**Minutes of a Meeting of Cononley Annual Parish Meeting held in Cononley Village Institute**

 **Held on Tuesday 14th March 2023 at 20.00**

Present: Cllr M. Swinden (Meeting Chair), Cllrs M. Dracup, A. Powell, A Robertson

In attendance: Mr L. Senior (Clerk & RFO, via zoom); CDC Cllr A. Brown and 7 members of the public.

Apologies: None

23.01 The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed those present.

23.02 The Minutes from the previous year’s Annual Parish Meeting were approved by those present.

23.03 Parish Councillors Reports and Updates

The meeting chair updated on the activities of the PC over past 12 months and how busy it had been. The PC had welcomed new councillors Atholl Robertson and Andrew Powell. Four councillors have left the PC, Alex Bell, Dan Timbers, Kath Clark and Stacy Thornton. The chair remarked how the PC was currently operating with just four serving councillors and this is far from ideal. Up to three more councillors are needed for the PC to operate to its maximum potential.

Allotments: Cllr Robertson updated the meeting. The PC had been working hard to update the Allotments Agreement that all plot holders need to sign. The PC had consulted with the plot holders as part of the process and the new agreement has now been finalised. The PC now has a policy of splitting plots into smaller plots where possible. This will help people on the waiting list to obtain a plot a little quicker. Both allotment sites are doing well.

Dead Eye: Mike Latham gave an informative update on the site. The pond has been owned by the PC since 2001. A group of volunteers had originally been formed in 1989 but nature took control in recent years; the fencing fell giving livestock free access and the track from Ings Lane became overgrown. There has been much work done over the past 12 months. The Woodland Trust donated trees have been planted and pleasingly around 80% survived.  The intake stream has been cleared, leaving reed beds to filter sediment and nutrients, and access improved through traditional finger-post signage from the village. Finally, a bird-hide, picnic style table and platform have been commissioned to encourage people to visit. Bird boxes will be added in the autumn. The intention is to maintain it as a well-supported, community-maintained resource.

Highways/Road Safety:

Cllr Robertson gave an update to the meeting.

NYCC Highways refused the blanket request to extend the 20mph zone through the village. However, the road between the level crossing and playing field (park entrance) will become a 20mph zone.

The ‘Village Gateways’ have been useful in reducing the speed of oncoming vehicles.

The local Speedwatch group would like an additional Vehicle Activated System (VAS) for Cononley, this will be subject to funding being in place. Some figures from VAS for 2022 on Cononley Lane show that 22,000 vehicles used the road, an increase of 4,000 from the previous year, when lockdown played a part. The average speed was 21mph.

The National ‘20s Plenty’ campaign is gaining momentum with more local councils signing up.

Double yellow lines will be painted near the station during March 23 to alleviate the problem of cars parking on the road into the village near the level crossing.

Pinfold Site

Cllr Dracup gave an update to the meeting:

Cononley Wildlife Group (CWG) had an open day in May 22 that was a major success. CWG also bought a shed and planted some bulbs. The group also purchased 4 hedgehog signs with support from Councillor Andy Brown. There is some ash dieback on the site but the advice is to monitor this at this stage. The group has been in contact with the Aire Rivers Trust who provide advice if required.

 Clerk Update

 My apologies that I can’t be with you in person tonight.

Finance- The PC had agreed a Precept rise of 23.9%. This is an increase of c£10-£15 on your Council Tax bill next year for most Cononley residents. This necessary decision has not been taken lightly. It is essential if the council is not to have to rely on its reserves to allow it to maintain its current undertakings, which further improve our village. My thanks go to Simon our financial consultant who provides important advice and assistance with keeping PC accounts up to date.

 Allotments- both sites that the PC manages are successful and are a real asset to the village. There is

 a waiting list of 18 names. The PC has a policy of splitting plots when they become vacant when it is

 practical to do so. This is proving effective at reducing the numbers on the waiting list quicker. The list

 is down from record highs of 23 names and it should drop further as more plots have been created.

I would like to thank Jo Clark for the excellent work she does on the PC website.

I would also like to thank David the PC’s Lengthsman who is a pleasure to manage. Nothing is ever too much trouble for David and he has a fine ‘can do’ attitude.

The PC intends to upgrade the small number of street lights the PC is responsible for to LED in 2023/4 to improve energy efficiency.

There are three vacancies for Parish Councillors at the PC and if anyone is interested, I’d be happy to talk through the role as required. The PC does an incredible amount in the village given its relatively small size, with a lot of projects going on.

23.04 District and County Councillor Reports

(a) County Cllr Andrew Brown updated the meeting:

North Yorkshire Council have a very good online reporting system for the public to report matters to the council. It is called ‘Do it Online and it is easy to use.

The main focus on my activities has been on practical issues that matter to people in the village. These have included:

Flooding: At the junction of Crosshills Road and Crag View a serious problem developed with water running across the road for weeks and threatening properties. After much campaigning I managed to get North Yorkshire to identify the cause of the problem and fix it.

Development: I have spent a lot of time studying documents and liaising with residents over the potential development of 25 houses in Meadow Close. I spoke on this at the planning committee and it was rejected by Craven Council. I have tried to support a number of smaller brownfield developments such as the old barn on New Inn Fold.

Footpaths: I have continued to try and identify problems with keeping our network of rights of way alive and have helped to progress the application to get recognition of the already widely used but not officially recorded footpath on Moorfoot Lane. There will be a public inquiry into the potential closure of the footpath alongside 124 Main Street. I have consistently argued that this needs to remain open. The village will have to protest its case and this is being backed by the PC.

