

Broomhaugh and Riding Parish Council



Minutes of the annual Parish Meeting

Thursday 16th May 2019, 7 pm, Parish Hall, Riding Mill.

Present: Cllr. Andy Dunhill (Chair), Cllr. Christine Howe, Cllr. David McKenzie, Cllr. Brian Singer, County Councillor Anne Dale, Revd. Lesley Chapman, and Cllr. Janet Padgett (Chair of the Village Hall Trust), together with 24 members of the public.

In attendance:

Mrs Catherine Harrison – Parish Clerk

Professor Michael Green – guest speaker

Before the formal meeting began the attendees enjoyed a talk on 'The Ghosting of Anne Armstrong' delivered by Michael Green, resident and local author.

1. Apologies

Cllrs. Carew and Bridges, and Ms Jennifer Ainsley, Executive Headteacher, Corbridge & Broomhaugh First Schools.

2. **Minutes of the 2018 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

There were no matters arising to note.

4. Broomhaugh CE First School Report, Ms Jennifer Ainsley, Headteacher

(delivered by Revd. Lesley Chapman and Rob Archer, School Governor, in Jennifer Ainsley's absence).

As the new Executive Head Teacher of Broomhaugh Church of England First School, I am proud to work with the team of fully dedicated teachers and governors to ensure the best education and social experiences for our pupils, enabling them to flourish and be self-confident, proud members of their community.

With the support of the Governors from both Broomhaugh and Corbridge CE First Schools we have appointed Mrs Sarah Gray as Executive Deputy Head Teacher, and we are both dedicated and committed to seeing our school thrive.

By Autumn term we hope to have built solid relationships with St James and I am pleased to say Revd. Chapman has already visited school to lead worship this term. It is clear the community at Riding Mill is strong, and I look forward to getting to know and becoming part of this wonderful community.

Below is the most recent school information for your information.

Current number on roll	71	% of SEND pupils (Special Education Need/ disability)	1%
Age range of pupils	4-9	% of disadvantaged pupils	1%

The school receives termly visits from a School Improvement Partner and the strengths of the school from the spring visit include:

- The changes planned, as a result of the retirement of the current headteacher, are ongoing and governors are at the forefront of facilitating this next step.
- School leaders and staff continue to develop their teaching for mastery pedagogy and skills. They are focused on quality first teaching to support attainment and progress.
- The SIAMS inspection took place on the 1st February 2019. The school demonstrated they are a good school in all areas within the inspection. A mission statement reflects the school's values and ethos within the school and the wider community.
- Pupils within the school are polite, keen to learn and are clearly proud of their school. There are no incidents of concern relating to behaviour.
- Outcomes continue to be above the national average at the end of each key stage. In most subject areas there are high proportion of pupils working at greater depth. Reading is a strength in this aspect of the curriculum.

The school SIAMs Inspection took place on 1 February 2019 and concluded:

Key findings:

- The living out of the school's Christian vision and distinctive Christian values guides all aspects of school life. Consequently, pupils flourish in terms of both their spiritual and academic development.
- Self-evaluation is accurate. This ensures that the school is able to build on its strengths and is well-placed to develop further as a church school.
- As a result of the school's Christian vision and associated values, relationships at all levels are of a high quality. This is reflected in pupils' good behaviour and attendance.
- The curriculum is inspired by the school's Christian vision and offers pupils the opportunity to explore different points of view. As a result, they are able to disagree well and live comfortably with difference.
- Collective worship reflects the Christian vision and inspires pupils. As a result, they are able to relate the teachings of Jesus and the Bible to their own lives. Evaluations, however, do not involve all members of the school community.
- Teaching and learning in religious education (RE) is consistently good. It allows pupils of all abilities and backgrounds to gain a good understanding of Christianity and a range of other religions.

5. **Village Hall Trust Report, Janet Padgett, Chairperson**

I'm going to make a very bold claim: Here in Riding Mill we have the best village halls in the area. The halls are beautiful, well-maintained, spacious, warm but are still more affordable than many similar venues. I believe we have good evidence to back up this bold claim.

The work that was at the planning stage this time last year has been carried out. We have greatly enhanced storage space in the new garage. The newly refurbished kitchen is being put to good use by the cafe on Mondays and Fridays and also by many other groups who do their own catering. I want to take this opportunity of wholeheartedly thanking the cafe volunteers who selflessly give up their own time & energy (& culinary skills – yum!). You are the ones that do so much to make the halls a focal point for all of the community – thank you for all you do.

