

PARISH ANNUAL MEETING - 9th June 2015

Present at the meeting were: Cllr Carlisle, Cllr Brown, Cllr Hughes, Cllr White, Mrs Lynn Wake, S Bedford, M Branthwaite, A & L Todhunter, D Marmont, C Guy, A Lacey, D Wake, C Foster, K Bainbridge, R Bettison and Clerk Mrs Overfield

Apologies – Mr & Mrs Storr

- 1 Minutes of the meeting on 11th June 2014 were approved by Cllr Hughes and seconded by Cllr Brown.

CHAIR'S REPORT

Written on 8th June 2015

Allotments

Two new allotments have been created and fenced at the top of West Clint Field and are now occupied. The remainder of the land is let for grazing until the end of 2016.

Cemetery

Councillors have trimmed the yews on the west side of the steps, and Kath Adams has laid the turf taken from the area to the south of the play park. Unfortunately the wild flower planting carried out last year had only limited success, so we intend to extend the turfed area in due course to tidy up the bank. Thanks to John Bain for mole control and to Callum Guy for reducing the number of rabbits.

Footpaths

Grants from Durham County Council have been considerably reduced but, we have been able to install gated stiles in the back lane wall and repair the one leading into the wood ***** of the Greta.

Play Park

Graham Irvine recently reported that the Leslie Longstaff memorial seat was found in pieces. Inspection revealed that though some vandalism may have occurred the timber was rotten, especially around the joints. The debris has been removed as a safety measure and a replacement is under consideration. A grant has been received to create a flower bed between the iron seat and the play park fence, match funded by paid work carried out by Kath Adams, and voluntary work by councillors. The bed is now ready for planting, a littler late perhaps but the weather has not been idea so far this year.

Grass Cutting

Growth rates were such that we had to commission two extra cuts last year, and even without these, costs have risen considerably over the last few years. This season we have agreed to include the village hall grass in our contract, due to a reduction in Council grant funding at an additional cost of £500.00 to the Parish Council.

Finance and General

Last year expenses exceeded income by £551.00 and we budget a deficit this year of £1399.00 despite a small increase in our precept. Never the less cash reserves remain satisfactory and will hopefully carry us through a period of continued austerity.

Red tape and correspondence never diminish and, as ever, our valued Parish Clerk has waded through with her usual cheerfulness. I would also like to thank all those councillors who have freely given their time to various projects including chasing up grants and gardening. Kath Adams has had plenty to do over the last few months, so she is probably hoping that the future will involve more routine maintenance and less construction work.

Are there any questions regarding the report – None

Are there any matters arising – None.

The meeting was opened to the public for discussions on the allotments.

Cllr Carlisle explained the position of the Parish Council with regard to the allotments as follows:-

Ownership of land and walls – BPC lease the land from the Lords in Trust, but we are uncertain as to the owners of the walls. Cllr Hughes explained how they had several owners and that he thought Mr Foster owned the wall that backs onto A Todhunter's allotment, which he said "has some damage to it". Clerk asked to write to Mr Foster requesting proof that the walls don't belong to him, and if they do belong to him ask him to repair/make stock proof the walls. It is believed that the Lord in trust own several walls when they were granted their enclosures, when we write to Mr C Raine, we will ask for these walls to be maintained. The south wall may belong to the highways, did they take enduring maintenance? The Parish Council do not own any of the land or the walls. A Todhunter asked how we were going to find out, Cllr Hughes asked who was going to pay for such investigations? **The allotments belong to a small group of Bowes Parishioners and we are responsible for the monies for all Bowes Parishioners.** The council will endeavour to gather as much information as possible without any extra costs.

Could be written better

Rent increase by the Lords in Trust:- The rents have been gradually increasing since 2007, there will be a point where the allotments will be costing the parish council to keep. The rent will have to be reviewed at this time. Clerk handed out a costing sheet showing the breakdown of rent versus costs for the allotments and West Clint Fields

Youngs have requested we return West Clint Field if it is not used for allotments. This is one of the reasons that we have made two new allotments at the top of West Clint field, the other being two parishioners on the waiting list for new plots and another requesting a larger plot. The parish council also received a letter on 9th June from 2 more parishioners who want to go onto the waiting list. The Parish Council will be writing to Youngs shortly with an intention to keep the field.

Wall inspection week commencing 1st June: Cllrs Carlisle and White have inspected the walls around the allotments and most of it is in fairly good shape. The council have no objections to allotment holders putting the odd stone back on the wall if it falls off, and are grateful to Denise's dad for repair work he has already done. Clerk to contact Zurich insurance to add volunteer workers to carry out work for and on behalf of the parish council up to the value of five million pounds.

Cllr Carlisle suggested the allotment holders nominate a representative to attend Parish Council meetings from time to time so that we can notify each other of any issues arising. Mr Todhunter said he would prefer if a group e-mail went out so all allotment holders could attend, Cllr Hughes explained how the public could not attend a parish council meeting, and how the meeting would have to be stopped so that the representative could speak. Cllr Carlisle also explained that to be fair, we couldn't invite one group of people and not others.

D Marmont asked for a breakdown of the projected costs - £580.00 for the fencing, £280.00 for the stile and an estimated cost of £200.00 to plough the field totalling £1,060.00.

A Todhunter asked why work on the field beside the allotments had not been carried out by volunteers. The water was running onto the allotments and had been mentioned by Mr Wake and Mrs Bettison. The field belong to the Land Reeves, from whom we obtained permission, but we had to use contractors who had their own insurance, as it would not have been covered by our insurance policy.

D Marmont asked about the tree that has come down – The tree belongs to Kevin Watson, he is allowed to remove his tree and should repair the wall. (I don't have an address for him, if you want me to write to him)

S Bedford said that his allotment was very dry now the repair work has been done due to changes in the water table. Cllr Hughes suggested they put a bid together to get funding to put in a solar pump.

Meeting closed @ 7.45