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

**Minutes of the annual Parish Meeting**

Thursday 12th May 2016, 7pm, Parish Hall, Riding Mill.

**Present:** Cllr. Andy Dunhill (Chair), Cllr. Malcolm Reid, Cllr. Jill Mills, Cllr. Eileen Carew, Cllr. David McKenzie, 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 15 members of the public.

In attendance:

Mrs Catherine Harrison – Parish Clerk

**1. Apologies**

 None.

**2. Minutes of the 2015 annual Parish meeting,** which had been displayed on the ridingmill.org website in draft form since last June, were agreed to be a true record.

**3. Matters arising from last year’s Minutes**

 (i) *Neighbourhood Plan*

No one came forward to say they thought it would be a good idea or to offer to help to develop a Neighbourhood Plan. The PC therefore agreed that no further action would be taken on this matter.

 (ii) *Ramp*

This had now been installed and positive feedback received, notably from parents using the Play Park. It had also become the route of choice for most users of the footpath.

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

At present we have 71 pupils at school. We had a small intake to our reception class this year – only 11 pupils and we had one pupil move away from school at Christmas. The good news is that in September we are actually taking in 17 new starters in Reception class and one new pupil into the Year 2 group. As school is not at capacity we are able to take in every child who had Broomhaugh down as their first choice of school. At present we have 5 members of teaching staff – 1 full time ( me- and I teach 4 days a week), 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 football and tennis coaches and yoga teacher to enhance our PE activities. Some big changes occurred at Easter as Mary our Office Manager for the past 26 years retired- her knowledge was vast and Susan who has stepped into the role is working hard to try to understand all systems and procedures.

We have continued to work with the new curriculum that the Government introduced a year ago. No doubt you have all heard a lot in the news recently about the SATs and how much children are expected to know. I am not exactly convinced the 6 and 7 year olds need to understand what adverbs are and to be able to identify them in a sentence, as well as to be able to spell 200 common words and correctly use terminology such as suffix, compound or subordination…I always thought that writing should be a little more creative for children of that age. I cannot give any indication of what our children have achieved as the government will not tell us the pass marks until after all the tests results have been sent to them. It is quite a challenge to provide an exciting stimulating curriculum when weighed down by these expectations but we do try and children still seem to love school.

The inside of the school was painted last summer holiday which brightened up the classrooms considerably and we are hoping that this summer we will receive funding to replace some of the felt on the flat roofs that we have.

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, Drama and Sport activities, – the list goes on. Staff do these in their own time at the end of their days. We have also tried to join in with activities in the local area – we loved the Tour of Britain bike race and still have our yellow bikes up outside school and join in with the Hexham partnership – the schools that feed into Queen Elizabeth High school – events.

We are still waiting for Ofsted to return at some point.

Another talking point in the news recently was the forced acadamisation and then the u-turn about academies. Unfortunately this threat to small schools does not really go away as one point that was made by the Education Secretary was that any authority that was not performing could still be made to convert schools to academies. This is a real danger to schools such as ours in Northumberland and the Governors and myself are discussing this situation with the diocese as well as other local schools.

The PTA as always, work hard for us but have struggled this year to find willing parents to join the committee – a problem faced by many organisations.

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.

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.

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

The past year has been very busy both locally and at County level and I have been able to lead on developing projects and service improvements at both levels. This report I hope will give you a brief overview of the past year and projects underway.

**County Council**

The County Council continues to make changes to service delivery as more cuts in Local Government funding are announced. Since 2009 the Council’s revenue budget has been cut by £190.5m and we have some difficult challenges ahead such as the delivery of social services to an ageing population and over 3,500 children registered in need in the County. The Council are legally not allowed to use capital for revenue funding however they can invest in capital projects which have a revenue saving and this approach was used very successfully by the late Tynedale District Council. I have worked with the County Council to ensure that there is capital investment in both Hexham and Prudhoe and the west of Northumberland. Capital investment includes the Queen’s Hall as a main service centre, a wedding venue at Hexham House, Hexham High School, a new Fire Station and bus station for Hexham, funding for the maintenance of the Hexham bandstand, the new Sill Discovery centre, together with investment in Prudhoe Waterworld, development of business space in Prudhoe together with support for many other projects. The Council are also looking to identify further parking spaces in Hexham.

