

COTHERSTONE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council held in Cotherstone Village Hall
on Wednesday 8 January 2020 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:	Nicky Carter of the <i>Teesdale Mercury</i>

1. Approval of apologies for absence

All councillors were present.

2. Declarations of interest

Cllr Green declared an interest in item 10 (planning application DM/19/03875/FPA).

3. Requests for dispensations

No requests had been received.

4. Minutes

Draft minutes (paper 080120-1) had been circulated.

It was resolved that the minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting held 11 December 2019 are an accurate record.

5. Public participation

No members of public were present.

6. Update on progress of actions and resolutions

Paper 080120-2, an action log updated 2 January 2020, had been circulated. Following discussion:

- Dog waste bins — Clerk to seek assistance from Ross Carrick of Durham County Council, who has specific responsibility for the Railway Path.
- B6277 road resurfacing — Clerk to ask Charlotte Wilkinson of Durham County Council for update on expected schedule for this work, as deterioration continues and white lines have disappeared in places.
- Hagg Scar footpath — Clerk to speak to Mike Murden about the request to extinguish this footpath.
- Stile condition (junction of FP72 with Tees Railway Path — work has been completed.

7. Finance

Paper 080120-3 had been circulated.

- It was resolved to receive a report of receipts and payments from 1 to 31 December and a bank reconciliation at 31 December.*
- It was resolved to authorise payments due as listed.*
- It was resolved to receive a monitoring report of expenditure against budget at the end of Quarter 3.*
- It was resolved to note an application submitted to #CelebrateNationalLottery25.*
- It was resolved to approve the budget for 2020/21 as presented.*
- It was resolved that the precept for 2020/21 be £25.80 per Band D property, resulting in a total precept request of £7,103.00.*

8. Grass cutting tenders

Paper 080120-4 had been circulated.

Agreed that minor revisions to the tender pack be made — on the Greens/Klondike allotments contract: daffodils on the greens should not be cut back until May (after the flowers have died back); the Klondike allotments map be adjusted slightly; and grass in front of the Hearse House and grass in front of the entrance sign at the east end of the village to be included and on the Cemetery contract: the specification to include that edges of the boundary walls and headstones should be trimmed as necessary.

It was resolved to agree the process and documentation (with minor revisions) for inviting tenders for grass cutting during 2020, with direct approaches also being made to CE & CM Walker Ltd and Robertson's Garden Services.

9. Correspondence

Paper 080120-5, a list of correspondence received, had been circulated and was noted. No further information was requested or action necessary.

10. Planning matters

Cllr Green took no part in this agenda item.

It was resolved to submit a neutral comment on application DM/19/03875/FPA (Hawthorne Cottage), pointing out two inaccuracies in the Heritage Statement (the cottage is not 'in the north east of Barnard Castle', and it is not the case that 'the shop has sadly closed recently').

11. Cemetery matters

Cllr Birkett offered to remove Christmas wreaths. Clerk reported that an enquiry about a second interment in a Garden of Remembrance plot had been resolved.

12. Allotment matters

- a. Clerk reported that all rents have been received with the exception of two half-plots at Klondike; these payments will be chased.
- b. There were no other allotment matters raised.

13. Bench seats

Paper 080120-6 had been circulated.

It was resolved to receive an audit report on bench seats in the village, to seek a quotation for replacement leg braces and bolts for six Wicksteed benches (all 8ft) and to plan a maintenance programme over five years, starting with those central in the village.

Agreed that Cllr Hunter will establish whether paint or varnish was used for the last refurbishment, and that bench number 19 should be used for spares. Noted that some benches on Moor Road are cared for privately.

14. Tree inspections

A file note of Cllr Hunter's site meeting with Simon McGinney, Durham County Council's Senior Tree Officer, had received no further comment. Subsequently, Cllr Hunter has met with the owner of Hagg House, who would be happy for all the self-seeded saplings around the Noble Fir and Norway Spruce to be removed. Also the immediate neighbour is agreeable to the removal of a rotten, ivy-clad, damaged Ash at the top of Hagg Scar, adjacent to the field gate.

