

Corsenside Parish Council Meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 6th of December 2021

Corsenside Parish Hall at 7.30pm

Present: - **Councillors:** C Hamilton (Chair), C Hawman (Vice-chair), A Wilson, S Smith, J Fenwick.

County Councillor: J Riddle. **Clerk:** C Woodcock. **Members of the Public:** None

- 1) Apologies for absence: A Harding & D Mole
- 2) Code of Conduct (Declarations of Interests): Cllr C Hamilton in respect of The Gun at Ridsdale & the Corsenside Flood Resilience team, Cllr C Hawman in respect of Revitalising Redesdale, North Tyne Youth and The Gun at Ridsdale, Cllr A Wilson in respect of The Gun at Ridsdale & The Green Rigg Steering Group & Cllr S Smith in respect of Bellingham Middle School Parents, Teachers and Community Association & the Corsenside Flood Resilience team.
- 3) Opportunities for members of the public to raise issues: None raised.
- 4) Minutes of the Corsenside Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 8th of November 2021:
Signed as a true and accurate record.
- 5) Matters arising from the minutes not dealt with elsewhere on the agenda:
Cllr Hawman raised the issue of the planning permission which has been granted for Ascendant Monument Cold Law, CW read aloud an email received from County Councillor Colin Horncastle, who currently holds the portfolio for planning within NCC, in which he confirmed that despite the departments' aggrievement at the decision they had no legal grounds to challenge the appeal and therefore would not be able to take the matter further. Cllr C Hawman suggested that there may now be grounds to object on a moral basis given, among other things, the environmental concerns surrounding the structure. After some discussion it was decided that parishes together may have more weight and therefore to contact other local PC's who'd objected to the plans with the proposal that we collectively lend support for the Keep the Wannies Wild campaign as this group now appears best placed to represent the concerns of local parishioners in this matter. CW is also to request that the other councils keep this matter on their agendas.
CW fed back to the council progress that has been made on some other points arising in the last meeting. The Cattlegrid and fencing damage at Ridsdale/Hindhaugh has been assessed by Highways from NCC and repair work is expected to begin in a few weeks.
CW confirmed that a 'Community Right to Bid' Application for the Bay Horse, West Woodburn has been resubmitted, to protect the parish's local facilities. NCC suspect that this application will be confirmed quickly as it is a reinstatement of the status that only recently expired. Given that the Gun is now community owned, NCC's advice was that there is no need to re-apply for the 'Community Right to Bid.'
CW advised the councillors that the contracts for the Panto booking have been completed and returned and that the tickets are now ready to go on sale. Cllrs confirmed that the ticket prices should stay the same as previous years, £6.50 for adults, £3.50 for concessions and £16.50 for a family of 4.
Thanks were expressed to Cllr A Wilson who performed an internal audit of the council's financial file.
- 6) Notification of any other business for discussion, at the chairman's discretion, under item 18 below:
Cllrs C Hamilton, C Hawman, S Smith and J Fenwick as well as Clerk CW had points to raise.
- 7) County Councillors Report: C Cllr J Riddle attended to discuss matters arising from the aftermath of Storm Arwen (26th November) that has badly affected Corsenside as well as the wider region. High winds caused huge amounts of damage with the main problems being fallen trees, particularly where they obscured roadways, and damage to many electricity pylons. The whole of the parish was subjected to a power cut on the night of the storm and although electricity was restored within 48 hours to some streets, then to further

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homes over the following few days, many properties, including all of Ridsdale, were left without power for almost 9 full days. The lack of electricity left many parishioners unable to heat their homes, cook food, use their home phones or charge up mobile telephones. Some mobile network masts were also damaged and many locals found they were unable to reliably obtain a mobile phone signal, to make or receive calls or text messages.

