



Delivering Quality Services to
Coxhoe & Quarrington Hill

Coxhoe Parish Council

Meeting	Monthly
Date	Wednesday 24 th March 2010
Time	6.45pm
Venue	Landsdowne House, Coxhoe

Minutes of the proceedings of the monthly Coxhoe Parish Council meeting held at 6.45pm in Landsdowne House, Lansdowne Road, Coxhoe, on Wednesday 24th March 2010.

Present: Councillor P. Dodsworth (in the Chair) and

Councillors: S. Dunn, Mrs. B. Hepplewhite, R. Mayo, K. Pounder, A. Rowe, G. Shotton, D. Smith, J. Taylor and Mrs. C. Wigham.

Clerk: Mrs. M. Forster

Also Present: County Councillor D. Morgan (part of meeting).

10.49 Apologies: Apologies for absence were received from Councillor C. Thirlaway and Mr. B. Watts (Quarrington Hill Village Partnership).

10.50 Members' Declarations of Interest: Conflicts of interest had been declared by Councillor D. Smith in Sanderson Street and Mrs. M. Forster, the Clerk, in Salary, Terms and Conditions of Clerk and Proposed Voluntary Assistant to the Clerk. (Both withdrew from the meeting for consideration of the respective items).

10.51 Questions from the Public: There were no members of the public present.

10.52 Police Report: Mark Ogilvie was present at the meeting and gave details of the Police report that had been circulated covering the period 18th February to 18th March 2010. There had been three incidents of violence, two burglaries, four thefts, seven incidents of criminal damage, one incident involving drugs, thirty four incidents of anti-social behaviour and four incidents of vehicle nuisance. The next PACT meeting would be 25th March at 6.30 p.m. in Coxhoe Leisure Centre. The report included a large disturbance on 12th March for which there had already been three arrests, with more likely as statements continued to be collated. As a result of the incident, the Parish Council had arranged an urgent meeting on 18th March with the Police and Coxhoe Community Partnership. M. Ogilvie stated that it had been explained at that meeting that the Police were putting major resources in to Coxhoe to combat the problems. The Management Team were giving this utmost importance and the area had been inundated with marked and unmarked vehicles, plain clothes and uniformed Police following the incident. The Police had obtained the power to issue notices to leave a designated area and one such notice had been served at the weekend but it had been very quiet. The Police were targeting the offender considered to be the main instigator of the trouble and were collating evidence towards an Anti-Social Behaviour Order. He had breached the agreement and been arrested Saturday night and held until Monday morning when the same conditions regarding exclusion from Coxhoe and curfew had been agreed at Court. There had been a substantial impact since he had not been allowed into Coxhoe and since other youths had realised that there were consequences to their actions. It was anticipated that an Interim Anti-Social Behaviour Order would be issued the following week prior to a full hearing. Publicity regarding the youth would then be issued. Senior management were targeting the main known areas where there was evidence of offences having taken place and the Police would go to Court with proposals for his prohibition. It was anticipated that the severity of the action taken against the main perpetrator would deter the youths who had been travelling into Coxhoe from other areas such as Cornforth and Spennymoor. The Chair thanked M. Ogilvie for his report and asked that in future questions only be taken as the report had been distributed a week in advance and this would help to reduce the length of Council meetings. M. Ogilvie left the meeting.

Resolved That the Police Report be noted and displayed on the village notice boards.

10.53 Minutes of Monthly Meeting held 24th February 2010 had been circulated. Members advised that it may be that the Parish Council would in the future review the situation regarding speed visors in Coxhoe and request that they be amended to be able to rotate to allow these to be in either direction. The consensus was that at the last Parish Council meeting when it had been reported that the County Council had advised that these had been agreed with the Police as being only in one direction, the Parish Council had noted this, rather than agreed it. It was, therefore, agreed to amend minute 10.35 to reflect that the Parish Council noted that the visors at Coxhoe could operate in one direction each. **Resolved** (i) That minute 10.35, 24th February 2010, be amended to reflect that the Parish Council had noted (rather than agreed) that the visors at Coxhoe could operate in one direction each; (ii) That subject to resolution (i) above, the minutes of the last monthly meeting held on 24th February 2010 be approved and signed as a true record.