You might also have noticed that we have had the rear garden cleared and re-turfed, transforming what was a wasteland into an attractive area. First impressions count. If the surroundings look well cared for, people will assume the inside will be too and that is important when we want to attract more people into the halls. A lot of physical effort goes into the upkeep of the gardens and I want to thank the Garden Invaders for their very hard work in keeping it all looking so lovely. In a frantic world, it is wonderful to have this little oasis to enjoy.

But there's no point having beautiful halls and gardens without people to fill them. We're not the National Trust- the halls are there to serve a purpose. The VHT remains incredibly active and vibrant in terms of the number and breadth of activities on offer. Some of the clubs are full, or nearly full. Some forge connections outside the village by way of matches or get-togethers with clubs from other areas. So, it's a very lively scene. There is something on offer for everyone whether that be physical – badminton, table tennis, karate and more; more gentle pursuits such as Linda's exercise class & bowls etc; spiritual such as yoga, the Northumbrian Healers; creative – e.g. art & photographic societies, choral society, drama society; – as well as those which need no explanation e.g. the WI, Scouts, the pot luck lunch club. Even then, I haven't mentioned everything on offer. With so much emphasis nowadays on maintaining good physical and mental health & avoiding social isolation, there is no need for anyone to feel lonely in Riding Mill.

None of this happens by itself. Most activities are run on a volunteer basis; people giving of their own time to bring folk together to share their enthusiasm & their passion for their craft. My sincere thanks to all clubs for your support for the halls. Without your efforts, the community would be that much poorer.

Administratively, we have had a complete turnover in the committee. Pam Pryor and Rosie Cummings have taken a well-earned retirement after about 33 years of service between them. (More about them later.) We are very fortunate to be back up to full strength in the committee with Graham Walmsley as treasurer, Judy Wilthew – secretary, Philip Latham – deputy chair. We work really well together as a team & I am very grateful to them for their efforts.

Arguably the biggest change has been in contracting out the bookings management to Suzanne Barker on a paid-for basis. Change, and all it entails, can genuinely be difficult for some to accommodate. But I believe this change was both necessary and for the better. Necessary, because no-one was willing to come forwards to take on this task on a voluntary basis. The reality is that the job has become too big for voluntary work. Similar halls such as SICA have had a paid manager for many years. It's a great issue to have because it's a symptom of growth & success.

But I also believe it is change for the better. We can be assured of both continuity and a continued professionalism. Suzanne brings a real dedication and sense of purpose to the community and we are very lucky to have her, going forwards. It helps us on the committee because we are freed up to concentrate on all the boring but necessary bureaucracy that is required these days, such as drafting

new T&C's, data protection policies, tenancy agreements – I could go on. For all her immensely hard work – a massive thank you.

We remain affordable. It's notable that several groups - ones that have no connection or loyalty to the village – choose to come here, some of them for fundraising events. This underlines that we remain good value compared to equivalent local venues, notwithstanding our increased overheads.

Being new to the VHT, I am very conscious that we are building on the achievements of those that have gone before us. Being the very self-effacing persons that they are, I would not want Pam & Rosie's huge contributions to go unnoticed. At a time when many businesses are failing and shops closing, it is a real success just to keep the 'show on the road'. To do all that and make substantial improvements to the buildings, is a stellar achievement. A massive thank you also to Andy Pryor for his fundraising efforts, who raised nearly £85,000. Put bluntly, he found the money to pay for improvements so that hall users didn't have to. It takes persistence and know-how to get that kind of money. Every application has to be tailored differently – it is certainly not a case of sending out a 'one size fits all' begging letter. It is our understanding that Andy made about 70 applications for grants! It is a rare and generous thing to have benefited from the extremely long hours that these three put in and I would not want that to be taken for granted by anyone. We have been truly blessed to have had you.

I'd like to end with a request and an invitation. First the request. It's all very well my doing the flowery speech of thanks – it's the 'done thing'. Really and truly it is the small individual thank-yous that are taken to heart. So, if you notice the flowers are looking particularly nice, or perhaps you have been served some delicious cake by a cheerful volunteer, or even you just notice that person who always quietly gets things done in the background – can I ask that you show your appreciation to them. You may not know it, but that person might have battled through aches and pains, a bout of ill-health, or family woes and yet still keep on giving of themselves. If you can be as quick to praise as others are to criticise, that makes our community a cheerful place to live in.