**Tour of Britain**

I was delighted that the Tour of Britain came to Northumberland for two days and I was so pleased for everyone that the second day commenced at Prudhoe and travelled through Mickley, Stocksfield and Riding Mill. There is further good news that the Tour will be returning to Northumberland next year but I can’t promise that it will be the same route. I was amazed by the input of the villages and the schools to make it such a special day.

**Northumberland County Council Local Plan/Core Strategy**

A pre-submission draft of the core strategy has now been produced and consultation on this version of the document took place at the end of last year. The comments received during the consultation have been reviewed and it is considered appropriate that the document should be amended before it is submitted for independent examination. A consultation on proposed major changes to the core strategy will therefore take place for a six week period during June and July this year. I have worked to ensure that the green belt around Riding Mill remains unaltered.

**Highways and Flooding**

There has been extensive press coverage of the flooding in the area in December and January. I am continuing to work with the County Council, the Environment Agency and nwl to mitigate any future flood risk. I am working with the Parish Council and the Environment Agency to form a Flood Management Group for the village. I work closely with the Area Highways officer on issues of road maintenance and gulley cleaning. I would like to thank the emergency services and the County Council officers who have given outstanding service to the residents during this difficult time.

The ROW between Riding Mill and Corbridge was extensively damaged during the December floods. The Council’s Rights of Way Officer for the area is working with local landowners however I am sorry but it will take some considerable time before progress is made and a new ROW is made. The County Council does recognise that it is an important route for the residents of the Parish especially as there is no other safe footpath to Corbridge.

Other issues raised include planning, a water leak in the Old School Playground, lighting on Whiteside Bank, school transport, dog dirt, trees, litter, speeding, Council tax, benefits of different types, fracking, bin collections, fund opportunities, immigration, bonfires and the emergency services. I am always very happy to meet and discuss any issues you may have.

**Local Projects**

I have been working with the Parish Council on new gateways at the eastern end of the village in response to the many complaints I have received about the speed of traffic on the A695 at Broomhaugh. Although some parts of the project are installed there is further work to be undertaken.

The County Council have agreed to make a 20 mph zone outside the school and this will include Whiteside Bank and Church Close as far as the junction with Meadow Park. There will also be a 20 mph zone at the beginning and end of the school day on the A695. I am also working with Jen Stephenson at Broomhaugh School on a project with the children.

The County Council have agreed to introduce a 20 mph speed limit in Station Close after I was contacted by several residents.

I am continuing to engage with the Council on the possibility of a pedestrian crossing. They will be monitoring the area sometime in the future.

**Closure of Railway Bridge at Hexham – diversion of traffic through Riding Mill**

I continue to work with the County Council on all risk assessments, speed limits, etc for the period of the diversion later in June. A meeting with the members of the Parish Council will be arranged once the draft management plan is ready.

**County Council work**

I Chair the Northumberland County Council Audit Committee and the Northumberland Cycling and Walking Board and serve on many other County Committees. I also serve on the North East Combined Authority Audit and Governance Committee and on other regional committees. I also work closely with the Parish Council and attend all their meetings and work closely with residents to help with any issues they may have.

Please do contact me on 01434 673326 or email me at Anne.Dale@Northumberland.gov.uk if you have any issues or would like to discuss any of my work in more detail.

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

Since the Annual Parish Meeting in 2015, the Trustees of the Riding Mill Village Halls have continued to be busy with approximately 1,000 people passing through the Parish Hall and Millennium Hall each week. These are wonderful halls, aptly named our ‘community buildings’ - sociable places where education, exercise, creativity and, most of all, fun is in abundance.

Of course busy halls mean busy caretaker, busy volunteers and a great deal of wear and tear. Recently our Caretaker, Val Thompson, has found it difficult to look after both halls within her contracted hours and it has been necessary to appoint an Assistant to work an additional eight hours per week. I believe this position is now filled. Val and Alan also kindly undertake gardening work and, together with Elaine and Martin Raeburn and their voluntary team of Garden Invaders, they ensure our Parish Hall looks attractive and interesting. These are large outside spaces and the amount of upkeep they require should not be under-estimated. It is true to say that without our Caretaker and enthusiastic volunteers, our halls would not be so popular and welcoming.

The obvious disadvantage of busy halls is the repair and maintenance required and the expense of our utility bills. For many years we have lived with a slow response heating system in the Parish Hall which can’t be zoned dependent upon the space being use. We also learnt in the Millennium Hall that when we replaced the table tennis lights for LED lights, we swapped 4500 watts for 270 watts! We need to upgrade the heating system in the Parish Hall and the lighting in both halls now. David Niven, the Trust’s Vice Chairman, is kindly working on both projects and we hope to have the work carried out if our halls become a little quieter around August.

