

# COTHERSTONE PARISH COUNCIL

## Minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council held in Cotherstone Village Hall on Wednesday 11 March 2020 at 7.00pm

In attendance:	Cllr John Birkett (Chair), Cllr Jenny Watson, Cllr Vince Bendin and Cllr Richard Green and Cllr Richard Hunter
County Councillor:	Cllr Richard Bell
Public:	One local elector
Absent:	Cllr Tim Sabey
Clerk:	Judith Mashiter
<b>1. Approval of apologies for absence</b>	Apologies were received from Cllr Sabey.
<b>2. Declarations of interest</b>	None.
<b>3. Requests for dispensations</b>	No requests had been received.
<b>4. Minutes</b>	Draft minutes (paper 110320-1) had been circulated. <i>It was resolved that the minutes of the meeting held 12 February 2020 are an accurate record.</i> <i>Chair sought and received agreement to consider agenda item 5 following agenda item 14.</i>
<b>6. Update on progress of actions and resolutions</b>	Paper 120320-2, an action log updated 4 March 2020, had been circulated. Following discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Noticeboard, Greenfields — noted that the BT telephone box and paving has now been removed. Agreed Clerk continue to chase NorthStar Housing for permission to erect a noticeboard</li><li>• Tree inspections — noted that four separate applications have now been submitted for tree work on Parish Council-owned land; work on Hagg House trees can proceed after 19 April unless Durham County Council advise to the contrary. Cllr Hunter reported that Hagg House owner has offered to pay for the work there, and that another individual has offered to pay for work to remove the ivy-clad damaged ash next to the Teesdale Way.</li><li>• Dog waste bins — noted that a bin has been installed close to the Moor Road/Tees Railway path crossing.</li><li>• Paving slabs — Agreed Clerk report to DCC that although repairs were made outside Headlam Cottage, the slabs again need repairing; and to also report broken tarmac between Chapel House and Cleveland House.</li><li>• Safety equipment — Clerk to chase Durham County Council for copy of risk assessment, copying Cllr Bell.</li><li>• Potholes — work was done on The Hagg and Hallgarth Hill potholes; remove from action log.</li><li>• Footpath 97 condition / 'Cotherstone Lake' — Cllr Bell reported on recent efforts by Durham County Council and the Fire Brigade to prevent properties at Hallgarth Hill from flooding. 3000litre/minute pumps had been set up on 5 March; DCC monitoring whether the level rises again when pumps switched off. Although not a DCC responsibility, they will assist in preventing properties flooding and then will investigate the cause, taking enforcement action against private owner if appropriate (albeit that this might be a lengthy process). Noted that Castle field well is not now flowing, so something has changed with the manmade drainage which is hundreds of years old, which affects the outflow from the lake. Clerk to circulate drone images taken by DCC. Clerk reported that permission had been sought and given for pumping pipes to cross parish council land at The Hagg. Cllr Bell also reported that DCC had been clearing a drain at Briscoe Lane / Red Gables, even though the drain wasn't shown on the council's maps. Agreed Clerk to report surface water drainage problem on Lathbury Bank, just above old railway bridge. Cllr Watson expressed appreciation to Cllr Bell for his work in addressing a difficult situation.</li><li>• Hagg Scar footpath — Clerk to chase for removal of the fingerpost.</li></ul>
<b>7. Finance</b>	Paper 110320-3 had been circulated. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. <i>It was resolved to receive a report of receipts and payments from 1 to 29 February and a bank reconciliation at 29 February.</i></li><li>b. <i>It was resolved to authorise payments due as listed, with the addition of £96.82 to HMRC for PAYE/NI and £60.09 reimbursement to Clerk for website/email fees, printing and postage.</i></li></ul>

## 8. Correspondence

Paper 110320-4, a list of correspondence received, had been circulated and was noted. No further information was requested or action necessary.

(item 8) — Agreed to nominate three potential sites for electric vehicle charging point exploration: outside the old garage, outside the Red Lion and at the back of the village hall.

(item 13) — Cllr Bell clarified that the proposed selective licensing of private residential landlords will not apply to Teesdale.

## 9. Planning matters

There were no new planning applications to consider and no application decisions to note.

## 10. Request for permission to erect directional sign on village green

Detailed information (specification, map and photographs of the current sign and site of proposed new sign) was tabled supporting a request for signage to the Quaker Meeting House. *It was resolved to refer the Quaker Meeting applicant to Durham County Council as the proposed site for a new directional sign is their land, but also to suggest that a better site might be the other end of the ginnel (nearer the Green), also Durham County Council's responsibility.*

## 11. Cemetery matters

No matters were raised.

