Broomhaugh and Riding Parish Council

Minutes of the annual Parish Meeting

Thursday 16th May 2024, 7 pm, held at the Parish Hall, Millfield Road

Present: Cllr. Christine Howe (Chair), Cllr. Andy Dunhill, Cllr. Eileen Carew, Cllr. David Irwin, Cllr. Barbara Wood, Cllr. David McKenzie, Cllr. Brian Singer, County Councillor Anne Dale, Reverend Diana Johnson, Pam Waldron (VHT Trustee), Suz Hart (Executive Headteacher, Corbridge & Broomhaugh First Schools), Nicki Burton (Deputy-Headteacher, Broomhaugh First School), Liz Charman (Chair of Governors, Broomhaugh First School), Chris Higgins (VHT Trustee) and Judy Wilthew (VHT Trustee/Secretary).

18 members of the public were present.

In attendance:
Catherine Harrison – Parish Clerk
Mr David Taylor-Gooby – Volunteer Speaker, The Woodland Trust

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1. Apologies

Cllr. Ellen Rutherford, Adrian Banger (Chair of the Village Hall Trust), Mike Smith, Carol Smith.

2. Guest Speaker – Mr David Taylor-Gooby, Volunteer Speaker, The Woodland Trust

Mr Taylor-Gooby gave an informative speech on the Woodland Trust explaining how it first came about, its goals and how it works with other organisations with the aim of protecting and restoring ancient woodland, planting trees and protecting threatened wildlife. He also gave details of how community groups and local schools could obtain free tree and hedge packs from the Trust and how trees in woodlands could be dedicated to loved ones.

3. Minutes of the 2023 annual Parish Meeting, which had been displayed on the ridingmill.org website in draft form since June 2023, were agreed to be a true record.

4. Matters arising from the previous Minutes

There were no matters arising.

5. Broomhaugh CE First School Report, Suz Hart, Headteacher

At Broomhaugh Church of England First School, we have the Christian values of respect, forgiveness, truth, thankfulness and kindness guiding us in all we do, helping us to be courageous advocates who make a difference in our local community and the wider world.

'Let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.' 1 John 3:18

Through high expectations and encouragement, we empower our children to believe in themselves and be the best they can be!

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School Information

Number of children on roll: 65	% SEND pupils: 17.2%
Age range of pupils: 4-9 years	% of disadvantaged pupils: 4.8%

Key Developments (Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Education)

The whole school ethos, and promotion of personal development, are enhanced through collective worship, RE, the work of the playground buddies, the work of the School Council and the work of the Eco Council. Picture News is used in whole school worship to discuss current affairs; pupils can access the content at a suitable level. The use of Picture News encourages discussion and debate through links to current affairs. Pupils are encouraged to talk about things happening in the world right now, becoming courageous advocates for change. Staff look at how the Bible can be linked to Picture News. The worship schedule is on the school website so that parents can use links from Picture News at home and know what has been discussed in school.

Children have accessed further, special assemblies such as a virtual session on the Protected Characteristics for KS2, a local author, an online safety speaker and regular visits from Reverend Diana, who works with our prayer leaders in school. A PSHE enrichment calendar has been created for the year across the Federation; it includes, for example, global goals week, black history month, Christianity projects, STEM, Remembrance Day and LGBT History Month. There is a strong focus on the purpose of the days and why the school takes part. Kema Kay – rapper and actor – came to speak to both schools about the racist bullying he experienced and complete a forum theatre workshop with the children on bullying.

On Wednesday 28th February we held our annual Rainbow Day where we celebrate equality, diversity and inclusion. This year, we celebrated neurodiversity and making links to mental health and wellbeing. Very simply, neurodiversity refers to the different ways a person's brain processes information. Those who are neurodivergent make up a large percentage of our society and school communities. Research from the NHS states that up to 1 in 7 people in the U.K may be neurodiverse. Neurodiversity includes those with dyslexia, ASD, ADHD, OCD, Developmental coordination disorder (dyspraxia), dyscalculia, stammering and Tourette's Syndrome. Throughout the day, we shared books linked to neurodiversity and took part in wellbeing activities as well as having an assembly led by the Northumberland A.S.D team about different types of neurodiversity. As we did last year, we invited children to come dressed in different colours of the rainbow. We are all unique like each colour of the rainbow and we believe we should always celebrate our differences!

Every day, every class chooses someone to be a special person. The special person hears positive affirmations from their peers and provides their own self-affirmations; some pupils can initially find this difficult to do, however self-esteem is boosted as a result. The work also supports oracy and language development. The SENDCo works closely with a number of external partners to promote positive emotional wellbeing and mental health in school; she has put in place a range of strategies to support pupils and parents. The SENDCo is a highly skilled practitioner who has a sharp focus on achieving the best outcomes for all pupils.