Despite the storage area which was added to the Parish Hall in 2014, we still remain short of space due to the amount of Clubs which are in residence. Even when equipment is stored, access can then become difficult in a packed room and safety must be prioritised.

For this reason we have some short and medium term projects in the pipeline. We need to build another storage room, to the same specification as the 2014 project, to the rear of the Parish Hall but envisage this being an extension of the Storeroom to the left of the stage which currently houses the fridge, freezer, hot box and old toilet facility.

Some time ago, the Parochial Church Council (our Landlords) expressed a wish that the old Drama Club hut be pulled down but, as we can’t afford to lose this space, then we would need to transform the garage at the end of the driveway into a bigger, more solid construction. We can then landscape behind the Parish Hall. Eventually, we will also need to upgrade the kitchens in both our halls due to the wear and tear they receive.

One other expense outstanding from last year is the purchase of new staging at a cost of over £10,000. Some people have asked me if this is necessary but the staging previously used by the Drama Club, the Choral Society and the Tyne Valley Youth Theatre was damaged and dangerous and, as such, a liability. It seems to me to be ridiculous to pay for the hire of such equipment at huge expense when to purchase our own would be such an asset and a benefit to the whole community. Our First School and Pre-School and our Churches would be welcome to borrow the system at any time.

All of the above sounds costly. We thank Northumberland County Council for granting us £5,000 from the Community Chest to be spent on the heating system. We also thank the Parish Council for allowing us £2,500 from their precept.

My husband, Andy Pryor, has been Co-opted (or do I mean coerced) onto the Village Hall Trust and has been working on grant applications to raise funds for our projects which, in total, could amount to in excess of £100,000. So far, he has received one response from the Barbour Foundation who have donated £500 towards the staging.

Once the above targets have been achieved, which I know won’t be easy, we can concentrate on using and maintaining our halls and simply enjoy them again. At the moment we continue to be met with problems and inadequacies which make the management of two halls quite stressful.

Please know that you can trust your Village Hall Trust and we will aim to reach our targets as soon as funds allow. Thank you for supporting our Clubs and our fundraising events. Remember these are your community buildings.

**7. Chairman’s report, Cllr. Dunhill**

This has been my first year as Chairman and I have been elected to continue in the role for the next year. I must begin this report by thanking my fellow Councillors for their support, Anne Dale our County Councillor and most importantly Catherine Harrison our Clerk who ensures that we all do what we should when we should (well almost).

I have continued the framework of delegated responsibility set up by Malcolm Reid, the last Chairman. The sub groups we have work very well and include – Planning, Legal/FOI, Footpaths, Village Amenities, Sports and Recreation etc.

One of our main roles is to maintain and enhance the village and PC assets within it for the benefit of the community. We employ a Handyman a few hours a month; Grass cutting of PC land has been contracted to a local private business; Maintenance of our trees is an ongoing problem especially as they keep falling down; The Play Park is inspected on a weekly basis; The Old Play Ground sprung a significant leak in the cold weather causing an ice build up which will be monitored.

Our main achievements during the year have been:

*Ramp Adjacent to the Single Tennis Court* – This allows disabled access to the court and makes it easier for older people and those pushing prams etc.

*Edible Riding Mill* – The aim is to plant fruits and vegetables that can be enjoyed by all. Following completion of the Ramp the adjacent land has been tidied and planted by a group of residents

*Football Field* – This has been refurbished and will be useable in the autumn.

*Footpaths Group* – All paths in the parish were walked and problems noted. A programme of work to carry out repairs has been developed

*Newsletter* – We produced the first one last year which went down well so plan to do one this summer. Let us know if you have any ideas.

For such a small community is amazing how many administrative things there are to do. We agree our budget and precept for the year monitor spending & produce year end accounts. We give grants to various organisations and clubs in the village the main ones being the Village Hall Trust (annual) and a contribution to the Church Cottage Refurbishment. This year we helped the Table Tennis Club buy a new table. Together with the Church we are seeking grant funding to refurbish the WW1 plaque found in the Church Cottage. All clubs are welcome to apply for grant assistance.

We receive many consultation documents from the County and respond to the ones that affect us. We have put in place a range of policy documents which must be reviewed on a regular basis, and many more mundane tasks.