C Cllr J Riddle addressed a concern that has been raised directly with Northumberland County Council – shouldn't they have declared a major incident sooner? He explained to the Parish Council that there are a strict set of criteria that must be met before this can be done. For example, the Army cannot be called in to support a private business and therefore they were deployed only to specifically meet welfare needs and in light of the ongoing uncertainty surrounding how long the crisis would continue. Cllr C Hamilton asked C Cllr J Riddle if there were any plans to tackle the misinformation from Northern Powergrid that abounded during the week following the storm, namely the repeated false statements about when the power would be back on. C Hamilton emphasised that the continued belief that the power would only remain off for a short period longer hampered the efforts by the locals to support one another and caused many people to refrain from reaching out for more help from elsewhere, as they were acting on the mistaken belief they did not need to wait long. C Cllr J Riddle explained his observation that despite things, such as hotel rooms, being made available most people preferred to remain at home, C Hamilton reiterated that had people had more accurate notice of how long the power outage was suspected to last, parishioners could have made more informed decisions and more people may have chosen to relocate to other accommodation. Both C Cllr J Riddle and Cllr C Hamilton expressed their gratitude to and praise for the staff on the ground from Northern Powergrid, who worked hard to repair the equipment, a sentiment which was echoed by the other Cllrs. C Cllr J Riddle stated his expectation that in time an objective review of the response by Northern Powergrid to the Storm damage would be forthcoming, areas of particular concern have been identified as the general robustness of the network and the poor communication.

J Riddle discussed the need for plans to be made locally for how best to coordinate in an emergency, such as identifying the best place for generators to be placed in order to be of maximum use to the community. The suggestion was made that places that are already equipped to serve food or provide beds should perhaps be favoured over traditional publicly used buildings, such a parish hall or church, that may lack such provisions.

Cllr C Hamilton expressed his thanks to J Riddle on behalf of the Ridsdale locals who were able to take advantage of the swiftly organised permission to put out additional rubbish bags with this week's refuse collection in order to dispose of the high amounts of spoiled food incurred when freezers defrosted. Parishioners elsewhere benefitted from a skip put in place in West Woodburn for the same purpose. The fast action taken to solve this problem was noted and much appreciated.

Further thanks were asked to be passed on to Philip Hunter of NCC who helped with speed and efficiency last weekend to get hot food provided for the area.

- 8) Action point list: 91. Traffic calming measures West Woodburn A68 – Cllr C Hamilton explained that himself, S Smith and former parish clerk K Traill met with P Beecroft of TWM on the 15th of November to visit and discuss all the speed sign sites. PB was happy with locations and stated that he would add removal of the relevant current signs to the quote free of charge. The Cllrs and TWM were satisfied with the meeting and felt in a position to proceed providing the rest of the Parish Council gave their support. Unexpectedly on the 22nd of November it was noticed by KT that CPC's old speed signs in West Woodburn had disappeared. KT contacted both A Olive of NCC and PB of TWM. PB clarified that TWM was definitely not responsible for their removal. KT sent AO locations of the signs and questioned if perhaps NCC had mistakenly taken CPC's signs instead of their school signs, AO said he knew nothing about it however would investigate. Cllr C

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Hamilton asked for clarification on this matter as CPC would otherwise have to report these as stolen. AO stated that his department had not moved them however was waiting a response from County Hall. KT sought further information about this from parishioners via Facebook and received a response stating that NCC uniformed staff had been seen removing them on the previous Thursday. AO was informed of this and responded stating his belief that 'these have been taken down through our street lighting team via Highways Program, who I have copied into this who will be able to respond'. Despite subsequent follow ups the clerk had not had a response by the time of the meeting, perhaps a delay due to the fallout from Storm Arwen making the department exceptionally busy. Cllr C Hamilton asked CW to continue to seek clarification of this situation regarding the parish council's property. Cllrs took solace from the fact that the existence of the flashing speed signs originally placed in West Woodburn because of the school mean the village does have some traffic calming measures still in place. Cllrs requested that CW submit a funding application to Ray Wind Farm Fund in order to enable the purchase of the discussed speed signs from TWM.

95. Goal Posts & Nets West Woodburn – CW reported that former clerk K Traill had kept in contact with C Mowatt through November but that as yet CM had not installed the goal posts. Cllr C Hamilton suggested that in light of news received about the ownership of West Woodburn's former school field (see point 14) it may now be better to postpone the installation of the goals until such time that they can be put inside the fenced space of the former school field which is better suited to ball games. CW was asked to pass this request on to CM. The long-term storage of the nets and safety hole covers was discussed by the council as a suitable, secure local site is needed. CW has been asked to research and get quotes for a sturdy, ideally metal, lockable shed or large storage container that could be installed on the village green. It was noted provision should be made for harsh weather conditions and rodents that could cause damage.

