

Corsenside Parish Council Meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 22nd June 2020

Via video link, at 7.30pm

Present: - **Councillors:** C. Hamilton (Chair), C. Hawman, R. Robson & A. Harding, **Clerk:** K. Traill **Members of the Public:** None

- 1) Apologies for absence: - Cllrs G. Scott & C. Currie
- 2) Declarations of interest: - Cllr C. Hamilton in respect of The Gun Inn, Cllr C. Hawman in respect of Revitalising Redesdale, North Tyne Youth and The Gun Inn and Cllr A. Harding in respect of the Ray Wind C.I.C.
- 3) Opportunities for members of the public to raise issues: None raised.
- 4) Minutes of the Corsenside Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 2nd March 2020: Signed as a true and accurate record.
- 5) Matters arising from the minutes not dealt with elsewhere on the agenda: Cllr C. Hawman requested that we add the parish green goal posts to the next agenda as the rules and regulations regarding goal posts and netting needed further investigation. KT to add to the action list.
- 6) Notification of any other business for discussion, at the chairman's discretion, under item 24 below: - KT
- 7) County Councillors Report: - None
- 8) Annual Governance and Accountability Return for 2019-2020 – Cllr C. Hamilton began by informing all that CPC had sought advice from NALC regarding our obligation to hold parish council meetings. Cllr C. Hamilton stated that there needed to be a minimum of 3 meetings a year and that a reorganised schedule of meetings was acceptable especially under the current situation. New legislation also stated that Annual General Meetings and the election of the Chair and councillors had now been postponed to May 2021 which is a local council election year when all parish councillors will need to seek re-election. Cllr C. Hamilton said he was willing to continue as chair and all present at the meeting were in agreement. Cllr C. Hamilton explained that he was keen that members of the public should still be able to attend 'virtual' meetings and had developed a system whereby anyone wishing to attend could contact the clerk in advance of the meeting and be included on the list of invitees. The same rules as for regular meetings would still apply, namely that members of the public were not permitted to speak other than at the point on the agenda for members of the public to raise issues or if invited to do so by the Chair. Cllr C. Hamilton explained that the main purpose of tonight's meeting was to discuss and authorise the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for 2019-2020.
 - i. Internal review of Financial Procedure – review of effectiveness of the system of internal controls, banking mandate, asset register recording – KT emailed out documents relating to CPC's financial procedures in advance of the meeting. Such documents included CPC's Financial Procedure (which included all the measures CPC has in place to keep the finances safe and secure), banking mandate and the Financial Regulations we adhere to. Cllrs discussed all the systems CPC have in place and all were happy with the effectiveness of such controls.KT discussed CPC's asset register stating that all assets CPC own and are responsible for are recorded on this list. KT informed all that under some guidelines it recommends that anything carried out to maintain assets, should also be recorded on the register. KT discussed how practical this was as this could mean that when a bench was repainted or new pads for the defibrillators were purchased these would have to be recorded. Cllrs discussed this and all agreed that just maintenance of significance, (such as the addition of new play area equipment), should be added and not general maintenance as this just kept the asset at its current value and

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did not necessarily enhance it. Cllr C. Hawman asked how depreciation was accounted for. KT stated that our asset register did not account for depreciation. CPC's assets register recorded details such as the purchase price, date of purchase, whether it was purchased by ourselves or gifted, its location, any actions needed and if it had been disposed of.

ii. To consider and agree any actions arising from the report of the internal auditor in 2019 – None arising from 2019.

iii. To approve the Annual Governance Statement section 1 – KT emailed a copy of section 1 to councillors in advance of the meeting. KT read out each point and councillors discussed how they believed CPC's procedures met the criteria for a 'yes' response. KT has signed and will pass onto the Chair after the meeting as physical signature needed.

iv. To approve the Accounting Statement section 2 and Explanation of Variances – KT emailed a copy of section 2 to councillors in advance of the meeting. Councillors discussed the figures recorded in section 2 by KT as the Responsible Financial Officer. Cllr A. Harding queried the significant difference in total receipts from 2019 to 2020 and the amount carried forward as section 2 did not allow further explanation. KT stated that the significant difference of total receipts was due to the £20,000 grant received in February 2020 from The Ray Wind Farm Fund to go towards the refurbishment of the play area. KT also stated that CPC were carrying over significantly more funds into the 2020-2021 financial year than normal as this still included almost £12,000 to be paid to Playdale once work to the play area was complete. KT explained that all of these are recorded in great detail in the Explanation of Variances section of the audit and that this had been viewed and approved in advance by two councillors after the addition of another paragraph explaining the difference in staff costs. This explanation would also be sent to the auditors. As required by the regulations, KT has previously signed section 2 and will pass it onto the Chair for signature following the approval of the meeting.

v. To approve the period for the exercise of public rights – KT explained the regulations regarding the exercise of public rights and how all accounts needed to be available for inspection within a 30 working day period after the submission of the AGAR. Notices advertising this needed to be displayed the day before the start date until the day after the end date. Notices needed to be displayed on noticeboards and on CPC's website. KT suggested the following dates 24th of June to the 4th of August. All Cllrs agreed. KT to pass section 1 and 2 onto Cllr C. Hamilton for signature and to email all relevant documents to the financial auditor - pkf Littlejohn's on the 23rd of June 2020.