10.54 Matters of information: The Clerk updated that **(1)** she had reminded County Councillors that they were to seek confirmation that appropriate checks had been carried out prior to installation of the **speed humps and barriers near the school at Quarrington Hill** and ascertain when the Stage 3 Assessment would be carried out. County Councillor Morgan had sent a response advising that Phase 3 assessments were no longer required. The principles involved in a safety audit were an integral part of the scheme design process and schemes were designed in accordance with legislation, Department for Transport guidance, and sound engineering principles based on extensive experience. Since the measures had been introduced, vehicle speeds had reduced significantly. Members advised that it was sufficient to record this in the minutes. **(2)** There had not been any response from Gavin Cordwell-Smith yet to the request for the position to be reconsidered with regard to the street naming and the planning gain monies for the **Hellens Development**. **(3)** No progress had been made on contacting the alternative provider with regard to **Clocks Remedial Work** due to the huge workload at the moment and this needed to be progressed soon as the annual maintenance would be due. **(4)** The next session of the **CILCA Mentoring Course** was scheduled for 25th March and then the Clerk needed to register and start putting together the portfolio for submission. Members advised that they had previously agreed to assist in this. **(5)** There had been no progress advised from Councillor Dunn with regard to the land ownership of the **rough land adjacent to the allotments at Quarrington Hill** with a view to the Parish Council procuring this to provide additional allotment sites. **(6)** There had been nothing further from the County Council on the three potential **Asset Transfers** but Landsdowne House was not one of the Community Centres listed as potentially going back to the County Council's housing stock. **(7)** As suggested, the Clerk had written to Michael Young at Tarmac to see if he could shed any light on the query regarding the **responsibility for the footpath at Quarry Road**. Brendan Kelly of their Estates Department had rang to say that if this was the quarry access route that ran parallel to the quarry entrance then this had been raised at the last Liaison Meeting. This was an adopted path maintained by Durham County Council and it had been agreed that the County Council would sort this out. Councillor Rowe was provided with contact details to ensure it was the same path that was being queried. **(8)** It had been reported the previous month that the **fencing repairs outside the tip** had been carried out. Councillor Pounder had since advised that the fence had been hit by another vehicle last weekend and he had referred this to County Councillor Morgan. **(9)** It had been reported the previous month that the electrical contractor was arranging for the **Memorial lights** to be operational for one hour in the morning and a request had been sent to Adrian Varty at the County Council to enquire about the possibility of someone being shown how to alter the timer for future. Neither Councillor Mrs. Hepplewhite nor the Clerk had heard any progress on this and the Chairman offered to ascertain whether the timer was easily operational. **(10)** Nothing further had been received from the Planning Enforcement Officer who was currently investigating the **unauthorised development issues** the Parish Council had raised with them. A Member stated that there were an increasing number of unauthorised signs being erected and illuminated lights had been installed on the cafe at the bottom of the village. The Member requested that the Planning Enforcement Officer be asked to attend a meeting of the Parish Council to talk through the issues. **(11)** The Highways Action Line had advised that they had passed on the request for works to the **raised paving** and tarmac between the traffic lights and the Red Lion Public House to the Highways Area Office. Members confirmed that the works had not yet been carried out and it

was agreed to chase these up. **(12)** The Clerk was still in negotiations on the additional **insurance** premium Zurich were requesting for extra items added by the previous Clerk and would keep Members informed. **(13)** The **photocopier** for Landsdowne House had arrived and paper required for the next runs of the village newsletters would be ordered in the new financial year. **(14)** The Model **Standing Orders** had arrived and a review of Coxhoe Parish Council's Standing Orders would take place as time and workload allowed. **(15)** The Clerk had written to the resident of Ashbourne Drive outlining why the Parish Council was unable to assist with the **provision of a salt bin**. **(16)** A **Policy for Applications for Grants and Donations** would be drafted as time and workload allowed. Cheques and accompanying letters had been prepared for Great North Air Ambulance, Victim Support, and Coxhoe Village Hall Association and their letter would advise that the Parish Council would continue to pay the maintenance contract for the photocopier at the Village Hall and review this when the 2011/12 budgets were looked at. **(17)** The Clerk had written to the County Council expressing the Parish Council's concerns about road safety in response to the Planning Application for **Proposed Relocation of Site Compound at Joint Stocks Waste Disposal Site** and asked that they liaise with the Police in coming to a suitable solution. They had advised that the representations would be taken into account. A Member stated that they would also raise this at the next liaison meeting. **Resolved** (i) That the information be noted, the outstanding resolutions be actioned and progress be requested on those issues raised with other parties; (ii) That the Clerk ask the Planning Enforcement Officer to attend a future meeting of the Parish Council to discuss the number of unauthorised developments in Coxhoe.

10.55 Joint Meeting re Lighting and Other Improvements at St. Mary's Church and Front Street, Coxhoe: had been held Tuesday 2nd March. The meeting had included representatives of Coxhoe Parish Council, Coxhoe Community Partnership, Durham County Council and St. Mary's Church. The representatives had looked at lighting to the rear of St. Mary's Church and the Church representatives had stated that their preference was for a timer to be installed for lighting at the back door between 6.00 p.m. and 9.30 p.m. This had been suggested as a bulk head fitting with a low energy bulb. It had been agreed that ideally there should be a wider footpath from the Church entrance to the top of the new grave area at the left with a bench seat near the top of the area. It had been suggested that the Community Partnership could look at having spiky planting to the corner area behind the hairdressers to improve the appearance and deter youths. It had been hoped that CDENT monies would cover this but the Parish Council would be informed of any costs that may be outstanding. The County Council representatives had agreed to trim the planting at the stone wall to the side of the Church. They were looking to install a litter bin in the Churchyard and Members advised that a metal one would be preferable as this would be more vandal proof in that area. The land ownership issues relating to the Churchyard were to be discussed at a future Parish Council meeting.

The representatives had then visited the Front Street of Coxhoe to look at improvements, including looking at the location of various street furniture. The intention was for heritage type lights to be provided as part of the URR1 scheme in the commercial area from the mini roundabout to the traffic lights. These would be heavy duty ornamental columns with brackets capable of having hanging baskets and Christmas lights attached to them. Two would be substantial enough to have CCTV cameras attached at strategic places to be agreed by the County Council in liaison with the Police. These were fully funded and on order for delivery in approximately 16 weeks. The current light bulbs in this area would be recycled to replace sodium lighting elsewhere in the village. The County Council Officers had offered to provide expert advice on the Christmas lights once the posts were in place. The County Council were aware of the barriers that had been bumped at the top of the village and remedial works were in hand. County Council advice had been sought as to the best way to flood light the Co-op and Village Hall car parks and whether it was possible to have additional street lights in that area or whether flood lights at the side of the Village Hall would suffice and if so what the best lights to install would be. County Councillor Morgan had agreed to speak to the County Council lighting engineers in connection with this and obtain costs. The County Council had agreed to prune back the planting and the Chairman of the Village Hall Association had agreed to this as he had been on site at the time. Part of the agreement of letting the Co-op have a walkway had been that they would maintain the path and lights so the County Council needed to raise these issues with them and see if they would provide a further flood light so that there would be two or three from the Village Hall and one from the Co-op buildings.

