



Delivering Quality Services to  
Coxhoe & Quarrington Hill

## Coxhoe Parish Council

<b>Meeting</b>	Monthly
<b>Date</b>	Wednesday 25 <sup>th</sup> August 2010
<b>Time</b>	6.45 pm
<b>Venue</b>	Landsdowne House, Coxhoe

### **Minutes of the proceedings of the monthly Coxhoe Parish Council meeting held at 6.45 pm in Landsdowne House, Lansdowne Road, Coxhoe, on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> August 2010.**

**Present:** Councillor P. Dodsworth (Chair) and Councillors S. Dunn, R. Mayo, K. Pounder, G. Shotton, D. Smith, J. Taylor, and C. Thirlaway.

**Clerk:** Mrs. M. Forster

**Also Present:** County Councillors D. Morgan and Mrs. M. Plews (part of meeting) and I. Forster (Assistant Clerk).

- 10.180 Apologies:** Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs. B. Hepplewhite, A. Rowe and Mrs. C. Wigham.
- 10.181 Members' Declarations of Interest:** Councillor K. Pounder had declared an interest in Quarrington Hill Community Centre and Councillor D. Smith had declared an interest in Sanderson Street.
- 10.182 Questions from the Public:** There were no members of the public present.
- 10.183 Police Report:** The Police report had been circulated for 15<sup>th</sup> July to 19<sup>th</sup> August 2010. M. Ogilvie had advised that he was unable to attend the meeting as three people were answering bail for offences relating to the large disturbance in Coxhoe in March.  
**Resolved** That the Police Report be noted and displayed on the village notice boards.
- 10.184 Minutes of Monthly Meeting** held 28<sup>th</sup> July 2010 had been circulated. A Member suggested that whilst the minutes were extremely thorough, they be reduced in future to record decisions only in view of the current workload. The Clerk advised that some discussion may need to be included if it resulted in a decision.  
**Resolved** That subject to the words "by the solicitor" being added after "It had also been stated at the meeting" on exempt minute 10.179, the minutes of the last monthly meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> July 2010 be approved and signed as a true record.
- 10.185 Matters of information:** The Clerk updated that **(1)** she had confirmed with the County Council that the Chair and she would attend as representatives of the Parish Council and Councillor Mrs. Hepplewhite would attend as the Coxhoe Community Partnership representative to the meeting in connection with the potential procurement of improved **CCTV in Coxhoe** and having the park monitored centrally at Durham. **(2)** Councillors Dunn and Pounder had not yet discussed the differing information on 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. **(3)** Councillor Dunn would draft a letter on the **Asset Transfers** as a matter of priority. A Member expressed concern that the transfer of Landsdowne House may cost substantially in terms of purchase if this was not agreed as peppercorn and in repairs and maintenance. It was stated that all costs and options would need to be looked at rather than a full asset transfer. County Councillor Mrs. Plews entered the meeting. **(4)** On the **DRCC Community of the Year Competition**, the Chair and Vice-Chair had submitted a presentation to the judges and DRCC had advised that the three shortlisted communities would be invited to their Annual General Meeting in the Autumn when their decision would be revealed. The presentation showed how much had been achieved over the last ten years and would be added to the new Parish Council website. County Councillor Morgan entered the meeting. **(5)** The Clerk had sent the appropriate extract from the minutes to the **Quarrington Hill Village Partnership in response to their query** with regard to the support for the play park and had advised that the Quarrington Hill Parish Councillors were happy that the minutes reflected their individual views and they had nothing further to add. The Chair stated that the Chair of the