## 12. Allotment matters

- a. *It was resolved that a letter be sent to two tenants who have not paid their 2020 rent asking them to pay within 14 days or to terminate their agreement and vacate their plot.*
- b. No other allotment matters were raised.

## 13. Bench seats

- Cllr Sabey has reported that Bishop Auckland College students might be able to help with seat repairs, although insurance and risk assessment need to be in place and he will explore this. Agree that April might be too early for this work as the seats will not have dried out. Cllr Birkett offered the use of his byre if necessary. Cllrs Sabey and Hunter to liaise about bench work.
- Clerk reported that Wicksteed spare parts of six benches will be delivered to Cllr Hunter in 2-3 weeks.
- Cllr Hunter reported that Seat 27 (at The Close) has been added to the asset register.

## 14. Community-run shop/post office

- a. The quantitative results of the community venture consultation were presented, with the 51 comments received from the 136 responses. Agreed that the 46% response rate was fairly good.  
Cllr Hunter observed that a clear age demographic was visible, with the older generation keen on retaining a local shop, with the younger generation perhaps relying more on supermarket online deliveries. Cllrs Sabey and Watson expressed particular concern about whether a sufficient number of volunteers would be committed to operating any shop venture. Cllr Bendin reiterated that the original Steering Group had investigated, and eliminated, other premises options such as the old garage (new owner not interested), Hearse House (which would require considerable infrastructure work) and Village Hall (where long-term option for shop and storage were considered problematic). The potential detrimental effect on the village hall of another 'community space', the hall's under-utilisation and its possible use for at least a temporary/short-term shop was raised by many respondents.
- b. *It was resolved*
  - *to explore the possibility of using either part of the village hall or part of the Methodist chapel premises to establish a temporary/short-term shop with the aim of testing the demand for a shop and also the supply of volunteers to operate it;*
  - *to share the consultation results with the existing shop owners (cognisant also that the results might accelerate their decision-making), with members of the former Steering Group and with the public via the parish council's website;*
  - *to continue to seek external advice and support (eg. from Plunkett Foundation) about how to progress, given that the consultation has not resulted in a clear mandate for action; and*
  - *to consider the next steps at the April meeting, once advice is received and local investigations advanced.*

## 5. Public participation

The member of public present urged the Parish Council to prepare a plan for how to take the community-run shop project forward if the premises are found to establish a temporary/short-term shop as he had seen nothing to demonstrate how this would happen, and the members of the original Steering Group had all resigned and the Group

been dissolved. He commented that the original Steering Group had held a meeting attended by 20+ volunteers and so he remained confident that sufficient volunteer help was available. He suggested that the café use results should be interpreted as positive. He disagreed with any suggestion that people might boycott any shop if it wasn't their preferred option.

#### **15. Cotherstone Community Celebration**

A meeting of Parish Council (Clerk), Neighbourhood Plan Group (Cllr Hunter) and Friends of Cotherstone School (Kelly Green) had discussed possible options for the celebration. The school is already planning a VE75 event and the Neighbourhood Plan second formal consultation needs to be kept separate and will be around May time also. *It was resolved to work with the Cotherstone Fun Weekend committee to agree how to utilise and publicise the Lottery grant funding to enhance this year's events in June, especially given that a new committee will be finding their way, thus requiring only one Safety Advisory Group application and potentially allowing for new activities, catering etc to be tested.*

#### **16. Annual Parish Meeting arrangements**

Cllr Sabey had suggested a similar event to 2019, given the positive feedback that was received. Cllr Bendin observed that it had been a good way to showcase the diversity of groups, activities etc in the community. Doubts were expressed, however, about whether the exact same format would work again. *It was resolved that the 2020 Annual Parish Meeting be held on Wednesday 13 May, followed by the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council and that councillors exchange ideas about possible formats and arrangements be finalised at the April meeting.*

#### **17. Reports from councillors**

- Cllr Green reported on the Planning Applications training he had attended. He found it a positive experience, with a good, clear overview of how to respond in the correct manner and stated that it was good to better understand how the planning process actually works. He recommended all councillors study the presentation slides which have been circulated.
- Cllr Green reported a standing water problem on the Tees Railway walk east of Birkett Close, just before the descent to the field from the trackbed.
- Cllr Sabey had reported that the wall at the back of the churchyard has now been repaired.
- Cllr Sabey reported that recent storms had blown away lids from the green bins on the East Green, however other councillors believed that these bins had never had lids
- Cllr Sabey reported that the large tree stuck to the pier of the Tees footbridge remains, despite the storms. Clerk will chase Durham County Council about its removal.

Meeting closed: 8.37pm