We were subject to legal action by a resident of Millfield Road which resulted in a property litigation legal advisor instructed on behalf of the PC and supported by three Councillors attending an Alternative Dispute Resolution meeting in November. There remains the threat of further legal action on this matter.

I would like to thanks the many other residents in the village for their help throughout the year including Pam Pryor Chair of the VHT; Alan Thompson for mowing the grass on the path at the east end of the village by the WI planter; all those who helped on the Litter Pick Day and the two gardening days; The walkers on the Footpaths Group; plus anyone I’ve forgotten.

**The next year** – there’s lots to do.

*Flood Management Plan –* You will all be aware that a few houses were flooded in winter. We are working with the County, NWL and The Environment Agency to mitigate future problems. We are looking for volunteers to help establish a plan.

*Gateway entrance in Broomhaugh* – Agree a plan of landscaping to enhance the effectiveness. Re-align the VAC signs.

*Marchburn Lane Bridge and the Weir Footbridge* - Take appropriate action from the surveys to be undertaken soon.

*Cricket and Football Ground* – Work with the club to improve the facilities.

We do have 3 vacancies on the PC so would welcome more help. Please contact one of us if you’d like to see what it’s all about.

**8. Financial Statement**

A draft financial statement for the year ending 31st March 2016 was presented. It was noted that the figures were unaudited as yet. The accounts would be available from 13th June until 22nd July for public scrutiny and anyone wishing to see them should make an appointment via the Clerk.

**9. Minor Matters**

 The following issues were raised by residents attending the meeting:

1. *Survey of Marchburn Lane road bridge and the wooden weir footbridge – when would this work by undertaken?*

It had been hoped that the surveys would have been completed earlier this year but weather conditions had delayed the inspections. It was anticipated that the reports would be received within the next month.

1. *Footbath from Broomhaugh to the roundabout – very overgrown with vegetation*

Due to financial considerations at the County Council, the grass cutting on this section of the road would now only be undertaken once a year. Cllr. Dale offered to raise the matter with the County Council.

**ACTION: ADa**

1. *Weeds throughout village*

The County Council applies weed killer once a year to pavements. The PC had asked that weed killer was not applied to areas adjacent to other vegetation although had no objection to its application in gullies and on pavements. If residents were prepared to clear weeds from outside their homes this would help and the Clerk would highlight this in the next newsletter.

**ACTION: CH**

1. Japanese Knotweed

It was reported that the Japanese Knotweed in Millfield Road showed signs of re-growth. The Clerk was asked to take advice on further treatment from a specialist firm.

**ACTION: CH**

Cllr. Dunhill asked those attending the meeting if they liked the format of the current meeting i.e. a series of verbal reports followed by questions. Some members of the audience liked this format others felt that it would be better to simply read the reports. With no clear majority it was agreed to continue with the current format for future meetings.

**Sports for All**

Following the reports, representatives from various sports clubs gave brief presentations outlining what was happening at each club:

*Cricket Club (also Football) – Clive Page*

There has been a cricket club in Riding Mill since 1886. Use of the current ground was being expanded – it was now being used for ladies and junior matches as well as by the regular men’s teams. The football field had been reseeded and it was hoped that football would commence in the autumn. With the increased use of the ground, there was a need to improve the facilities and the Cricket Club hoped to replace the pavilion with a new structure with proper toilets and shower facilities and with electricity. A feasibility study to identify the costs was to be undertaken shortly.

*Gym Club – Linden Furness*

Run by Jill Tan, the Gym Club offer a one hour session for girls aged 4-8. The session for boys has had to be cancelled due to insufficient interest but there was potential to reopen this class if the situation changed.

*Table Tennis – Linden Furness*

The Club was formed in 1980 and meets on a Monday evening. There are currently 40 members. The Club recently purchased two new tables with the help of grants from the County Council, Anne Dale and the Parish Council. The older tables have been moved to the Parish Hall and there was some interest in starting an additional session there on a Wednesday morning.

*Carpet Bowls – Alan Armstrong*

The Club meets on a Monday afternoon all year round including Bank holidays. There are currently 24 members (the maximum membership possible is 28). The Club also plays competitive evening fixtures on occasion.

*Tennis – Rob Archer*

The Tennis Club has 70 members, with two teams – men’s and veterans – competing in leagues. Coaching sessions were held for juniors and adults and the Club was applying for funding for coaching for 16-25 year olds and for new members. MUGA court – football sessions were currently being offered and the Club hoped to offer walking football, netball and volleyball sessions on the court later this year to increase usage.

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