Partnership was seeking clarity on the views of the individual Quarrington Hill Councillors. A Councillor reiterated that there was nothing to add to the record in the minutes. A Member stated that it appeared that mediation, as suggested, had been agreed by both parties as the way forward to talk over the issues the parties had concerns over. Members commented that a large amount of work had been caused to the Partnership and the Parish Council in dealing with this matter. A Member had tried without success to find a mediator and at costs less than £1,000. It was suggested that the County Council, CDALC and NEREO be approached to ascertain if they were aware of any. Discussion ensued as to whether the Partnership or Parish Council should and could pay the costs. A Member commented that they did not consider that this should be paid for from public monies but others considered that the situation had gone on for years and needed to be resolved as it was affecting the workload of the organisations. A Member stated that it had only gone on for a year. Members agreed that subject to ratification at the next Parish Council meeting the Clerk, in consultation with the Chair of the Parish Council, consider and agree an appropriate contribution to the payment for a mediator.

**(6)** The County Council had asked for clarification that they were just to procure the **Christmas lights** on behalf of the Parish Council. The Clerk asked that the Council agree to waive financial regulations that required three tenders for expenditure over £1000 to allow this to happen and as the Council had tried to get quotes for Christmas lights last year and only one company had provided a full quote. Members agreed that this was sensible and the Vice-Chair advised that the correspondence from the County Council had implied that there was an option with the Christmas lights and he would sort this out. He had information from the Clerk to Monk Hesleden Parish Council on their Christmas tree arrangements and this could be used in looking at possibilities for a Christmas tree in Coxhoe as the Community Partnership had been advised that they were not able to fund lighting up the trees in the Memorial Garden. Possibilities could also be looked at for a tree in the compound of Quarrington Hill Community Centre as there was already a power supply in existence there. The Clerk advised that the costs of the lights on the lamps in the Front Street of Coxhoe would take up the budget set aside for Christmas lights for the year. Councillors Mayo and Thirlaway entered the meeting. Discussion ensued that it would be good for the trees in the Memorial Garden outside the Village Hall at Coxhoe to be lit up and to have a Christmas tree with lights in the compound of the Community Centre at Quarrington Hill. There may be scope for additional funding to be available but this would not be known until a review during the budget setting meeting in November. It was agreed that the Vice-Chair discuss possibilities, costs and budgets with the Clerk and report back to the next meeting with options. Members considered that the lights for the fifteen street lamps in the Front Street of Coxhoe should be provided regardless of any other possibilities. **(7)** With regard to the **Hellens**

**Development**, the Officer at the County Council had been advised that the Parish Council endorsed the suggestions for the street names. An initial design had been sent to the Chairman of the Parish Council in connection with the proposals for the level crossing gates and would be forwarded with the invitation to the Special Meeting of the Parish Council arranged for Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> September at 6.30 p.m. in Landsdowne House. Members discussed Mr. Cordwell-Smith's offer of putting fliers in local shops but considered that the Council's public notices would be sufficient at this early stage and they may request another meeting as the new scheme progressed. A Member stated that the design for the gates was outstanding and he may ask for these to be moved forward and for a further set on the other side of the road up to the fence. **(8)** The Clerk had advised **Quarrington Hill Village Partnership** that the Parish Council had agreed to receive updates by way of a joint meeting every four months and requested that they provide update reports a week in advance of meetings. She had also asked that if there was anything to update between meetings that they provide such information a week in advance of Parish Council meetings so that it could be sent out with the agenda. She had asked when they considered it would be appropriate to commence the meetings. **(9)** The Clerk had advised **Coxhoe Banner Group** Secretary that several people were on holiday and unable to attend their meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> August but that Councillors Dodsworth, Mayo and County Councillor Mrs. Plews would try to attend. The Chair had submitted apologies as his wife had been ill. A couple of Members who had attended updated that the Group had been invited to attend the next meeting of Coxhoe Community Partnership so that they could be given assistance in how and where to apply for funding towards the £50k they had advised they needed. They wanted to form a Coxhoe Miners' Memorial Group and would like representatives from the Banner Group, the Community Partnership and the Parish Council to be involved in this. They had advised that they wondered whether there could be any gain from the new houses in the village, with Hellens perhaps constructing the base or plant wheels. There was no update on any progress on the Medical Practice. **(10)** Appropriate responses had been sent to Durham County Council within the deadline dates on the **County Durham Plan Core Strategy, Housing Strategy, and Settlement Study Consultations.** **(11)** A cheque and accompanying letter had been prepared for signature for the £200 **donation** agreed for Quarrington Hill Community Centre.

