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

**Minutes of the annual Parish Meeting**

Thursday 11th May 2017, 7pm, Parish Hall, Riding Mill.

**Present:** Cllr. Andy Dunhill (Chair), 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 10 members of the public.

In attendance:

Mrs Catherine Harrison – Parish Clerk

Mr Melvyn Stone – Dementia Friend, Corbridge Parish Councillor

Ms Katrina Padmore & Ross Menzies, Let’s Get Growing Project Co-ordinators

**1. Apologies**

Cllrs. Reid and Howe.

**2. Minutes of the 2016 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**

16-9(i) – Survey of Marchburn Lane bridge and wooden weir footbridge: surveys had been undertaken and it was hoped that the repairs could be scheduled within the next few months.

16-9(ii) – Footpath from Broomhaugh to the roundabout: The Parish Council had taken on the task of ensuring the grass was cut along the route to the roundabout.

16-9(iii) – weeds throughout village: in 2016, the County Council had had to re-spray areas of the village as heavy rain had prevented the weed killer working effectively. Due to financial pressures, the service offered by the County Council was limited and residents were asked to consider clearing weeds from pavements and gullies outside their homes.

16-9(iv) – Japanese Knotweed in Millfield Road – this area had been treated again and cordoned off. The area would continue to be monitored.

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

We have 72 pupils on role 34 boys and 38 girls. This year we had 2 families relocate away from the area at Christmas but have just had, this term, 3 new pupils join us. Unfortunately we lose 15 pupils from Year 4 at the end of the year and our new Reception intake, in September, is tiny at only 8 pupils. Looking at the birth rates for this area we did know that this is a very low year and hopefully just a ‘blip’ in the system. As I am sure that many of you realise this small intake does have an effect on the school finances but more of that later.

Staffing remains the same – I teach in Reception Class 4 days a week, there are 2 job share teachers who work half weeks in both the year 1/2 class and 3/4 classes. We have one full time higher level Teaching Assistant 4 part time teaching assistants (the adults in the classroom are the most valuable resource that I have.) 1 part time office manager, our catering manager and assistant who is also a dinner supervisor, part time caretaker and 2 play workers who run our Out of Hours club. External coaches come to school to deliver tennis, yoga, tag rugby etc. to enhance the curriculum and are paid from the Schools Sports Grant.

We try our best to provide a stimulating curriculum whereby children are not just sitting at a table in the classroom all the time. We try to include many opportunities for speaking and listening activities, use of the outside environment, visits out of school, visitors in to school, and put them into realistic situations. We ask the children to come up with their own ideas and questions about topics they are covering and then create problem solving activities. We like to create a curriculum that both that challenges and supports children to do their best and allows the children to be happy at school enjoying their learning. On the whole we continue to achieve high academic standards as well as catering for some very specific special needs.

We try to involve parents in school as much as possible – last week we had our annual parents into school week – where parents can sign up to help in classes, we recently held an afternoon where we put up displays of writing throughout the years to show parents how the children progress and what they are expected to achieve each year. The parents have also just had their Summer parental consultation appointments as we would like parents to have as much information as possible as to what their children are expected to and do achieve.

Last summer holidays we were lucky enough to receive extra funding from the Diocese to replace 2 of the classrooms roofs one bonus is that they now have a greater depth of insulation and so retain the heat better. We are always hopeful that we will be lucky enough again to receive this funding so that in future years we would be able to replace the rest of the roofs.

Our links with Church continue – children reading in the Christmas Eve service, using St James for Easter and Harvest services, Lesley coming in to school to visit and supporting the same charity as St James at Harvest. We also encourage the children to support other charities – we have families taking part in the Children Cancer Run in Gosforth Park a week on Sunday and planting flowers at the Daft as a Brush HQ in Gosforth (we named an ambulance)

We also join in with the Hexham partnership of schools activities, we see the partnership of schools and working with them as an essential part of our success both for academic activities and the pastoral care -for instance 4 pupils are attending a pupil voice conference next Friday and we are working with 2 other schools on a mapping project with funding from Councillor Dale to hopefully produce a child friendly walking map of the area.

Squirrels, our out of hour’s club continues to thrive and several mornings and evenings they are up to their maximum number of 16 places. This is such a valuable part of our school as I know some working parents would not have their children at Broomhaugh if it were not for this wrap around care.

