

COTHERSTONE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held in Cotherstone Village Hall on Wednesday 9 October 2019 at 7.00pm

In attendance:	Cllr John Birkett (Chair), Cllr Jenny Watson, Cllr Vince Bendin and Cllr Tim Sabey
Absent:	Cllr Richard Hunter and Cllr Richard Green
Clerk:	Judith Mashiter
Public:	None
1. Approval of apologies for absence	<i>As Cllr Hunter had submitted apologies due to being on holiday, it was resolved to accept his absence.</i>
2. Declarations of interest	None
3. Requests for dispensations	No requests had been received.
4. Minutes	Draft minutes (paper 091019-1) had been circulated. <i>It was resolved that the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held 11 September 2019 are an accurate record.</i>
5. Public participation	No members of public were present.
6. Governance	Paper 091019-2 had been circulated. <i>a. It was resolved that the draft revised Planning Applications Policy be approved with no further changes.</i> <i>a. With a clarification about the difference between an individual councillor's email to a parishioner and a Council email to a parishioner it was resolved that no revisions are necessary to the Council's Social Media and Electronic Communication Policy.</i>
7. Update on progress of actions and resolutions	Paper 091019-3, an action log updated 1 October 2019, had been circulated. Following discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tree inspection work — noted that one quotation has been received; three further quotations are expected.• Lifebelt at The Hagg — noted that Clerk is aware that Durham County Council Health and Safety Team officers will visit the site on 10 October and will report their risk assessment to the adjacent property owner.• Dog waste bins — Cllr Watson to establish whether a new bin has been installed• Overgrowth on Footpaths 71 and 101 — noted that work has been completed• Clerk to report to Durham County Council concern that large tree trunk still lodged against Tees Bridge pier.
8. Finance	Paper 091019-4 had been circulated. <i>a. It was resolved to receive a report of receipts and payments from 1 to 30 September and a bank reconciliation at 30 September.</i> <i>b. It was resolved to authorise payments due as listed, with the addition of £200.00 to A R Toward, (invoice received since paper was prepared).</i> <i>c. It was resolved to receive a quarterly report of expenditure against budget (Quarter 2). No questions were asked.</i>
9. Correspondence	Paper 091019-5, a list of correspondence received, had been circulated and was noted. Following discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• (item 13) — agreed to acknowledge the letter.• (item 31) — agreed to contribute 10% to the purchase of 'The Clerk's Manual' updated publication.• (late item) — agreed to suggest that two tubs planted with herbs and bulbs, donated to the village by The Cotherstone Clowns and currently on the forecourt of the old filling station, should be offered to Cotherstone School.

- (late item) —email from resident who planted flowers at the eastern entrance sign apologising for the poor display this year caused by flowers growing too tall, grass not being cut, and the weather!

10. Planning matters

Paper 091019-6 had been circulated.

- Councillors considered that taking the top 1.5m off the multi-stemmed sycamore would not be effective. Noted that if the application was not withdrawn, it seemed likely that a Tree Preservation Order would be placed on it. *It was resolved to withdraw the Parish Council's application DM/19/02593/FPA, and to seek the County Council's Tree Officer's clarification/elucidation of his statement, or others' advice.*
- It was resolved to submit a neutral response, with no further comment, to application DM/19/02882/LB (Red Lion).*
- It was resolved to note Durham County Council's decision on four applications.*
- It was resolved to note a summary of planning applications since October 2018.*

11. Cemetery matters

- Cllr Hunter reported, through the Clerk, that he has re-seeded two grave areas (Hull, Harle), one grave (Eccles) has been levelled by the funeral director, one double-interment (Alderson) in the Garden of Remembrance took place, a headstone to Philip Lee has been erected and ivy around the noticeboard has been chopped back. Cllr Hunter suggests that tidying up the path edging is not a simple job and is something for councillors to consider at the annual walkabout in June.
- There were no other cemetery matters.

12. Allotment matters

There were no allotment matters raised.

13. Community-run shop/post office

- Clerk presented the summary analysis of the 99 community survey questionnaire responses. Agreed that the summary pie-charts etc should be made public at the next community shop public meeting, and in the interim also with the current shop owners.
- It was resolved that Cllr Bendin be the Parish Council's representative on the Community Shop Steering Group.*
- Cllr Bendin provided an update on activity since the first public meeting on 16 September:
 - A Steering Group, comprising 9 volunteers, has met twice. Tim Meacham will Chair the group.
 - Gratitude is expressed to the Parish Council for funding the room hire for the meetings and for providing administrative support through the Clerk
 - Fact-finding is progressing, into the viability of a community business, into a number of options for premises for any community business, and into sources of support in developing the business model, financing it and operating it. There are many facets still to be explored and the time constraint, before the current owners might close the shop (March 2020) is very challenging.
 - A key source of help has been identified as the Plunkett Foundation, and a 'Request for Support' has been drafted. Should this be successful, an adviser will be appointed and start work very soon (free of charge).
 - A further Steering Group meeting is planned for 22 October, possibly with a Plunkett Foundation adviser present.
 - A further public meeting will be held mid- to late-November, led by the Steering Group, to share results of the survey, progress to date and possible options for any community business model.
- A clear relationship between the Steering Group and the Parish Council is imperative. *Following discussion of the options available, it was resolved that the Community Shop Steering Group should operate as a Working Group of Cotherstone Parish Council until such time as an independent legal structure is established for any community business implementation.* This would require it to report to the Parish Council but provide it with moral support as well as access to the Clerk's support, contact database from the public meeting and some budget for initial development work and room hires for meetings. *On the basis that the public meeting on 16 September and the response to the survey have indicated very strong community desire to pursue the possibility of a community-run shop/post office, it was resolved that a budget of £800, including spending already incurred and any possible membership of the Plunkett Foundation, be allocated to the Community Shop project.*

Councillors noted the work of the Steering Group to date. Cllr Sabey commented that the social value of the shop is as valuable as the shop service itself and suggested that providing only a shop, without the complexities of operating a post office might be the way to achieve this.

14. Single use plastic pledge

Paper 091019-7 had been circulated.

It was resolved that the Parish Council sign up to the County Durham Single Use Plastics Pledge and publicise this, along with tips for individuals, on its website.

15. Balder Bridge trees

Cllr Watson confirmed that the landowners had approached Durham County Council for advice on possibly pruning/felling the young trees blocking visibility, and had been told that from a Highways perspective, poor visibility for approaching traffic was a good thing in that it made vehicles reduce speed. *It was resolved that Clerk write to Durham County Council Strategic Highways officer, with photographs supplied by Cllr Sabey, raising the Parish Council's concerns about poor visibility on the approaches to Balder Bridge on the B6277.*

16. Remembrance Day

It was resolved that Cllr Birkett will represent the Parish Council in laying a wreath at the Remembrance Day service on 10 November.

17. Reports from councillors

- Cllr Sabey reported that part of the church boundary wall had collapsed and was advised that this has already been reported to the church.

18. Clerk's report on recent Continuing Professional Development

Paper 091019-8 had been circulated.

It was resolved to note the Clerk's recent continuing professional development activity.

Meeting closed: 8.55pm