With regard to other street furniture, it had been stated that the bin outside the Church may be better moved to near to the Pizza shop but then agreed that it remain as that was more likely to be where people would drop litter; the street planter further down the Front Street would be better placed at the corner of the Florists shop and the florist could be approached as to whether she wished to fill this to advertise her business. Michelle White had advised that the County Council had agreed to refill and level off the planters at the top of the Front Street as part of the URRI scheme and could look at having the planter moved to the corner outside the hairdressers. Jeff Stephenson of the County Council had advised that this should not be a problem from a risk point of view as there were bollards in that area. Members stated that it would be good to have a noticeboard near the Workingmen's Club; one for young people near the bus stop; and a map of the Limestone Links in the village centre, near the pedestrian crossing or opposite Gatenbys or at the entrance to the Village Hall. The County Council had stated that these should not be a problem as these were pedestrian areas. The Parish Council noticeboard may be better placed near the Post Office to be more central and should be an improved three way board. Michelle White could provide advice on the best type. Heritage pointers would be good at the Village Hall entrance with walking times rather than distances to encourage walking. These would indicate the Leisure Centre, Park and School. Jeff Stephenson would take up the issue of the outdated sign at the entrance to the Village Hall car park.

To progress matters a sketch had been provided of what improvements the Parish Council wanted to see occur and this had been submitted to County Councillor Morgan in order that he could obtain advice and costings from the County Council Officers. Following that, appropriate discussions could take place as to how all the suggested improvements could be funded. It had been suggested that the monies saved from the lighting no longer required at the rear of the Church could potentially fund some of the lighting to the car parks or to assist in the provision of a footpath to the newer graves. J. Hepplewhite had offered to obtain costings for the footpath from the contractor currently working on other projects being undertaken by the Community Partnership.

The Clerk added that since the meeting, Adam White of the County Council's Regeneration and Economic Development Directorate had advised that he wished to meet with the Parish Council and Coxhoe Community Partnership to discuss the village centre regeneration. He had advised that he could act as a facilitator in getting actions re physical improvement to the area improved and also help with funding applications and project work. She suggested that the notes from the meeting of 2nd March be shared with him and the Officers who had attended the site visit and then another meeting incorporating all parties be called once Officers had had a chance to look at the best options and costings in order that the Councils and Partnership could progress the matters discussed.

A Member commented that the bin outside the Churchyard should be moved slightly as it did not match the rest of the street furniture in that area. County Councillor Morgan stated that the County Lighting Engineer was currently carrying out an assessment on the Village Hall. Adam White could be asked if he could contribute to that and this could form part of discussions with the Village Hall Association on the car park and options available to them, with some budgets available to the County Councillors possibly contributing to the funding. The Street Lighting Section had advised that as the lighting would be installed on a private building this would not fall within their remit. The Chair of the Parish Council advised that he would contact a contractor to discuss this and the lighting to the rear of St. Mary's Church. A Member stated that the lights at the rear of St. Mary's Church and the side of the Village Hall could possibly be paid for out of the budget set aside for the lighting at the Churchyard and suggested that authority be delegated to the Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Parish Council, to order the works if the contractor that the Chairman contacted could do this within that budget or contact County Councillor Morgan for alternatives if not. He added that there had also been a request for planting around the periphery of the Churchyard in the longer term. Another Member suggested that Catherine Grezo of Durham County Council be asked to prepare a full planned scheme of where the furniture should be in the Front Street as the Officer had suggested that there was too much in the Front Street.

Resolved (i) That the Chairman ascertain the possibility and costings for a contractor to install the required lighting to the rear of St. Mary's Church and to the side of the Village Hall; (ii) That should the costings provided be within the remaining budget of £2,500 then authority be delegated to the Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, to order that the works proceed; (iii) That should the costings for the lights to the rear of St. Mary's Church and the side of the Village Hall equate to more than the remaining lighting budget, then the Chairman consult with County Councillor Morgan in connection with the alternatives available; (iv) That Coxhoe Community Partnership ascertain costings for spiky planting at the corner to the rear of the hairdressers in the Churchyard;

and whether there was sufficient CDENT monies available to cover these costs; and for a wider footpath from the Church entrance to the top of the new grave area at the left; and report these back to the Parish Council; (v) That the County Council trim the planting to the stone wall to the side of the Church and on the walkway through the Village Hall car park and arrange for the sign at the entrance to the Village Hall car park to be updated; (vi) That the County Council install a litter bin, preferably metal, within the Churchyard grounds; (vii) That the County Council raise with the Co-op that the Co-op had agreed to maintain the footpath and lighting when the walkway to the shop had been agreed and ascertain whether they would install a further flood light on their premises; (viii) That the County Council Officers who had attended the site visit, together with Adam White and Catherine Grezo be provided with the notes relating to the meeting of 2nd March and be asked to provide schemes and costings for a wider footpath and a bench and periphery planting to be installed at St. Mary's Church, and for the street furniture in the Front Street, with a further meeting to be arranged involving all such parties once this information had been compiled; (ix) That the County Council be asked for advice on a scheme for Christmas lights in Coxhoe Front Street once the appropriate lamp posts were in place; (x) That the land ownership issues relating to the Churchyard be discussed at a future Parish Council meeting following decisions with regard to the possible improvements to the Churchyard.

10.56 Visit by Department of Communities and Local Government – had taken place on 22nd March 2010. Everything had gone very well, with the morning consisting of discussion on the Parish Plan and progress and various projects that had been undertaken as a result. There had been a powerpoint presentation and informal discussion over lunch. This had been followed by a walk round of some of the projects such as the skate and play park, the Youth Room, Sensory Garden, Village Green / Proposed Medical Centre site, Coxhoe Front Street to discuss the URR1 Scheme, then St. Mary's Church and the Living Churchyard. The latter part of the day had consisted of a coach tour to incorporate the entrance signs at Coxhoe and Quarrington Hill, traffic calming at Quarrington Hill, Crowtrees Heritage, and the Limestone Links routes prior to the party returning to the train station. Members commented that the visitors had praised the work undertaken to the point of suggesting that the Parish Council and Community Partnership sell their expertise. In addition to the contingent from London, representatives from the Area Action Partnership, Government Office North East and Community Development had visited to see what was happening in Coxhoe. It was considered to have been a worthwhile day.