Finally - an invitation. There is a hall open day Saturday next week – 2-4pm 25th May – when many of our clubs will be present to tell you what they get up to. Come and see what goes on! You may find a club to join that takes your fancy, and your social life could go up a whole new level! It's true that other people that share your interests, tend to be 'your kind of person' and it's great to be among likeminded friends. Getting involved definitely gives you a feel-good factor, so come along – we'd love to see you there.

6. St James's Church Report, Reverend Lesley Chapman

Revd. Chapman began by sharing the ethos of St James... to be generous, engaged and open. She reflected on what an active community Riding Mill was and felt that the role of St James was to help the community celebrate.

Quinquennial inspection: work to repair the structure of the Church had been identified following the most recent inspection and this had recently begun, funded from donations.

Community engagement: in the next few months the Church would be exploring how best it could use its space to make it available for the whole community e.g. art exhibitions, use by Broomhaugh First School, to hold ecumenical services, Reverend Chapman noted that the congregation of St

James's already helped the community in many ways by serving on committees, working with international organisations etc.

Important Dates: Reverend Chapman finished by inviting all the community to take part in three events which were planned:

1. Sunday 16th June - Open Garden event
2. Sunday 22nd September - service to launch a discussion about the use of the building.
3. Sunday 13th October – Harvest. A Methodist-led service followed by lunch.

7. **County Councillor's Report, Cllr. Anne Dale**

It is always difficult to keep you all informed of everything that is going on in the village but the Annual Report is always a welcome opportunity to hopefully keep you in touch with the work that I am undertaking in the village. Working together for the benefit of the community is so important to me and I work with the Parish Council, the school and other partners to take forward new projects for the village and manage issues when they arise.

The following is a brief annual review for 2018-2019. I have kept the information to items which are relevant to you in the village and also west of the County. Please do contact me if you would like more detailed information or would like to discuss anything further.

HIGHWAYS AND FOOTPATHS.

Highway Improvement Schemes

It seems to have taken for ever but finally the work on the implementation of 20 mph speed reduction measures throughout the village has been started. There is still some further work on signage on the side roads and speed reduction measures outside the Church. The Parish Council is funding the work to the entrance to the Spinney which the County Council Highways department will undertake at the same time as the speed reduction measures. The poles for the Vehicle Activated signs are in place and I am waiting for the actual signs to appear.

A new pedestrian crossing is to be installed on the A695 close to the access of Millfield Road and the Wellington this year. Detailed design work with input from Newcastle City Council is underway and I have been advised that the work will probably take place in the Autumn of this year. This is something that the village has wanted for many years and at last there will be a safe crossing.

Signage in the village is very important and I think that once all the highways work has taken place, I will work with the Parish Council to review the signage and remove unnecessary or duplicate signs.

Right of Way to Corbridge

I continue to work with the County Council Rights of Way officer on the ongoing closure of the ROW from Riding Mill to Corbridge due to the landslip some years' ago. Unfortunately, the work will take many years to resolve but discussions are taking place between adjoining land owners and the County Council.

The loss of the 10-year permitted right of way to Healey was a loss to lots of you. I did speak with the Estate however the landowner was within their legal rights to close the permitted footpath at the end of the 10-year agreement.

I am working with the County Council with the support of the Parish Council to undertake maintenance on the footpath on the A695 from the village entrance to the roundabout. The Council is also working with the Parish on the maintenance of the ROW throughout the Parish.

A69 roundabouts at Hexham and Brocksbushes

Concerns have been raised about Highways England's plans for the introduction of the new roundabouts on the A69. I raised the issue with the County Council as I had issues with the implementation of the roundabout at Brocksbushes. This has now been put on hold for further design work to be undertaken together with proper consultation.

Highways Maintenance and gulley cleaning

The gullies in the village were cleared earlier in the year. Please do let me know if you find that the water is not soaking away quickly as there is generally a breakdown in the drainage system that is causing this and further work will be required. There are two areas I am aware of in the village which is outside the Church and on the A695. Work is ongoing with the County Council and the landowner.

