

COTHERSTONE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council held via video conference
on Wednesday 13 May 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. Election of a Chair for the year 2020-21 and signing of declaration of acceptance of office	<i>It was resolved that Cllr Birkett be elected as Chair for the year 2020-21.</i> Cllr Birkett signed the declaration of acceptance of office and showed this to all present. Clerk will sign as witness in due course.
2. Approval of apologies for absence	All councillors were present.
3. Councillors' interests	a. There were no declarations of interest. b. Clerk reminded all councillors to review, and update, their register of interests as appropriate.
4. Requests for dispensations	No requests had been received.
5. Election of a Vice-Chair for the year 2020-21	<i>It was resolved that Cllr Hunter be elected as Vice-Chair for the year 2020-21.</i>
6. Minutes	Draft minutes (paper 130520-1) had been circulated. <i>It was resolved that the minutes of the meeting held 8 April 2020 are an accurate record.</i>
7. Governance	Paper 130520-2 had been circulated. a. Parish Council policies i. <i>It was resolved to approve the Standing Orders with no revisions.</i> ii. <i>It was resolved to approve the Financial Regulations with a revision to Section 6 to reflect the change from payments by cheque to dual-authorisation online payments.</i> b. <i>It was resolved that the membership of the personnel/employment matters working group remains as Cllrs Birkett, Hunter and Watson.</i> c. <i>It was resolved to note the contract and other arrangements currently in place with the Council.</i> d. <i>It was resolved that no changes be made to representation on or work with external bodies.</i> e. <i>It was resolved to continue subscription to County Durham Association of Local Councils and a share of the Clerk's subscription to Society of Local Council Clerks.</i> f. <i>It was resolved to note that there was no expenditure incurred under s.137 of the Local Government Act 1972 during 2019/20.</i> Councillors noted that a cheque for £25 issued to The Poppy Appeal was not received by Barnard Castle Town Council and agreed to make a larger contribution in November 2020 to account for this. g. <i>It was resolved to hold ordinary meetings of the Council on the second Wednesday of each month, with no meeting held in August or December, each starting at 7pm in either Cotherstone Village Hall or via video conference.</i>
8. Public participation	No public were present.
9. Update on progress of actions and resolutions	Paper 130520-3, an action log updated 6 May 2020, had been circulated. Following discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• New noticeboard at east of village — agreed Clerk will continue to chase for a response from North Star Housing• Footpath Condition 'Cotherstone Lake' — Cllr Watson reported that water level has dropped and it's now quite obvious where the blockage occurred and she is in touch with Durham County Council about this.

10. Finance

Paper 130520-4 had been circulated. Clerk explained the new format of the finance report (more consistent with year-end requirements) and councillors agreed that it is self-explanatory and clear.

a. *It was resolved to receive a bank reconciliation at 30 April 2020.*

b. *It was resolved to authorise payments due as listed, with the addition of £250 to A R Toward for April cutting of the greens.* Although the collection of three loads of Christmas Trees by Rotters was more than expected it was agreed that the service was valued by residents. Cllr Hunter suggested a contribution be sought from Romalldirk Parish Council as many of their residents use the service. Clerk explained that other insurance companies are very reluctant to enter new business with a council within a long-term agreement, so the time to consider competitive quotes for insurance will be towards April 2021.

It was resolved to accept the Internal Audit Report for 2019-20, dated 13 May 2020

c. *It was resolved to approve each of the statements in the Annual Governance Statement for 2019/20 and for Chair and Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer to sign in due course.*

d. Clerk reported comment from Chris Butler that the Parish Council accounting and the financial detail in support of it is to a very high standard. Cllr Sabey called for more clarity in Note 3 of Notes to Accounts 2019/20, stating that the Council is to ringfence the £10k Coronavirus Business Rates grant pending further advice from Durham County Council. Agreed that Clerk write to Durham County Council asking for specific clarification on whether the Parish Council should have received the grant, in light of contradictory information from Durham County Council and Co. Durham Association of Local Councils. *It was resolved to approve the Accounting Statements for 2019/20 and for the Responsible Financial Officer and Chair to sign in due course.*

e. *It was resolved to approve the suggested arrangements to complete the Annual Governance and Accountability Return and to satisfy the period for the exercise of public rights.*

11. Correspondence

Paper 130520-5 had been circulated and there were no requests for further information.

(late item) — request has been received from Play@Cothelstone for additional financial assistance to mitigate the loss of fundraising events this summer. Request has been acknowledged and applicant advised that the request will be considered at the June Parish Council meeting. Agreed that Clerk refer applicant to other sources of grant funding specific to Covid-19 impact.

12. Planning matters

Paper 130520-6 had been circulated.

a. *It was resolved to note the decision of Durham County Council on the Parish Council's applications for tree work at Cothelstone Cemetery, at land to the north east of Glenleigh and at Klondyke Allotments.* Clerk to forward letter of approval for the latter to Cllr Hunter for checking dimensions listed. Agreed that Cllr Hunter invite Lee Jopling to quote for the various pieces of tree work and councillors consider this at the June meeting. If Mr Jopling can do this before 31 May and then another quotation is necessary, then there would be time to seek another quotation in time before the June meeting. Noted that any contractor (tree work, grass cutting etc) should be asked to confirm their Covid-19-compliant working methods (referring them to official government website). Clerk advised that it would be best practice to obtain more than one quote, although councillors agreed that it would be best to support a local company to do the work, and avoid having site visits with people from outside of the village, if the price from Lee Jopling was reasonable (though Council at this stage had no idea what 'reasonable' would be).

b. *It was resolved to note Durham County Council's decision on DM/20/00559/FPA (4 Station Terrace) (approved).*

c. *It was resolved to note a summary of planning applications relevant to the Parish Council since May 2019.*

13. Cemetery matters

Councillors reported that the grass cutting and weed spraying have been excellent.

14. Allotment matters

Clerk reported contact from a tenant who is, with Council agreement, informally sharing a plot, saying that they want to formalise the agreement. Clerk has advised tenant that full review of tenants and those on waiting list will be carried out in September.

15. Cothelstone Community Celebration

Agreed that no further planning can take place currently, but that perhaps retrospective reference be made to VE Day during whatever celebration takes place in the future, using the National Lottery grant towards this.

16. Community-run shop/post office

Agreed that no further action is appropriate currently, but that the item remain on the agenda for future meetings. Councillors once more acknowledged the very valuable service the current owners are providing to the village and the wider community through the current crisis.

17. Reports from councillors

- Cllr Hunter reported that the drafts of the Neighbourhood Plan are being finalised, however there is news that any further public consultation or referendum on Neighbourhood Plans has been suspended until May 2021.

Meeting closed: 8.11pm

APPROVED