

Broomley and Stocksfield Parish Council.

Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on Monday 3rd October 2011

Present: Councillors Pete Barrass, John Davison, Pete Duncan, Ian Hall, Maggi Hunt, Norman Hooks, Melna Martin, Helen Morris, Alan Verheyden, Keith Woods, Mrs M Williams, Clerk.

Also present: - Ms K FitzGibbon & Dr R Penny, Whittonstall Action Group, 3 other members of the public all interested in the Hoodsclouse Opencast site.

Apologies: - Julia Sayce, Mr K Lord.

11/54 - Whittonstall/Hoodsclouse Opencast Proposals

Ms Hunt, Chairman, invited Dr Penny and Ms FitzGibbon to outline the thoughts and concerns of the Whittonstall Action Group regarding these proposals. Ms FitzGibbon outlined the Action Group's position with regard to Hoodsclouse and possible sites on the area for coal extraction in the future. She pointed out that although the additional sites had been identified at present there was no proposal or planning application for these. Other points made included:

- Although the notion of coal constraint areas was thought to have been removed, this designation still seems to have some bearing on identification of possible sites for coal extraction
- It was stressed that in order to extract 2.2 million tonnes of coal from the Hoodsclouse site, 40m tonnes of earth would have to be moved
- It was thought that the community benefit fund was low
- Key objections to the proposal are summarised on the Action Group's website
- Among other things, the Action Group has concerns over noise, air pollution and blasting
- There are concerns about the sustainability of small communities during the planning period and the operation period
- There are concerns about the level of traffic along the narrow road from the site to the A68
- There are concerns over the increase in traffic throughout the surrounding area.

The Action Group is running a survey amongst local businesses regarding the impact of the proposed mine on their businesses. Of the 34 responses received so far, 85% suggest that the operation will have an adverse impact on their businesses.

It was felt that the relevance to Stocksfield in this issue is the possible development of the other sites. It was felt that this part of Tynedale might become a coal mining area which could have a depressive effect on the district. It was felt that people would not wish to live in a coal mining area and that such a development would make the neighbourhood a less desirable place to live.

The question was asked as to how the community would benefit from the proposals.

It was thought that the proposals could affect the value of properties but it was noted that UK Coal would not pay compensation for loss of property value.

Mr Barrass said that Broomley & Stocksfield Parish Council had not felt that there were any items in the planning application to which it could object under planning law. Dr Penny responded by saying that the Action Group's letter to the County Planners (which had been circulated to members) was largely based on planning issues.

It was suggested that the proposal for the new "village for heroes" currently being proposed for the Marley Tile site at Ebchester might be in conflict with the proposal to carry out surface coal extraction at Hoodsclouse.

County Councillor Mrs Dale advised that she is not a member of the main County Council Planning Committee. She felt that comment might be made on the impact of the increase in traffic on the junctions with the strategic routes.

Mrs Dale also spoke as Chair of the Governors of Whittonstall School. She read out a letter which had been sent to the County Planners earlier in the year which highlighted various points of concern to the Governors and stated that if these were not addressed then the Governors would oppose the proposals.

Mr Duncan felt that the case might not be won on planning issues, but may be won on emotional ones. He asked if Hedley Parish Council had drawn up a Neighbourhood Plan and suggested that such a document might be helpful.

It was thought that the County Council's decision might be coloured by the possibility of their having to fund the costs of planning appeals.

To summarise: The Whittonstall Action Group would like Broomley & Stocksfield Parish Council to write a letter of objection to the proposals to the County Council. They would also like a link from the Parish Council website, Stocksfield.org to the Action Group website.

Dr Penny and Ms FitzGibbon and the other members of the public were thanked for attending the meeting and invited to stay on for the rest of the meeting if they wished. The Parish Council will debate on what the next steps should be.

It was agreed to continue debating this topic.

It was felt that an objection could be raised on the grounds of dust and environmental concerns and also on the impact of traffic, particularly on the cross roads at Apperley Dene. It was felt that the Parish Council could object to the principle of the opencasting at Hoodsclouse. It was felt that there should be a link from the Parish Council website to that of the Whittonstall Action Group.