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL (PLANNING) AND THE DRAFT LOCAL PLAN

Planning is an emotive subject and there are unfortunately some inconsistencies within the County Council Committees' decisions. I have received more complaints on the Planning service and more concerns raised with me over the last year than ever before. There are always difficult decisions to be made and I do have my concerns about the draft Local Plan at this time.

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL L.E.D. STREET LIGHTING MODERNISATION PROJECT

I can only apologise for some of the issues that have arisen with the introduction of the project in Riding Mill and especially the lack of consultation. I am afraid that I have had similar problems in all the other villages I represent. I would like to thank you all for your patience over the last two years and I hope that the majority of your concerns have been addressed.

THE FUTURE DELIVERY OF EDUCATION IN THE WEST OF NORTHUMBERLAND

The changes in delivering education for our children in the west is ongoing. A new High School at Hexham is being built which is long overdue but very welcome. The federation of Broomhaugh and Corbridge Church of England First schools under one head will bring sustainability for the future of the first schools in the villages.

It is always sad when someone who has worked tirelessly for our children retires after such a long time in their post. Jen Stephenson will be missed and I would like to thank her for all her hard work and kindness over the years. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the new head teacher Jennifer Ainsley and I look forward to working with her.

NORTHERN RAIL

I have been working with Northern Rail on the implementation of the new penalty scheme. Concerns were raised by residents who were unable to access the ticket machine on the south platform from the north side due to some disability. Residents from Riding Mill have been consulted and have been a sounding board for the implementation of the scheme. I was pleased to get the support of both Northern Rail and Network Rail to mend the light near the station.

ROGUE TRADERS

Following concerns raised by residents about unwanted sellers attending their streets the police have sent me a document which I will ask the Clerk to pin on the Parish Council notice board. Briefly it states that do not open the door if you don't want to and if you feel intimidated please ring 101 and explain the position.

LAYING OF DARK FIBRE BY COMEX 2000.

I have received lots of request for information on the work that is being undertaken at the moment and I will give an update at the annual Parish Meeting.

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 have any concerns by either ringing me on 01434 673326 or e-mailing me at Anne.Dale@Northumberland.gov.uk

In a discussion following Cllr. Dale's report the following issues were raised:

- *Residents were concerned at the idea of extra homes being built in Corbridge knowing that the sewage pipe from there flows close to Station Close. There was often an unpleasant smell and raw sewage leaking from an access hatch near the station frequently occurred after heavy rain. Cllr. Dale agreed to raise the matter with NWL. ACTION: Ada*
- *Drainage on the A695. It was noted that the gullies had been cleared but water was still pooling after heavy rain which could only mean that the drainage network had broken down in certain areas. A CCTV survey of the drainage network was suggested. Cllr. Dale offered to liaise with the County Council re the issues raised. ACTION: ADA*

8. Chairman's report, Cllr. Andy Dunhill

I would like to begin this report by thanking my fellow Councillors for their support, Anne Dale our County Councillor and most importantly Catherine Harrison, our Clerk, who tries to ensure that we all do what we should, when we should.

One of our main roles is to maintain and enhance the village primarily the PC's assets for the benefit of the community. This includes – grass cutting; upkeep of the many benches we own; the Play Park; two road bridges; two footbridges; the War Memorial; six bus shelters; the weir; the banks of the Marchburn adjacent to PC land; the Spinney; the Old Playground and a lot of trees.

We've had another busy year and our main achievements have been:

- *WW1 Memorial* – This Grade 2 Listed memorial was cleaned and repaired by specialist contractors in preparation for the WW1 commemoration last November. The event was a huge success involving over 300 people on the day so the PC would like to thank all those people who put in a tremendous amount of effort to organise the day and decorate the village;
- *The Play Park* – Following the additional facilities completed last year we had a formal opening last May attended by many village residents, a large group of children from the school and a surprise visit by "Spiderman";
- *Old Playground* – Resurfacing work was undertaken to the top section and higher access point due to break up of the Tarmac;
- *Tree Work* - The third and final stage of work identified in the arboricultural report done in 2016 was put in hand and is almost complete. We now need to start the process again and commission a further report. This is to be a three-yearly process;
- *Sports Club* – A short term loan of £12,000 was given to the Sports Club to facilitate the installation of an electricity supply to the pavilion. The cost will be refunded on completion of the work by a Northumberland County Council S106 grant approved in 2017;
- *Gardening Work* – The PC has appointed a locally-based gardener to regularly maintain all PC garden areas. This includes – the gateway at the east end of the village; the edible garden and all planters;
- *Handyman* – A four-year contract was awarded to maintain PC facilities including – all 17 seats; the Play Park; the two wooden footbridges, numerous signs, the Spinney and other areas of PC land;