Of course funding issues in school has been in the press recently. Schools are facing real problems as we have to cope with rising costs of resources, utilities etc. as well as the LEA now having to impose substantial charges on school for such services as special needs, HR etc. The Governors and I have had to spend a lot of time this year really scrutinising the budget in great detail to see where we can make savings’ feel this problem will only get worse in future years and that is why maintaining a healthy school role is essential as each child on role generates funds for the school budget. I am having to turn more and more to the PTA to ask them to provide some of the more basic provision – for example they are replacing some dining room tables for us as the budget constraints make it hard to find monies for these extra costs so we are very grateful to them for all their support and fundraising work.

As always I am grateful to the children, parents, governors, staff and villagers for all the help, support and interest and hard work they show in and give to the school as it makes each day a happy and fulfilling one and I would like to thank the Parish Council for their continual support too.

**5. Village Hall Trust Report, Mrs Pam Pryor, Chairman & Secretary**

Caring for the Parish Hall and Millennium Hall over the last twelve months has been challenging as we undertook two major upgrading projects of the heating in the Parish Hall and the lighting in both halls due to the increased cost of our utilities bills.

In September 2016 the old cast iron boiler at the Parish Hall had to be cut into five separate parts to be dismantled and removed from the site by three men. It weighed 0.5 tons. The new boiler proved to be efficient immediately, however, we were challenged with another problem. In October, the new boiler started to make an horrendous noise when it fired up every morning. We staggered the start up time because of the inconvenience to neighbours but early this year when the hall was full to capacity again, we couldn’t avoid starting the heating around 7.30 am.

This resulted in two formal complaints. The Project Manager and the plumber said they would investigate but no cause could be found.

Eventually, I contacted the manufacturer of the boiler in Hull who agreed an inspection on condition that the engineer’s expenses were reimbursed should the fault lie with the plumber’s installation. I very much doubted the latter as the plumber had checked his work many times and he has never let the Trust down after many years of work.

On dismantling the new boiler, a faulty burner was found to be the cause of the noise and at long last the boiler now works quietly and efficiently.

I have apologised to the neighbours and thanked them for their patience but there is no doubt that what should have been a major achievement for the hall caused much upset and distress which is disappointing.

While all the above was happening, new LED lighting had also been installed in the Parish Hall and Millennium Hall. Our hall users had commented that the overhead lighting could be too bright for sports such as badminton or for relaxing classes such as pilates and yoga. The side lights were too dim. Strip lights were fitted between the two and are proving popular. The new lights at both halls cost £8,993 and there has been a 90% saving in wattage.

The Trust is grateful to the County Council for Community Chest funding towards the cost of the boiler.

The Trust also purchased new staging in 2016 at a cost of £11,562 of which £2,000 has been paid by the Drama Club for bespoke items. This has caused criticism from some villagers saying that the staging costs too much for the use of one club. The old staging, used and stored in the Trust’s premises, was dangerous. It was also being used by the Choral Society and the Tyne Valley Youth Theatre. I see the staging as a huge asset for the village. It is available for the above clubs plus anyone else who wishes to use it i.e. the churches, the school or pre-school. It is safe and secure with barriers and it is an investment, as hiring such equipment from other halls or schools costs hundreds of pounds.

At the end of 2016 our caretaker, Val Thompson, retired. Three people applied for the position which was given to Suzanne Barker who is also the teacher at the Riding Mill Pre School. The Trust is grateful to Val and Alan who are still actively and kindly helping with the Café @ The Foyer and the Mill Race Garden and welcomes Suzanne who has settled into the new role despite her busy schedule. She is doing a sterling job.

Our project for 2017 is the demolition of the green shed behind the Parish Hall and the demolition of the garage at the bottom of the drive alongside the Hall, replacing it with a larger, more attractive structure for which planning permission will be required.

When Alison White was Priest in Charge at St James’ she said she would love to see the back of the hall cleared so we intend to landscape this area so the hall looks attractive from all sides. Jason Tennet, from In-Architecture in the village, is currently drawing the plans and, once available, these will of course be passed to the PCC, as our Landlords, for consideration who will, in turn, ask the Diocese for permission if they are happy with our plans. It was felt that this development would be simpler than another extension to the Parish Hall which would spoil the shape of the building.

Another upsetting occurrence happened on a Friday morning several weeks ago, when one of the ladies in the over 50s exercise class, sat on a damaged chair and fell to the ground. Thankfully she was one of the younger class members but the Trust has been asked to replace all the chairs in the Parish Hall. You may remember that the chairs were donated to us by Michael Pritchard’s son who worked in the hotel industry. We don’t know what wear and tear they had endured before we were grateful to receive them but, obviously, they have now seen better days. The remaining chairs have been checked for faults in the meantime but we are happy to confirm we have now obtained grant funding to purchase 150 new chairs for the hall and we await delivery of our order in early June.

