residents should write with their views to the Clerk and the comments will be discussed by the Neighbourhood Plan group. Residents are encouraged to join this group if they feel they could contribute;
* The PC should review other Neighbourhood Plans under development.

**At the end of the discussion, Cllr. Reid encouraged residents to write to the Parish Council with their views.**

**2nd Presentation**

Inspector Julie Cole and her colleague Stg. Gary Simpson gave a presentation on current policing issues and an overview of the new operational structure. There had been 11 burglaries in the village since last October and although no one had been prosecuted for any burglary in Riding Mill there had been one offender jailed for offences in other areas. High-visibility patrols, officers drafted in from other areas and plain clothes detectives had all been used in an attempt to catch the thieves and the extra police action appeared to have had an effect as there had been no recent incidents.

Inspector Cole felt that a formal Neighbourhood Watch scheme was not necessary as residents were already fully aware of noting and reporting anything or anybody suspicious. The installation of CCTV cameras at either end of the village would not be appropriate.

Inspector Cole concluded by reminding residents to contact the police on 101 with any concerns, or on 999 if there was an immediate risk.

The formal meeting commenced ay 8.50pm

**1. Apologies**

 Bill Cairns

**2. Minutes of the 2014 annual Parish meeting,** which had been displayed on the ridingmill.org website since last June, were agreed to be a true record.

**3.** **Broomhaugh CE First School Report, Ms Jen Stephenson, Head teacher**

I am glad to inform everyone that the school is still at capacity, we have 75 pupils in school. At present 41% of our children come from out of the village area. We have 10 new starters in September. We think this is due to a small cohort at pre-school this year – pre-school is of course our main feeder. In previous years we have had calls during the summer holidays asking for places, which may of course happen again. Funding does depend a lot on school numbers. We have to carefully manage all our finances to ensure we are able to provide the resources to deliver the curriculum with adequate adult/pupil ratios, but we hope we will be able to carry on this year without these 5 spare places having any effect on our resources. At present we have 5 members of teaching staff – one full time, 4 part–time, 1 full time Higher Level Teaching Assistant, and 4 part time Teaching Assistants, 1 part time Office Manager, our Catering Manager and Catering Assistant, Part time Caretaker and 2 play-workers to run our out of hours club. We also enlist the use of outside experts such as our Yoga teacher and hopefully tennis/cricket coaches later on in the summer term.

A new curriculum was introduced to all primary schools last September. This meant that staff had to re-plan their teaching activities and topics that were to be covered. The introduction of the new curriculum has led to some ‘headaches’. As well as introducing new concepts to the children, we have had quite a few areas where the new curriculum has led to a jump in learning, so we have been playing at catch-up. The other new initiative that the Government introduced was that they have taken away assessing children in levels. We now have end of year objectives to aim for. Again, this has led to staff having to spend hours and hours trying to work out a new way of assessing the children to show their progress. In previous years the levels that our children achieve have always been well above the National average – I am not sure how I am reporting this in future years!

We are still waiting for Ofsted to return but right now are in the happy position of having a double outstanding school, that is outstanding for Ofsted and outstanding for our SIAMs Church Inspection.

We continue to run extra-curricular clubs at the end of the school day and across the year we cover such activities as Art, Music, Sport activities, ICT clubs, gardening – the list goes on. Staff do these in their own time. We have also tried to join in with activities in the local area so as an example, two weeks ago, we took part in a Fun Run at The Sele which was a nationally organised run with many other schools. In September, we are looking forward to the Tour of Britain Bike Race coming through the village, and hope to be producing poems and decorating a bike to be put up along the route.

The PTA as always, work hard for us and this year they have bought new ICT resources as well as contributing to our outdoor area.

Our out of hours and breakfast club Squirrels, provides an invaluable service for parents who work and our two play-workers are kept busy, especially on the days in the middle of the week.

We are both thrilled and upset that Alison is leaving us. She has an excellent relationship with school and the children love her coming in to chat to them. As a school we are planning an afternoon to celebrate her involvement here at school – an afternoon tea party.

