

LOW CONISCLIFFE & MERRYBENT PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting and the Parish Council AGM held on 16 May 2017
St Edwin's Church Hall, High Coniscliffe, 7pm**

Present: Cllrs: M Ellerton (Chair), P Ellerton, S Gatenby, C McLay, A Craggs, T Stuckey,
M Bailey (Clerk).

Apologies: Cllr L Steel, WC G Lee, WC P Crudass

Mr R Burges attended the Annual Parish Assembly as a member of the public.

ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY

- 1 Chair's Report:** The annual report of Parish Council was presented by the Chair. This included a summary of Parish activities, finances, successes and improvements planned for the next 12 months.

Action: M Bailey to post copies of the Report on Parish noticeboards and on the Parish Council web-site.

- 2 Agenda topics from the Public:** Mr R Burges raised the following points of concern for the PC to consider:

1. The Neighbourhood Plan survey was distributed by First Class post especially as the precept had been increased by 87%.

The Parish Council responded that the postage was paid from a grant for the Neighbourhood Plan and not from Parish Council funds. The decision to use First Class post was taken by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee who felt it was necessary to ensure residents were given good notification of the public engagement event to be held on 20 May.

2. Public attendance at the Annual Parish Meeting was very low and had not been adequately communicated.

The Parish Council responded that the meeting had been advertised on Parish noticeboards as is usual practice. In future, the meeting will also be advertised through the recently developed web-site.

3. The Parish Council give greater attention to matters in Low Coniscliffe than in Merrybent or especially Merrybent Drive.

The Parish Council responded that Merrybent Drive is considered a component of Merrybent and not a separate entity. Over the last 25 years there has been substantial expenditure on improvements for Merrybent, recent examples being the Speed Visors and restoration of grass verges. The highest priority activity in recent months has been in responding to 3 contentious planning applications and it is recognised that 2 of these are of greater interest to Low Coniscliffe. The proposed development for 'Coniscliffe Park' will be of great concern to the entire Parish.

4. No attendance at the meeting by Ward Councillors.

The Parish Council responded it was unfortunate that both Ward Councillors were not available. WC G Lee attends most of the PC meetings.

Mr Burges was invited to submit all of his questions in a letter to the PC who will then provide a formal response.

AGM

1 Acceptances of Office: The forms for Declaration of Acceptance of Office and Register of Members Interests' were completed and signed by all Cllr's present at the meeting.

Action: M Bailey to provide copies of forms to Cllr Steel for completion, then all forms to be taken to the Town Hall, and uploaded to the PC web-site. By 16 Jun 17.

2 Election of Chair:

Cllr M Ellerton was elected as Chair.

3 Election of Vice-chair:

Cllr Steel was elected as Vice-chair.

4 Apologies for absence: As above.

5 Declarations of Interest: None.

6 Public Forum: None.

7 Minutes of Last Meeting: The minutes from the meeting held on 14 March 2017 were accepted and signed.

8 Finance and accounts

8.1 The balance in the bank account as at 1 May 17 was £18265.68 and £40.44 in petty cash. This included a recent grant of £2560.00 towards development of a Neighbourhood Plan (NP).

8.2 Expenses approved since the last meeting: Stationery (£53.19), NP grant application (£80.00), Land Registry fee (£40.00), Printing documents for planning application 16/01231/FUL (£56.37) and Printing Parish newsletter (£49.99).

8.3 Expenses approved at the meeting: Clerk salary Apr / May 17 (£191.67), Tax on clerk salary to HMRC (£47.92), Land Registry fee (£40.00), Elm Ridge planting and maintenance (£1246.71) and CDALC subscription (£81.81).

8.4 Recovery of VAT: The Clerk reported that a further £275.38 of VAT had been recovered bringing the total to £1267.33 over the last financial year.

8.5 Annual Return 2016/17. The Annual Governance Statement for 2016/17 was presented and approved.

8.6 Annual Return 2016/17. The Bank Reconciliation and Accounting Statement for 2016/17 was presented and approved. The Parish Council expressed thanks to R Burges for completing the internal audit of the accounts. The period for Exercise of Public Rights is from 5 June to 14 July 17.

ACTION: M Bailey to submit Annual Return for External Audit and display notice of Exercise of Public Rights, including on PC website. By 5 June 17.

9 Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Previous Meeting:

9.1 **Inaccurate information in Conservation Status assessment report:** S Clark still working on response to DBC.

Action: S Clark to send information to DBC Conservation Officer. By 30 Jun 17

9.2 **Conversion of Phone kiosk to Book Exchange:** It was reported that G Charman has fitted 4 book shelves at a cost of £150. Cllr P Ellerton has approached Prontaprint to design and supply signage to place on the Book Exchange at a cost of £40. Both items of expenditure were agreed by the PC. It was also agreed that the Book Exchange should be cleaned by the Parish Handyperson before use.