Resolved That the information be noted.

10.57 Speed Visors – The Clerk had advised Gerry Jones at the County Council that the Parish Council would pay up to £700 for power to be provided to the southbound pole at Coxhoe, with the County Councillors kindly having offered to pay any costs above that and for power to be provided at the north bound pole at Coxhoe. He had advised that he would organise the order with Service Direct. Costs for the rotation and information on when and in what order the rotations would occur had been requested and that the County Council provide appropriate data from Quarrington Hill prior to any movement. The Clerk had reiterated that the Parish Council were of the opinion that the site visit at Quarrington Hill had agreed that the visor near the garage would be capable of being activated in both directions. Members added that the power was currently being supplied to the northbound pole.

Resolved That the information be noted.

10.58 Quarrington Hill Community Centre and Communal Hall Consultation: As the Parish Council had not had a chance to properly consider the letter from Clive Lawson delivered at the last meeting and advising that the current Management Committee would be standing down in November, it had been agreed that this be submitted to this meeting in order that consideration could be given as to how the County and Parish Councils could rally community support to prevent the closure of the Centre. At the last meeting, Councillor Pounder had advised that he was willing to assist in sorting a new set up to take over the running of the Community Centre after November and it had been agreed that the village newsletters incorporate articles in each edition until the end of the year. The Parish Council mobile number had been provided as a contact but to date there had been no calls in this connection. The Clerk had asked Mary Foy at the CVS to ensure that she incorporated visits to

Quarrington Hill Community Centre when she visited voluntary organisations to discuss any assistance they could provide and had updated her on the position regarding the two Centres at Quarrington Hill. It had been suggested at the last meeting that a multi-agency meeting be called after that visit had taken place and Councillor Pounder had offered to obtain information relating to usage and funds prior to such a meeting being arranged. He advised that he had met Mr. Lawson and that it would be beneficial to have someone organised to have a hand over from September. He stated that the Community Centre was used weekly for coffee mornings, bingo, youth club and toddlers group, monthly for Citizens Advice Bureau, occasionally for MP Surgeries and AAP meetings, and annually for flu jabs and the Heritage Group. He provided brief details of the finances and advised that there were large costs involved with water rates and insurance but healthy funds in the balances. A problem with usage was that voluntary groups used the Resource Centre as they did not have to pay for that. He provided details of the usage at the Resource Centre and stated that the County Council was advising that it was underused but may not have the full details.

The Clerk added that the County Council was consulting on the possibility of the Hawthorns Resource Centre at Quarrington Hill being taken back into the County Council's housing stock as they considered that it was underutilised and there was a nearby alternative of the Community Centre. The correspondence from the County Council had been copied to Clive Lawson in case he had not been consulted directly. It was agreed that the two agenda items be discussed together as each had an impact on the other. Members stated that both buildings were owned by the County Council and it was imperative that one building was retained for use by the community. The County Council should be asked to assist in this as they would be saving costs by one of the buildings not being used for the community. County Councillor Morgan added that it may be difficult to involve the County Council in discussions at present on the retention and potential assistance with funding of any community halls as the overall review of community buildings would mean that they would want a unified approach across the County as opposed to becoming involved in piecemeal decisions. The County Councillors could try to solicit interest from the AAP in having offices at Quarrington Hill. They were looking for somewhere central to the AAP area and on good bus routes. Members added that the County Council needed to look at the issues of water rates and grant aid when looking at community buildings.

Members considered that a public meeting may assist in encouraging usage of, and volunteers for a new Management Committee for, the Community Centre. They advised that fliers for such a meeting could be distributed at the next Parish Council meeting for delivery by Councillors. A potential date, subject to availability, would be Saturday 8th May at 10.00 a.m. in the Community Centre. The Clerk had circulated an email from the Chair of Quarrington Hill Village Partnership which requested that the Parish Council support the continued use of the Resource Centre which had been used by the Partnership monthly for 4 years and was valued as an excellent meeting room with good facilities. He had mentioned that Crowtrees Heritage Group met there monthly and approximately 12 people attended a fortnightly coffee morning. With the future of the Community Centre in possible jeopardy, he had asked that the Parish Council respond to the County Council to let them know of the importance of having a place in the village available for meetings, etc. She stated that she would update the County Council of the current position and the Chairman advised that he would update the Chair of the Quarrington Hill Village Partnership.

Resolved (i) That subject to Councillor Pounder checking the availability of the Quarrington Hill Community Centre for a public meeting on 8th May, fliers for such be distributed at the Parish Council meeting in April for circulation by Councillors; (ii) That the Clerk, in responding to the County Council consultation, update them on the current position and advise that one community facility should be retained in Quarrington Hill; (iii) That the Chairman advise the Chair of the Quarrington Hill Village Partnership of the current situation and proposed actions.

10.59 Photocopier at Village Hall: For audit purposes so that agreement to expenditure was a separate item on the agenda, ratification was sought of the decision made at the Parish Council meeting in February 2010 under Matters Arising to agree to continue to pay the maintenance contract for the

copier at the Village Hall and review the position when the budget setting process took place in October / November 2010 for 2011/12.

Resolved That the Parish Council continue to pay the maintenance contract for the photocopier at the Village Hall and review the position as part of the budget setting process for 2011/12.