9) COVID 19 Response – Cllr C. Hamilton discussed the Covid 19 situation and the response CPC have made. Cllr C. Hamilton discussed how the situation in the early days and weeks of the lockdown was very fast and fluid and how CPC had to adapt to this, suspending meetings and offering what help they could to parishioners. Cllr C. Hamilton explained that our initial response had involved an information page from CPC. Cllr C. Hamilton had contacted various food supplying local businesses asking about their delivery options. Many businesses were quick to respond to the situation and did offer local deliveries. The information page included the details of shops offering these services as well as the contact details of the clerk should anyone wish to volunteer or needed additional support with shopping. This information was displayed on The Corsenside Clarion Facebook page with appeals to pass on the information to others, on noticeboards and pushed through the doors of those thought to be the most vulnerable. As well as the information page CPC applied to The Ray Wind Fund for a small grant which was used to purchase essential food supplies (seeking advice on contents from food banks), which would be boxed and could be issued to those in dire need until the statutory organisations could respond. The existence of these emergency supplies was made known to local Social Services and the Bellingham Surgery who were best placed to advise CPC or parishioners should the case arise. All items contained have long shelf lives therefore it is hoped that if any remain after the current crisis is over, that they

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can be donated to the local food bank. Our thanks go to The Ray Wind Fund for their speedy response to our request and to the Bellingham Co-op and West Woodburn Shop for their help in supplying the goods needed. Cllr C. Hamilton informed all that The Ray Wind Fund were keen to help further suggesting that parishes could apply for funding in order to offer financial support to those in need. Cllr C. Hamilton explained that CPC were responding to the situation within our capacity as a small rural parish council and were depleted as an organisation with some Councillors falling into the vulnerable category themselves and that to offer such a scheme was beyond CPC's remit or ability to administer. Following a subsequent meeting of RWF C.I.C. representatives, it was felt that this was something that they could administer themselves which was advertised via noticeboards and The Clarion. Cllr C. Hawman discussed the fact that government funded furlough payments were due to come to an end and it might be the case then that many could find themselves unemployed and in need of help and support and we should therefore remind people of what help is available when this happen.

10) Councillor Vacancy- Cllr C. Hamilton explained to all that at the end of May Cllr D. Carrington informed him that she had thought long and hard about her position as Councillor and felt her time on the parish council had ran its course and wished to resign. Cllr C. Hamilton on behalf of CPC would like to thank her for all the hard work she has carried out during her time as a councillor. Cllr C. Hamilton explained that KT would now notify NCC of the vacancy and CPC would follow the statutory processes involved to fill the position.

11) Update on adopting & signing of new policies, regulations & risk assessments: - KT stated that she was aware that new web-site accessibility regulations were due to be introduced in September 2020 however she was still awaiting guidance from Northumberland Association for Local Council's regarding this. KT has again emailed NALC asking for advice for small rural parish councils.

12) Action point list: - Nothing further to report.

13) Play Area – West Woodburn: - Cllr C. Hamilton informed all that the refurbishment to the play area had been carried out at the end of May. A Playdale employee had carried out the works to the equipment with a different company coming out the following week to install the safety surfacing. Cllr C. Hamilton explained that he and KT had visited the play area to check works however were unable to gain access to the majority of equipment as the safety fencing erected by Playdale was still in place. Cllr C. Hamilton stated that CPC had queried the bounciness of the rubber mulch in the places where it had been laid over grass. Playdale responded stating that this is normal and the warranty for the rubber mulch was 5 years. Cllr C. Hamilton informed all that days after the installation KT received word that the ROSPA inspection would be carried out the following week. Cllr C. Hamilton explained that straight after the inspection the inspector contacted KT to inform her of some issues he had discovered as he was aware contractors were still on-site and hopefully would be able to correct these issues. The issues raised included the ball in the new ball maze being jammed, now that the safety surfaces had been raised the junior swings did not meet the recommended 500mm from ground level, 2 further log walks were showing signs of wood rot and more importantly one of the supporting poles on the intertwine had rotted and snapped underground. Cllr C. Hamilton explained that KT was in contact with Playdale regarding these issues and as yet the remainder of money owed to Playdale had not been paid. Cllr C. Hamilton asked if all Cllrs were happy to give KT the go ahead to instruct Playdale to carry out all repair works given that the walk logs and intertwine pole were new issues and would not be covered by the initial Ray Wind Fund grant. All Cllrs agreed that KT should continue to chase this up and organise replacement parts and works.

