

COTHERSTONE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held in Cotherstone Village Hall
on Wednesday 11 December 2019 at 7.00pm

In attendance:	Cllr John Birkett (Chair), Cllr Jenny Watson, Cllr Vince Bendin, Cllr Tim Sabey, Cllr Richard Hunter and Cllr Richard Green
Clerk:	Judith Mashiter
Public:	None
Press:	None
1. Approval of apologies for absence	All councillors were present.
2. Declarations of interest	Cllr Green declared an interest in item 10(a) (planning application DM/19/02959/FPA); and Cllrs Sabey and Birkett declared interests in item 10(c) as a committee member and landlord, respectively, of Play@Cotherstone.
3. Requests for dispensations	No requests had been received.
4. Minutes	Draft minutes (paper 111219-1) had been circulated. <i>It was resolved that the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held 13 November 2019 are an accurate record.</i>
5. Public participation	No members of public were present.
6. Governance	Paper 111219-2 had been circulated. <i>It was resolved that, with the addition of clause 6(g), the Complaints Policy and Procedures be approved.</i>
7. Update on progress of actions and resolutions	Paper 111219-3, an action log updated 4 December 2019, had been circulated. Following discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dog waste bins — no new bin(s) have been noticed on the Tees Railway Path/road crossings. Clerk will chase with Durham County Council.• Balder Bridge trees — Clerk reported that Durham County Council Traffic Assets team's Traffic & Streetworks Manager had emailed on 10 December advising that: there is no accident history at the location, acknowledging that reduced visibility <i>does</i> have a traffic calming effect, and stating, however, that the Traffic Assets team has no objection to the land owner removing or pruning the trees if they so wish (but the County Council has no grounds to compel them to do this). Discussed further under agenda item 13.
8. Finance	Paper 111219-4 had been circulated. <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. <i>It was resolved to receive a report of receipts and payments from 1 to 31 October and a bank reconciliation at 31 October.</i>b. <i>It was resolved to authorise payments due as listed, noting that the salary payment to the Clerk is for December only.</i> <i>Chair sought and received agreement to deal with item 8(c) following item 14.</i>
9. Correspondence	Paper 111219-5, a list of correspondence received, had been circulated and was noted. Following discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• (item 17) — Clerk to send what3words information to editor of Our Cotherstone for possible inclusion in future• (item 24) — agreed that the council votes for Stephen Rickett in the online election for the national NALC Smaller Councils Committee• (item 29) — Noted that road closure and traffic management weren't exactly as advised in advance• (item 33) — Clerk reported that a bid was submitted and full details will be provided in January's finance report• (item 38) — Clerk reported that further notice received recently from CDALC advising councils to wait until further consideration by NALC

10. Planning matters

Paper 111219-6 had been circulated.

- a. *Cllr Green took no part in this agenda item. It was resolved to not make further comment on (amended) application DM/19/02959/FPA (Bellview Cottage)*
- b. *It was resolved to note Durham County Council's decision on application DM/19/02882/LB (Red Lion) (approved). Councillors noted that the work in progress is looking good.*
- c. *Cllrs Sabey and Birkett took no part in this agenda item. It was resolved to support the application by Play@Cotherstone for a grant of £3,610 from Durham County Council's Section 106 'planning gain' fund.*
- d. *It was resolved to note a summary of planning applications since December 2018.*

11. Cemetery matters

There were no cemetery matters raised by councillors.

12. Allotment matters

- a. *It was resolved to grant permission to the holder of The Close plot 2b to erect a small polytunnel, subject to the terms set out in their Allotment Agreement.*
- b. There were no allotment matters raised, although Clerk reported a good response to the rent request letters, with 14 of the 20 payments received to date.

13. Tree inspections

Cllr Hunter met with Durham County Council's Senior Tree Officer, Simon McGinney (SM) on 21 November and reported:

- SM understands why the Parish Council wants to remove the Klondike boundary sycamore and ash back to hedge height and stated that if the Parish Council is adamant that they want to proceed, then Durham County Council would not object.
- SM will request that Durham County Council Highways Department remove the Ash tree at the Baldersdale Lane junction with the B6277
- SM advises that the Noble Fir and Norway Spruce at Hagg House are very solid, with no disease and no sign of root movement; the re-growth of the crown is all that needs monitoring and it shouldn't require an annual professional inspection. SM suggested removing the self-seeded saplings around the two trees. Cllr Hunter will speak to Hagg House owner about this prior to submitting any application.
- SM looked at two trees at 45degrees on the Teesdale Way. The Sycamore is sound, with a massive root system going up the bank and causes no concern. The Ash has already lost some significant branches and SG advised it would be wise to cut it back to relieve the weight, though acknowledged this might be difficult.
- SM suggests that the owner of Glenleigh re-submit an application to remove a third tree that showed signs of significant root movement in summer high winds.
- SM suggests that permission would be granted for work on the two Cherry trees at the Cemetery gates where they overhang the public highway.
- SM's opinion on the Balder Bridge saplings was that there were still sightlines through the trees for approaching traffic. Given the response from Traffic Assets team (item 7) agreed that Cllr Hunter speak again the land owner.