**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 Councillors Dunn and Pounder investigate the issue regarding the land ownership adjacent to the allotments at Quarrington Hill and report back; (iii) That the Vice-Chairman draft a letter to the Chief Executive of the County Council advising the timing of the first request for the information on the three potential asset transfers; setting out the assets the Parish Council were interested in; and providing emphasis to the time constraints for seeking assurance that the Parish Council could continue to use Landsdowne House; and forward it to the Clerk to place on letterhead; (iv) That the Clerk, in consultation with the Chair of the Parish Council, consider and agree an appropriate contribution to the payment for a mediator between the group of residents at Quarrington Hill and the Quarrington Hill Village Partnership, with approaches being made to the County Council, CDALC and NEREO as potential sources for the mediation services and that this be ratified at the next meeting of the Parish Council; (v) That the Council agree to waive Financial Regulations that required three tenders for such expenditure and that the Vice-Chair be authorised to liaise with the County Council to procure and erect Christmas lights on the fifteen new street lamps in the Front Street at Coxhoe and remove and store them at the appropriate time and this be carried out on an annual basis thereafter; (vi) That the Vice-Chair discuss possibilities, costs and budgets with the Clerk and report back to the next meeting with options for additional Christmas lights and trees in the Parish.

**10.186 Ratification of Expenditure agreed in principle at the last meeting:** The Clerk advised that it had been agreed at the last meeting to replace the seat at The Grove with a metal seat, with the County Councillors contributing £300 (which had been received) and the Parish Council paying the remainder, which was considered to be in the region of £200. The agreement had been in principle and the item had been placed as a specific item on the agenda for this meeting for audit purposes and to accord with notice required.

**Resolved** That the Clerk make arrangements to have a metal seat installed to replace that previously at the corner of The Grove and the expenditure of approximately £200 from the Parish Council be ratified.

**10.187 Coxhoe Community Partnership:** The Clerk updated that a huge amount of work had been done on uploading information to the new Council website ready to go live later in the year. The Assistant Clerk circulated a questionnaire which would be distributed to businesses in the Parish to allow them to promote their services on the site. Responses were still awaited on the possibility of hearing aid induction loop, assistance with broadband, and the possibility and costs of the Council insuring the History Group's equipment. It had been agreed that a joint meeting be arranged late September to move forward on the plans for the regeneration of Coxhoe Front Street. No correspondence had been received from the Partnership during the month.

A Member advised that a suggestion had been made by a member of the Partnership to have an additional Memorial Garden in Coxhoe. This would be a pleasant place of remembrance or maybe allow somewhere for ashes to be scattered in the village. It had been suggested that part of the paddock area could be used for this now that the Church had confirmed that they did not require that land as there was considered to be sufficient burial space for another twenty years in St. Mary's Churchyard. A working group of the Environment Committee and any other Members of the Parish Council, Community Partnership, Churches and the community could be set up to look into this and ways of making the churchyard more attractive. Discussion included that Cassop-cum-Quarrington Parish Council should be contacted as they were planning such a garden and had experienced complications by way of legal, technical and planning implications. They were to invite a superintendent of a nearby Memorial Garden to attend their Parish Council meeting to discuss technicalities and Coxhoe Parish Council should ask that they be invited as observers.