Road Safety: Speedwatch are doing a great job and welcomes new volunteers. Parish Council former member Kath Clark did some great work on getting the Village Gateways established and on double yellow lines opposite the Mill. I have helped clear some of the blockages to make that happen.

More recently I’ve been working to try and get 20mph accepted as the default speed limit in North Yorkshire and to get permission for 30mph speed enforcement cameras to be introduced into villages that particularly need them. North Yorkshire and Durham are the only counties in England who don’t have fixed speed cameras. The campaign has resulted in national and regional TV coverage and serious signs of fresh thinking from the relatively new North Yorkshire Police and Fire Commissioner and from North Yorkshire Council. I went to the ITV studios to be filmed while speaking about this. Environment: There were 4,088 separate releases of sewage into the River Aire in just one year (2021) so I have been campaigning to try and ensure Yorkshire Water sticks to the law on discharges.

Council re-organisation: Craven District Council ceases to exist on 1st April and North Yorkshire Council becomes the sole local government authority. We are promised that there will be no obvious change in the service on 1st April, that staff will transfer over and that websites and information will continue to be available. My North Yorkshire email contact is cllr.andy.brown@northyorks.gov.uk.

There are no new elections scheduled for this council until May 2027. Could I thank everyone who voted for me in May 2022. I was very grateful to receive an astonishing 79% of the votes cast.

I have £10,000 of Locality Funding available over 6 Parishes- match funding is required.

23.05 Playing Field Trust

 The work has been completed on the park refurbishment including the new cycle track and Muga.

 A total of £138,431 has been spent out of s106 Planning Gain monies. There is still a few snagging

 tasks to undertake.

 There will be a Gala in 2023 on 16th September. There is a Gala cttee that is pulling the event together

 and they are always on the lookout for new volunteers.

23.06 Village Institute Trust.

Becky the CVIAC Secretary gave her report:

 Cononley Village Institute is now fully reopened after the covid pandemic and we have been

 delighted to welcome back regular groups without restrictions including pilates, yoga, art group,

Cononley cinema club, Brownies and Rainbows, plus WI and Parish Council. From September 2022, Cononley Singers have been hiring the hall on Wednesday evenings for choir practice.
The regular village events have also returned including the Cononley Scarecrow Festival, Make it, Bake it, Grow it, Cononley Art Show and Cononley Beer Festival, Music Mayhem and a new information event, Cleaner Greener Cononley, giving local residents and visitors a chance to see what life in Cononley can offer. The venue has also been popular again for private bookings & children's parties.
Our thanks to Jo Clark for her hard work this year in setting up and building a specific website for the CVI which is now live and looks fantastic [www.cononleyinstitute.co.uk](http://www.cononleyinstitute.co.uk/). Other positive achievements included adding storage space in the store room loft which is proving invaluable.
The main concern of the year has been (like many people) the increase in utility costs, particularly important as while we want to keep gas, electricity and hire costs down, we also want a warm and welcoming building. Unfortunately, the building is over 100 years old and does not lend itself to staying warm but we have made small steps with the installation of a SMART meter and hope to be able to control the thermostats remotely. Luckily, we have been selected to be part of a decarbonisation project, which includes a survey of the building and advice to address this issue.
Looking to the future, we are hoping that the institute will be able to host more events during the coming years, that we can live up to our website strapline of being ‘our community space’ and ensure that people ‘Love Living in Cononley. New volunteers are always needed.

 Thanks are given from the Chair, Julian Brown. To make a booking contact Kim Hardy 01535 630371

 Or email, gillboucher@talktalk.net. For further CVI information email: cvicononley@gmail.com.

 23.07 Reports by Village Organisations

 Friends of Cononley Station, a report by Marten Lougee:

 The group is only small group and it can only undertake limited work. Thanks go to the ‘Make it, Bake

 It, Grow it’ group for the donation of £200 towards new barrel planters which are now at the station.

 Our thanks go to Hayley for her efforts with weeding at the station. The otter was seen again recently

 In the station area.

 There was a meeting with Northern in Nov 2022. A defibrillator has been earmarked for platform one,

 to be maintained by Northern. A resignalling of the Airedale line is promised for 2028.

23.08 Open discussion, questions and answers:

 Peter asked whether it was possible to use s106 funds to improve the pathways on the allotment

 sites. Cllr Powell replied that there is a five-year period to spend the funds and £28,000 is yet to be

 allocated. Peter also asked if putting gravel on the path may be a possibility to improve it.

 A question was raised about a broken stile in the village and what to do about it. Cllr Brown advised

 using the ‘Do it Online’ reporting system. Mark Allum added it would be useful to have photos of any

 footpath issue that is reported. Mark also agreed to look at costings for the footpath improvement

 near the campsite.

 Robert-Minton-Taylor spoke as Public Governor for the Airedale Trust. He stated it is intended that

 Airedale Hospital will close by 2030 due to serious structural issues. A new hospital will be built which

 will be state of the art and may have a helipad.

 Robert remarked how hard it is to get a GP appointment these days and also that ambulances were

 waiting up to 12 hours outside at times to be allowed in with patients.

 Finally, Cllr Robertson advised there will be a litter pick on 17th March and there had been overflowing

 bins outside the CVI on one occasion recently.

 *There being no further business, the meeting ended at 21:07*