- *Xmas Tree* – With agreement from the VHT the PC placed an Xmas tree with lights in the garden facing the main road. This was a success and it is planned to do this each year, maybe a bit bigger!
- *Millfield Road Bridge* – The periodic inspection by our Civil Engineering consultants has identified some minor maintenance work which should be completed in the near future
- *Litter Pick* – This was another successful morning where we collected many sacks of rubbish from around the village and out to the A68 roundabout. Thanks to all those who gave up their time to help;
- *Regeneration Group* – This Group currently has two initiatives in hand:
 1. Old Mill Pond - In conjunction with the Tyne Rivers Trust it is looking into the feasibility of rejuvenating the Old Mill Pond, next to the Weir, to create an additional village amenity;
 2. Heritage – A small group of enthusiasts is exploring the heritage of the village. One possibility is to re-print and update the history book of the village done by Marion Cooke;
- *Flood Management Group* – We have established a Flood Management Plan and a group of residents that will help in the event of a future flood;
- *Village Plan* – We have decided not to embark on a statutory Neighbourhood Plan at the moment but we have reviewed the village plan done some 15 years ago and established that we have done the majority of the recommendations made in it, at least those that are still relevant.
- *Minor Issues* – Following installation of the Gateway at the west end of the village by NCC, they finally moved the bus stop sign next to the new shelter; the newsletter was delivered to all households in the parish; charitable awards through S137 contributions.

We had planned to install a street light by Marchburn Lane Bridge but the Residents' Association advised that they did not want one.

Tyne Rivers Trust suggested that some further work at the Weir would be helpful but grant funding was not available.

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 ones being the Village Hall Trust and Sports Club. 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 comment on all planning applications within the parish. We have put in place an expanding range of policy documents which must be reviewed on a regular basis. And there are many more mundane tasks.

Key Failure:

Dog Fouling – Despite many requests in the Parish News and references in the Minutes of PC meetings requesting that all dog walkers pick up their dog's mess there are still a few who ignore the obvious health hazards this anti-social act creates.

And a Key Success!

We now have a full Parish Council - comprising 6 ladies and 3 men.

Thanks to everyone who has helped in any way during the year including Ray Dryden for building the wall for the Edible Garden; everyone on the Footpaths Group for their continued monitoring of our

paths; Rod Padgett for doing the Play Park Inspections while I'm away on holiday; the various members of the Regeneration Group for their hard work and ideas; and for all those I've forgotten to mention.

Some Plans for the future

- *Pedestrian Crossing* – Something we have lobbied for this has now been approved by NCC and we hope it will be installed soon;
- *The Spinney* – Plans have been drawn up in conjunction with the County to alter the entrance to make it safer. We hope this work will be done soon;
- *Sports ground* – We are working with the Sports Club and Anne Dale to enhance the facilities and improve parking;
- *Energy Efficiency* – A very current topic. We would like to encourage everyone to use energy efficiently. We would also like to see some generation of renewable energy within the Parish. If this is of interest please get in touch;
- *Website* – We've had a website for several years but it's now in need of a revamp so we are looking into outsourcing this to a specialist developer of this kind of site;
- *GDPR* – Complying with this is a Statutory requirement. Most of the policy documents have been approved but work is still needed on the website.
- *Historic PC Papers* – We are looking into having all the old papers scanned for ease of storage before transferring the originals to the County Archive at Woodhorn.

In a discussion following Cllr. Dunhill's report the following issues were raised:

- *More dog bins would be helpful;*
- *Japanese Knotweed – there were plants growing by the river in the woods and on the small island at the end of the March burn. The Clerk was asked to notify the land agent and the Tyne Rivers Trust;* *ACTION: CH*
- *Residents would very much like see the ROW re-established along the river to Corbridge.*

9. Financial Statement

A draft financial statement for the year ending 31st March 2019 was presented. It was noted that the figures were unaudited as yet. The accounts would be available from 10th June until 19th July for public scrutiny and anyone wishing to view them should make an appointment via the Clerk.

10. Minor Matters

There were no matters to note.

Cllr. Dunhill closed the meeting at 9 pm and thanked all those who had attended.