Agreed that file note of the meeting, prepared by Cllr Hunter, be sent to Simon McGinney for confirmation.

Parish Council to further consider tree inspection frequencies.

14. Community-run shop/post office

- a. Cllr Bendin provided an update on recent Steering Group activity:

Six Steering Group meetings, and two public meetings have been held. The Steering Group now numbers 7, following Neil Jowett stepping down due to ill health and Tim Meacham due to personal reasons.

Attendance (42 members of public) at the meeting on 28 November was disappointing and lower than at the 16 September public meeting.

At the public meeting the composition of the Steering Group, the work done to date and the results of the initial survey were presented in some detail. The Group's collaboration and work with the Plunkett Foundation was also presented and Plunkett's advice that the most successful Community Shop projects have usually incorporated a café facility. This was followed by a summary of the numerous options the Group had considered and eventually narrowed down to two: the existing shop and the soon-to-close Methodist Chapel. These were presented with pros/cons for both taken into consideration. Only broad outline plans were presented for both options as fully-costed purchase prices, design, refurbishment costs and work to incorporate a café facility were not available. There followed roundtable discussions, facilitated by Steering Group members to ensure that any additional questions or concerns were drawn out, eg. viability, sustainability, finance and comparisons between the two

main options or any other ideas that had not been considered. At the conclusion of the discussions attendees were asked to register which of the options had appealed to them most and the results were as follows: Chapel-18, existing shop-12, Hearse House-3, village hall-2, do nothing-1 and other-6. The final key element of the public meeting was the request for help/volunteers through completion of an 'I'll help' form. The Steering Group was hugely encouraged by the positive offers of help as follows: joining a working group-5, joining an implementation committee-3, help with publicity materials-3, leaflet distribution-16, transport-7, joining shop operating team-14, baking-6, organising community events-10, help with social media-1. A crucial part of the success of the project will be engaging these volunteers in the next stages of the Steering Group's work.

The Steering Group has met to discuss the results of the public meeting and what the next steps might be, drawing up the key questions for the Parish Council to consider, a draft timeline document for its work to March 2020 and beyond, plans for further advice/support from the Plunkett Foundation and how to progress both options subject to the Parish Council's approval to proceed.

Following Cllr Bendin's report, councillors raised the following concerns/issues for the Steering Group to address, which are interlinked:

- the small percentage of the parish population present at the meeting and the need to canvass wider opinion to establish a strong mandate to proceed; and
- the need for very precise and comparable information and cost breakdowns for each of the two options, covering design/facilities, cost to opening day, ongoing operating model and business plans, timescales/continuity of service plans.

b. Specific questions from the Steering Group were discussed as follows:

- It was resolved to approve the current composition of, and direction of work of, the Steering Group based on the outcome of the public meeting on 28 November: that fully-costed details (covering purchase/lease, conversion, design/facilities, operating model, capital and revenue costs) are prepared for developing a community shop/post office/other facilities in either the existing shop premises or in the Methodist Chapel premises, and to endorse the formation of an implementation committee/Management Committee as appropriate. Councillors agreed that further consultation (probably not a public meeting, but a more wide-reaching survey/vote) be run, with respondents having the comparable details.*
- It was resolved that the Parish Council would, in principle, be willing to consider submitting a Public Works Loan Board application to raise capital for a community shop project, pending consideration of a fully detailed business plan and cash flow forecast. Clerk to circulate details of Public Works Loan Board to all councillors.*
- It was resolved that the Parish Council would, in principle, be willing to consider setting an increase in precept to support a community shop project (however there is insufficient time and insufficient detail available to allow this to be for the financial year 2020/21) but only on the understanding that this decision would be made by the electorate and not the Parish Council.*
- It was resolved that at the current time there was no need for the Parish Council to consider nominating any premises as an Asset of Community Value.*

8. Finance 8(c) (deferred from above)

Agreed that the draft budget be further developed with: a budget of £200 for seat maintenance, a Community Shop project budget of £250 (allowing for 24 room hires for meetings), a tree inspection budget of £500 (which could form the basis of an earmarked reserve for tree work should it not all be used) and a zero budget for Neighbourhood Plan.

15. Reports from councillors

- Cllr Hunter reported that progress with the Neighbourhood Plan has stalled due to Durham County Council's focus on the Examination in Public of the draft County Durham Plan and a further change in legislation relating to Design Codes. The aim is to have the Neighbourhood Plan ready for second consultation during quarter 1 of 2020.
- Cllr Watson reported that work is still needed on the stile at the top of 5 acre field. Clerk will report to Durham County Council with photographs supplied by Cllr Bendin.
- Noted that grasscutting contracts invitation to tender will be prepared for January.
- Clerk to book Rotters to remove Christmas Trees w/c 6 January.

Meeting closed: 9.04pm