

Corsenside Annual Parish Meeting

May 11th 2016

Chair of Parish Council's Report

I am pleased to report, that following the upheaval of the previous year which saw the departure of two longstanding councillors and the parish clerk and the subsequent appointments required to fill these roles, the Parish Council has enjoyed a period of relative stability in terms of personnel. That being said we were very sorry to see the departure of Anne Pender who had served as a parish councillor since the year 2000. Anne has served in a number of positions including chair and also acted as unpaid clerk for a year or so to fill a gap between paid clerks in role. Anne retired at the end of August last year and at that time she held the position of Vice chair. Anne was a very conscientious councillor and carried out a tremendous amount of work on behalf of the parish of Corsenside and was instrumental in bringing the NTC to the parish for the annual Christmas performance we all enjoy. Happily, Anne is continuing to co-ordinate this aspect of our community life for which we thank her. She was presented with a certificate of appreciation at a short ceremony in November before the parish council meeting to mark her many years of service. Thank you Anne your knowledge, ability and insight will be greatly missed.

Anne's departure obviously created a vacancy and this was advertised in the prescribed way on the parish noticeboards. There being no call for an election, the Parish Council were free to co-opt a new member. I am pleased to report that Andrew Harding has joined us and has quickly established himself in his new role. My thanks to him for his willingness to take on this position, he is most welcome.

My thanks also go to Karen Traill, our clerk, who has really grown into the role and is approaching the end of her second year in the position. She conscientiously provides us with an outstanding service during changing times and continues to carry out the role with great commitment and enthusiasm and we remain fortunate to have her as our clerk.

Karen has also put in a considerable amount of work to the Parish Council website which is now looking very good. All agendas and previous minutes are now available on line along with contact details for your councillors, an events diary, a news page and information and links on local clubs, societies and groups. It will continue to grow and develop as it is our aspiration to make this the go-to site on the internet for all things Corsenside.

To routine matters now, your PC consists of seven councillors including a chair and a vice chair, elected annually by the rest of the council. I have served as chair again and Dot Carrington was elected vice chair in September in place of Anne who had held the post up until her resignation. We continue to meet every month, with the exception of August, usually on the first Monday and usually in the Parish Hall in West Woodburn at 19:30 though in the colder winter months, usually December, January and February, we decamp to the warmer surroundings of the Bay Horse. Notices of meetings along with agendas and minutes of previous meetings are displayed on the three noticeboards in West and East Woodburn and in Ridsdale. In the eleven meetings since the last annual Parish Meeting we have addressed ourselves to some 228 different agenda items, as ever, some simple and easy to resolve, others taking considerably more work and effort and indeed some still on-going. This represents a small increase in the number of items addressed from last year, in the order of just over 3½% (3.64). Of these items there were only 7 planning matters which represents a notable decrease from recent years.

As part of our work we have also introduced new levels of financial scrutiny to ensure even greater levels of transparency and accountability and ensure that we adopt the best possible practice. The annual audits from both external and internal auditors carry on as usual, as we are legally obliged to do, and my thanks to Hazel Goodall, a local accountant, for continuing to provide our internal audit. In addition to these we have introduced an extra internal audit of the budget, every three months, conducted by Dot Carrington and an approval record, requiring the signature of the chair or vice chair to authorise all expenditure or outgoings. Any cheques still require the signature of three PC's and any electronic money transfers require on-line authorisation also from three councillors.

We continue to be frustrated at how slowly the wheels turn at county level when we make requests of various different departments within NCC. You may remember from my report last year that NCC were hoping to improve channels of communication and speed up requested actions. I am pleased to report that there have been improvements in these matters but there is still a need for significant further improvement. If you have brought an issue to us which hasn't been resolved, please accept our apologies. We have acted upon it and will always keep you informed of what we are able to do and of what we have done. As ever, it is our intention to ALWAYS do all we can to address any issue within our remit. We are, however, often reliant on the services of others at NCC to resolve matters and sadly, though we keep asking, often time and time again, we sometimes have to wait a considerable time for action.

We have been lucky to see some highways improvements within the parish such as the resurfacing of the road to Bellingham, for which we have been asking for many years, along with improvements to signage and road markings at several locations. I reported last year that our County Councillor, John Riddle, was supporting us in traffic calming measures for Ridsdale with a grant towards a flashing speed sign. We have been fortunate to be able to secure further grant funding from EDF energy to cover the costs of a second sign so we could have one at either end of the village. I'm pleased to report that the order has been placed and we should see installation in the very near future. We continue to do all we can to minimise the problem of speeding and dangerous driving throughout the parish, our mantra has always been prevention rather than cure when it comes to these problems.