10.60 Quarrington Hill Village Partnership: The agenda for 29th March and minutes of 22nd February had been circulated. As the Chairman of the Partnership was unable to attend the Parish Council meeting, correspondence had been circulated that advised that the Partnership had received good news on 2nd March that they had been successful in being awarded £15,000 from the AAP budget, and £5,000 from each of the County Councillors' neighbourhood budgets. When added to the £1000 set aside by the Parish Council, this equated to £26,000 towards the play park scheme. The Chair stated that this was good news and could allow the Partnership to take the project forward in stages.

Resolved That the information be noted.

10.61 Coxhoe Community Partnership: The agenda for the Partnership meeting of 3rd March had been circulated, together with the Youth Room Partnership minutes for 21st January. The Chair asked that in order to reduce the length of Parish Council meetings, both Partnerships be asked to issue the Clerk with their reports a week in advance of the meeting if possible to allow Members time to read these so that questions or new updates only could be taken at the Parish Council. The Secretary of the Partnership stated that the Chair was resigning and the vacant position would be the subject of election at the Annual General Meeting in May. Councillor Mrs. Hepplewhite advised that there was £4,000 left in the Memorial Garden budget and was asked to check whether some of this could be used to purchase lights for the trees for use on special occasions and at Christmas. She and the Chair of the Parish Council would see whether the surrounding area could be turfed rather than seeded for better short term effect and whether the seats could be moved forward. The Living Churchyard had been shortlisted for Durham County Council environmental awards. A response was still awaited from the Coalfield Regeneration Trust on the Village Hall internal doors. Computer classes would commence 26th April in Landsdowne House and an application for funding had been submitted to pay for rent for the room and a tutor for the classes. The Partnership had been advised that all electrical equipment, including the laptops required, needed to be PAT tested and no equipment should be left unattended although they had wanted to leave a computer and printer in the meeting room. The Officer from the County Council was checking the capacity to ascertain how many computers could be plugged into the system simultaneously and it was agreed that County Councillor Morgan look into these issues. A Member commented that it would be beneficial to have the asset transfer of Landsdowne House determined prior to November when the licence fee for the hire of the room at the Village Hall would be reviewed.

The Clerk updated that provision of a litter bin for the Churchyard had already been covered under the item on the joint meeting. Things had moved on slightly with regard to the County Council assisting the Parish Council, following her request for help in the development of a website. She had obtained from the DCC Web Team a website requirements document which needed to be completed and returned prior to arranging a meeting with the web development team. She had asked TP Gardens to not drive past St. Mary's Church and only use the main parking area when carrying out grasscutting in the area and had written to Wilf Newall to express concern that the subsidence may be the result of inadequate backfilling of excavation works. County Councillor Morgan added that a third set of works would be carried out to the worst area in April but upgrading and reinforcing the path would have to be a new project. The Clerk went on to advise that following the request for the Parish Council to have insurance cover for volunteers, Personal Accident insurance for up to ten volunteers working on a project had been added to the Council's insurance at no additional cost. The Clerk had advised the County Council and Partnership accordingly to assist with the planting works that the Partnership wished to undertake. A projector had kindly been donated by Councillor Dunn and, as authorised at the last meeting, reimbursement costs for a cable to enable connection to the Parish Council's laptop had been arranged for accounts for payment later in the agenda. The Clerk had further updated the Parish Plan Progress Report and issued it for comment and the final version had been provided to the DCLG representatives who attended on 2nd March 2010.

Resolved (i) That the information be noted; (ii) That the Clerk request both Partnerships to issue their reports a week ahead of the Parish Council meetings in order that questions and new updates only be provided at the meetings to assist the effectiveness; (iii) That Councillor Mrs. Hepplewhite investigate whether Memorial Garden funds could be used for the purchase of lights for the trees; (iv) That the Chairman of the Parish Council and Councillor Mrs. Hepplewhite investigate the possibility of turfing the Memorial Garden and moving the seats forward; (v) That County Councillor Morgan investigate the issues raised in connection with the provision of computer classes at Landsdowne House.

10.62 Crowtrees Heritage Group: The agenda for 11th March and minutes of 11th February had been circulated.

Resolved That the information be noted.

10.63 Correspondence:

10.63.1 Durham County Council:

a) EDRC AAP Local Councils Committee – The agenda for 16th March and minutes of 19th January had been circulated. The main points were concern that the AAP Board Member was not attending or providing written reports. Concern had been expressed in writing and the Committee may look at amending the constitution to deal with such matters. Anne Armstrong, the Local Councils Officer from Durham County Council, had outlined her newly created liaison role to improve consultation and engagement of local councils and practical support with printing and IT, and that the new County Durham Partnership would in effect be like a LSP for County Durham – a strategic partnership bringing together key organisations to improve social and economic well being, with £12m performance reward grant for achieving targets. Sandra Stephenson was a newly appointed Community Development Officer who could act as a first point of contact for support with neighbourhood budget applications. There was now a standard application form and a funding team to assist with the previous concerns about anomalies in the AAP monies being awarded. Joint working was taking place with CAVOS and they were feeding back to the two CVS in the area.

Resolved That the information be noted.

b) EDRC AAP Board – the agenda for 17th March, minutes of 20th and 28th January and report of the Forum on 10th December 2009 had been circulated.

Resolved That the information be noted.

c) Consultation on Proposal to close In House Residential Care Homes had been circulated.

Resolved That no response to the consultation be issued from the Parish Council.

d) Further information from the County Council answering the Parish Council's query with regard to the **County Council's Policy on Replacement of Wheelie Bins** had been circulated. The particular ones in question at the football pitch at Quarrington Hill were to be replaced, with a custom made metal dog waste bin on order and the wheeled litter bin sited further away from where the previous one had been burnt out. The County Council would try to source a more vandal resistant one if it continued to be vandalised.