I am grateful to my husband, Andy, for applying for grant funding for all the work mentioned in this report. As of April 2017 he has been promised £40,000 in funding with hopefully more to come.

Depending on the figure for the work which Jason is planning, if we have any surplus funds, then we would like to look at upgrading both kitchens, the supper room and store room in the Parish Hall and decorate both halls too.

We are also obtaining quotes for installing a handrail from Millfield Road down the slope to the path to the Parish Hall entrance as some of our elderly hall users are struggling with the gradient.

In future years, we will need to look at replacing the roof of the Parish Hall. At the moment David Niven is investigating the condition of the roof and the urgency for work to be undertaken.

I worry that the Trustees seem greedy (or should I say over-ambitious) asking for financial support from the Parish Council and County Council in addition to our other applications, however, the money is not being sought for selfish reasons. All money raised is being used to make life in our community buildings educational, promote physical activity and well-being, provide entertainment on your doorstep, encourage hobbies and new crafts, develop creativity in young members and, most of all, offer friendship and be a place where you know you will feel a sense of belonging.

Apart from our Caretaker/Manager whose work is extensive, our halls are run solely by volunteers and require many hours. We couldn’t operate without the dedication and commitment of these enthusiastic and selfless people.

To me, a village hall is a village hub and we are blessed to have two.

Thank you for your support. We will continue to do our utmost to make your time in our buildings comfortable and enjoyable.

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

The following is a brief annual review for 2016-2017. I have kept the information to items which are relevant to you in Riding Mill and also west of the County. Please do contact me if you would like more detailed information or would like to discuss anything further.

**NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL’S LOCAL PLAN 2010 TO 2030.**

The County Council’s Local Development Framework up to 2030 has been finalised by the Council and has been submitted to the Government Inspectorate for full inspection. The Government’s Housing requirement for Northumberland is for a further 24,000 houses to be delivered between 2010 and 2030. This will require the deletion of 0.5% of the greenbelt mainly from the larger towns and villages. The green belt surrounding Riding Mill has been maintained however the Government has powers to change local planning policies.

**NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL PLANNING SERVICE**

In 2013 at my request the Council’s external auditors, Deloittes, reviewed the Planning Service. This review took place when the Planning service was failing and was in danger of being over by Government Office and the cost of the loss of appeals to the Council was rapidly increasing. Deloitte made 21 recommendations including the removal of the Area Planning committees. The recommendations were approved by the Council and the Planning service has now been able to move forward and improvements have been substantial with all the Government’s targets being well met.

**NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PRESSURES.**

Northumberland is the largest local authority by land with the lowest population. It is also has an ageing population, **10,300** children living in poverty per Government statistics, **4,135** children requiring intervention by social services from April last year, areas of rural isolation together with areas of deprivation and a high cost of delivering services to rural areas. Since 2012 and up to 2020 the Council’s loss of **revenue** funding and underfunded financial pressures from Government equates to an **annual loss of** **£178.3million to our revenue budget.** Local authorities are legally not able to use **capital for revenue funding.** However like the late Tynedale District Council the County is able to invest capital to make revenue savings and it has a secure Treasury Management Strategy which is closely monitored and reviewed by the Council’s external auditors.

**NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL MARKET TOWN INITIATIVE.**

In 2009 when Tynedale District Council ceased to exist the new unitary authority centralised many services to Morpeth. Since 2013 this Council has recognised the importance of investing in the delivery of services in our towns not only to help the economy, viability and vitality of the town but to also ensure that residents can access services locally. A new service centre has already been established at the Spetchells in Prudhoe and the Queens Hall is due to be extended and refurbished and will become the service centre for Hexham. I am delighted that your local planning officers will once again be working from Hexham where they will be available to the public.

**CAPITAL INVESTMENT IN AND AROUND HEXHAM AND PRUDHOE.**

The County Council has been investing in capital schemes in the west since 2013. The larger investments include the new bus station and new fire station in Hexham, the new Prudhoe High School, Hexham Bandstand, the Sill project, Hexham High School, Hexham House, Waterworld at Prudhoe, The Queens’ Hall, The Spetchells at Prudhoe, together with other smaller projects. The local Tynedale Area Committee has given financial support for locally lead projects in the area through the Council’s Community Chest such as funding for the Table Tennis Club and the Village Hall Trust.

The Council’s regeneration company, ARCH, is working in both Prudhoe and Hexham to bring in external investment for the benefit of the towns.