It was resolved that a Planning Application be submitted by the Parish Council for tree remedial works at Hagg House entrance (felling/removal of 8 self-seeded saplings and elderberry scrub), on the Teesdale Way Footpath/Hagg Scar (removal of horizontal bough of Ash and removal of semi-rotten Ash), at Klondike Allotments (6 Sycamore stems, main Sycamore tree base stump, 3 Ash stems and main Ash tree base stump) and at Cotherstone Cemetery (two Cherry trees).

Cllr Hunter will advise Trees for Cotherstone of this action.

Cllr Hunter reported that Simon McGinney's advice was that inspections of those trees causing concern should be only every 18-24 months. A revised tree inspection schedule will be brought to council in due course. It was noted that no specialist inspection or work is necessary at the current time.

15. Community-run shop/post office

- a. Cllr Bendin provided an update on recent Steering Group activity:
 - The Parish Council's view that fully-costed details (covering purchase/lease, conversion, design/facilities, operating model, capital and revenue costs) are prepared for a shop/post office/café/other facilities in either the existing shop premises or in the Methodist Chapel should be prepared was shared with the Steering Group at a meeting on 16 December.
 - There is now a revised estimate of the valuation of the Chapel (£160-165k rather than £95-100k) and knowledge that the Charities Commission regulations might require the best market value to be obtained by the vendors. Locally, the Methodist people are still keen to work with the community.
 - There is now some slight flexibility on the deadline for the existing shop owners to close, although the premises are now being marketed as solely residential.
 - Support from the Plunkett Foundation continues, with a decision imminent on ongoing support through the appointment of a specialist to advice on raising capital, share issue options, grants, loans etc, legal entity and organisational structure etc. Durham Sparks and Bright Ideas funding also being explored.
 - Architects have prepared broad outline plans for the two premises: the Chapel incorporating a shop and café in Phase 1, with a proposed second phase to extend the development, and the existing shop being altered to

accommodate a café either in what is currently the ground floor living accommodation (or in the barn). Noted that there may be planning application challenges for both premises.

- A volunteer's meeting is scheduled for 16 January to keep the momentum going.
 - An informal meeting of the Steering Group and parish councillors had allowed an exchange of information and the enthusiasm and passion of the Steering Group for the project was evident.
- b. Councillors appreciated the considerable work of the Steering Group to date, and all agreed that the major work on the project for the Steering Group and any implementation committee is really only just starting. All are agreed that the deadline of achieving a 'final' solution by the end of March is increasingly challenging. Councillors noted that the 'post-it note vote' at the last public meeting did indeed show 18 people in favour of the Chapel option, however there were more people in favour of other options (collectively) than this one. Councillors were very concerned that a strong mandate is evidenced for both the principle of a community-run shop and for the preferred premises in which that should be delivered. Agreed that the electorate must see the facts and figures, risks, opportunities and implications for both the Chapel and the existing shop options and then the community make the final decision. Agreed that it might be best to present funding as 100% loan rather than speculating on the success of a share issue.

It was resolved:

- *That a direct communication (probably A4x4pp leaflet) be provided to every household in the parish, issued by the Parish Council, using information provided by the Steering Group (but with editorial control resting with the Council) setting out the facts, figures, designs, risks, opportunities for a community-run shop/post office/café/other facilities in both the Methodist Chapel and the existing shop premises and inviting feedback by a given date.*
- *That the approval for the content and details of distribution/cost of the above be by resolution at a future Parish Council meeting (either February 2020, or an Extraordinary Meeting).*
- *That following feedback from the direct communication and the construction of one proposed solution a referendum be held in the parish on whether to pursue that given project (possibly also including reference to a possible precept increase).*
- *That the Parish Council makes clear its view that the pace of any project should be such that it allows for maximum community involvement, commitment and 'buy-in' as this will be the primary determinant of whether any eventual community enterprise succeeds (a view also emphasised by Plunkett Foundation).*
- *That the possibility of a temporary shop be explored and planned for, in order that any gap in shop provision might be minimised and the volunteer-run model be 'tested' in some way.*

16. Reports from councillors

- The Christmas Trees collection for recycling seems to have gone well.
- The wall between the church and the footpath is still awaiting work, but Cllr Watson advised that this is in hand.
- Parking around West Green has been causing problems. The option of placing flower tubs was discussed, but agreed to initially try posting a sign stating 'Please, no parking beyond this point' on the boundary chain fence.
- The deadline for submission to the next 'Our Cotherstone' is 31 January.

Meeting closed: 8.55pm