

Coxhoe Parish Council

Meeting: **Extraordinary Meeting**

Date & Time: Tuesday 22 September 2020 6.00pm

Venue: via Zoom

Councillors present:

S Dunn (Chair); I Armstrong; N Brown (part of the meeting); K Simpson (Vice Chair) J Slater.

Also present: County Councillors J Blakey and M McKeon; C Llewelyn, Parish Clerk.

One member of the public was present.

753 Zoom meeting information and Parish Council Public Participation Policy

The Chair reminded all present of the Parish Council's Public Participation Policy and gave some guidelines for remote meetings.

754 To note apologies

Apologies were given from Councillors K Lowes, W Lavelle, C Thirlaway, A Hedley, J Barber. It was **Resolved** the apologies were noted.

755 Declarations of interest in items on the agenda

No interests were declared.

756 Public Participation

Cllr Dunn advised the member of the public would be able to have their say.

757 Quarrington Hill Churchyard

Councillor Dunn asked the meeting to note the following items:

- 1) The notes of the PCC Quarrington Hill public meeting 23 July 2019.
- 2) The notes of the walkaround the geological features of Cassop and Quarrington Hill September 2019.
- 3) The Wardell Armstrong report dated May 2020 and in particular the mitigation measures on page 18, the advice on headstones on pages 16 and 17 and Coal Authority obligations on page 19.
- 4) The Responsible Care of Churchyards Document, in particular pages 1, 13 and 17.
- 5) The email from Stephen White (Acting Secretary of Cassop cum Quarrington Parochial Church Council) of 21 September 2020 (13:03) and the five attachments, particularly the covering letter detailing their reasons for proposing closure of the churchyard for burials other than ashes.
- 6) The emails of 22 September 2020 from Father John Livesley to the Chair (08:58), and the Chair's reply (10:25), in particular the Parochial Church Council's approach to the Coal Authority.
- 7) The emails of 22 September 2020 from Stephen White to the Chair (11:29 and 12:50).

8) The guidance attached to the full Ministry of Justice form for closure of Church of England Churchyards, particularly page 3 (grounds for closure), page 12 (referring to the Responsible Maintenance of Churchyards publication), page 19 (the requirement for Coxhoe Parish Council and Durham County Council to respond to section B of the closure form), page 33 (that residents need to be given reasonable notice to be able to object), page 35 (that maintenance issues should have been raised and considered before an application is made) and page 37 (notices).

It was **Resolved (A)** that items 1 to 8 were noted.

All present were invited to give their views.

County Councillor Blakey asked that her disappointment at not receiving the agenda for the meeting be noted.

Parish Councillors expressed their wish that the Churchyard remains open for burials and for it to be opened to visitors as soon as possible. County Councillors expressed their wish that the Churchyard remains open. The resident spoke of her and her family's wish that the Churchyard be opened to visitors as soon as possible and preferably opened for burials. Parish Councillors discussed the Parochial Church Council's reasons for suggesting closure, and that they do not find all those reasons valid.

Cllr N Brown left the meeting at this point.

The Clerk advised that the Parish Council needs to consider the risks and implications, including insurance and potential costs, before making a decision, with time to consider that information ahead of a meeting, and to consider what exactly it wants to agree to and whether it needs any further advice such as on what else is required to make the Churchyard safe, and that Officers need time to get this advice.

The following were **Resolved**:

- (B)** To advise the Parochial Church Council that the Parish Council would be prepared to take on maintenance of the open Churchyard however not if closed.
- (C)** To challenge the closure with the Ministry of Justice if Cassop cum Quarrington Parochial Church Council applies for closure.
- (D)** For Coxhoe Parish Council to consider the risks and ongoing implications before it reaches a final agreement.
- (E)** For Coxhoe Parish Council to ask Cassop cum Quarrington Parochial Church Council to carry out mitigations to get Quarrington Hill Churchyard open to visitors as soon as possible.
- (F)** To write to Mary Foy MP and to request her to intervene with the Ministry of Justice to avoid closure.
- (G)** To request further discussion with the Parochial Church Council to try to get the Churchyard open as soon as possible.

The meeting ended at 7.05pm.