As always, 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.

**4. County Councillor’s Report, Cllr. Anne Dale**

The last year has once again been busy and challenging. I am always pleased to have an input into the work of the County Council and continue to Chair the Audit Committee and also Chair the new Cycling and Walking Board. I also serve on various scrutiny committees and working groups including the Planning Committee and School Improvement Panel. I have a full time commitment to representing your views at County Hall.

A few highlights over the last year include:

**Budget 2015/17**

The finances of the County Council continue to be challenging and over the next two years savings of £44m have been budgeted for and there will be further savings of £55m required up to 2019. The cost of social services, an ageing population, highways and education are of particular concern. However I am pleased that capital funding has been made available for the new Prudhoe High School, Hexham High School, Hexham Fire Station and the new bus station in Hexham together with highways improvements on the A695.

**Prudhoe High School**

I would like to thank everyone who supported the County Council’s bid for a new school building for the students of Prudhoe High School. I am delighted that both the Council and Government will be taking this forward with the support of Sport England and work will begin soon.

**Bus subsidy working group**

As a member of the County Council’s working group I am looking at the development of sustainable bus services throughout the county.

**Highways**

I do apologise for the continuous line of traffic lights along the A695 however this is due to road maintenance and resurfacing. There will be further maintenance work over the next few months.

I am working with the Parish to develop village gateways at the east entrance to the village on the A695 to reduce the speed of vehicles entering the village. The County are reviewing their policies on speed reduction around schools and built up areas however this may not incorporate strategic routes.

**Local development Plan**

The Core strategy has recently been out to consultation however there will be a further opportunity later in the year to add any further observations to this important document before it is examined by the independent Government Inspector.

**Proposed refurbishment/new build of County Hall**

The cost of a new build or the refurbishment of the present County Hall has been estimated at £19.5m. I look forward to seeing the business management report in the near future before any decision is taken.

**At a local level**, I attend every Parish Council meeting and support the Parish in any way I can. I am always available before the meeting if residents wish to discuss anything with me. I have been able to help various organisations in the village with financial help through my Members local improvement funding scheme.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for contacting me over the year with your views and concerns and I hope that I have also been able to help many of you on a personal level. As this is just a snapshot of the work of the County Council during the last year if you would like to discuss anything in more detail please do contact me at Anne.Dale@Northumberland.gov.uk or telephone 01434 673326.

 **Questions following report:**

Mr Paul Brown raised a query re the need for either a pedestrian crossing or a lollipop person to help children cross the main road on a morning. Cllr. Dale agreed to look in to the matter but remarked that this issue had been raised a number of times before and following extensive surveys the road had been deemed insufficiently busy to warrant such a crossing.

**5. Village Hall Trust Report, Mrs Pam Pryor**

To prepare this report, it was necessary, of course, to read my notes for the Annual Parish Meeting in 2014. I can't believe how busy we have been in the last 12 months. Last April, the extension to the Parish Hall to create extra storage was four months away. Today it feels as though the two new rooms created have always been there. In fact both rooms are almost full. How did we manage without it?

Ian Davison and his builders set to work at the end of July and the work took much longer to complete than expected. A September completion date was changed to mid October. Thankfully all hall users were understanding as there was little inconvenience and everyone appreciated that Ian was thorough with his work, paying particular attention to detail.

Once the builders left the site, Graeme Goole arrived to paint the new rooms and half of the main hall affected by the work. The main hall was transformed and it is a pity that we couldn't afford to paint the whole of the area at the same time. We will add this work to our wish list.

Concern had been expressed that the large old window would be removed and replaced with a plain glass window but we need not have worried. Feedback shows that people prefer the new window bringing far more light and atmosphere into the hall.

I thank David Niven, Vice Chairman of the Trust, for project managing the extension and for his vision and I thank Elaine and Martin Raeburn and Val and Alan Thompson for restoring the land outside of the extension to such a high standard for us all to enjoy.

