

COTHERSTONE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council held via video conference
on Wednesday 8 April 2020 at 7.00pm

In attendance:	Cllr John Birkett (Chair), Cllr Jenny Watson, Cllr Vince Bendin, Cllr Richard Hunter, Cllr Richard Green and Cllr Tim Sabey
Public:	No public attended the meeting
Clerk:	Judith Mashiter
1. Approval of apologies for absence	All councillors were present.
2. Declarations of interest	None.
3. Requests for dispensations	No requests had been received.
4. Minutes	Draft minutes (paper 080420-1) had been circulated. <i>It was resolved that the minutes of the meeting held 11 March 2020 are an accurate record.</i> It was noted that the Extraordinary Meeting scheduled for 24 March 2020 had been cancelled due to Government advice on holding meetings.
5. Public participation	No public were present.
6. Update on progress of actions and resolutions	Paper 080420-2, an action log updated 3 April 2020, had been circulated. Following discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Litter bins on East Green — following reports of recent storm damage, it was agreed that Clerk request that Durham County Council provide two new lidded bins, appropriate for a Conservation Area, for each end of the Green.• Noted that the 'split' tree at the B6277/Briscoe Lane junction has been felled• Bench seats — Clerk reported that Wicksteeds' parts order has been put on hold due to the factory shut-down.
7. Finance	Paper 080420-3 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 March and a bank reconciliation at 31 March.</i>b. <i>It was resolved to authorise payments due as listed.</i>c. <i>It was resolved to receive a monitoring report of income and expenditure against budget for the year 2019/20.</i> Clerk shared information about the reserves position at the end of 2019/20 and it was agreed that no changes be made to this at the current time.d. <i>It was resolved to receive the unaudited annual accounts for 2019/20, and councillors had no questions.</i>e. <i>It was resolved to move, as soon as possible, the council's banking arrangements to dual authorisation online payments rather than the use of cheques, with Cllr Birkett being the authorising signatory following the Clerk setting up payments once full council has agreed payments be made.</i>f. <i>It was resolved to note the receipt of a Business Rates Coronavirus grant of £10,000 in respect of Cotherstone Cemetery, and, pending any further clarification about eligibility to this or what it could be used for, to earmark this money as specific reserves.</i>
8. Scheme of Delegation	<i>It was resolved that no further delegation is necessary at the current time, given that remote meetings of the full council are now possible.</i> Agreed that, until further notice, parish council meetings are held, remotely, on the second Wednesday of each month, at 7pm.
9. Coronavirus/Covid-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. <i>It was resolved to note new Regulations which came into force on 4 April, and are temporary until 6 May 2021 unless revoked earlier, which</i><ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>allow for (but don't require) remote parish council meetings;</i>

- *remove the requirement to hold an Annual Meeting of the Council this year (but don't preclude a council doing so) and in which case the current Chair continues in post until such time that an Annual Meeting is held;*
- *put back the Annual Governance and Accountability Return deadline by two months until 31 August;*
- *allow the frequency of parish council meetings to be varied without the need to notify everyone; and*
- *retain the requirements to give three clear days' notice of a meeting, though this notice can now solely be on the parish council's website and not on the noticeboard in the village.*

Clerk further explained that internal audit arrangements are uncertain due to practicalities, and that, with the Business Rates support grant taking annual income over the £25k threshold, an external audit, costing £200, will be required for the 2019/20 Annual Governance and Accountability Return.

- b. *Councillors resolved to note the sterling work that a group of volunteers are doing offering help to community members and noted that contact details for the three main organisers has, with their permission, been placed on the homepage of the Council's website.* Cllr Bendin reported that the Teesdale Supply Stores is offering a whole range of delivery services, providing vital support to the community. He also mentioned that a 'local businesses home-delivery service' directory has been put on the noticeboard at the village hall. Councillors were unanimous in hoping that once the current crisis is over the community will pull together and strongly support local businesses of all kinds and that the parish council should perhaps plan towards assisting this in whatever way it can.

10. Correspondence

Paper 080420-4, a list of correspondence received, had been circulated and was noted. No further information was requested or action necessary.