The school council were asked to source a local charity to support throughout the year as part of their work on becoming courageous advocates. 'Tanga' in Hexham, a youth club for children and families with additional needs, was identified as a charity they'd like to link up with. After carrying out further research into the charity they set a target of raising £250 throughout the year. They're well on track after their first event and are passionate about raising more in the summer term.

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Extra-curricular provision

A wide range of lunchtime and after-school clubs are on offer and boast strong numbers. Provision is always inclusive and funded places are available, so no-one misses out. Attendance is monitored. A proportional representation audit has been completed to ascertain number of Pupil Premium and SEND children accessing clubs and whether this is in line with Pupil Premium and SEND percentages in school. We currently offer choir, calm club, sensory club, gymnastics, sports, orienteering and history, to name just a few! All of the children's interests ate celebrated and developed in school.

Behaviour Policy Changes

We are proud to take a relational approach to behaviour management. At Broomhaugh CofE First School, we feel that positive relationships are the root of positive behaviour and attitudes to learning and we all have a part to play in building that positive foundation. Our approach reflects the 5 core Christian values that underpin everything we do in school. We serve to provide a Christian school community in which our children can feel secure and happy and thrive, both emotionally and academically, on a daily basis.

The Broomhaugh CofE First School Code outlines what children and adults will do in our school. They are very much a statement of, 'How we do things here.' New policies and documents have been shared with the wider school community and are available on the schools' websites.

STEM Fortnight

Broomhaugh CofE First School's STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) fortnight took place 5th-15th February 2024 and managed to go beyond last year's excitement levels and enthusiasm! Our ongoing aim is to inspire the children into STEM based interests through activities and workshops during the fortnight. Each class had a packed timetable with events, ambassador visits (where we invited parents and family members with STEM careers into school to talk to the children), workshops and more.

The children were all invited to dress up on the first and last days to start and end it with a bang. These costumes either reflected their class theme or were STEM based. The fortnight finished with an 'Open Morning' on Thursday 15th February, where the children acted as STEM experts and explained what they had learnt and achieved to all of our visitors.

All of the children were so enthused by their learning, smashed stereotypes about what people who work in STEM careers look like and saw the amazing opportunities each of their futures could hold.

Out and About!

EYFS and KS1 visited Queen's Hall to see Hey Diddle! at Christmas time. Our music lead, Mrs. Errington, attended Royal Opera House training through NCC and booked places at a singing event for The Magic Flute for the choir and KS1 children, where they sang songs from the opera, accompanied by a full orchestra and professional singers. Years 3 and 4 will be spending the day at Beamish, in addition to their residential trip to Dukeshouse Wood. We have also continued the annual beach trip, which will take place this year in July. Our many trips have been made possible by the support of our wonderful PTA and Consett Rotary and their 'Kids Out' programme, which we are extremely grateful for.

Ofsted Success

Broomhaugh First School has been graded outstanding – the highest possible rating – for its early years education. Rating the school "good" overall, Ofsted inspectors judged the school to be "outstanding" in the two of four assessment areas – early years provision and personal development of pupils.

Inspectors wrote: "Broomhaugh First School is nurturing and inviting... lessons bring learning to life for pupils... Pupils are well prepared for life locally and beyond (and) the environment develops children's curiosity and independence".

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Inspectors also concluded:

- "Pupils are happy and safe... the emotional well-being of pupils is a priority".
- "Pupils achieve well. The school has introduced an ambitious and broad curriculum. There are high expectations for all pupils".
- "Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive the tailored support they need in lessons. They achieve well."
- "Lessons and classroom discussions raise pupils' aspirations".
- "There is a strong reading culture in school. Pupils learn to read quickly and confidently".
- "There are clear expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils behave well."
- "The school develops pupils' character and cultural capital exceptionally well. Pupils have a firm understanding of justice and equality. They are passionate about making the world a better place."
- "Children speak to adults with a high level of respect and kindness".
- "Pupils are well prepared for the transition to middle school."

6. Village Hall Trust Report, Pam Waldron, Trustee

Our Purpose

The Riding Mill Village Halls (RMVH) charity will provide, manage, and develop the Riding Mill village halls to meet the changing needs and expectations of the community. The guiding principle of all our actions being 'For the community, with the community'

Our Vision

- We aim to maintain and develop the village halls to provide adaptable venues which maximise the benefit to the community of Riding Mill and surrounding areas.
- We aim to engage all ages and interests in both using the halls and participating in the organisation of events
- We will seek to fund these venues by a mixture of hire charges and fund-raising events supported by taking advantage of grant opportunities

Governance & management

This was a transitional period with the move from our original charitable status to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) with a new constitution. This has proved to be a very slow process with the legalities of getting our lease reassigned to the CIO. Early in 2023, we held a trustee workshop to establish our purpose, vision, and values as a basis to guide future decision making. Our Trustees are all volunteers and there has been a significant turnover in Trustees during the reporting period.