Both the Parish Hall and the Millennium Hall are well utilised with very little space left for new bookings. Can I please take a minute of your time to tell you what we have on offer in these two community buildings?

For socialising, the Cafe @ The Foyer is open every Monday and Friday morning. Lunch is also served every Tuesday and Thursday in the week for anyone wishing to enjoy a hot two course meal among friends. For exercise and sport enthusiasts we offer Carpet Bowls, Karate, Pilates, Yoga, Zumba Gold, Gymnastics, Badminton, Exercise classes, Table Tennis and Nia Dance classes. For education, the Pre School is open every week day in term time in the Millennium Hall and Sunday School is held there every week in term time too. The Bridge Club also offers Bridge lessons. For leisure, we have the Choral Society, the Photographic Society, Craft classes, the Bridge Club and an Art Group. The yoga tutor, Rose Romani, and the Northumbria Healers also offer complementary health treatments on the premises.

We have regular bookings for private functions and fundraising events and both halls are also used for meetings by the Parish Council, the Scout Association, the Guide Association, resident associations, local businesses, club committees – I could go on.

Gone are the days when the halls were closed in August. Now our clubs are asking to continue throughout the year. These community buildings are important meeting places for villagers of all ages. We are proud of them.

Sadly, it seems that earlier this year we became victims of our own success. It didn't take the police to calculate that burglaries were committed in homes where the occupants were attending functions at our halls. Naturally the Trustees worried that we promoted our facilities too actively but after meeting with detectives and the Community Police we were advised that we must not allow the thieves to spoil what we have worked so hard to establish.

Of course, being so busy, the halls incur substantial maintenance and running costs. Particularly in the long winter months, the halls need to be well heated for groups such as Lunch Club, Yoga, Bridge etc but much cooler for Badminton, Gymnastics or Zumba. Our heating system is old, expensive to run and is not zoned so if one room is hot, the whole hall is hot. In the Millennium Hall it is the complicated lighting system that is expensive to run. All in all, our gas and electric bills are high. We are grateful to Northumberland County Council for allocating £5,000 from the Community Chest towards upgrading the heating at the Parish Hall but we can't use this money until we have completed the first phase of the upgrade which is the new boiler and zoning to isolate areas which are not in use. This is a huge and expensive project which we must get right. The system also needs to respond quickly. At the moment it needs to be switched on at least one hour before the room is required to reach a comfortable temperature.

It's a tall order but we are also hoping to be able to raise £10,000 this year to purchase new staging as the old platforms which are currently being used are dangerous and cumbersome. The new staging can be easily stored and will be well utilised by the Drama Club, the Choral Society and the Youth Theatre. It can also be hired out to help us recoup this expenditure. We have taken advice as to our requirements and sourced the most versatile equipment.

We are extremely grateful to the Parish Council for purchasing the defibrillator for the village and honoured to have this located at the Parish Hall where there is regularly a large number of people at any one time.

Running two village halls is like managing a business. The Trustees are aware of their responsibilities to the Church (in the case of the Parish Hall), the Charity Commission and to everyone who uses the buildings. Without the support of the Parish Council, Councillor Anne Dale and the County Council, the Parochial Church Council, our caretaker and her husband, Val and Alan Thompson, and a huge team of volunteers, our business would fold and life in the village would be far less entertaining.

Thank you for putting your trust in us.

**6. Chairman’s report, Cllr. Reid**

For personal reasons my name will not be going forward in May for the annual election of Chairman. So I would like to touch on the last 2 years of my watch.

Without question, the outstanding achievement of this period was the appointment of Catherine Harrison as Clerk in October 2013. Her diligence, competence and enthusiasm have enabled the Council to fulfil many of its aspirations. One of these was to be more accessible and keep villagers in touch by having a regular report in the Parish News and keeping the website up to date, especially with regard to public consultations.