Mr Duncan proposed and Mr Woods seconded that the Parish Council should submit a general objection to the proposal to carry out opencast mining at the site at Hoodsclouse and also that there should be a link from Stocksfield.org to the Whittonstall Action Group website. The proposal was agreed.

It was further agreed that Ms Hunt would draft the letter of objection.

Mrs Dale is to be asked for a copy of the letter sent by Whittonstall School Governors.

The Whittonstall Action Group is to be advised of the decision.

11/55 - Declarations of Interest – None

11/56 - Public Participation

Mrs Dale advised that she had spoken to Tim Fish, the County Council's Footpaths Officer about the problems that she had been advised of with regard to the footpath from New Ridley Road to Tynedale Gardens.

Mrs Dale advised that the County had written to the liquidator of the developers of the Burnside site.

Mr Duncan advised that the drain cover at the edge of the car park on the north side of the station was missing, leaving a deep and dangerous cavity. Mrs Dale is to take this up with the County Council.

11/57 - Minutes of the Meeting held on 5th September

It was agreed that the Minutes of the Meeting held on 5th September 2011 were a true and correct record of the meeting.

11/58 - Matters Arising

Councillors were reminded that it had been agreed to submit a series of questions to SITA regarding Merryshields Quarry and urged to submit their questions to the Clerk so that a letter could be drafted.

Nothing had been heard recently from PC Joanne Tennant and she is to be contacted again regarding the issues raised in July.

Litter Bin – at the layby just to the south of New Ridley is not to be replaced.

Festival – Mr Verheyden advised that one of his neighbours had objected to the noise of the disco late at night following the Festival. It was pointed out that this event had not in fact been part of the Festival, but the complaint was noted.

11/59 - Correspondence

Correspondence received since the September meeting had been listed on the Agenda and was noted.

Attention was drawn to the NALC AGM and it was suggested that even if no one was able to attend the meeting, it would be worthwhile reading the Annual Report.

11/60 - Finance

The Accounts for September 2011 were approved following clarification of queries.

The Bank Reconciliation for August 2011 was noted.

Expenditure for September had been circulated and was noted.

Additional Cheques – were approved as follows:

Straight2Business	£129.19
Northumberland County Council	£808.41
SCA for set up of Social Centre	£100.00

11/61 - Revision of Standing Orders

Ms Hunt apologised that the document had proved to be so lengthy. She outlined the background to the production of the document and said that as no comments had been received it was assumed that Councillors were happy with the draft. It was agreed that the figure for issuing a tender would be reduced from £60K to £5K. It was noted that the Model Code of Conduct, the Financial Regulations and the Notes on responding to Planning Applications formed part of the revised Standing Orders document. Ms Hunt is to make the final amendments to the document and bring it back for formal approval at the November meeting. Once the document had been approved Councillors would be issued with a copy.

11/62 - Co-option of New Parish Councillor

To date, no one had come forward expressing interest.

11/63 - Advisory Groups & Council Representatives

a) - Finance & General Purposes Advisory Group

The report of the previous meeting of the Group had been circulated.

External Auditor's Report – this had been circulated and Mr Woods proposed, Mr Barrass seconded and it was agreed to accept the report.

The policy on Vexatious Communications – it was agreed that complainants would have no right of appeal and the document is to be re-drafted.

Presentation of Accounts

The F&GP recommended and it was agreed that a summary sheet showing budget heads with monthly expenditure against annual budget should be the only financial information circulated to Councillors with papers for Parish Council meetings and that the Finance and General Purposes Advisory Group should meet immediately prior to each Parish Council meeting to consider the full range of financial information for the month.

Asset Transfer -The F&GP recommended and it was agreed that legal advice be sought, subject to cost, on the documents received from the County Council.

Stocksfield Community Association Hire Charges – the charge for 2011/12 was noted.

Sportsfield Boundary Trees - It was agreed to wait until the report on the trees was received from Land Factor.

Photocopying Charges – The prices proposed by the Clerk were agreed.

Diamond Jubilee Mugs – it was felt that if the Parish Council were to commemorate the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee at a cost of around £1000 then there might be a more appropriate way of spending the money. It was agreed to consider ideas, perhaps a lasting item, for the school, at the November meeting.

