

ALSTON MOOR PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Alston Moor Parish Council held on Monday, 2nd March 2015 at 7.15pm in Alston Town Hall.

Present: Cllrs: A. Martin (Chair), B. Cooper, D. Athey, E. Grew, T. Haldon, M. Herdman, I. Johnson, R. Miller, T. Pennell, D. Phillips, P. Thompson.

Apologies: Cllrs: M. Bell, A. Bondi, B. Aves, A. Green.

Absent: none

Declarations of interest: none.

County Councillor's Report

Apologies from Cllr Robinson.

District Councillor's Report

Cllr Harrison reported on the following:

Footway lighting– no progress to report.

Cllr Godwin reported on the following:

Scrutiny of Post-16 transport – the review by the scrutiny panel has been suspended until the County Council conclude their negotiations on bus transport, but it is proposed to add the review to the draft scrutiny panel work programme for next year. Transport is a complex issue involving costs running into the millions.

1. Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 2nd February 2015 be adopted as a correct record. Proposed by Cllr Herdman and seconded by Cllr Phillips. (nem con)

2. Matters Arising from the Minutes

2a/MAR/15 Subsidised Bus services

Re: 2b/FEB/15 An e-mail was received from Rory Stewart MP with a copy of a letter from Kris Hopkins MP Minister for Local Government. The letter quoted the Transport Act 1985, which allows for parish councils to make grants for services that will only benefit the elderly or the disabled, or community bus schemes. (It was this Act the clerk asked CALC for clarification on, with the response from NALC's solicitor that a commercial bus service does not meet the criteria.) Buses may be subsidised through the General Power of Competence, which gives parish councils the power to do anything that a member of the public would be able to do. The conditions are that at least one third of its members must be elected and that the clerk is suitably qualified. The clerk reported that currently there are too few elected members, although this situation may change after the May elections.

It was observed that the Ministers response was inconclusive, and the council still does not have an authoritative statement is needed on whether the commercial bus service, mainly used by the elderly, can be subsidised.

It was agreed to ask the Minister to comment on the letter from NALC, and to encourage residents to stand for election, so the council could apply for the General Power of Competence. **Action**

2b/MAR/15 Footway Lights

Re: 2c/FEB/15 The clerk reported that the Neighbourhood Policing Officer commented recently on the dark streets around town, and that the light in the top narrows was out and potentially dangerous for road users if not fixed. After complaining to EDC a reply was received that an officer would be coming to Alston in the near future to review the siting of some replacement columns.

2c/MAR/15 Alston Ambulance Meeting

Re: 2d/FEB/15 Cllr Martin reported that she called a meeting of local representatives last month to draw up a list of questions for the Ambulance Service, to be discussed at a meeting later this week.

Cllr Cooper reported that he is collating information to be presented to the meeting. He was unable to take the training on the day it was offered, as were several others and is concerned that there will not be enough people to cover. NWAS told him they were not taking anyone else on, although they said originally they would need a minimum of 12 to provide adequate cover.

2d/MAR/15 Henderson's Wood

Re: 2f/FEB/15 The thinning work has been completed and the agent has signed the work off. He stated that it was been completed to a good standard and to specification, with due care for health and safety and site tidiness.

There are two caveats: the path towards the upstream end is muddy with unavoidable machine operations, but should dry out when the weather improves. An overhanging branch pointed out by Cllr Athey has been overlooked, but the contractor agreed to deal with it at no additional cost and although there is some dieback it does not merit recalling him.

The woodland has been opened up and ground vegetation may start to return. This should be regarded as part of the process of opening up the woodland and that ideally there should be subsequent thinnings as the trees expand their canopy over the years. They may need another thinning in 5 – 10 years. There is a risk that when Sitka woodlands are opened up there may be some windblow, but once the growing season starts they will gradually become more windfirm.

Ideally it is also a good idea to consider a thinning in Firs Wood in places, particularly where ECCP restocked the woodland after the ravages of Dutch Elm disease in the late 80s/early90s.

It is recommended that the parish council conducts a periodic monitoring of their woods for public safety purposes and keeps a record of inspections, ideally with photos once or twice a year. The aim of this should be to minimise risk to the general public in areas that are heavily used.

The contractor aims to carry out the planting around the middle of the month. Planting areas have been discussed and it should not take long. Instructions are awaited as to whether the agent can carry out a site visit during the work and another to sign it off. Agreed that one visit should be sufficient. **Action**

It was noted that there is a lot of lying water where the machinery has been operating, and this area used to drain well. Cllr Cooper offered to monitor it. **Action**

The clerk was asked to contact the contractor and ask him to deal with the overhanging branch if possible when he comes back to do the planting. **Action**

The clerk reported that one of the marked trees is too close to the power lines for the contractor to take down, so it was reported to ENWL, who have agreed to take it down, although they could not give a date.