**Resolved** (i) That the information be noted; (ii) That further information from the County Council in connection with the possibility of the provision of broadband and a hearing aid induction loop at Landsdowne House be awaited; (iii) That the response of Zurich be awaited in connection with the possibility and cost of the History Group's equipment being added to the Council's insurance policy; (iv) That a meeting be convened in late September of representatives of Coxhoe Community Partnership and Coxhoe Parish Council to discuss how to move forward the plans with regard to the

regeneration of Coxhoe Front Street; (v) That subject to the additions suggested allowing opening times and menus and prices to be incorporated, the business questionnaires be distributed; (vi) That the Clerk request that Cassop-cum-Quarrington Parish Council invite representatives of Coxhoe Parish Council to their meeting when the superintendent of a nearby Memorial Garden was to be invited and to share the difficulties that they had experienced in investigating the possibility of provision of such; (vii) That subsequent to resolution (vi) above, a meeting of the Environment Committee be convened to discuss how to proceed with the introduction of an additional Memorial Garden in Coxhoe.

## **10.188 Correspondence:**

### **10.188.1 Durham County Council:**

**a)** A consultation document on Durham County Council's **Statement of Licensing Policy** had been circulated.

**Resolved** That no corporate response be sent and Members answer individually if they wished.

**b)** A consultation document on Durham County Council's **Draft Library Strategy** had been circulated. Further and fuller consultation would take place later in the year.

**Resolved** That at this stage no corporate response be sent and Members answer individually if they wished.

**c)** A consultation document on Durham County Council's **Taxi Licensing Policy** had been circulated.

**Resolved** That no corporate response be sent and Members answer individually if they wished.

### **10.188.2 County Durham Association of Local Councils**

**d)** Details had been circulated of consultation on the issue of **holding local referendums if councils seek to introduce large increases in Council Tax**. There would be some protection for Parish Councils where the precept increase was large in percentage terms but small in monetary value. The Parish Council could make comments to the Government by 10<sup>th</sup> September and the consultation document would be considered by the CDALC Executive Committee on 1<sup>st</sup> September so that they could respond within the deadline. Members expressed concern that the referendums could cost the Parish Council and that the precept as it stood did not allow the Council to do everything it wished to enhance the area for residents. Items should be placed in the newsletter and on the website advising the community that Parish Plan 2 work would be commencing in 2010 and asking views regarding what the community wanted for its Parish and how people wished to get involved. The Plan would allow the priorities of the community to be set out and the Parish Council should be allowed to precept to procure the resources required to do what the community wanted. The mechanism set out in the consultation document was bureaucratic and not easily understood, including the need for a shadow budget and bills having to be revised or refunds made should a referendum require this following the initial bills being sent. Local Councils were now the next tier from the County Council and this was impacting on workload of the Parish Council. The introduction of the Big Society would impact further on the resources required by a Parish Council and there was a need to precept to match the resources required to deliver services effectively to the community.

**Resolved** That a response incorporating the comments made at the meeting be sent to the Department of Communities and Local Government and that it be copied to the County Durham Association of Local Councils.

### **10.188.3 Other Correspondence**

**e)** The latest **NALC Events Bulletin** had been circulated.

**Resolved** That the information be noted.

- f) The National Association of Local Councils had asked for details of Councils' experience of being involved in the creation of new homes, shops, businesses or facilities. No responses had been received by the date for information to be received.

**Resolved** That Members note the current position whereby the Department of Communities and Local Government had announced their plans for the **Community Right to Build** which was a new power to allow communities across England to come together to create such facilities.

**10.189 Quarrington Hill Community Centre:** Councillor Pounder **declared an interest** as a Member of the Shadow Committee. He thanked the Parish Council for its support, in terms of finance and input into ensuring the continuance of the Community Centre. He advised that the Family Fun Day had been a tremendous success and achieved its objectives. There were now 19 people active on the Shadow Management Committee. Feedback questionnaires had requested activities for youths and 6-10 year olds. The potential for having a joint insurance with other groups and organisations to save money was being explored. The Chair thanked everyone for their involvement.

**Resolved** That the information be noted.

**10.190 Web Statistics:** had been circulated for the period 2<sup>nd</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2010.