**WORKING WITH THE COUNTY COUNCIL.**

I was one of five independent councillors and we all voted individually and in very different ways. We all challenge the Council rather than opposing good initiatives for the sake of playing politics. To this end I have always supported policies that will deliver for the residents I represent such as the new Prudhoe High School, investment in both Prudhoe and Hexham and the delivery of local services back to Hexham and Prudhoe. I am delighted that the present Council has supported this through the Councils Market Towns and services will again be delivered at the Spetchells and at the Queens Hall. I continued to challenge and hold the Council to account.

**FUTURE DELIVERY OF EDUCATION IN NORTHUMBERLAND.**

The Government’s Schools Academies programme is challenging for a rural county such as Northumberland where we have many small rural schools with fewer than 200 pupils which is the Government’s measure of a small school. I have always been dedicated to ensuring that every child has the opportunity to receive at least a good education and I am working with schools and partners to ensure that our local small schools will continue to flourish for the benefit of the next generation. I have initiated and funded a project which the three first schools in this County Division are working together on. This includes designing a map of the area which will include historical features, healthy life style tips and lots more.

**SUPERFAST BROADBAND.**

I was delighted that the Council supported my initiative to bring superfast broadband to the outlying areas around the village. It is presently being rolled out so please let me know if you would like any further information.

**OTHER LOCAL NEWS.**

The **new gateways** at the east end of the village which were funded out of my member’s small scheme allowance arenearly complete. I hope that they are making a difference and I would like to thank the members of the Parish Council and residents who have helped with the digging and planting of the greenery in the area.

The County Council will be introducing a permanent **20 mph** **speed limit** outside the school this year. I arranged a meeting with members of the Parish Council, the Church, governors, parents and staff from the school and the county officer to hear people’s views. This was most helpful and we all agreed what safety issues needed to be addressed in the project design including a 20 mph speed limit on the A695 at the beginning and end of the schools day.

Following concerns from residents about speeding traffic on **Station Close** I have been able to introduce a 20 mph speed limit which was again funded from my member’s allowance scheme.

I am working with the County Council Rights of Way officer on the present closure of the **ROW from Riding Mill to Corbridge** due to the landslip. Unfortunately the work will take some time as changes to Rights of Way are complicated and we need to work with all the landowners to make this succeed in reasonable time.

The wet weather has caused flooding in parts of the village and I am working with the residents, Parish Council, County Council and the Environment Agency to address future flooding concerns. Please do continue to report any blocked gullies to me.

I am very privileged to serve you and take up your concerns and help whenever I can. Please do let me know if you would like any further information on any topic or if you any concerns by either ringing me on 01434 673326 or emailing me at [Anne.Dale@Northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:Anne.Dale@Northumberland.gov.uk)

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

I must begin this report by thanking my fellow Councillors for their support, Anne Dale our re-elected County Councillor and most importantly Catherine Harrison our Clerk who ensures that we all do what we should when we should.

I have continued the framework of delegated responsibility. The sub groups we have work very well and include – Footpaths, Legal/FOI, Planning, Sports and Recreation, The Spinney, Village Amenities etc.

One of our main roles is to maintain and enhance the village and PC assets 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 (we have added in the footpath from the village to the A68 roundabout); Maintenance of our trees is an ongoing problem; The Play Park is inspected on a weekly/quarterly and annual basis.

Our main achievements during the year have been:

*Edible Garden Adjacent to the Play Park* – The aim was to tidy this area up then plant fruits, herbs and vegetables that can be enjoyed by all. Thanks to all those who have provided plants, helped tidy the area and keep it looking good.

*Gateway Entrance Broomhaugh* – We worked with the County on this. A group of volunteers helped to dig the area and plant flowers and bushes. Some of these have been damaged by rabbits so remedial work is needed. Work is still to be on the VAC speed signs

*Tree Survey* – We commissioned a survey by an arboriculturalist of all trees on PC land which recommended a phased programme of works. The main issue was to deal with trees adjacent to footpaths or roads. This work has been done over the last few months. There is additional work to do within the woods which will be put in hand.

*Flood Plan* – We liaised with the relevant authorities and residents affected by the floods in 2015 – 16 to prepare a Flood Plan. This is to help in the event of a future flood. It is now in the final stages and will be available on the PC website shortly.

*Litter Pick* – This annual event was on Saturday morning 18 April. Thanks to the 19 volunteers who between them collected over 20 bags of rubbish mainly from the area north of the railway station and towards the roundabout on the A68

*Cricket and Football Field* – This was refurbished last year and became playable in the Autumn. It is now being used on a regular basis at weekends. We are assisting the Club in its efforts to secure funding to refurbish the Pavilion.