We are now in the fortunate position to have defibrillators available in both West Woodburn and Ridsdale. Both defibrillators are fully automatic and can be used by anyone regardless of their level of training, the ambulance service will advise upon the necessity for their use and provide an access code for the cabinets they are stored in. The West Woodburn defibrillator was supplied by kind donation from the Steven Carey Foundation and is in the care of guardians Jan Bilton, Pamela Lawson and Karen Traill. Jan, Pamela and Karen carry out checks every two weeks to ensure everything is in working order, and log these with the SCF, my grateful thanks to them for their time and efforts in this important role. The defibrillator in Ridsdale has kindly been supplied via a donation from OTS and was bought in memory of a colleague who sadly died from a heart attack. We thank OTS very much for their donation and community spiritedness. This has now been adopted by the SCF who maintain an oversight of all community defibrillators in the local area. We are also grateful to the Ridsdale Village Hall Fund who have supported the on-going costs of the Ridsdale defibrillator with a grant of £500 to cover the purchase of consumable items - this means there should be no cost to the parish for the first three or four years of operation. May I pass on my thanks to Steve Carrington, who along with myself is the guardian in Ridsdale. It is worthy of note that the guardians in Corsenside have been singled out for praise from the Steven Carey Foundation as the only ones who are carrying out the fortnightly checks and reporting on them - well done and thanks again to all.

It is sad to report a somewhat uncertain future for the Parish Hall. The PHC have put in a tremendous amount of effort in an attempt to promote the hall however, usage remains very low and at a level which is unsustainable where outgoings far outstrip incomings. A public meeting was held in March to explain the situation and seek support. Despite good publicity beforehand this was very poorly attended with only 19 parishioners extra to those PHC and PC's who were there. Whilst the general feeling was one of a desire to keep the hall, there was insufficient people coming forward to form a new committee. The PHC will hold an AGM later this month and the likely

outcome will be a motion to close the hall and sell it off, holding any assets in trust to be used for the benefit of parishioners.

On a much happier note, the parish of Corsenside has been placed firmly at the centre of the map for anything relating to Border Collies. Extensive research has traced back the father of the breed, a Collie called Old Hemp to whom all Border Collies alive today can trace a bloodline, to Woodhouse, West Woodburn, where he lived with his handler Adam Telfer. We were approached by the great granddaughter of Adam Telfer who asked permission to erect a monument to the pair, close to the house they lived in, just off the Jubilee Triangle. This was to be funded entirely from donations raised via the internet. The PC were very happy to grant such permission once all the formalities regarding such things had been cleared up with NCC. The monument was unveiled at a ceremony in September last year which was very well attended with Border Collies, and their handlers, from far and wide in attendance. All the children from WWFS were also present to witness such an historic occasion in the life of the parish. The monument has been officially gifted to the parish and is now in our ownership and care in perpetuity. We are grateful to all those who worked on this project or made financial contributions, it is a monument, in keeping with its surroundings and truly something which we as a parish can be proud of. My particular thanks to Gillian Scott and Pete Bilton who took the lead on organising this from a PC perspective.

After much to-ing and fro-ing between NCC, our solicitors and the PC, we have finally secured the future of the Village Green and are in the final stages of taking it into the control of the PC via a community asset transfer from NCC. Dot Carrington and I signed the official papers with our solicitor on 28th April and the green will be officially passed into our custodianship once the relevant papers have been submitted to the Land Registry. Our aim in going through this process, which has taken about a decade all told, has been to afford protection to the village green and prevent the possibility of the land being sold off for development in the future. I am very pleased to report that we have now achieved this and the village green will remain as such for the benefit of all of the people of the parish for the foreseeable future.

Whilst speaking of the village green it has been wonderful to see it being used, on the third weekend in September, to host the Corsenside village show. The show has developed year on year and has been well supported by locals and visitors alike. It is now a super event, taking part over both days of the weekend, with a great variety of things going on to appeal to all sections of the community. My thanks on behalf of the whole parish go to the Corsenside Leek and Vegetable Society who organise the show and put in a great deal of time and effort in doing so. The organisers wish me to let you know that they are very open to other organisations, clubs and societies within the parish using the show facilities as a venue for their own events and activities. Speak to Andrew Harding and he will be happy to provide all the information needed for other organisations to become involved. This may become of increasing importance in the future given the likelihood of the demise of the parish hall.

In the coming year we hope to see the improvement in communications with NCC continue to develop and we shall continue to push for further measures to improve both the safety and the condition of the roads within our parish.

Lastly but by no means least may I, once again, say a huge thank you to all the Parish Councillors, on your behalf and also from me personally, for all the hard work they do on behalf of the parish, for giving up their time, entirely free of charge, and for their willingness to serve the wonderful parish of Corsenside. It is, as ever, a privilege to serve and work alongside you all.

Thank you.

Carl Hamilton

May 2016