



Parish Plan 2011-2016

Report of Business Forum

14th March 2011 – Landsdowne House

Present:

Coxhoe Parish Council:

Stuart Dunn (Parish Councillor), Ian Forster (Voluntary Assistant Parish Clerk).

Traders:

A total of 16 people were in attendance.

Notes of the meeting

The forum was opened by stating that the business people had requested the meeting through PP2 and they expressed difficulty in attending public meetings due to timing. The Business Forum was advised that the Parish Council representatives had no mandate to agree anything. The purpose of attendance of such representatives was on behalf of the PP2 Steering Group and were there to listen. The forum was advised that issues that were raised would be reported back. It was noted that the forum was an attempt to try and start business engagement with the rest of the community in the Parish Plan.

The floor was opened to those present. Issues raised are identified as follows.

Why have businesses never been invited to meet Coxhoe Parish Council before?

The business people felt that they had never, ever been asked to participate in the past with the Parish Council. Some claimed that they had never ever been made aware of any of the Parish Plan events. The response was provided that they know who we are they know how to find us, all available on website. They were advised that the Coxhoe Parish Council meeting always took place on 4th Wednesday every month and was open for the first 15 minutes for the community to raise whatever they like. Police and County Councillors usually there so most agencies they may need to help or identify who else could. Most didn't seem to realise this. It was also stated that the events had been well publicised. In two editions of the Chronicle, in a flyer to all households and was included on the business forum flyer so such criticism was not justified. It was also noted that

communication was a two way thing and the business people have responsibilities here. Many acknowledged information was published via Chronicles.

Availability of parking outside shops

The traders generally felt that there is not enough through traffic stopping to shop. Partly this was due to traffic calming but largely due to availability of parking spaces. There was general concern about lack of available parking because of spaces been used as a park and ride, trader's cars and even cars being 'dumped'. It was explained what Coxhoe Parish Council trying to do in partnership with Co-Op & Coxhoe Village Hall to increase long term parking, because of potential threat posed by possible Bowburn supermarket development. Coxhoe Parish Council was committed to retaining a varied and vital Front Street. It was also explained that there had been talks a few years ago with Durham County Council about introducing a waiting limit on Front Street. There was no specific agreement by the traders on how the issue could be resolved but there was general support for parking time restrictions. It was identified that questions had been included in draft PP2 questionnaire to identify support for this. They had concerns that there were residents above shops who needed parking, possibly via permits but some had 3 cars. They felt that any restriction needed to be long enough e.g. for a haircut, and that it needed periodic enforcement. They suggested marking out at least some of the spaces at 45° to accommodate more cars, and possibly a loading and a disabled space. They suggested parking could be incorporated at road side next to Catholic Church. The Parish Council suggested vacant land behind cycle shop could be used, they said they had other plans which they'd be letting us know about.

Parking Restrictions at Lengs

Cars ignore single white lines. Paint hardly visible. Was there a need for these or could they be reviewed/restructured to allow some parking instead of cars abandoning on the footpaths? Need to increase parking at bottom end of Village. The business people suggested that the double footpath at the bottom of the village was not essential and part could be used for parking.

Review of Speed humps

The traders queried whether Coxhoe Parish Council or Durham County Council had ever reviewed effectiveness of speed humps? The traders had very strong feelings these were a waste of money, did not represent public opinion and should be removed. Red stripes on the road with speed limit would be better. They hampered businesses and farms, some people avoided travelling through the village and stopping at shops as a result. Humps needed repainting to avoid damage to unfamiliar drivers. As part of the Limes could planning gain funds be used to install a roundabout as they thought there would be a few hundred more houses built there. There was a feeling that road humps were simply a pett project of some parish councillors.

It was explained that planning gain from Limes phase 1 was committed by planners and wouldn't be sufficient for roundabout. It was further noted that the origin of humps from PP1 consultation and that had included exploration of diverting course of Coronation Terrace to introduce a kink, indenting mini roundabout at Peterson Dale and upgrading to a full roundabout, original plans for chicanes. All of the PP1 transport group meetings involving many members of the public and consultation with nearby residents that had eventually led to plans for humps. These were then designed and installed by Durham County Council highway engineers not Coxhoe Parish Council. It was also noted that Coxhoe had received more traffic calming funds from LTP2 than any other area in the County and this was unlikely to be repeated. Again it was stated questions in PP2 draft questionnaire to identify traffic problem areas. A request was made whether the business people could be consulted on the questionnaire because they felt that the last questionnaire had leading

question. They were advised that if that was the case we would have to consult all the community and that was not feasible. They asked that a question should be asked about noise from speed humps which was an issue for some residents.

Brown tourist signs

The business people suggested tourist signs be located at both ends of the village identifying local services to pull in passing trade, particularly from the A1.

Environment

The trader expressed concern about general cleanliness and felt that the appearance of village was deteriorating, footpaths, cleansing, dog fouling, cigarette butts on top of bins for days and bus shelters dirty. There was a problem with footpaths rising but only since relayed, there had never ever been any problem in the last 25 years before the laying of the new pathways. Neighbourhood wardens used to identify problems. They asked why don't Coxhoe Parish Councillors walk streets. Planters were not being cleaned and the planter outside Steven Scarrs was particularly poor. It was stated that the community was not doing enough about the state of the place. The traders identified ongoing problems with dirt on the roads from tip traffic. They identified footpaths/bridleways e.g. leading from allotments to sports centre in very poor condition and in need of upgrade.

In response it was pointed out that these were all issues they could also take responsibility for getting things done and report directly or bring to CPC meetings. The traders themselves raised the point that if they target complaints Durham County Council will focus resources on those areas where there were the most complaints (get a customer reference number when you call in)

PP2 questionnaire

The business people asked for influence on draft questionnaire. They suggested loaded questions could lead to answers Coxhoe Parish Council wanted. It was confirmed that the Steering Group had started with a blank page. Comments had been noted but it was made clear that councillors had not engineered them. They were advised that the general public had identified issues in the villages and then voted on their priorities and this was the basis for the new questions. We would consider what further consultations there would be on questionnaire through PP2 Steering Group.

They asked what our priorities were, Drs surgery?, more plants on village green that would get vandalised? did we want to close Coxhoe to traffic whereas the traders wanted it grid locked with potential shoppers. We said some plans had already received community support via public exhibitions e.g. Village Green and Doctors surgery and that although funding stalled on the surgery still pushing for it and Groundwork Trust looking at plans for Village Green and at potential sources of funding. It was stated that Coxhoe Parish Council intended to re-confirm support for these through the questionnaire.

Summing up

In summing up it was stated that Coxhoe Parish Council were driven by community agenda identified in PP1 and would be by PP2. The Parish Council stated that it strived to be a listening Council so if they had issues not to sit on them but raise them. It was stated that we are in times of much more limited resources. The meeting closed on the clear understanding that nothing could be guaranteed other than that the issues raised would be taken into account and there would be future meetings and working groups to develop proposals. The business people were urged to take part in such discussions.