Policy & procedures

The process of reviewing and updating policies and procedures has been time-consuming, and the work is ongoing. Priority was given to the review of our fire risk assessments and ensuring that statutory inspections are up to date.

Review of activities

The halls continue to be well-used for many and varied activities ranging across health and fitness, leisure, and social and charitable events. The Drama Club staged two successful and very well attended productions during the year. Two concerts raised money for Tynedale Hospice and Ukrainian Red Cross with local musicians making a major contribution. Café in the Foyer welcomes people in every Monday and Friday mornings for refreshments, Drop In provides a meeting place at the Millennium Hall every Tuesday afternoon and Pot Luck lunches continue.

The RMVH website provides a valuable information resource, access to the hall diary, and a reliable online booking system. A contract was set up with a new booking secretary to improve the efficiency of our booking arrangements.

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The Market Table, which was set up during lockdown, continues to make a significant contribution to RMVH income. It is available all day, every day, in the open but covered section of the Parish Hall porch. It sells eggs and home-made jams, marmalades, and chutneys, with an honesty box. There is also a free book exchange facility. It requires a significant and regular commitment from our volunteers but has helped to raise the profile of the hall within the community.

We were awarded Warm Hub status for the Parish Hall and have implemented audit recommendations to improve accessibility and signage and become more dementia friendly.

The Parish Hall garden, cared for by the volunteer Garden Invaders team, is flourishing and an audit of all of the trees on RMVH land is to be carried out.

Financial overview

The charity prepares accounts on a receipts and payment basis and accounts for the year ending Aug 31st 2023 are in the process of being validated. The figures show an approximate 30% increase in hall hire from the previous year as people gradually became more comfortable returning to public places. This increase in Parish Hall bookings, and the increased hire charges from 1st January 2023, contributed to our overall income increasing by 6%.

RMVH income from invaluable fund-raising activities such as the Market Table, jumble sales, and coffee mornings rose by just over 40% also contributing to the 6% increase in total income. Our total expenditure for the year was £40,403 which is a 7% increase over the previous year. However, the operating costs of the Parish Hall rose by 53% on the previous year primarily due to increases in energy costs. The net surplus for the year was £13,874.

The charity has a healthy bank balance, in part due to grants received during the COVID period and to judicious management of finances in previous years. However, the Parish Hall will be 100 years old in 2026 and we are very mindful that, as we are on a full repairing and maintaining lease, we need to keep a substantial reserve.

We intend to review the Parish Hall flat tenancy and renew at an increased rent but will have to invest money in the flat in 2024 to increase its thermal efficiency and decorative state.

Significant effort was required to reconcile the accounts of this reporting year and a valuable start was made in developing new financial procedures and disciplines. This has given us more rigorous management information and control in 2023/24.

The year ahead

We aim to improve communication with hall users and interested parties in the community by way of regular Newsletters, User Group meetings, and an annual open meeting.

We are looking at ways to reduce our energy costs with the help of Community Action Northumberland (CAN) who can provide a free energy audit and assist with identifying grant sources.

We will be planning ways of celebrating the Millennium Hall's 25 year milestone.

Networking with other halls local to Riding Mill will be explored to share ideas and possibly resources.

We are extremely grateful to everyone who contributes their time to help the halls to thrive and we will continue to actively seek to increase our trustee and volunteer teams.

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7. St James's Church Report, Rev. Diana Johnson

The past year has been a time of taking stock of the realities of Parish life in the straitened times in which we live. Much has been done, much is yet to be done and, with God's help, there has been much to be thankful for. For I am clear that there *is* good news.

The support of our Bishops, Archdeacon and others within Newcastle Diocese has been strong. They have faith in us and have recently demonstrated that trust by 'lifting the suspension' that has been in place since 2001: all the while the structure of our parish has been under review. It's a technical change, but the practical effect is that we can be confident that the Diocese see Riding Mill as secure for the future - and once more the Village will have our own Vicar, rather than a 'Priest-in-Charge'.

We have, this year, further developed a Vision for St James that has been recognised by national publication in the Church Times. Together with local artist Hannah Thorpe's creativity, we have created a picture of what we are, as if seen from the outside of the Church.

