

MINUTES OF THE ONLINE MEETING OF CORBRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON 20 MAY 2020

PRESENT Councillor W Clouston, Chair of the Council together with Councillors: Mrs E S Buckley, C G Curry, N M Oliver, Mrs M V Kemp, Mrs J Neal, M J Stone, L Rogers and L Stenhouse.

0520.01 **APOLOGIES** received from Cllr M F Griffin.

0520.02 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.** Cllr N M Oliver declared a personal and prejudicial interest in item 0520.08 as a member of Northumberland County Council's Planning Committees.

0520.03 **MINUTES.** It was proposed by Cllr M J Stone, seconded by Cllr Mrs E S Buckley.

0520.04 **ACTIONS ARISING FOLLOWING THE MEETING HELD ON 26 FEBRUARY 2020**

- a) **Appletree Lane.** Minute 0220.11b refers. It was noted that Appletree Lane had been marked for the resurfacing work to start. Cllr N M Oliver to confirm with NCC that the footpath is to be removed. A request was made for the proposed double yellow lines in this area to be carried out at the same time. This would depend on the consultation process. **Cllr N M Oliver to confirm actions with NCC.**

0520.05 **FINANCE**

- a) **Accounts for payment.** Payments were received and it was AGREED to approve the items of expenditure on the list, previously circulated.

0520.06 **ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN FOR 2019/2020**

- a) **To approve the Annual Governance Statement.** It was proposed by Cllr N M Oliver, seconded by Cllr Mrs E S Buckley and AGREED to approve the previously circulated Annual Governance Statement 2019/2020.
- b) **To approve the draft budget report 2019/2020.** It was proposed by Cllr N M Oliver, seconded by Cllr Mrs E S Buckley and AGREED to approve the previously circulated draft budget report 2019/2020.
- c) **To approve the Accounting Statement and Explanation of Variances.** It was proposed by Cllr N M Oliver, seconded by Cllr Mrs E S Buckley and AGREED to approve the previously circulated Accounting Statement and Explanation of Variances.
- d) **To receive and approve the Bank Reconciliation up to 31 March 2020.** It was proposed by Cllr N M Oliver, seconded by Cllr Mrs E S Buckley and AGREED to accept and approve the Bank Reconciliation and balances of accounts up to 31 March 2020.

0520.07 **PLANNING DECISIONS.** It was proposed by Cllr W Clouston, seconded by Cllr Mrs E S Buckley and AGREED that the Council receive the details of the Planning Decisions made by Northumberland County Council, in accordance with the list circulated.

0520.08 **PLANNING APPLICATIONS.** It was proposed by Cllr W Clouston, seconded by Cllr Mrs E S Buckley and AGREED to accept the decisions of the Planning Advisory Group in accordance with the list circulated.

0520.09 **CORRESPONDENCE.** Correspondence and information items received since the February meeting had been listed on the agenda and were noted. Most items had already been circulated by email. Other than those below no action was required on the items received.

- a) **Speeding on Aydon Road.** Letter received from a resident on Aydon Road advising that in his opinion the vehicle activated sign on Aydon Road gives a false impression as the speed of vehicles at the top of Aydon Road are often considerably higher than when passing the sign. Northumberland County Council advised the Parish Council where the sign should be located on Aydon Road. **Action: Cllr N M Oliver will revisit the location of the speed sign with Highways when they next visit Corbridge.**
- b) **Update from Corbridge in Bloom.** Corbridge in Bloom has started emptying tubs of winter planting. They are to plant for summer colour but believe they won't be able to achieve the gold standard they usually reach due to the working restrictions during the current pandemic. They requested help with the watering of the tubs around the village. **Action: Cllr N M Oliver to try and obtain a key (or the Radar key) for the public toilets to assist with access to water.**

0520.10 **TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM WORKING/LIAISON GROUPS AND UPDATE FROM CHAIRMAN AND COUNTY COUNCILLOR.**