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14) West Woodburn First School Closure- Cllr C. Hamilton discussed the closure of West Woodburn First School and the issues CPC would need to investigate as a result. These issues included what would happen to the school field (the fenced area), would the defibrillator need relocating and what would happen with the new flashing speed signs which were installed by NCC as a result of the schools location. It was also thought that the school was likely to be boarded up. Cllrs discussed whether NCC would possibly transfer the school field to CPC under the same process as the village green – a Community Asset Transfer. CPC would very much like to take custody of the school field to complete the village green. Cllrs request that KT contact County Councillor J. Riddle initially to see if he can answer all the above questions.

15) Wind Power Stations & BANTR update- Cllr A. Harding informed all that work was going on as best as possible with the use of various online video meetings. The C.I.C had been trying to help support local businesses and funding had been made available which some local businesses had made use of. Cllr A. Harding stated that they were coming up to the end of 3 years and would be having the AGM at the end of this week with a new annual amount of funding starting on the 4th of July. Most of the money had been allocated for this current year. Cllr A. Harding stated that all committee members served a 3-year term (up to a 9-year period), and that his 3-year term was due to come to an end. Cllr A. Harding stated that he was happy to continue in this role if all agreed, all Cllrs were happy for Cllr A. Harding to continue to represent CPC. Cllr A. Harding stated that should he need to step down for any reason CPC would need a representative on the committee. Cllr A. Harding informed all that several public meetings had been planned over the summer to get information out into the communities in order to inform people of the C.I.C, what they do, get ideas for future funding and to also show people what projects have already benefited. However due to Covid 19 these meetings have had to be postponed. Cllr A. Harding discussed ideas for the future once current projects are complete. Such ideas put forward include rural transport and help with accessible healthcare however they need people to put more ideas forward.

KT read out a BANTR update which stated that unfortunately the last 3 months had not been very productive as far as those on the ground were concerned as they were unable to liaise with landowners or walk potential routes. Barrasford are doing well with the village cabinet already on order however Corsenside are still well below the 30% sign up needed before digging works will start. B4RN have also changed the amount awarded in grants meaning that businesses would now only get £150 towards installation rather than £300. Cllr C. Hawman stated that she felt more information needed to be made available about what households were committing to before signing up to the terms and conditions as this information only seemed available once you had signed up.

16) Parish Hall: - Cllrs had approached members of the public asking if they would be interested in representing CPC on the parish hall committee, however as yet this had been unsuccessful.

17) Six Parishes Youth Engagement Project: - Cllr C. Hamilton explained that KT had received an email from Gemma of North Tyne Youth regarding the six parishes youth engagement project. Gemma stated that due to the COVID 19 situation there had been an obvious delay and that sessions would have to take on a different format to initial ideas. NTY hoped to start holding sessions in late July and all sessions would now be held outside. KT had suggested The Gun Inn garden in Ridsdale, The parish green in West Woodburn or maybe West Woodburn First School field as potential sites within our parish. Cllr C. Hawman stated that NTY would be

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welcome to use the Ridsdale Juniors & Seniors marquee with the sides taken off, if need be. Cllr C. Hawman is happy to continue to liaise with Gemma regarding this project

18) Community Volunteers & Spending: - Nothing further to report.

19) Revitalising Redesdale & Heritage Fund update: - Information from Cllr C. Hawman regarding updates from Revitalising Redesdale had previously been distributed to Cllrs which included a list of projects implemented since April 2018. Cllr C. Hawman discussed a funding application to The Ray Wind Fund by RR to fund a series of star cairns across Redesdale. Cllr C. Hawman stated that this project may need support from local PC's as it was felt the application had been an idea created by RR rather than supported by local communities. Local communities had in fact found the idea very exciting and wished to support it.

KT stated that Cllr G. Scott wished to inform all that the footpath across Smoutel Ford was now complete and that NCC were working on the footpath connecting West Woodburn with Otterburn which has been a bigger job than anticipated due to the number of natural springs.

20) The Gun Inn update: - Cllr C. Hamilton stated that the sale of The Gun Inn had now gone through and that renovation works are beginning and a planning application for minor works to include accessible toilets, had been submitted. Volunteers are working safely carrying out various tasks with furloughed workers offering up their technical skills.