Of course, there are challenges, and I suggest that three need our energies right now:

1. We must ensure our future is sustainable, in order to take us to our Third Century. The development of the 'Friends of St James' and the appeal last Christmas will help in that.
2. We want to ensure that Riding Mill continues to have a priest living in the community: making our priest a vicar is a symbol that this is an aspiration shared widely with the Diocese.
3. We need to address the congregation's capability, for example to raise up enough volunteers to do the myriad tasks that sustain us.

So what is my reaction? My report card?

I believe that St James' can have a secure future in this place; and it is in our collective hands to ensure that this is so. There are so very many marks of hope, which together give me reason for that belief: realistic planning; generous giving; joy in worship; committed people, who *do* stuff as well as *say* things; generous love of others, that is expressed with soft eyes towards our neighbour; desire to act in the community; ...and over all, firm faith in God.

It's all there: we have the means to take on the challenge of the future, and forge ahead to our Third Century. With the Village's generous help, support and advice ringing around the metaphorical circle of the Vision's icon-like centre, always inspired by God's Spirit, securely held in God's Creator hands, and guided in Jesus' name by God's Word - we shall be part of this holy Tynedale place called Riding Mill for the next generations.

8. County Councillor's Report, Cllr. Anne Dale

I am always delighted to be given the opportunity to attend the Annual Parish Meeting and update you on the work of the County Council and my work as your County Councillor in the village. I attend your monthly Parish Council meetings and I am available at the beginning of every meeting. If you would like to raise any issues please do come along.

HIGHWAYS AND RIGHTS OF WAY.

Due to the atrocious weather since November I thought that it would be helpful to inform you about the policies and legal requirements by Government on the maintenance of Highways. A Statutory

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duty to maintain was imposed on the local authority by S44 (1) of the Highways Act 1959, now 41(1) of the Highways Act 1980. The local authority is responsible for maintaining and repairing the highways, which can be a road, cycle tracks, walkway, footpath over which every member of the general public has a right of passage. There is not an obligation to improve a highway, only to maintain it. The publication of a revised National Code of Practice, Well Managed Highway Infrastructure on 28th October 2016 resulted in the County Council reassessing the Council's defect intervention response times which includes the hierarchy and classification of the highways in the County.

There are 9 classifications: Category 1 is the Major Road Network which includes the motorways, etc., Category 2 is the resilient road network which includes the A695 . Category 8 includes local access roads, the majority of the roads in this village fall under this category.

The classification dictates the defect (pothole, etc.) intervention response times according to the National Code of Practice. The workforce are expected to work to the response times and it is a risk based approach. The County Council has to report all this information back to the Department of Transport.

The very wet weather since November has put considerable strain on the workforce, I wrote in early November last year raising my concern that the workforce was not adequate, it needed more funding and local policies should be reviewed. For instance the Council's policy on cleaning gullies is once every 28 months, there is one gulley cleaner which covers the area from the Scottish, Cumbria, Durham, Gateshead and Newcastle borders. After continually asking for a meeting on this subject the Council has agreed to hold a meeting at the end of this month.

The Government has allocated further funding for highways for this year, it will be ring-fenced. The Council has not received any further information.

Winter Flooding issues.
There was considerable flooding in the village and in particular on the outskirts where the water was flowing from the fields and houses were at risk. This occurred especially at Beauclerc and I would like to thank all the residents for their help and co-operation during this time. Northumbria Water undertook investigations in the area and blocked pipes and water leaks were found. Hopefully everything is in order now.

Rights of Way
I am sorry to report that since the landslip in 2015 no further work has been undertaken recently to provide a new route between Corbridge and Riding Mill. The Council officer has had positive discussions with the landowners. However due to the lack of resources available within the ROW team he has been unable to take this forward. I wrote last week to the Leader of the Council, County Council Cabinet Member and Councillor for Corbridge and I waiting for a response.

EV charging points.
The County Council is waiting to hear further on the funding due to the Mayoral Elections. I keep the Clerk informed of any news on this matter.

BROADBAND PROVISION.
Openreach has been give the contract from the Government Agency Building Digital UK (BDUK), to deliver ultra-fast broadband to the village. Some parts of the village are not eligible to receive vouchers, this is a BDUK decision and a mystery to us all. However Openreach will look into providing the service wherever possible.

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FUNDING
I was pleased to help with the funding for the play park. I have also visited the Broomhaugh School Councillors to discuss their outdoor project with them. It was fun and I hope that they enjoyed a bit of learning on how to develop a project in the future, you need a plan first !

County Council Committees.
I am a member of the following Committees. Staffing and Appointments, Tynedale Area, Tynedale Planning, Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny, Inequalities Working Group, Rights of Way and the Audit Committee. I also serve on the Local Government Association Audit Board in London.