**Resolved** That the information be noted.

**10.191 Finance:**

10.191.1 **Budget Update:** A financial account summary had been circulated that showed the balance at the end of the last meeting and income and expenditure during the month and the balance at the end of the month. A budget summary had also been circulated showing that the Council was pretty accurate with budgets four months into the year. Other than issues of timing due to seasonal and one off payments and the outstanding query on the insurance payment, the photocopier was the only individual budget that had any significant overspend but Members had previously agreed the reasons for this.

**Resolved** That the information be noted.

10.191.2 **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.

**Resolved** That all payments presented be signed and paid:

<b>Creditor</b>	<b>Reason</b>	<b>£</b>
T P Gardens	Grass cutting and maintenance August	665.00
CIT Vendor Finance UK Ltd.	Landsdowne House Copier Rental 1/10 to 31/12/10	130.43
BDO LLP	External Audit of Accounts year ended 31/3/10	334.88
Quarrington Hill Community Centre	Hire of Hall for Citizens Advice Bureau Outreach Service	120.00
Quarrington Hill Community Centre	Section 137 Contribution for Village Fete	200.00
3 Mobile	Broadband & Mobile July	31.75
M. Forster	Clerk Salary August and reimbursement postage	

10.191.3 **Applications for Grants and Donations:** Details had been circulated of a request for a donation from **Durham City Centre Youth Project** towards running costs of a high profile centrally situated Youth Facility offering a service that may not be available in the parish. The project provided a range of new experiences and opportunities, both social and educational, for 11 to 25 year olds from the Durham area. The letter stated that promotion was underway to encourage young people from across County Durham to use the facility including young people from the Parish villages. One Member had commented that they would not agree with a donation as things were needed in the village. Another Member stated, however, that this project had been supported previously and provided resources such as drug counselling and specialist advice that could not be provided on a village scale but may be extremely valued

by young people in desperate situations. Members concurred that this was a valuable support service within a reasonable travelling distance that may benefit residents of the Parish.

**Resolved** That a donation of £50 be made under Section 137 expenditure to the Durham City Centre Youth Project.

10.191.4 **Letters of thanks** had been circulated from St. Cuthbert's Hospice and from Diabetes UK for the donations of £50 to each organisation.

**Resolved** That the information be noted.

10.191.5 The **Notice of the Conclusion of the Audit** had been circulated advising that the External Auditors had concluded their audit of the Parish Council's Accounts and Annual Return for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010 on 3<sup>rd</sup> August and that the accounts would be available for inspection from 26<sup>th</sup> August 2010. The completed Annual Return for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010 had also been circulated. Section 3 had been completed by BDO LLP, the External Auditors, to advise that the information was in accordance with the Audit Commission's requirements and that no matters had come to the attention of the External Auditors that gave cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements had not been met. An Issues Arising Report had also been circulated. This advised that a donation made to the Citizens Advice Bureau could have been authorised under a power other than Section 137. It was considered that an Action Plan was not required to indicate how the issue raised would be addressed. The payment had been recorded as made under Section 137 in April 2009 prior to the appointment of the present Clerk. For the year 2010/11 the payment to CAB made in May 2010 had not been recorded as Section 137 expenditure as the present Clerk had been aware that there was other provision available. The Clerk was thanked for the massive amount of work involved in the production of a new and effective financial system that had ensured a clean bill of health for the Council's accounts.

**Resolved** That the Council approve and accept the Annual Return and Issues Arising Report; that the requisite part of the Annual Return and the Notice of Conclusion of Audit be displayed on the notice boards for a period of 14 days; and that it be noted that no action plan was required in connection with the Issues Arising Report as the matter had already been corrected prior to receipt of the report.

**10.192 Planning Applications:** Details had been circulated of planning applications that had been determined under delegated authority from 27<sup>th</sup> July to 23<sup>rd</sup> August and of applications received since the last meeting.