*WW1 Memorial Panel* – We secured grant assistance to have this refurbished professionally. The work is in hand at the moment and should be finished in the next couple of months. We need to find a permanent home for it. The War Memorials Trust has agreed to a rededication ceremony in November 2018.

*Newsletter* –To be published in summer. Let us know if you have any ideas.

For such a small community, it is amazing how many administrative things there are to do. We agree our budget and precept for the year, monitor spending and produce year end accounts. We give grants to various organisations and clubs in the village the main one being the Village Hall Trust (annual). 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.

I would like to thank 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.

*Marchburn Lane Bridge and Weir Foot Bridge* – We commissioned a survey by a local firm of Civil Engineers in 2015 which identified work that needs to be done. We are currently putting together a programme of works

*Bus Shelters* – We propose to install a new shelter at the west end of the village on the north side of the main road which will require the Bus Stop to be moved closer to the Slaley Road Junction. We also plan to erect a new shelter on the main road opposite the Wellington between the existing one and Whiteside. This will enable it to have side panels as the footpath is wider. This is being done in conjunction with the County

*Western Gateway* – We are working with the County to put in place a Gateway similar to the one at the east end of the village to help slow traffic entering the village

*Marchburn* – The section adjacent to the Double Tennis Courts is subject to significant erosion so we commissioned a survey by the Tyne Rivers Trust which recommended remedial work. We are currently awaiting a cost for this and hope to have it done in the coming months.

*The Spinney* – Plans have been drawn up in conjunction with the County to alter the entrance to make it safer. We hope to have this work done when the County puts in place the 20-mph speed limit along Church lane.

*Riding Mill Play and Regeneration Group* – we are assisting the group in their efforts to raise funds for the refurbishment of the Play Park. Just over £30,000 has so far been raised which is three-quarters of the target. We hope to see work start after the summer holidays.

We do have 2 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. Have a wonderful year.

**8. Financial Statement**

A draft financial statement for the year ending 31st March 2017 was presented. It was noted that the figures were unaudited as yet. The accounts would be available from 13th June until 24th July for public scrutiny and anyone wishing to see them should make an appointment via the Clerk.

**After the formal reports the meeting heard from three guest speakers:**

1. **Dementia Village/Memory Café – Melvyn Stone (Dementia Friend and Corbridge Parish Councillor)**

Melvyn explained how Corbridge PC involved the whole community to become a ‘Dementia Friendly Village’. 60 traders together with the school and local pubs have signed up to the initiative which involved attending a short training course to understand more about the condition.

In addition, Corbridge PC provides free use of the Parish Hall once a month for a Memory Café – around 50 people attend including carers. The café is a social event – participants sing songs, play bingo and watch films designed to help those with memory loss. Refreshments are provided free by a local business and there are trained volunteers present to offer advice to family members and carers.

If residents of Riding Mill thought it appropriate to offer something similar, Melvyn would be happy to help facilitate this and suggested a group of interested people get together to form a steering committee.

1. **Katrina Padmore & Ross Menzies, Let’s Get Growing Project Coordinators**

Katrina and Ross explained how for the last 6 or 7 years, they had been running the Let’s Get Growing project at the Peace Garden at Minsteracres. The project’s ethos is to promote the benefits of nature to support people of all ages with varying health needs such as depression, dementia etc.

There is such a wide range of reasons why people might attend that no-one feels labelled by their condition. The age range of participants is vast, 20-85, with everyone happily working together.

The project can accommodate 12 participants at each session and is held twice a week. The sessions are run by Ross and Katrina who are assisted by 3 or 4 volunteers. A minibus from Hexham stopping at various locations helps people make the journey to Minsteracres.

To find out more about the project contact Ross Menzies on 07762 244381 or Katrina on 07748 600498 or via email [katrina\_padmore@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:katrina_padmore@yahoo.co.uk).

[www.letsgetgrowing.co.uk](http://www.letsgetgrowing.co.uk)

**Speed Awareness**

A brief discussion was also held on possible ways of slowing traffic through the village (see Paper A). Cllr. Singer explained how he and another village resident have become Community Speedwatch volunteers. Working with the police they can arrange to use a speed gun and record any motorists speeding. These motorists will receive a letter from the police or if they are speeding excessively i.e. more than 20 mph over the speed limit, they will likely receive a visit from a police officer. Cllr. Singer encouraged other residents to get involved.

A number of people thought the speed signs showing actual motorists’ speed were the most effective measure. Everyone was supportive of the idea of a pelican or zebra crossing.

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