Resolved That the information be noted and Councillors Pounder and Dunn send County Councillor Morgan maps of the additional areas they would like bins to be installed in order that he may request provision of these.

e) The Parish Council had responded to the County Council's **Overview and Scrutiny Committee** on issues relating to **anti-social behaviour in parks and open spaces**. As a result, the Council had been invited to send a representative to a **workshop** held 16th March. Councillor Pounder had attended.

Resolved That Councillor Pounder send information from the workshop to the Clerk for onward transmission to all Parish Councillors.

- f) An **Improvement Programme of Household Waste Recycling Centres** had been circulated. Coxhoe was scheduled for works for 8th October to 15th November 2010.

Resolved That the information be noted.

- g) The County Council had sent their **Public Consultation on Contaminated Land Strategy** to the previous Clerk's home address and by the time it had reached the present Clerk the deadline date for consultation of 1st March had passed. Parish Councillors had been afforded the opportunity to view the document. The Clerk had raised the overall issue of addressing correspondence with the Local Council Officers and the County Durham Association of Local Councils who were working to ensure that all Officers at Durham County Council used the correct up to date database for Parish Clerks.

Resolved That the information be noted.

10.63.2 County Durham Association of Local Councils

- h) **NALC E-Bulletins of 26th February and 12th March** – had been circulated.

Resolved That the information be noted.

- i) The CDALC **Executive Committee** agenda for 3rd March had been circulated.

Resolved That the information be noted.

- j) CDALC had advised that the winners of the draw for attendance by Parish and Town Council representatives at the **Royal Garden Party** in July 2010 were Sherburn Village and Pittington Parish Councils.

Resolved That the information be noted.

- k) CDALC had advised that there was to be a free **Quality Status Seminar** at Peterlee Town Council 20th April. As this was the Clerk's first working day back after annual leave it was

Resolved That Councillor Dunn attend the Quality Seminar on 20th April.

- l) Details had been circulated of an **Anti-Social Behaviour Event** held at Sedgefield Racecourse on 19th March. Councillor Pounder offered to forward information from this.

Resolved That Councillor Pounder send information from the event to the Clerk for onward transmission to all Parish Councillors.

- m) Details had been circulated of **Durham Police Authority Community Consultative Group Meetings** to be held across the County between March and May.

Resolved That the information be noted.

10.63.3 Other Correspondence

- n) **Campaign to Protect Rural England** had written to the Parish Council to inform them of work they were doing to protect the Hamsterley Upper Gaunless Area against what they described as being under threat from two proposed **wind farms** nearby.

Resolved That the information be noted.

- o) **Tarmac Ltd.** was undertaking **Consultation on Durham Quarries Biodiversity Action Plan**. This had been forwarded from the previous Clerk's home address and missed the deadline of 1st March but Michael Young had said that the Parish Council could advise him of any comments.

Resolved That no response to the consultation be issued from the Parish Council.

- p) A **Resident of Ashbourne Drive** – had contacted Paul Parker, the Neighbourhood Warden, about off road bikes at the rear of his property having accessed the land through

a **gate at the bottom of Parson's Walk**. Paul had contacted the Parish Council to say that the County Council may consider the erection of a fence as a compromise but that the Parish Council may need to amend the gate. He had advised that the Parish Council had erected two gates to Parson's Walk and the one opposite Station Road was fine but the one at the school end was a different kind and may need to be altered. This opened and stayed open as there was no strength in the spring and this allowed entry by youths on bikes. The Clerk had spoken to the resident about his concerns and he had advised that the entrance near the old vicarage was good and quad bikes could not enter there but the gate from Cornforth Lane near the school was, in his opinion, set too far back and this was causing a problem with youths riding through the estate to access this. He considered that the gate should be moved 20 to 30 yards nearer to the main road.

Members commented that the gate had been erected by Coxhoe Parish Council with a retrospective grant received from Durham County Council to cover the costs. This had primarily been to prevent a horse rider gaining access. Moving the gate would make it further away from the path and Members did not consider that this would produce any benefit. A contractor could be asked to look at replacing the spring if it was not operating correctly. The problem with the horse still existed but the rider now rode the path along from the school, not going through the gate and along Parson's Walk, but up the verge next to the steps beside the gate and on to the estate, resulting in the horse's hooves churning up the verge. Durham County Council could be asked to consider a further small section of fencing to prevent the horse and bikes using the verge to get around the steps as the verge and steps were maintained by Durham County Council. The boarding to the fence that abutted the green in the middle of Parson's Walk at Ashbourne Drive had been replaced on many occasions by the principal authority as it was repeatedly vandalised and Durham County Council could be asked to consider a more sustainable fence or planting or possibly installation of a gate to deal with the bike issue as that would make Parson's Walk only accessible as a footpath from all three entrances.

Resolved (i) That the Clerk source a contractor to ascertain the effectiveness of the spring at the gate and to replace this with a stronger one if it was not working properly; (ii) That Durham County Council be asked to consider installation of a further small section of fencing to prevent horses and vehicles using the verge to get around the steps; and to consider installation of a more sustainable fence or planting, or a gate, to prevent access by horses and motor bikes at the middle of Parson's Walk, to make this accessible as a footpath only from all three entrances.

q) Standards for England – The Response to the concerns the Parish Council raised following the last briefing being circulated had been sent to Members. This advised that there were no plans to propose changes to the present system for meeting the costs of investigation of complaints against Parish Councillors. The information suggested that the Council may wish to also forward its concerns to the Department of Communities and Local Government who wrote the legislation that underpinned the standards committee complaints system.

Resolved That the information be noted and the Clerk forward the Council's concerns to the Department of Communities and Local Government.