The main concerns raised are the delivery of the planning service, highways maintenance including potholes and blocked gullies and Council Tax. The delivery of Social Services is excellent throughout the area. Northumberland has the highest Council Tax in the Country but delivers the worst Value for Money for its residents. The external auditor has qualified its reports on value for money since 2017.

BOUNDARY REVIEW.
The Boundary Commission of England published the new County Council divisions following their review at the end of last year. Due to the growth of the number of residents in Prudhoe changes were made to the adjacent Divisions. I am sad that both Mickley and Riding Mill have been removed from the Stocksfield Division. Mickley is now included in the new Prudhoe West Division and Riding Mill is now part of the new Corbridge Division. Whilst Bywell, Newton, Ovington and Horsley have been included in the new Stocksfield Division. Hopefully I will be allowed to attend next year's meeting to give my Annual Review to you all.

If you have any concerns please do contact me at: Anne.Dale@Northumberland.gov.uk or telephone me on 01434 673326.

9. Chairman's report, Cllr. Christine Howe

The year started off with the very good news that our neighbourhood plan had been ratified at last. A big thanks to all who voted for it. This means that the policies set out in the documents will be treated as part of planning policy and considered by the planning officers whenever an application is made within our parish. We were disappointed that no housing sites were allowed to be included, but our policies on design, climate change and local green spaces stood the test.

The neighbourhood plan included a set of community actions which we were quick to activate and we now have a lovely new planting area alongside the seat just below Bobby's shop. I suppose I shouldn't really still call it Bobby's shop, but it will always be that to our villagers. Many thanks to the resident who helped with watering the area during the summer hot spell – please note, however that the big planter is self- watering!

The other community action we moved on is with climate change. Councillor Irwin spent a considerable amount of time investigating the possibility of some energy located around the pumping station. Investigations into hydro and solar power will continue this year.

A major expenditure was the footbridge across the Marchburn, which was replaced in the summer by one made from recyclable materials, and which should not need future maintenance. There is still some maintenance to do to sort out the scouring at the base of the piers, but this can only take place in the summer outside Tyne Rivers Trust restricted periods.

Following the investigations into the pond, that I mentioned last year, TRT have now determined that there isn't really a simple cost-effective solution to enhancing the pond area and this has now

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been shelved. However, if anyone has any thoughts on how to improve the space, then we would welcome ideas.

The memorial plaque was eventually restored and we hosted an event with the church in August to rededicate it. A number of retired service men from the Royal Engineers were welcomed to the event.

Work to the play park was completed replacing old parts and new springers have been installed thanks to a grant from our county councillor Anne Dale.

Ash die back continues to be a major problem and a considerable amount of money is spent on dealing with this. And there is still lots to do. Currently the trees on the Nick are in a very poor state and will be dealt with later this year.

The footpaths group has lobbied the County Council and some improvements have been made to the network in the east of the parish- stile replaced and steps installed to aid access to the Wentworth Grange field, now a local green space. We continue to raise the issue of the closed footpath to Corbridge.

An additional defibrillator has been installed at the sports field.

With the major expense last year and limited funds, we determined that this year would be devoted to catching up on maintenance with no major expenses proposed. As part of this ongoing maintenance, the allotment wall is to be repointed in June.

You may also be aware of the proposed boundary changes proposed by NCC. After a consultation, we are now to be moved to within the Corbridge remit and this will be the last year with us as our county councillor, Anne Dale. We have welcomed her involvement with us, over the years, and her efforts on our behalf have been very much appreciated.

Earlier this year our longstanding member Jill Mills retired from the PC- her legal insight has been invaluable over the years. We also recently said goodbye to councillor Stephen Lightley and have been grateful for his expert accounting advice and sensible contributions at meetings. We wish him and his wife well in their new home. The loss has been offset in part by the addition of 2 new councillors, Barbara Wood and Ellen Rutherford, with whom we look forward to working.

So, again we find ourselves with a vacancy for a parish councillor…….. any offers will be gratefully received!

10. Financial Statement

The unaudited financial statement for the year ending 31st March 2024 was received and noted. The Clerk reported that spending had been high, with funds taken from the Reserves to pay for the new footbridge. The PC accounts would be available from 3rd June until 12th July for public scrutiny and anyone wishing to view them should make an appointment via the Clerk.

11. Minor Matters

A resident requested further information from Cllr. Dale about the installation of ultra-fast broadband and it was agreed that he would write to her so that she could obtain answers to his queries from Openreach.

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Cllr. Howe closed the meeting at 9.00 pm.

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