21) Planning Matters: - a) For decision – The Gun Inn Planning ref: 20/01734/FUL – minor alterations and single storey extension to the rear and side to create a new accessible toilet. Cllrs C. Hamilton & C. Hawman declared an interest and therefore withdrew from discussions. KT stated that she had previously discussed this application with Cllrs G. Scott & C. Currie who had no objection to the application. Cllrs R. Robson & A. Harding stated that they were both happy to support the application.

b) Decisions from NCC – i. Planning App 20/00480/FUL Construction of two new driveways at 1 & 2 Hillcrest, West Woodburn - GRANTED

22) Other correspondence: - i. Historic England – Parishioner P. Scott had previously discovered that the East Woodburn bridge was not a listed structure. Obviously with its age, history and structure it was felt that it definitely deserved to be listed and protected. Mr Scott investigated this matter further and has submitted an application to Historic England who will now begin assessing the structure. Our thanks go to Mr Scott for pursuing this.

23) Finances: - a) Invoices for payment i. Insurance £747.48, ii. Clerks wages (submit 25th, should be between 20-25 hours) & expenses £5.67 (thank you gift audit), iii. Playdale £11,950.94 Cllr C. Hamilton suggested that if Playdale chased up this invoice before the snags were rectified that CPC pay 90% of the invoice, withholding the remaining 10% until the snags had been amended, all agreed, iv. ROSPA safety inspection – awaiting invoice.

b) Bank Balance - £24,440.05.

c) Monies received – i. NCC precept April - £3,875, ii. Ray Wind Fund Covid 19 food parcels April - £250 (£91.90 remaining). iii, V.A.T refund May - £2344.79

d) Requests for assistance – None

e) Clerk pension & annual appraisal – Cllr C. Hamilton informed all that he had received notification from The Pension Regulator regarding the three yearly re-enrolment requirements. Cllr C. Hamilton explained that all employees were entitled to be enrolled in a pension scheme with contributions made by their employers if they met the criteria. The clerk's weekly earnings were below the threshold for automatic enrolment and employer contributions. Cllr C. Hamilton discussed how he had informed KT of this in writing explaining CPC's responsibilities and asking KT if she would like enrolling onto a scheme however, she would not be eligible to

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receive contributions from CPC. Cllr C. Hamilton requested that KT respond in writing. KT sent a letter to Cllr C. Hamilton informing him that she did not wish CPC to enrol her in a pension scheme. Cllr C. Hamilton has now completed all relevant online documentation and submitted these to The Pension Regulator. Cllr C. Hamilton will pass the paperwork onto KT when he receives it back.

Cllr C. Hamilton also informed all that the clerks annual review was due in July and asked if all were happy for him to carry this out, all agreed. Cllr C. Hamilton explained that during this the clerk's salary would also be reviewed. Cllr C. Hamilton informed all that currently there was no cost of living increase this year as it was still being consulted on by the unions and at the earliest the decision would be made by the end of August however any agreed settlement would be backdated to the beginning of the financial year. Cllr C. Hamilton displayed on screen for all Cllrs to see, a chart detailing the pay scales and the natural progression the clerk followed. Cllr C. Hamilton explained that the clerk's salary was in the LC1 range, Scale Points 13 - 17, on the NJC Local Government pay scale and currently at point 13. Cllr C. Hamilton stated that the clerk was currently paid £11.45 per hour and that, subject to the satisfactory outcome of the clerk's annual review, he proposed she move up to pay scale point 14 as of the 1st of July. Cllr C. Hamilton asked if all Cllrs were in agreement and asked if, given the current situation and uncertainty around the timing of CPC meetings, Cllrs were all happy to pre-authorise this conditional increase, all agreed.

24 Matters for discussion at the Chairman's discretion: KT informed all that she had been contacted by Communities Together asking if CPC were happy to continue to offer the Covid support put in place within our parish. All Cllrs agreed that CPC were happy to continue with this support.

KT stated that she had not yet received word from the Northumberland Theatre Company regarding a date for the Christmas performance which was very unusual. KT explained that she had contacted the NTC who stated that admin were not currently at work and they did not know whether a performance would be able to go ahead this year however they were happy to provisionally book CPC in. All agreed KT should provisionally book a performance for January 2021.

KT informed all that she had received word that works to the C201 Bellingham road to carry out drainage works prior to resurfacing to alleviate flooding was expected between 20/07/20-14/08/20 with diversions in place.

KT stated that it had been brought to CPC's attention by parishioners that there has been an increase recently in works traffic through Whiteacres. These vehicles are travelling at speeds and are believed to be from a local business. Cllr R. Robson declared an interest and withdrew from the discussion. Cllrs discussed this issue and will investigate further to see what can be done.

25) Next Meeting: - Possibly September – CPC will continue to monitor advice and guidance from the Government and the Association of Local Councils.

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