My aim has been to de-centralise the Council so that individual Councillors would take the lead in different areas. Amongst other things, Eileen saw through the bus shelter at the west end of the village, Brian is leading on restoration of the football field, Jill keeps us straight on legal matters, Bill tries to get his head round the accounts and Andy leads on planning issues and consultations and has been a very able acting-Chairman when I have been away. This breakdown of roles should make it easier for villagers to consider volunteering as councillors if they see an area they could contribute to – and there are 3 vacancies, so please give it a thought.

An important role of the Council is to maintain village amenities in good order, see that the complicated arrangements on grass cutting are carried out, and monitor the safety of the many trees we own. It is also to facilitate the initiatives of the many wonderful people who make creative things happen in the village, such as co-operating with Pam Prior on improving facilities for young people in the village.

We are currently working on plans for a ramp from the Parish Hall to the play park, the provision of new play and exercise equipment for people of all ages, a review of the vehicle activated signs, and a gateway at the East end of the village. Traffic consultations take place regularly between the PC and our very energetic County Councillor, Anne Dale. A safer turn-off to Healey from the A 68 has been introduced. Money has been allocated for creating a safe cycleway between the roundabout and Stocksfield. Further priorities under consideration are: traffic calming measures at the west end of the village; widening of the footpath beside St James Terrace; and possible speed restrictions on the A68 within the Parish.

There is now a newly formed footpaths group, a river watch group and a working party considering a neighbourhood plan. Paul Goldsmith’s initiative has brought us access to high speed broadband this year. Hopefully the pre-school group will soon be taking advantage of the amenity of the Spinney. We have at last achieved effective lighting at reasonable cost on the footpath to the platform for east-going trains.

The Council has created a policy of encouraging planting with edible produce on amenity land and 5 large planters with vegetables, herbs and spices now grace the station platforms for villagers to sample when the produce is in season.

Public spiritness thrives in the village. Of events organised by the PC, 20 villagers turned out on Saturday 28th March for the annual litter pick, and on Sunday 22nd February a large number of villagers took part in training on use of the defibrillator recently installed at the Parish Hall.

The year ahead promises new excitement and planning with the Tour of Britain cycle race sweeping through the village in September.

What more? Well it is up to you as well as the Council.

**7. Financial Statement**

A draft financial statement for the year ending 31st March 2015 was presented. It was noted that the figures were unaudited as yet. The accounts would be available from 1st June until 29th June for public scrutiny and anyone wishing to see them should make an appointment via the Clerk.

**8. Minor Matters**

This part of the meeting commenced with a presentation by Cllr. Dunhill outlining ideas for improving facilities within Riding Mill. Pieces of play equipment were considered for the Play Park together with fitness equipment for adults. A discussion was also held on the installation of a ramp by the Parish Hall to aid access to the MUGA court and Play Park for those in a wheelchair of with prams.

 Comments re play equipment & adult fitness equipment:

* The play park should be kept for under 12s.
* It would be nice to see new equipment aimed at slightly older children, over 8s.
* General feeling that adult fitness equipment might be extremely underused and money could be better spent elsewhere. It would not be appropriate for parents who are supposed to be supervising children in a play park to be exercising at the same time as clearly they wouldn’t be watching their children. Could possibly be installed at various points up Whiteside Bank but would it be used?!

Comments re ramp:

* Concerns were expressed re misuse by children on bikes or skateboards. It was noted that it would be a 1 in 20 incline and that other pavements throughout Riding Mill were much steeper.
* The Clerk would see if it was possible to produce a better drawing of the ramp which could be displayed in the Parish Hall for residents to view.

**ACTION: CH**

 Knotweed

A resident reported that a new patch of knotweed was growing in Broomhaugh woods upstream of the stepping stones.

This is the Styford Estate’s land and they should be dealing with it in conjunction with the Tyne Rivers Trust. There was now a trained volunteer within the village who could inject the plants with herbicide to kill them and the PC reiterated that it was happy to make a contribution towards the costs for any herbicide required.

Cllr. Reid closed the meeting and thanked all those who had participated.