10.64 Length and Timing of Meetings: The Chairman advised that ways needed to be found to reduce the length of Parish Council meetings and cited that the last meeting had lasted over three and a half hours. The Police and Community Partnership reports were circulated prior to the meeting and so could just have questions rather than detailing the reports at the meeting. With regard to public participation, it was an important move in the right direction to allow the public to ask questions at meetings but the decision had been to move meetings forward from 7.00 p.m. to 6.45 p.m. to allow for this. This needed to be adhered to to ensure effective meetings. Members agreed that the fifteen minutes allocated should be divided by the number of members of the public present to allow fairness

and that members of the public should be advised that the slot allowed them to have their say and they should not interrupt proceedings after the time period. A balance was required between the importance of engaging the public and effectively handling all the required business of an active Parish Council. The public could be advised that if their question would entail a lengthier or detailed debate, the matter would be placed on the agenda for the following meeting to allow full discussion.

Resolved That to ensure effective meetings, the Partnership and Police items be for questions only, the reports to be circulated prior to the meeting; and the public participation at Parish Council meetings be restricted to fifteen minutes at the commencement of the meeting; this time to be divided equally amongst those present and wishing to ask questions; with any further debate requiring an item on the agenda for the next meeting.

10.65 Quarrington Hill Allotments: A Member had highlighted various incidents recently occurring on the plots at Quarrington Hill. These had included storage of window frames, stripping of copper wiring, burning non-allotment type waste and adding unauthorised locks. The current tenancy agreement and terms and conditions had been circulated in order that the Parish Council may discuss how these could be tightened up to help to prevent such occurrences. It was opportune that this was done now as the annual bills were due to be sent out with the tenancy agreements for signature. The Councillor's suggestions had been circulated as a starting point on setting out that fires were prohibited; activities that were not allotment related such as cutting up of metal and storage of non-allotment type materials was prohibited; and considering a restriction on the number of hens to be kept on any one site. There were no restrictions set out in the agreement and conditions to increasing the rent from £16.20 per year to £18.00 per year as suggested when the 2010/11 budget had been set and the Clerk would incorporate this, subject to there being no restrictions in allotment regulations.

Resolved That as a full review of allotment agreement and conditions had recently been undertaken for the Willow Cottages allotment site at Coxhoe, the agreements for Quarrington Hill be amended to reflect that agreed at Coxhoe.

10.66 Web Statistics: had been circulated for the period 23rd February to 22nd March 2010.

Resolved That the information be noted.

10.67 Finance:

10.67.1 **Budget Update:** An account summary had been circulated that showed income and expenditure for the year and current balances reconciled against the latest bank statements. Details were circulated of the budget for 2009/2010, with income and expenditure and the variance against each budget heading to the end of February. The Clerk went through the budgetary comparison information in detail. There had been a further improvement over the last month with reduced winter expenditure and a further VAT reclaims receipt. With the amounts agreed to be carried forward for items not completed within the year (elections contingency, Church lights and Christmas lights) and the outstanding commitments for the year (speed visors and bollards), the Council should be under spent slightly against budget. Central Services was the only budget heading overspent due to unanticipated expenditure and some budget allocations being underestimated as a result of the changes in Clerk.

Resolved (i) That the information be noted; (ii) That the outstanding commitments in the projects budgets of approximately £4,500 as outlined be carried forward to 2010/11 for payment; (iii) That the Clerk investigate the possibility of adding a further column for known outstanding commitments in the spreadsheets for the 2010/11 budget.

10.67.2 **Accounts for payment:** Details of financial payments required for the month had been circulated, together with the month end bank balances figure after the expenditure. The Clerk's payment included additional hours which Members agreed, some of which had previously been paid to the Council by way of a bursary for CILCA training.

Resolved (i) That all payments presented be signed and paid:

Creditor	Reason	£
Viking Direct	Printer Cartridges and stationery	103.41
Total Business Group	Maintenance and copies Village Hall copier	76.36
CDALC	NALC Model Standing Orders	20.00
CDALC	Clerks Foundation Course	27.00
Quarrington Hill Community Centre	Section 137 Donation – Supply of Poppy Wreath	16.50
Northumbrian Water	Supply Water to Quarrington Hill allotments	126.18
Great North Air Ambulance	Section 137 Donation	50.00
Victim Support	Section 137 Donation	50.00
Coxhoe Village Hall Association	Section 137 Donation / Grant	1,000.00
3 Mobile	Broadband & Mobile January	33.85
S. Dunn	Reimbursement of purchase of cable for projector	14.99
M. Forster	Clerk Salary, additional hours and reimbursement jugs, glasses, refreshments and gratuity expenses	
Post Office Ltd.	HMRC – PAYE Tax and NI Contributions	

(ii) That should it prove necessary and to avoid any potential late penalty payment in view of the time factor for approval, the Clerk be authorised to raise any payment that may be required as part of the end of year PAYE return and the new photocopier contract and have these signed by two of the four Councillor authorised signatories, with a retrospective report to Council in April;

(iii) That the Clerk investigate the possibility of the Parish Council having direct debit facilities for certain recurring payments in future.

10.67.3 **Durham Miners’ Gala Book Project:** Correspondence had been circulated about a book to be launched in 2011 recording the history of the Durham Miners’ Gala. Those who sponsored the project in support of the Gala by purchasing a copy would have their names incorporated. It was considered that the book, and the Gala which was being supported, both brought a benefit to the residents of Coxhoe.

Resolved That a hardback copy of the book be purchased under Section 137 expenditure.

10.68 Internal Audit: The Council had to fulfil certain conditions to meet the Audit of Accounts requirements each year.

10.68.1 **To agree the Appointment of the Internal Auditor and Fee** - Whilst the Council had agreed during the budget setting process to continue with the services of Gordon Fletcher as Internal Auditor for 2010/11, a letter had now been received outlining his work and fee for the year.