Another task needed to meet the grant criteria is to fit 5 bird boxes for lesser redpoll and wood warbler, but she will have research the right size box. **Action**

Firs Walk tree – two members were concerned that the tree along the Pennine Way, which had been dealt with before Christmas, still has a split and could still be a danger to the public. The clerk said she would seek an expert opinion on whether it was safe, but noted that the contractor has already been paid.

Action

2e/MAR/15 Tynedale Visitor

Re: 4d/FEB/15 An article was submitted to the Tynedale Visitor about the local area and events taking place during the year.

2f/MAR/15 Land Registry query

Re: 4e/FEB/15 The clerk reported that Andrew Nicholson, who was formerly employed by ECCP, was able to confirm an agreement with the landowner that the fencing on the grassy area besides the river would be erected towards the back of the site, allowing the public access along a permissive path to the Pennine Way. This area rightfully belongs to Bridge End and was registered to the parish council in error. The Land Registry were notified and have sent an amended site plan. It is understood that the landowner is away at present, but an apology will be sent when he returns. **Action**

2g/MAR/15 CCTV Survey/Firs Walk walling

Re: 6/FEB/15 **CCTV survey** - the contractor has not been able to carry out the work due to the weather, but hopes to be able to get on site later this month.

Firs Walk walling – the contractor has almost finished the work, and has opened out the drain.

2h/MAR/15 SKS meeting room

Re: 10a/FEB/15 The upstairs meeting room at SKS, although a pleasant space, does not have disabled access and so would be unsuitable for council meetings unless there were no alternative.

2i/MAR/15 SKS meeting room

Re: 2g/FEB/15 Cllr Herdman reported that he has repaired the wall besides the Nenthall War Memorial.

3. Planning

3a/MAR/15 14/1119 Full application. Conversion of redundant church hall to two dwellings. Victoria

Square, Front Street, Alston CA9 3SL for Ms P. Brandram-Jones.

Recommended for approval. Proposed by Cllr Cooper and seconded by Cllr Thompson. (1 abs)

3b/MAR/15 15/0062 Outline application. Outline application for erection of single dwelling on land at Hill House Farm, Garrigill. Hill Farm, Garrigill, Alston CA9 3HF for Mr & Mrs J. & L. Green.

Recommended for approval. Proposed by Cllr Haldon and seconded by Cllr Grew. (nem con).

3c/MAR/15 15/0068 Full application. Rebuild of derelict farmhouse to provide three market dwelling houses and one affordable dwelling house. Cotterill House, Nenthead, Alston CA9 3PY for Mr I. Pickering.

Resolved to adjourn the meeting to allow local residents to speak, and to re-convene in 5 minutes.

A spokesperson for the residents stated that there were a number of objections to the proposed application, which in their opinion did not fit within the national planning policy framework, or Eden District Council's and the AONB's local policies. They questioned the need for isolated dwellings in the countryside given the number of houses currently for sale on Alston Moor, and suggested that the housing need could be met in other more sustainable locations. This particular site has a long history of refusals, and the walls were built up at one time, to a level which should have had planning permission, to make the property look less ruinous than it is. The design footprint is only a little larger than the 2013 application, but it does not respect the form of the footprint or the height of the original dwelling, which was one and a half storeys with a catslide roof at the gable end. The proposal has the appearance of a suburban terrace, and is inadequately screened, as it sits on a rise that will make it visible across the valley.

The meeting re-convened.

Nenthead members agreed with the comments about scale, while noting that modern standards might require changes to the height, although there are appropriate ways of dealing with this. The proposed new building is massive and totally out of character with the area, with the potential to overshadow Nenthead and the valley. However, recent local policies for housing in the countryside have changed and Nenthead would benefit from more people to support the shops and public transport.

Recommended for refusal. Proposed by Cllr Herdman and seconded by Cllr Pennell. (5 + 1- 5 abs)

Resolved to include the observation that the parish council would not object to an application that is in keeping with the character of the local vernacular and of similar size and height to the original dwelling, This proposal will dominate the valley because of its height and location. Proposed by Cllr Phillips and seconded by Cllr Pennell. (8+ 3 abs)

3d/MAR/15 15/0070. Full application. Proposed replacement of shop windows with residential windows and replacement of first floor windows. Twain House, Front Street, Alston CA9 3SE for Mr W. Wilson.