- a) **Chairman's Report.** Cllr W Clouston gave his verbal report on matters relating to Corbridge. It was noted that most projects were on hold due to the current Covid 19 crisis.
 - **Corbridge Community Helpline.** Since the last meeting, the Corbridge Community Helpline and Volunteer Scheme had been set up to assist the elderly and vulnerable with essential shopping and medication collection during the Covid 19 crisis. Over 120 volunteers had signed up to the scheme and Mrs M Senior is coordinating the calls and matching those in need with volunteers.
 - **Parish Hall.** Due to the current lockdown, the Parish Hall closed on Friday 20 March and remains closed with no date for reopening. Chris Urwin, the caretaker is taking this time to refurbish the hall which includes building cupboards in the main hall, Room One and the corridor to store all the tables,

chairs and equipment. This will remove all the clutter from the corridors and rooms. He has painted the hall and will be renewing the flooring and carrying out other maintenance during the closure.

- **Neighbourhood Plan.** The Neighbourhood Plan is in abeyance due to the current situation as we are unable to carry out any kind of consultation exercise.
 - **Railings outside the Co-op.** This will be progressed once we are able.
 - **Corchester Pavillion.** A brief discussion took place on the possibility of refurbishing the pavilion. Other ideas included; tree planting and an exercise/circuit area on the playing field. This will be looked into further when we are able.
 - **Memorial Tree.** A lime tree had been planted behind the Parish Hall on The Chains Open Space to commemorate VE Day 75. The tree is thriving and the Parish Council will catch up with the Corbridge Branch of the Royal British Legion to discuss installing a plaque or memorial bench beside the tree when we are able.
- b) **County Councillor Report.** Cllr N M Oliver gave his verbal report on matters relating to Northumberland County Council and other matters relating to Corbridge Parish Council.
- **Car Park Extension.** No further update. More information should be available for the next meeting.
 - **Community Led Housing Project.** It was noted that the drawdown of the 1st tranche of grant monies is imminent. Unfortunately, all work had stopped on site so the whole project will be pushed back. It appears that Corbridge Parish Council is the first Parish Council in the country to take the lead on a project like this. Publicity was to be arranged however due to the lockdown this has been put on hold.
 - **QE High School rebuild.** Work has continued on this project throughout lockdown and huge progress has been made on the site clearance.
 - **Northern Gas Networks.** NGN have now finished the work in the village of upgrading the gas network. Cllr N M Oliver commended NGN on their handling of their project including the management of disruption and keeping people informed during the works. Cllr W Clouston had been speaking to them about funding the replacement of the railings outside of the Co-op.
 - **Cycling.** Cllr N M Oliver had attended a meeting before lockdown and no progress had been made since. Councillors were asked to email any thoughts to him about ways to improve/encourage cycling around Corbridge. He is currently looking into safe cycle storage at the railway station.
 - **Rural Energy.** Cllr N M Oliver had been in touch with the Rural Energy Officer to discuss and now had the application forms. Cllr Oliver to draft the application and circulate to all councillors for comments within the next few weeks. He felt that the project should revolve around the Parish Hall and Library building.
 - **NCC's Covid 19 Response.** Cllr N M Oliver gave an update on NCC's response to the Covid 19 crisis. Community Hub had been set up however at a local level hasn't had to do a lot. Most queries had been passed to the hubs set up by the local communities. There is also a Business Hub which is giving specialist advice and financial support. Most of the businesses in Corbridge had had to close due to the current situation. NCC is the 4th best Council in the country for delivery the Business Support Grants.
 - **Local Plan.** Work continues on the Local Plan with the Planning Inspectorate liaising with NCC.
 - **Roads/Local Services.** Some work around the county has been able to continue on the roads with further work being done when able. The Household Waste Recovery Sites, which are ran by a private company, have not reopened after pressure from NCC.
 - **Car Parks.** The Corbridge Village Car Park has been closed since the end of March. This is due to reopen by 22 May. Parking charges will be reintroduced before 1 June 2020.
 - **Public Toilets.** NCC is taking advice from government over the reopening of the public toilets. A decision is to be made in due course. When the toilets reopen additional cleaning will need to be carried out.
 - **Schools.** There is a lot of work going on around the reopening of schools. NCC is working with the governing bodies and unions.
- a) **To receive the minutes of the NCC Liaison meeting held on 21 February 2020.** Cllrs W Clouston, N M Oliver, Mrs E S Buckley and Mrs M Senior, the clerk had attended the meeting with Ruth Bendell on 21 February 2020. The minutes were circulated to all Councillors and were noted.