Request for funding from CAB – it was agreed to make a grant of £100.

Parish Council Meeting Agendas – it was agreed that the agendas for meetings needed to be streamlined in order, particularly, that the meetings might last no longer than 2 hours. Ideas as to how this might be achieved are to be given to the Chairman.

Remembrance Sunday – Mr Hall is to ask Jo Bennington to lay the wreath.

Asset Transfer - It was agreed that should this be completed in time then Branch End Play Area would be nominated for the QEII Fields Challenge.

[Suspension of Standing Orders –it was agreed that Standing Orders should be suspended and the meeting should continue until 10.00 p.m.]

b) - Parish Plan Action Group –the Report was tabled and it was agreed that the item would be discussed at the November meeting.

c) - Sports Facilities –

Mr Duncan gave an outline of the most recent meeting of the Sportsfield Management Group:

Overflow Car Park: - Mr Duncan advised that Allendale Estates had more or less given the go ahead for the car park and it was agreed to submit an outline planning application for this allowing for 38 spaces. It was thought that an approach to SITA should be made with a view to acquiring funding for the project. There is a need to speak to the County Council’s Highways Department regarding the entrance along the lane from Merryshields.

Eastern Sportsfield - The earth stockpile near the railway line is to be reduced although it was suggested that this also contained rubbish which needed to be removed.

Snooker/Rifle Club – the relocation of the scouts/snooker to the Cricket Club was also discussed – it was noted that at present well over 300 people were regularly using the sportsfield facilities (cricket 190, rugby 33, runners 40, plus football players and SMUGA users).

d) - Transport & Highways

Local Transport Plan – Mr Verheyden tabled the proposed submission to the County Council and this was discussed. It was agreed that greater emphasis should be placed on road safety and that the top three priorities for 2012-13 should be:

1. That the remaining sections of the pavement are resurfaced and where necessary rebuilt from near the junction with Tynedale Gardens to the junction with the A695 at Branch End. That special consideration be given to making repairs to the banking supporting the footpath adjacent to Nos. 160-182 New Ridley Road. This banking has slipped following flooding incidents in previous years, the pavement is narrow at this point and Parish Councillors are extremely concerned about the safety of pedestrians, particularly the elderly and infirm and children, should they slip on this section of path.
2. That a safety report be commissioned on the parking problems on New Ridley Road between the A695 junction at Branch End and Tynedale Gardens. The car parking situation on New Ridley road is causing problems for drivers and pedestrians. Of particular concern at present is parking between nos 6 and 32 where residents of these properties are being prevented from accessing the parking area across the pavement by cars parking on the highway.
3. The junction with the A68 and the road to Broomley Village – Parish Councillors were concerned about the number of accidents at this junction, some of them serious, and requested that urgent steps be taken to mark the A68 in such a manner as to reduce the number of incidents.

It was also agreed that a supplementary request be made to include:

- Provision of 30 mph speed limit without street lights in Hindley Village
- That a 30mph speed limit without street lights, be provided on the B6309 between the junction with the A695 and northwards to Bywell Bridge
- That the connecting roads to the Fords from New Ridley Road and the B6309 be designated Quiet Lanes

During the discussion it was noted that there are parking problems on New Ridley Road (nos 2-40) with parked cars blocking in vehicles parked in front of properties. Mrs Dale offered to pay for double yellow lines on this stretch and also in Mount View Terrace and at the junction of Tynedale Gardens and New Ridley Road. Mrs Dale is also to take up the question of the repair to the pedestrian crossing light at the station.

686 bus – Correspondence had been received regarding the withdrawal of the 686 bus from Whittonstall to Prudhoe via New Ridley Road. It was agreed to write to the County Council expressing disappointment that the Parish Council had not been consulted over this and putting forward the Parish Council’s view that the service operated by Go Ahead North East was not “fit for purpose”. Mrs Dale outlined the proposal for the ADAPT bus to come down New Ridley Road on Fridays at 9.30 returning after 12 noon. She will submit a full report to the November meeting. It is understood that this will be a Dial-a-Ride service and the return fare to Prudhoe will be £1. It was however stressed that this will only be a 13 seater bus and that the service is targeted at the elderly and infirm. A query was raised as to how potential passengers will be advised about the service.