96. Lonnen, West Woodburn – Nothing further to report.

97. Armstrong Street Speeding Traffic – Nothing further to report. CPC await NCC's canvass of the locals.

- 9) Play Area – West Woodburn: Cllr C Hamilton replaced the plastic screw cap and mount that he had previously found to be missing. Upon inspection a new screw cap was noticed to be missing but this was quickly found after a search of the locality and duly replaced. Cllr C Hamilton reported to the council that after further checks there are no wide cracks in the timber, nor anything else of concern at this time.

10) Volunteers & Community Spending: Nothing to report.

11) Wind Power Stations & BANTR update: Nothing to report.

12) Parish Hall: Nothing to report.

13) Revitalising Redesdale & Heritage Fund update: Cllr C Hawman explained that work is continuing with the interpretation boards planned for the area. There have been several design changes already as proofreading the text continues and the team seek to use the best photos available. Cllr C Hawman described the boards in a very positive light but advised that the councillors may prefer to wait to review them themselves because of the ongoing changes. The hard, detailed, work by Derek MacDonald, who is designing the Toposcopes, was acknowledged.

14) West Woodburn First School: CW reported to the council that they had received a letter from NCC regarding the Community Asset Transfer for West Woodburn First School Field stating that their application has been approved. This is subject to further discussion regarding the exact terms of the transfer but was nevertheless received very positively by the Cllrs. CPC now await contact from the Council's Strategic Estates team in order to progress this matter further.

15) Planning Matters: a) For decision

- i. 21/04566/ADE: Proposal- Advertisement consent for installation of monolith to be located on grassed area to East of pub car park, North of metal access gate. Location Bay Horse Tavern, West Woodburn, NE48

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Cllrs discussed the proposal and felt they would like to submit a comment of 'No Objection'.

ii. 21/04565/ADE: Proposal- Advertisement consent for 1 x A1 landscape lectern from 02/05/2022 to 02/05/2032. Location St Cuthbert's Church Corsenside, NE48 2TA.

Cllrs discussed the proposal and felt they would like to submit a comment of 'No Objection'.

b) Decisions from NCC - 21/03158/FUL: Proposed single storey rear extension.

Location: Pinetrees West Woodburn, NE48 2RA – GRANTED

16) Other correspondence: None

17) Finances: a) Invoices for payment – i. KT Wages £422.28, ii. CW Wages £193.90, iii. KT expenses £13.60

b) Bank Balance; c) Monies Received – None; d) Budget & precept planning – Cllr A Wilson had carried out the quarterly check on the finances folder and found all to be in order. Cllr C Hamilton described the discussion from the Precept and Budget meeting attended by himself, CW, Cllr A Wilson and K Traill. A breakdown of the current and the anticipated budget was given stating the various categories of expenditure and their costs, any changes to the amounts was explained. Cllr C Hamilton explained that for five years the Precept had been kept at £7750 despite that amount being significantly less than the Parish Council's annual expenditure in recent years. The shortfall has been covered from reserves in line with advice from the official auditors, CPC sought to reduce the existing bank reserves and operate with a bank balance comprised of the current year's budget and reserves equivalent to 1 year's spending. The bank balance is now coming in line with advice and it was felt it was now necessary to raise the precept to cover a higher proportion of the annual budget. Cllrs discussed at length how much to raise the precept by. Consideration was given to the expense to the Parishioners and the cost per elector was calculated. The decision was unanimously made to request a precept of £8500, an increase in council tax per Corsenside elector of less than £1.88 per year. CW to send the precept request off to NCC.

