

**Action4Acomb
Public Meeting
Tuesday 15th October 2013
7.30pm
Acomb Village Hall**

Minutes

Present

Lynn Crozier	Acomb Parish Councillor
Catherina Buettner	Acomb resident
Ian Dixon	Acomb resident
Bill Donald	Acomb resident
Charles Enderby	Chair of Acomb Parish Council
Lorna Farr	Member of the Action4Acomb steering group
	Acomb Parish Councillor
Rachel Gagliano	Acomb resident
Sybil Gill	Acomb Parish Councillor
Jenny Gillatt	Member of the Action4Acomb steering group
Pat Gray	Member of the Action4Acomb steering group
Bill Grigg	Clerk to Acomb Parish Council
Keith Gustafson	Acomb resident
John Henderson	Acomb resident
Barbara Huddleston	Member of the Action4Acomb steering group
Geoffrey Huddleston	Acomb resident
Katherine Hillier	Acomb resident
Ann Leece	Acomb resident
Naomi Liller	Member of the Action4Acomb steering group
	Acomb Parish Councillor
Joseph McGee	Acomb resident
Mike McKendrick	Acomb resident
David Penn	Member of the Action4Acomb steering group
Julia Plinston	Community Action Northumberland
Anne Robson	Acomb resident
Norman Robson	Acomb resident
Hazel Stott	Acomb resident
Gwyn Thomas	Member of the Action4Acomb steering group
Kathryn Thomas	Member of the Action4Acomb steering group
Kate Trinder	Acomb resident
Diane Whitfield	Acomb resident
Jim Wright	Acomb resident
Linda Wright	Acomb resident
Jane Wrigley	Acomb Parish Councillor

Apologies

Barbara Cox	Acomb resident
Rev. Jeremy Thompson	Vicar, St John Lee
Terry Robson	County Councillor

Welcome and introduction

David Penn welcomed everyone and introduced what he emphasised was an important meeting for the village, a turning point.

He plotted the history of the work to date, which commenced in April 2012 with an open meeting for all residents with representatives from County Hall and Acomb Parish Council where views were sought to take forward a Village Community Led Plan. A small group of villagers, Lorna Farr, Margaret Forster, Naomi Liller and David, attended a Parish Council meeting in Autumn 2012 and came together to work towards progressing the Community Led Plan. Further residents were invited in April 2013 from the list of those in attendance at the original meeting in April 2012 to join a steering group that came to be called Action4Acomb, see as above.

David explained that other villages had Community Led Plans, and that work towards Acomb's plan had included talking with various groups in the village. Examples given were: the Monday Club, the School, the W.I., bus-users, the Churches and the Footpaths Group. Presentations David had given had outlined the village population, history and environment but also gathered views of those who attended.

The plans of other villages had been considered and a very useful visit to Acklington village had taken place recently. This visit had highlighted the importance of not just having a plan, but of getting things done.

Tonight's meeting was essential to put the work on a more formal footing and to involve as many members of the community as possible in moving forward. He explained that a formal constitution would give the group status and enable it to apply for funding. The constitution (displayed on the tables) outlined the purpose of the organisation and how it would be run. Members of the community present were urged to join in the running of the organisation by volunteering for the committee and/or being part of an action group.

He explained that a Community Led Plan was all about communities taking action – dealing with community problems and seizing opportunities. If there were problems the group would approach other partners e.g. public authorities.

From the meetings with various groups, four broad themes of need have emerged:

- Community (including local events and traditions)
- Environment (for example, flooding, repair of the roads)
- Health and Social Care (care for the elderly and activities for young people)
- Housing and Planning (the future of the green belt, new housing development).

The newly constituted Committee will consider the themes emerging and take action for our village.

David asked if all attending would please complete a postcard with contact details (email addresses would be helpful) and indicate their willingness to be on the committee or part of a subgroup/action group. A record of attendees at this public meeting was needed to sanction the organisation, Action4AAcomb.

Naomi Liller then spoke, explaining the various papers on the tables. She made further reference to the range of suggestions grouped under the four headings. She further emphasised the importance of the constitution to ensure transparency and accountability and to enable access to funding for village projects.

Lorna Farr spoke and emphasised that the constitution signified a coming together of the whole of Acomb, that it is a mechanism to undertake functions as determined by local residents for the benefit of the village, that the constitution would follow a formal set of principles. Communication of meetings and actions needs to be clear and transparent. There is a need to create good lines of communication including a website with a link to other websites e.g. Parish Council etc.

The purpose of the constitution is:

“To enable the people of the village to identify and develop ways to improve the life of the community through the production of an Acomb Community Led Plan working in partnership with members of:

- *the local community*
- *Action4Acomb subgroups*
- *Acomb Parish Council*
- *Northumberland County Council and other public authorities*
- *service providers*

Lorna thanked Mike McKendrick for his help in formulating the wording of the constitution document. She also reinforced the word “partnership” in Section 2.