Agreed that the correspondence list be sent out weekly until further notice, with the full list being presented at each meeting as usual. Agreed that Clerk continue to not reveal councillors' email addresses in any communications, but that councillors share responses with each other and Clerk as they see appropriate.

11. Planning matters

- a. *It was resolved to note the decision of Durham County Council on the Parish Council's application for tree work at Hagg House (raised no objection).* Agreed that Clerk chase remaining three tree work applications.
- b. *It was resolved to note the Parish Council's response to DM/20/00559/FPA (4 Station Terrace) ('neutral', no comment).*
- c. *It was resolved to note Durham County Council's decision on DM/20/00122/FPA (Post Office) (approved).*
- d. *It was resolved to note a summary of planning applications relevant to the Parish Council since April 2019.*

12. Cemetery matters

- Clerk reported that since the last meeting seven grave plots have been sold and two interments have taken place. Clerk confirmed that cemeteries can remain open to the public unless there is a crematorium on site. Clerk had also forwarded to G Brownless & Son guidance from the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management about the handling of coffins etc during the current Covid-19 crisis and received the response that they are fully complying.
- Cllr Green reported that the first cut of the Cemetery grass had been carried out, and a brilliant job done of it. Agreed that Clerk ask C A Stamp to spray weeds around gravestones, at his quoted hourly rate, plus cost of materials, at mid-end of April and then possibly again in August, depending on the recommendation of Chris Stamp on this.
- Cllr Hunter clarified for Cllr Green the extent of the trimming back of the cherry trees at the gates.

13. Allotment matters

- a. *It was resolved to note that all rents for 2020 have been received.*
- b. The tenant of a half-plot has indicated that they are ready to surrender it. In the current circumstances, where working a half-plot whilst maintaining social distancing might be difficult, it was agreed to allow the tenant of the other half of the plot to cultivate the whole plot, but on the understanding that this arrangement is only for 2020. It was agreed to review the waiting list, and intentions of current tenants, in September to ensure that information is up to date. Clerk to contact one resident about using the 'spare' end plot for keeping hens. Noted that notices have been placed on allotment sites, and message sent to all tenants with guidance about how to use their plots during the coronavirus pandemic.

14. Community-run shop/post office

Cllr Bendin had reported to Plunkett Foundation the results of the consultation and was advised to explore with the chapel and village hall the possibility of a temporary shop set-up. Cllr Watson confirmed that the Village Hall Association had concluded that a temporary shop at the village hall was not going to be viable, and that the Methodist Chapel had confirmed that the schoolroom would be available to rent until October 2020. Agreed that the whole project should be put on hold during the current national crisis, but the item kept on each parish council meeting agenda. It was noted that the current shop owners have diversified and responded to increased demand during the

lockdown, and were being well supported, but also confirmed that they still wish to sell and move on. Cllr Bendin will seek clarification from Plunkett Foundation about what they are supporting at the moment.

15. Annual Parish Meeting

Clerk clarified that the law states that a parish council 'may' call an Annual Parish Meeting (of electors), but is not required to do so. *It was resolved to cancel the Annual Parish Meeting scheduled for 13 May 2020.*

16. Reports from councillors

- Cllr Sabey reported that he has received concerns and request for help, from four separate residents, including one landowner, about walkers, often with dogs not on leads, in fields around the village, not sticking to public footpaths. One dog on a lead had been attacked by a 'loose' dog, and there was also a report of sheep worrying by a dog. Clerk advised councillors that public rights of way and trespass on private land were not parish council responsibilities and that the residents should be encouraged to report the matter to Durham County Council.
- Cllr Hunter reported that work has come to a halt on Neighbourhood Plan until Durham County Council can complete the Graphical Information System work. A repayment of an unspent £500 has to be repaid of the latest £6k grant from Locality. Any further costs incurred will be subject to a new application in the 2020/21 grant year.
- Cllr Watson asked whether the Lottery Community Celebration grant money had a deadline for expenditure. Clerk clarified that National Lottery Community Fund had indicated understanding that community events would likely be impossible this summer, and confirmation is awaited about whether the money can be carried forward.

Meeting closed: 8.25pm

APPROVED