**Resolved** (i) That the information on delegated authority decisions be noted; (ii) That the information on application 617 for the erection of extension to existing single storey pitched roof extension to rear of dwelling at Bogma Avenue, Coxhoe, be noted.

**10.193 Increasing Workload of Officers:** In March 2010 the Council had considered a report by the Chairman that advised that the Parish Clerk had been and was still undertaking a significant amount of work above the contracted hours to achieve the workload generated by the Parish Council's priorities. The report had advised that this was not sustainable in the long term in terms of the responsibilities of the Council as an employer or the Clerk's work/life balance. It had been stated at that time that workload could increase further as a new Parish Plan was required but the Parish Council was not likely to be able to afford paid support in light of current budgets and financial restrictions. To alleviate the position in the short term, the Clerk's husband had offered his services in a voluntary capacity. Members had agreed to accept the offer and had appointed Ian Forster as Voluntary Assistant to the Parish Clerk. They had also agreed that hours worked by the Clerk and Assistant be recorded throughout the year in order that a review could be undertaken, when setting the budget for 2011/12, of staffing requirements and precept for the year, and in order that appropriate payments may be considered for additional unpaid hours worked.

Workload had continued to increase and the hours worked by the Clerk had not been alleviated by assistance from the Assistant but rather both had been putting in many hours unpaid. Since April total additional unpaid hours worked from both employees were 304 or 415 if unclaimed holidays were added. At the last Parish Council meeting a Member had commented that if the trend continued there may be the equivalent of £6,000 unpaid work for the year. It had been agreed that this matter be the subject of full discussion at this meeting. The Chairman had stated that the Council needed to realise

that a huge amount of work had been undertaken to bring the Council up to date and standard; and that there was a need to set realistic targets and focus on priorities. The Clerk gave details of further work that had been received whilst she was on holiday and work that was outstanding.

Members discussed this matter in great detail, including that there was a need for the Parish Council to be realistic in its expectations and set priorities; the effect on work/life balance for the Officers who were currently working excessive unpaid hours, including some weekends; the budget restrictions, particularly in light of the consultation on referendums on large increases in council tax; the outstanding, ongoing and future workload and current large amount of consultation with deadlines from other bodies; the Council's aspirations for continuous improvement; and the need to consider additional hours to be set for the Clerk and a possible Scheme of Delegation. The voluntary community service provided by the Assistant Clerk was commended and it was suggested that NALC guidance be checked in order that an appropriate amount of hours may be set for the Clerk to work to. To ensure that the Council remained successful and ambitious, Councillors may need to take more individual responsibility rather than the Clerk having to undertake all duties required.

**Resolved** That an informal meeting of Councillors and Officers be held Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> September 2010 at 6.30 p.m. in Landsdowne House to look in further detail at the issues raised.

**10.194 Information from County Councillors:** County Councillor Morgan advised that the new street lights in the Front Street of Coxhoe were planned to be installed Sundays 12<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> October to ensure minimum disruption to traders. The full installation should be complete by the end of October but old and new columns would be in situ simultaneously whilst connection works were undertaken. Members asked that County Councillor Morgan request via Michelle White that care was taken during installation not to damage the paving flags and to maintain the colour schemes as they were, with dark grey flags together. They also asked that he chase progress with Gerry Jones regarding the information required in connection with speed visors.

**Resolved** That the information be noted and County Councillor Morgan raise the issues mentioned with appropriate Officers at the County Council.

**10.195 Date of Next Meeting:** Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2010 at 6.45 p.m. in Landsdowne House. A Special Meeting would be held Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> September at 6.30 p.m. in Landsdowne House to enable the Council to meet with representatives of Hellens and Barratt Homes to discuss the proposals for further development in Coxhoe.

**10.196 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.

**10.197 Co-op and Village Hall Car Parks:**

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

The meeting closed at 8.55 p.m.

***Signed on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2010 as a true record of the meeting:***

**Cllr. P. Dodsworth (Chairman)**

**Cllr. S. Dunn (Vice Chairman)**