Cross Street – Mrs Dale advised that the County is to start enforcing the regulations on the double yellow lines in Cross Street.

Mrs Dale advised that she is investigating the possibility of a Vehicle Activated Traffic sign being installed near Branch End.

e) - Community Development –

Development Trust – Mr Duncan reported that the owner of the Branch End site had entered a 3 year lease agreement with a new tenant. It was felt that he might be willing to sell the site should a “gilt-edged” offer be made; he is looking to develop the site commercially. It was not felt however that this was the end of the matter as the prospective tenant may in the end default.

The Trust is continuing to explore the options for the snooker/rifle club site.

A joint meeting had been held with the Community Association and Social Enterprise North to explore how the Community Association might be integrated with the Trust.

Olympic Celebrations – the plans for the Eastern Parishes event continue to be formulated. While Mrs Sayce is receiving medical treatment, Mr Hall agreed to “keep her seat warm” at meetings and to keep the Parish Council informed of developments. There is a need to decide what the Parish Council’s role in these events is likely to be.

Stocksfield Festival – it was agreed that this year’s event had gone well, although there had been some issues with wind damage. It was agreed to write to the organisers thanking them and congratulating them on a successful event.

Focus on Youth – a report had been circulated and was noted. The cycling club is going ahead and Mr Barrass is looking into the CRB checks required. The comments made about the Northumberland Clubs for Young People were noted and endorsed. Mr Barrass agreed to keep the Council informed of progress.

Skate Park – It was agreed to set up a task group which would report back in January and look into the principle of providing a basic skate park and a potential location. Mr Hall, Mrs Martin and Mr Verheyden agreed to join this group.

f) - Communications –

The Group had met and a report of their meeting had been circulated. It was reported that Mr Dave Porter had said that he was happy to continue to edit and produce NE43 News. After some discussion it was agreed (with two abstentions) that 2B Graphics would be asked to produce the December issue of NE43 News. Production of other issues would be discussed later. A letter of appreciation is to be sent to Mr Porter.

g) - Play Facilities

Branch End Play Area – the report of the Group was tabled, noted and accepted.

Replacement of “The Twist” – the Group is to meet to make recommendations.

Mrs Dale advised that she had had correspondence regarding the basket ball post. She is to liaise with Mrs Hinchcliffe over this.

h) - Footpaths Gardens & Environment –

Ms Morris gave a brief verbal report on the most recent meeting of the Rights of Way Group

It was agreed that the Parish Council should write to both the Environment Agency and Northumbrian Water expressing disappointment that the problem with sewage on Ridley Mill Road had still not been rectified. Mrs Dale offered to contact NWL.

i) - Planning

Consultation on the Draft National Planning Policy Framework – Mrs Sayce had been unable to look at this consultation. Ms Hunt and Mr Duncan offered to draw up a response.

j) - Council Representatives –

The next meeting of the West Area Committee of the County Council is at Stocksfield on 11th October. This is a joint meeting of Parish and Town Councils with the County Council. Ms Hunt and Mr Hall are to represent Broomley & Stocksfield.

Mr Hall is to attend the next meeting of the East Tynedale Community Forum.

Ms Hunt attended a meeting of the Northumbria Police Strategic Assessment Group and her report had been circulated and was noted.

k) - Policy Group – it was agreed to make no response to the Boundary Commission on the proposals to change the parliamentary constituency boundaries.

11/64 - Any Other Business -

Mrs Martin advised councillors that there will be a coffee morning on 21st October to raise funds for the new service to replace the meals-on-wheels. This new service, Community Gathering, will start on 1st November. Mrs Martin said that the response from potential volunteers had been very good. The service will be offered to residents of Stocksfield and Mickley. The Stocksfield Meals-on-Wheels is the last to cook its own meal and is to be congratulated on the service it has offered over many years.

11/65 - Date of Next Meeting – 7th November 2011

The meeting closed at 10.05 p.m.