0520.11 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION ONLY

- a) **Questions from Cllr M F Grifffin.** Cllr M F Griffin was unable to attend the meeting however had emailed the following questions:-
- Why was there no call for agenda items from councillors for the May meeting? **The purpose of the online meeting in May was to agree the Annual Governance and Accountability Statement for 2020-2021 due to the submission deadlines. The agenda was kept to a minimum as this was the first online meeting.**
 - Why were previous agenda items from the cancelled previous meeting not carried over to the May meeting? **The normal business of the Parish Council is very limited at this current time and we are unable to progress any projects.**

- Why does the Neighbourhood Plan project need to be restarted and NCC funding for this funding returned? What is the new timetable for this project and who is responsible in the Parish Council and NCC for the management of this project? Funding for this project came from Groundworks UK. The deadline for the funds to be spent was extended to 31 March 2020. As the Parish Council was unable to extend beyond this deadline, Groundworks requested return of the grant. The Parish Council will be able to reapply for the grant when they are able to proceed. The process was restarted due to the delay in handover from the previous Chairman, Marc Horn to Cllr W Clouston. NCC has a team within the planning department responsible for Neighbourhood Planning and an officer has been allocated to Corbridge. Corbridge Parish Council is unable to carry out any public consultation due to the restrictions of the current lockdown.
 - Regarding March accounts for payment why is there a charge of £420 for cutting of grass at this time of year, consider the contract with NVC does not come into effect until April and groundworks were £4243 over budget for 2019/20? Due to the weather conditions in March the grass cutting season had to begin early. C R Reed cuts several areas in Corbridge that are not included in the NCC Groundworks contract.
 - April and May accounts for payment, why is there a charge of £507.50 for grass cutting in April and another in May for £340 (as above)? As above. The grass cut by C R Reed is approx. every 10-14 days, depending on the length of the grass. The main areas which need to be kept particularly short are the various play areas.
 - The Parish Council received the first instalment of the £128,000 2020/21 precept. On Cllr Griffin's council tax bill he has been charged £73.98 for the contribution to Corbridge Parish Council. Assuming my household council tax represents a reasonable average for our approx. 2300 homes in Corbridge, the total Parish Council tax taken from Corbridge would be approx. £170,00. Where is the missing £42,000? If these figures are not correct, please provide the official total amount of Parish Council tax taken by NCC from Corbridge? This information was discussed when setting the precept. The figure given was for an average band D house in Corbridge. Bands A-G each pay a different level of council tax. Band A pays significantly less than a Band G therefore the calculation of £74 x 2300 is incorrect.
- b) **Request for Memorial Bench.** Cllr Mrs J Neal requested a memorial bench, location to be confirmed, in memory of a family member. This was AGREED and further details would be provided in due course.
 - c) **Princes Street Pant.** It was noted that the pant on Princes Street is overflowing. Dynorod had tried to clear the blockage however were unable as they thought there may be a collapsed drain under the road. NCC had been contacted and will investigate further.
 - d) **Corbridge Matters.** Ian Wylie advised that the next edition of Corbridge Matters would be the August edition.

0520.12 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING.** The next meeting of Corbridge Parish Council will be held on Wednesday 24 June 2020 at 7.00pm. It is likely that this meeting will be held online via Zoom however this will be confirmed before the meeting. It was noted that the once the Parish Council can meet face to face this will take place in the main hall where Councillors can sit at a safe distance.