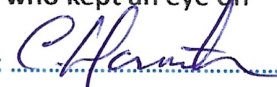
18) Matters for discussion at the Chairman's discretion:

Cllrs C Hamilton and S Smith both had matters to discuss arising from Storm Arwen. Cllr S Smith explained shared feelings of frustration and concern during the power outage and communication network problems. In particular it was questioned why, given that the Parish Hall was one of the earliest properties to have power restored, had it not opened its doors at all to the community members who underwent serious difficulties for a further 6 days? S Smith articulated that the situation, which affected the homes of half of the parish councillors themselves, had highlighted a lack of preparedness and a reliance on electronic communication methods. In a sentiment that was echoed widely among those present Cllr S Smith discussed wishing at such times to be able to be of more practical help to her community. While Cllr C Hamilton felt it was important not to raise expectations too high, reminding the councillors of the limited power, authority and resources CPC has, it was decided to add this matter to the agenda for the next meeting. Of particular interest for further discussion was if and how to set up a better communication network for sharing information across the Parish, with an emphasis on ensuring the needs of the most vulnerable are known about.

Cllr C Hamilton reiterated what had earlier been highlighted to J Riddle and described the ramifications of the misinformation from Northern Powergrid during the power cut. Philip Hunter, one of the directors of NCC, was praised and thanked for his quick reactions after Cllr C Hamilton appraised him of the situation and asked for Ridsdale to be included in the welfare provisions being implemented in other impacted communities in the county. PH subsequently arranged for hot meals, dinner and lunch, to be provided and made available for the local residents.

The entire Parish Council acknowledged the efforts of many people within Corsenside who kept an eye on

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their neighbours and wish to send a clear message of thanks for the community spiritedness and support for one another that has been evident.

Cllr C Hamilton asked that a formal letter of thanks be written on behalf of the Parish Council to Kerry Scott and The Gun at Ridsdale for their incredible efforts not only to organise and support the provision of hot food but also for going door to door in Ridsdale to spread the word to those who otherwise were likely to not have known help was available. CW will organise this letter.

Cllr C Hawman continued the discussion about the reliance on electricity to be able to communicate highlighting the lesser-known fact that new digital home telephone lines no longer contain the small amount of electricity needed to power a traditional wired telephone, meaning that those without the old analogue phone lines, which carry their own independent power supply, could not make a call during a power cut. CW was asked to share this information with the community via Facebook. Cllr C Hawman also drew attention to the fact that this recent situation was precisely why CPC has continued to oppose the removal of public phone boxes from the parish.

Cllr J Fenwick reported that 3 locals had very kindly planted up the planters in Ridsdale which had been noticed by other councillors and described as looking very smart, the Parish Council all expressed their gratitude for this kindness to the community.


Cllr C Hawman pointed out to the clerk that there is a broken dog waste bin on the road to East Woodburn, this was acknowledged to be the same bin where CPC previously noted a damaged post. It is surmised that during waste collection the damage has worsened. CW to assess and suggest a course of action to CPC.

CW explained that as part of taking over the role of clerk she has taken possession of many files. After checking the contents of each folder it became apparent that much of the paperwork is financial and is older than the 6 year period that such records need to be kept, as determined by Corsenside PC's own policies and those of the National Association of Local Councils. CW sought permission from the council to securely dispose of such papers. The matter was discussed and there was some concern that in the past similar records have been useful to retrace steps the Council had previously taken and that some form of paper trail, especially relating to large purchases could be beneficial. The suggestion was made that the important papers could be digitised prior to destruction, and an acknowledgement was made that summative financial paperwork may have more value than individual transactional papers. Permission was granted to clear the backlog of papers and Cllr C Hamilton suggested a stricter adherence to the policy of regularly disposing of redundant files to prevent storage problems in future. CW will recheck the files before disposal and remove anything that may be seen to have value in light of the discussion with the council. CW has agreed to maintain a system that digitises as much of the paperwork as possible.

CW also asked that the Cllrs confirm they are happy for her to initiate the Tree Survey which was planned for this financial year and has already been budgeted for. All agreed, and it was acknowledged that considering possible storm damage this matter has newly increased importance.

19) Next Meeting: Monday 10th of January 7.30pm at The Bay Horse, West Woodburn. CPC will continue to monitor advice and guidance relating to Covid 19 from the Government and the Northumberland Association of Local Councils.

Christine Woodcock, Corsenside Parish Clerk, 07737518867 corsensideparishclerk@hotmail.com

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