Moving on, Naomi stated that more volunteers were needed, to determine the priorities for the village, a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 12 to form the committee. There would be a minimum of 6 meetings per year. In addition volunteers were needed to form subgroups/action groups to take forward projects. She listed various recent activities and events:

- *the provision of bus timetables*
- *linking with the Scarecrow Trail and the School Fair*
- *flood planning discussions with the Environment Agency*
- *footpath work extension*
- *working with the Parish Council regarding notice boards and bins for litter and dog waste*
- *two members of the original steering group have been recently co-opted to the Parish Council*
- *a village Christmas tree is being planned*

A short break followed to allow for consideration of the constitution and general discussion.

Questions and comments were then invited and there was a robust discussion. The questions asked were as follows:

1. The constitution looks fairly comprehensive, has any advice been taken?
Yes, Community Action Northumberland have been involved and a proforma has been tailored to this village. This was confirmed by Julia Plinston, their Community Development Officer who was in attendance.
2. Clearly a lot of work has been done, but how is accountability to be achieved?
*The AGM provides this mechanism - reporting activity, re-electing members, making necessary constitution amendments.
The Parish Council will receive a monthly report (part of answer to q5)
See also sections 2 and 11 of the constitution. There was some discussion about the wording in section 11. Julia Plinston reassured the meeting with regard to this. (There was agreement sought from those present and following discussion, the constitution was felt to be adequate as it is worded at present but does not preclude future changes at the AGM next year, 2014).*
3. Some of the village will commit to this and others won't. Could the Community Led Plan be divisive?
*If enough people want to be involved things will happen. When people see things happening they are more likely to become involved.
Initial progress on two or three projects will encourage others to become involved. Acomb 2000 and the playground project were cited as positive examples.*
4. There is a division perceived between the top and the bottom of the village, are there examples of the Community Led Plan working in other villages like this?
Lesbury was quoted as an example of a community composed of distinct parts yet over a 5-year period they achieved 16 major outcomes. It needs to be recognised that every community has its own difficulties, not just Acomb.
5. What is the relationship between the Parish Council and this group? Will there be an overlap and potential disagreements?
Two Action4Acomb members have been recently co-opted to the Parish Council – this will ensure liaison, the Parish Council will receive a monthly report. Terry Robson, who attends Parish Council meetings, has been supportive, having already attended an Action4Acomb meeting to discuss improvements to the appearance and facilities of the village with possible future funding to be made available.
6. Talking to specific groups is not enough. There is a need to get through to those who are not members of formal groups. How will we do this?
We need to cut across all areas of the village, initially by issuing a questionnaire.

7. There is no representative here tonight from local businesses, for example the pubs and the shop. Has anyone talked to them?
There has not been time yet to talk to all businesses including the farming community (There are approximately 60 businesses in Acomb – with a high level of self-employed people), although the pubs and post office have helped display posters.

At the end of this discussion a motion was proposed to adopt the constitution. There was a unanimous vote in favour. The constitution was thus formally adopted and the majority of those present signed the accepted constitution.

There followed a request for volunteers to join the committee and/or the sub groups/action groups. As 10 people in total volunteered for the committee (leaving 2 spaces), there was no need for nominations or an election on this occasion.

The following will form the committee for 2013 to 2014:

Lorna Farr
Rachel Gagliano
Jenny Gillatt
Pat Gray
Naomi Liller
Gwyn Thomas
Kathryn Thomas
Kate Trinder
Jim Wright
Linda Wright

The following volunteered to join one of the subgroups/action groups:

Catherina Buettner - health & social care, housing & planning,
environment
Lynn Crozier
Rachel Gagliano
Katherine Hillier - environment (flood plan, clearing access
roads/snow)
Barbara Huddleston
Mike McKendrick - health & social care
David Penn
Gwyn Thomas - environment
Diane Whitfield - environment, health & social care
Jane Wrigley - community or health & social care

Jane Wrigley asked that those people unable to access groups or to get out due to age/infirmity or working away from home should not be left out and that some form of communication would take place with everyone in the village. Lorna reiterated the Acklington model where a questionnaire was delivered and collected on a one to one basis, supporting those who needed assistance to respond. We should aim to use the same process as they achieved an 87% return and they have made significant progress.

Thanks were given to all for their attendance at, and contributions to, the meeting. Thanks were extended to Barbara and Pat for organising the refreshments. Mike McKendrick then formally thanked those on the steering group for their hard work to date.

There will be a meeting on **Wednesday November 13th in the village hall at 7.00pm to which all those who have volunteered to become a member of the committee and/or subgroups/action groups are invited to attend.**

People were advised to consult the Acomb news in the Hexham Courant for updates.

The meeting closed at approximately 8.45pm.

Comments made on the postcards included:

⇒ *"Happy to muck in/volunteer - drum up other helpers"*

⇒ *"The main issue I think is to ascertain what the interest & support is for the various initiatives. Clearly unless there is a strong group of people with some commitment to projects, it will inevitably fall to a small number of folk who will struggle to make things happen. So, a comprehensive questionnaire!"*