

Cornhill Parish Council

Minutes of a meeting held on Monday, 19th May 2014, at the Village Hall.

Present: Cllrs. Mick Plunkett (Chairman), David Buckle, Marie Gillespie, Keith Bailey, County Cllr. Dougie Watkin, P.C. Mark Lynn (Northumbria Police), Rev. Rob Kelsey, Susie Dorrian, Tom Johnston (Glendale Gateway Trust), and Clerk Angela Hallam-Baker.

1. Apologies for absence were received from Cllr. Claudio Rickard who was away on business.

2. Police Report:

P.C. Mark Lynn reported no anti-social behaviour in the Parish since the last meeting, but damage to one of the Village Shop signs on the road side. Those responsible had been caught and cautioned.

Also within the area, a quad bike had been stolen from Crookham Eastfield Farm, which had not been recovered, and also show jumps stolen from a field at Mindrum Mill on 23rd April. Enquiries continuing.

3. “Setting up a Community Land Trust”

Tom Johnston, Director of the Glendale Gateway Trust, was invited to provide some information on setting up a Community Land Trust.

He stated that a CLT was owned and managed by a community for a community. This originated in the United States where it included housing, offices and community facilities, and spread to the UK to include almshouses, village halls, and other public buildings. Assets can be transferred or gifted to provide affordable housing, and acquired by fund-raising. In the case of the Cornhill School site, this could be used for business start-ups or affordable housing (use of the Localism Act). It was agreed that support for small business growth is important, and it was pointed out that the Wark Workshops are much in demand. It was noted that superfast broadband, linked to the Coldstream Exchange, is due in Cornhill by the end of this year, and this would be an incentive to start-up businesses.

Cllr. Watkin questioned where resources might come from for negotiation and purchase, and also subsequent management. Tom emphasised that this is a huge commitment – some of it is volunteer-based, but funding is difficult to find. Support from private benefactors would be important. There would be a need for a Project Officer, which would entail considerable expense.

Tom stated that GGT is providing another nine houses in Wooler at a cost of £760,000, for which half the funding is coming from the Homes & Communities Agency. The other half has still to be found. Tom explained that the GGT is well-placed to bid for funding from HCA due to a good track record.

Susie Dorrian stated that she strongly objects to the substituting of a perfectly functional building for housing. She had written to NNC to complain at the way in which they had handled the disposal of the school, and received a reply from Paul Leo (Interim Head of Strategic Estates). This stated that the property had been openly marketed, and that two of

three offers received were not acceptable. The third bidder, Partner Construction, had submitted an offer on the basis of a proposal to develop 24 affordable houses, but this proposal had stalled due to concerns relating to the number of houses it would be viable for them to construct.

NCC is therefore currently submitting funding applications to develop part of the site for affordable housing, the rest being retained for future development. Any proposal for this, for example, community or business use, would need to be submitted by the Parish Council. It is not clear in Mr. Leo's letter whether NCC intends to demolish the school building, how many houses they intend to build, where they would be sited, and the timetable for the proposed work. It was therefore agreed that the Chairman should write to Mr. Leo to ask for clarification.

If there is a possibility of the Parish Council converting the school building into small business pods, it was agreed that an interim meeting of the Parish Council would need to be held, and Tom Johnston was asked if he would attend this meeting and assist with any discussion. He agreed to this, was thanked for his input, and then left the meeting.

The next item on the agenda – "Protecting a Community Asset" was left until the next meeting.

4. Parishioner's Question Time:

William Carrington had complained about the state of the grass-cutting in the village. In reply, it was stated that this was a first cut which had been delayed due to the wet weather, and that the next cut should help to tidy up the grass. The clerk had enquired of NCC whether they would pick up the cuttings. They had said that they did not do this as a matter of course, and it would be an expensive job to have it done specially.

Two extra cuts were offered at a cost of around £200, and these would be in March and October before and after the season. The Clerk offered to make enquiries about this.

5. The minutes of the meeting held on 10th March 2014 were agreed and signed.

6. Matters arising from the minutes:

- **Planning Application 14/00550/FUL** The Cottage, Main Street, Cornhill – decision pending.
- **Speeding traffic in Donaldson's Lodge and pedestrian safety on Wark road** – Stefan Bell has left NCC and this is being dealt with by the Transport Dept. The clerk would remind them of the proposed double white lines at DL and the Pedestrians on Road sign on the Wark road. She would also remind NCC about speeding from the roundabout past Station Gardens.
- **Litter picking** – it was suggested that another litter-pick was due, and the clerk would arrange this for a Monday.
- **Fallen tree by the railway bridge** – the Clerk had reported this, but would send a reminder.
- **Bus shelter cleaning** – the Clerk had arranged for this to be done 6-8 weekly by the Village Shop window cleaner at a cost of around £10.00.
- **Footpaths** – the clearing will be done once the weeds have stopped growing.

7. Financial Report:

A note of the financial transactions since the last meeting was distributed. Following receipt of the first half of the precept, this showed a bank balance of £3,256.35.

A charge of £100 had been made for servicing the grit bin in Tweed Meadows. It was questioned whether the PC was liable for this since the estate had apparently not been officially adopted by NCC. The Clerk would make enquiries. At the same time, she would enquire about the promised slip road and pedestrian refuge.

A request from Community Action Northumberland for an annual donation had been received. Since they had lost their funding from NCC, Defra and Lottery, it was agreed to send a cheque for £50.00.

8. Transfer of Play Area from NCC to Cornhill PC and suggestions for improvements:

The PC had signed its half of the transfer document and is waiting for the solicitor to confirm completion of the transfer.