Resolved to adjourn the meeting and re-convene in 5 minutes.

A local resident spoke in favour of the application, which has already been granted residential status, and the use of upvc windows, which it was argued require less maintenance and are hardly distinguishable from spray-painted wooden frames.

The meeting re-convened.

Members noted that their stance on upvc was not consistent, and that an appeal had been won by a local resident to allow the use of upvc in his property, after which Eden District Council have mostly allowed its use in the Conservation Area.

Recommended for approval as change of use into a dwelling has already been approved and the details to make the property fit for purpose should not be resisted. Proposed by Cllr Athey and seconded by Cllr Miller (1 abs)

3e/MAR/15 15/0108 Outline application. Outline application for residential development with all matters reserved. Land west side of Park View Lane, Alston for Mr R. Gold.

The clerk reported that the planning officer confirmed that this application is outline only with no indication of the numbers, unlike the previous withdrawn application with a plan showing a terrace of 9 houses. All matters of scale, design, numbers and layout would be reserved for further approval if the principle of residential development on the site was accepted. The utility companies will advise on the capacity of sewers and drainage and the application suggests that the verge is owned by the applicant.

It was noted that there were a number of objections to the previous application, and that there are already two bungalows build along the bankside.

A recommendation for refusal was not carried.

Recommended that no objection would be made, but the parish council will look carefully at any future detailed plans. Proposed by Cllr Phillips and seconded by Cllr Herdman (1 abs)

3f/MAR/15 15/0109 Outline application. Demolition of existing agricultural building and proposed development of seven two-storey terraced houses. Gatefoot Farm, Garrigill, Alston CA9 3DU for Mr T. Bell.

Recommended for refusal on the grounds that the proposed development is out of keeping with the character of the village, whose houses are built along the street. Proposed by Cllr Grew and seconded by Cllr Athey. (7+ 4 abs)

3g/MAR/15 15/00134 Full application. Change of use of storeroom (use class B8) to residential annexe (use class C3). The Coach House, Kings Arms Lane, Alston CA9 3HU for Mr A. Dumble.

Concern was expressed about the lack of parking provision in an area where there is already considerable pressure on space in the public areas.

A recommendation for refusal on the grounds that no parking provision has been provided was not carried.

Resolved that no comment be made. Proposed by Cllr Phillips and seconded by Cllr Cooper. (2 abs).

Decision Notices

3i/MAR/15 14/1011 Outline application for the replacement of a dwelling house. Pastures House, North of Hill House Farm, Garrigill for Mr & Mrs J & L Green. The application was withdrawn.

4. Correspondence

4a/MAR/15 EDC – Planning Services Parish Charter and training

A letter was received from Eden District Council (copy circulated) which is intended to assist with responding to comments on planning applications. The Charter has been in use for a number of years now and the case officer may be contacted for additional information on any particular application. They will offer training for councilors, although would prefer for a number of parishes to get together to arrange a single event. They would like to hear back with expressions of interest.

It was agreed that the council would be willing to attend a training session with other parishes after the elections in May. The town hall could be offered as a venue, or alternatively the council could consider using the community bus to another venue. **Action.**

4b/MAR/15 EDC – Electoral registration

A letter was received from Eden District Council to say that the biggest change in the way people register to vote in over 100 years is taking place this year. The transition to individual electoral registrations means that everyone will register to vote individually rather than by household. Young people cannot rely on their parents adding them to the register.

For the elections on 7th May, the last date for receipt of applications for registration is 20th April 2015.

4c/MAR/15 EDC – Footway lighting in Nenthead

An e-mail was received from Eden District Council stating that they are in the process of replacing lights on the Outstanding Works Programme that meet their criteria and have been agreed with the parish councillors on their site visits. They are being replaced in the order they were reported. Two lights No 16 outside 17 Vicarage Terrace and 18 outside 3 Vicarage Terrace are to be replaced. It will take a few weeks as the column has to be concreted into place, the lamp head will be put in later to let the concrete set, and finally the electric supply will be connected by ENWL.

4d/MAR/15 EDC – Precept requests

The clerk reported that funding for young people and Quarry Pond had been precepted for the current year.

Young people – a request to offer the young men's group a visit to Carlisle to include a session at Eden Rock, and a cinema visit. It would be £290 and Young Cumbria asked for a contribution of £210. The precept allocation for young people is £400.

Quarry Pond – STRPS reported that the land has been secured for the local community and for public access in perpetuity. Subject to further fund raising there are plans to create a woodland walk and nature trail, with seating, interpretation panels and informal educational resources. If possible STRPS would like to link Quarry Pond with Quarry Wood and the riverbank when the repairs are finished to create an interesting circular walk. The precept allocation for Quarry Pond is £100.