It was resolved that Cllr C McLay and Cllr S Gatenby can stock the Exchange with up to £50 of books from Charity Shops.

Cllr C McLay agreed to monitor the ongoing status of the Book Exchange and bring any areas of concern to the attention of the PC. An inspection and maintenance schedule and record will be required to comply with insurance liability requirements.

Actions: M Bailey to clean Book Exchange by 19 May 17. Cllr P Ellerton to source display materials from Prontprint by 16 Jun 17. Cllr C McLay and Cllr S Gatenby to stock with books by 30 Jun 17. Cllr T Stuckey to complete risk assessment and produce maintenance checklist / record by 30 Jun 17.

9.3 Enforcement action re untidy land in Low Coniscliffe: The DBC Enforcement Officer has reported that the land owner is working on design of a single property for their own occupation. The safety and appearance of the land will continue to be monitored. The PC expressed frustration at the slow pace of progress and concern that the safety and appearance of the land will deteriorate over the coming months.

Action: M Bailey to request monthly progress updates from the Enforcement Officer. By 14 Jun and 14 Jul 17.

9.4 Neighbourhood Plan (NP): An initial grant of £2560 has been received to fund a drop-in event and preparation of the Vision and Objectives for the NP. The drop-in event for the public to put forward views and ideas is to be held on 20 May 17.

Action: Cllr M Ellerton to give update at next PC meeting.

9.5 Merrybent Noticeboard: The specifications and costs from 3 suppliers were discussed. It was resolved to progress with the quotation provided by Fletcher Joinery (5 votes for and 1 vote against). The posts are to be set in Metpost fixings rather than concrete.

Action: M Bailey to place order with Fletcher Joinery by 30 May 17.

9.6 Nuisance parking on grass verges in Merrybent. It was reported that the white stones placed to deter nuisance parking have been removed from the grass verges. Cllr T Stuckey has discussed solutions with DBC and suggested planting of trees as one possibility. DBC have stated they will repair any damage using road planings. DBC ruled out the option for the PC to purchase and install white posts as the locations for these would need to be marked out by DBC who are not prepared to do it. The PC agreed that further discussion with DBC is required to identify a solution.

Action: M Bailey to invite Paul Ibbertson of DBC Highways to attend the next PC meeting for discussion of a suitable resolution of the concerns. By 30 Jun 17.

9.7 Community Forest: Notices have been displayed at the Community Forest to give guidance to the public on reasonable behaviour whilst in the Forest. It was reported that these had been removed by unknown persons.

DBC have not yet responded to the concerns expressed by the PC regarding the removal of a large number of saplings in the Community Forest.

Action: Cllr M Ellerton to request an update from P Roxby. By 16 Jun 17.

9.8 Air pollution monitoring: No progress with purchase and installation of 3 air quality monitors.

Action: Cllr P Ellerton to arrange for monitors to be installed. By 30 Jun 17.

10 Planning applications and decisions:

10.1 It was reported that a highways and infrastructure assessment is in progress to determine the sustainability of the proposed development 'Coniscliffe Park'.

10.2 The outcome of the application to build 33 dwellings on the land to the east of Gate Lane is expected to be announced in June or July. Cllr M Ellerton is meeting with DBC Planning Officer w/c 22 May 17 to again raise the concerns of the PC. It was reported that a further archeological study is to be completed as the previous study is viewed as 'of significance'. This may result in additional conditions should the application be approved. The Planning Action Group are putting together a statement to lobby all members of the DBC Planning Committee with the concerns about this proposed development.

11 Highway Matters: None.

12 Parish Matters:

12.1 Recognition of Long Service. Cllr P Ellerton attended a ceremony to receive congratulations from the Mayor for 25 years of service as a Parish Councillor.

12.2 Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE). It was agreed to subscribe / make a donation to this organisation.

Action: M Bailey to find out process for joining and determine costs. By 30 Jun 17.

12.3 Parish Council insurance policy renewal. The parish council insurance is no longer organised by DBC. A quote has been received from Zurich Municipal (current providers) at a premium of £206.08. This is about £60 lower than last financial year. It was resolved that the PC should accept this quote.

Action: M Bailey to arrange for payment of the insurance premium. By 8 Jun 17.

12.4 Further expenses presented for reimbursement. It was agreed that the following expenses should be reimbursed.

- Neighbourhood Plan supplies for drop-in event, £306.71 to S Clark (funded by NP grant)
- Travel expenses for 2 visits for meetings at Land Registry, Durham, £64.00 to Cllr M Ellerton
- Miscellaneous sundries for planning application activities, £66.26 to Cllr M Ellerton
- Clerk office expenses, £55.21 to M Bailey

13 Items for Future Consideration: None.

14 Correspondence: None

15 Feedback from Meetings Attended: None

16 Date for next meeting: 11 July 2017, 7.00pm

The meeting closed at 8.58pm

M Ellerton
11/7/17