Resolved That Gordon Fletcher be appointed as Internal Auditor for 2010/11 at a fee of £450.

10.68.2 **To agree the Effectiveness of the Internal Audit Service** - Members needed to satisfy themselves annually prior to the Audit of Accounts that their systems of internal audit and internal control were adequate and effective. To enable the production of the Annual Governance Statement, Members needed to agree the Effectiveness of the Internal Audit Service. The report circulated identified how the Internal Audit Service met the appropriate criteria of independence and competence, i.e. the Parish Council employed an internal auditor who was able to competently carry out those services and who was totally independent of the Council. The table attached further identified how the service met the five expected standards and how the service had been, and was, effective overall.

Resolved That Members agree that the Council’s system of internal audit is effective and that this review of effectiveness will form part of the Council’s Annual Governance Statement.

10.68.3 **Internal Audit Plan for 2010/11** - Following discussions between the Internal Auditor and the Clerk as to the requirements of the Parish Council over the next year and the best use of the internal audit service, the Internal Audit Plan for 2010/11 had been circulated.

Resolved That the Internal Audit Plan for 2010/11 be approved.

10.69 External Audit: In 2008 the Audit Commission had notified the Council that it had appointed BDO Stoy Hayward LLP as external auditors for a period of five years. BDO had contacted local councils to advise that their fees remained unchanged from last year. The fee was based on income and expenditure at the year end and was likely to be £400 for Coxhoe Parish Council.

Resolved That the appointment of the External Auditor and the probable fee be noted and approved.

10.70 Appointment of External Contractors: Members discussed whether to proceed with the appointment of the contractors used in 2009/10 for the year 2010/11. Whilst they were happy with both the hanging basket / planters and the grasscutting/hedge trimming services that had been received, it was considered that in view of the amounts involved with the former, the length of time that had elapsed since this service had last been reviewed, and the previous decision to undertake a full review to ascertain whether this could be provided more cost effectively, this service should be reviewed at an early date and other contractors be given an opportunity to provide ideas and costings for the service. It was considered that in view of the small increase in fees quoted by T P Gardens and the satisfaction with the service, it would not be cost effective to review this service.

Resolved (i) That T P Gardens be appointed to fulfil the grasscutting and hedge trimming requirements of the Council for 2010/11; (ii) That contractors, including Thinford Nurseries, Durham County Council, and T P Gardens, be asked to provide quotes for the hanging basket, planter and watering service and to include their views as to the best plants to be utilised and most cost effective way of carrying out the planting and watering service.

10.71 Planning Applications: Details had been circulated of planning applications that had been determined under delegated authority from 23rd February to 22nd March 2010 and of applications received since the last meeting. **Alterations to Fenestration to Front Elevation of Foxtons Coffee Shop** had been granted planning permission, subject to conditions, at the Central and East Durham Area Planning Committee on 16th March. In considering application **Ref 154/FPA – Replacement of Permission to extend Time Period for Implementation of Erection of Dwelling at Garden Terrace**, Members commented that it was possible for the Parish Council to request the County Council to consider applications by way of a Planning Committee rather than delegated authority to Officers. It was stressed that Members needed to monitor the weekly planning lists circulated to ensure that if they wished to make such a request it was done at that early stage of consultation. It had also been mentioned at the Planning Seminar attended by Councillor Pounder that planning gain could be determined at grass roots level. Details had been circulated of application **Ref 081/FPA Erection of Single Storey Pitched Roof Extension to Rear of Existing Dwelling and Erection of Attached Extended Decking Area at Ashbourne Drive** since the agenda had been sent out. **Councillor S. Dunn declared an interest** in this application as he knew the applicants and did not take part in any discussion or decision thereon.

Resolved (i) That the information on delegated authority decisions be noted; (ii) That the information on alterations to Fenestration at Foxtons Coffee Shop, 154/FPA Replacement of Permission to extend Time Period for Implementation of Erection of Dwelling at Garden Terrace, and 081/FPA Erection of Single Storey Pitched Roof Extension to Rear of Existing Dwelling and Erection of Attached Extended Decking Area at Ashbourne Drive, be noted; (iii) That Councillor Pounder forward information from the M.P. organised Planning Seminar to the Clerk for onward transmission to Members.

10.72 Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 28th April at 6.45 p.m. in Landsdowne House. The office would be closed from Thursday 8th April and reopen Tuesday 20th April. Appropriate notices would be displayed in the village notice boards.

10.73 Date and Time of Annual Meetings: **Resolved** That the Annual Coxhoe Parish Meeting be held Wednesday 26th May 2010 at 6.30 p.m. in Landsdowne House, followed by the Annual Meeting of Coxhoe Parish Council immediately following its conclusion. (County Councillor Morgan submitted apologies).

10.74 Exempt Information – Resolution to Exclude the Press and Public:

Resolved That in view of the confidential nature of the following items, the press and public be excluded for the remainder of the meeting, pursuant to the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act, 1960.

10.75 Salary, Terms and Conditions of the Clerk: Mrs. Forster, **the Clerk, declared an interest** in this and the following item relating to proposed Voluntary Assistant to the Parish Clerk. She withdrew from the meeting during consideration of both items and Councillor Dodsworth recorded the discussions and decisions in her absence.

10.76 Proposed Voluntary Assistant to the Parish Clerk

10.77 Co-op and Village Hall Car Parks: The Clerk returned to the meeting.

10.78 Sanderson Street: NOTE: Councillor D. Smith **declared an interest** in this item and left the meeting.

The meeting closed at 9.25 p.m.

Signed on 28th April 2010 as a true record of the meeting:

Cllr. P. Dodsworth (Chairman)

Cllr. S. Dunn (Vice Chairman)