The clerk was asked to confirm that NCC is still carrying out the weekly inspections, and ask them to continue until such time as a new inspector is appointed.

Cllr. Watkin had suggested that Four Housing may be able to help with the maintenance of the Play Area. The Clerk to contact them.

It was agreed to leave discussion regarding improvements until the transfer was completed.

9. Planting – it was agreed that azaleas should be planted in the beds on the roundabout and the two tubs in Station Gardens planted with suitable flowers. The Chairman would ask the Donaldson's Lodge residents if they would be prepared to fill the tubs outside their houses and look after them as they had kindly done last year.

10. Notices regarding footpaths:

Notices had been posted by NCC regarding footpaths from Cornhill Farm and Campfield with reference to possible changes to public rights of way. Upon making enquiries, the Clerk was told that there was no question of closing the paths; this is a requirement for landowners to acknowledge footpaths, bridleways and byways on identified land. She was also told that the unwritten law of an unidentified path being used for 20 years becoming a right of way would no longer stand as from this year.

11. Cornhill Community Website:

It was agreed that this is being well-managed by Alan Cater and is being kept up to date. It was noted that the Walks Leaflets are not on the new website and these would be sent electronically to Alan. Cllr. Buckle has Walk No. 1, and Lynda Walks 2, 3 and 4. It appears that No. 2 does not have an electronic copy, and Cllr. Plunkett offered to scan this. The Clerk to let him have a copy.

Cllrs. Gillespie, Rickard and Bailey were asked if they would be prepared to supply photographs of themselves to Alan for posting on the Parish page of the website.

The Clerk was asked to enquire from Alan how many hits the website is receiving.

12. County Councillor's Report:

Cllr. Watkin had submitted his report at the Annual Parish Meeting and is minuted separately.

13. Reverend Rob Kelsey:

The Revd. Kelsey, Vicar of Norham, and Priest in Charge of Cornhill, Carham and Branxton, was welcomed to the meeting. He is concerned that St. Helen's Church appears as a "bubble" in the middle of Cornhill, and wishes it to be a more integral part of the community. He said there are plans to keep the church open during daylight hours and work with other organisations in the village, such as the Village Shop and the Collingwood Arms.

It had been agreed some time ago that a table would be made available at the back of the church for community information, leaflets, etc., and Mr. Kelsey is much in favour of this idea, which would bring people into the church. The literature would obviously have to be monitored in order that nothing sensitive is placed there.

A Task Group has been formed to look after the church, and Mr. Kelsey thought it would be useful if a member of that group were to attend PC meetings from time to time to provide update on what they are doing.

It is planned to produce an A-frame with a notice stating when the church is open, and a notice could also be put on the village notice board.

Mr. Kelsey suggested that the churchyard, with its superb view of Moneylaws Hill and the surrounding countryside, could be used for the benefit of the local people and visitors. A seat could be placed in a prominent position. The County Council is responsible for cutting the grass in the churchyard, but there is some concern about safety, due to leaning grave stones. This would have to be addressed, and the PC would be glad to assist wherever possible.

14. Any other business:

- **Borderlands Cycle Ride** – some 700 cyclists had set off from Wooler on Saturday, 17th May, to follow several routes through Northumberland and the Borders. Cornhill was the halfway point for a long route and around 400 cyclists had stopped at the Village Shop where Lynda Waite provided food and water, for which service she was enthusiastically thanked by the PC. Mick Plunkett and David Buckle handed out copies of the Tweed Horizons Border Cycle Rides booklet to around 300 cyclists. These were well accepted, and many cyclists said how much they liked the landscape and would come back and use the local facilities. Another event is scheduled for October.
- It was thought that the Queen's Baton and a tractor rally are due to pass through the village during the summer.
- **Homefinder** – lists of properties for rent throughout Northumberland is posted on the notice board every week. A letter from Patsy Healey in Wooler stated that a poster will be produced advertising the properties in Glendale and asked that this be put on the board. She asked if there was any capacity in Cornhill to download the weekly list. It was agreed that a link to this could be put on the website.
- **The Battle of Carham** – the battle which took place in 1018 is to be commemorated in 2018. This was when the border between England and Scotland was moved down from the Firth of Forth, and in view of the forthcoming referendum on Scottish Independence, is currently topical. A one-day conference was held in the Village Hall on 26th April attended by 30+ people, and a great deal of interest was shown. A group will be formed to research into the battle and prepare commemorative events and an anticipated re-enactment.

Non-financial sponsorship has been obtained from local businesses, and this will be used to access funding for the events. Cornhill PC has been asked, together with other local parish councils, if they would lend their sponsorship in the form of a letter of support. It was agreed that the Chairman would send this to the new group.

15. Parishioners' Question Time on agenda items:

- **Cornhill School disposal** – Susie Dorrian again brought up the subject of the proposed sale of the school property, saying that she assumed that the PC would question the way in which it was being marketed. NCC had asked for closed bids, with no price identified, and when questioned, neither would the estate agents handling the sale provide a guide price.

It was agreed that the reply from Paul Leo to Susie's recent letter had addressed her complaints, but that there was still a need for more information. Accordingly, it was agreed that the Chairman and Deputy should seek a meeting with Mr. Leo rather than just write to him.

16. Date of next meeting:

It had been agreed at the Annual Parish Meeting to hold the PC meetings on the second Thursday of alternative months. These dates had subsequently been booked at the Village Hall, but due to an unforeseen re-arrangement of dates by another party, the next meeting would be held on **Monday, 21st July, at 6.00pm.**

This concluded the business of the meeting which was closed at 8.45.

Signed:.....

Date.....