Resolved to pay both requests. Proposed by Cllr Haldon and seconded by Cllr Herdmaan (nem con)

4e/MAR/15 Notice of meetings and events

EDC Executive Committee meeting for 3rd March in Alston – cancelled due to the weather

What do Eden District Councillors do – informal information sessions for anyone interested in standing –

4th March 2015

Defibrillator training – Monday 16 March Alston Town Hall, Thursday 26th March Garrigill Village Hall
Eden Tri-Partite Meeting – Eden Association of Local Councils between county, district and parish 16 March 2015

4f/MAR/15 Literature received

CALC – Affordable Rural Housing - a practical guide for parish councils
CALC circular February 2015
CALC circular March 2015

5. Financial Regulations

Cllr Haldon reported that the Financial Regulations had been accepted at a council meeting last year, but have not been fully implemented as a number of actions have to be taken.

Resolved to accept the recommendations of the Financial Regulations review meeting. Proposed by Cllr Haldon and seconded by Cllr Pennell. (nem con)

Resolved to appoint Cllr Haldon to verify bank reconciliations quarterly for the periods Apr-Jun, Jul-Sept, Oct-Dec, Jan-Mar. Proposed by Cllr Pennell and seconded by Cllr Miller. (nem con)

Resolved to provide the clerk with a bank debit card for the council's current account. To instruct the clerk that the card may not be used for payments over £100 without the prior written authorisation of two bank signatories and that all payments made using the card be reported to the next meeting of the council. Proposed by Cllr Haldon and seconded by Cllr Phillips. (nem con)

It was noted that the internal auditor commented last year that the clerk should not have to use personal credit cards for payments.

6. Notes for Councillors – draft prepared by Cllr Haldon

Cllr Haldon reported that he is preparing a draft briefing paper for new councillors, which is currently a work in progress, but he hoped it would be ready for May when the new council starts. It is intended to supplement the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations and to try and explain how the council works.

7. Contract conditions and proposal to include the text of the Contractual Conditions documents into the Council's draft Standing Orders

Cllr Haldon prepared a draft paper to accompany invitations to quote for goods or services, and to ensure as standard that contractors were aware they should have appropriate insurance for the type of work to be carried out. He also suggested that it would be useful for the clerk to summarise tenders before the meeting, and that they could be listed anonymously with the aim of achieving a fair system.

Members noted that there will still be a need to take quality of work into consideration and not necessarily take the cheapest quote. It was suggested that a penalty clause be included to ensure work is carried out within a specified timeframe.

Cllr Haldon added that he is working on the Standing Orders and hopes to have a new draft for consideration at the next meeting. He was thanked for his work on all the documents.

8. Planning for the Annual Parish Meeting

It was agreed to ask parish council candidates to speak for a few minutes about why they wanted to stand. Parliamentary and district candidates would be invited to the 23rd April meeting.

Cllr Pennell reported that he was still waiting for a response from Minco, and if they were unable to attend the Ward meeting they could be invited to the Annual Parish Meeting.

It was agreed to set up a working group for planning the meeting with Cllrs: Phillips, Cooper, Martin, Grew and Haldon.

9. Parish Council elections/publicity/end of term activities

Cllr Martin asked the council if they would support the advertising of parish council elections on social media. Agreed.

10. Comments on EDC Scrutiny Work Plan consultation

Resolved to request that post-16 transport continues to be included on the Scrutiny Work Plan, so that it is not forgotten, and the ongoing issue of street lights. Proposed by Cllr Cooper and seconded by Cllr Gew. (nem con)

11. Crown Car Park – parking of PO vans during weekends re: Traffic Management meeting

The clerk reported that Eden District Council were asked to follow up the matter of PO vans parking on the Crown Car Park. They stated that there are no restrictions on parking in this car park, but offered to write to the Post Office to point out that they are taking up valuable parking space which leads to loss of trade for the town. They also suggested that the parish council write to highlight these concerns.

Cllr Godwin suggested that the issue is only for weekend parking when the spaces could be better used by visitors, and that it might be possible for the spaces to be kept clear on Saturday and Sunday outside of PO operating hours and the vans brought back on a Sunday ready for a Monday start.

It was pointed out that the car park is a public car park, and as there was no consensus over this issue it was:

Resolved to move to next business. Proposed by Cllr Phillips and seconded by Cllr Haldon. (nem con)

12. Snow Champions – Alston Front Street

This was another matter arising from the Traffic Management meeting. Cumbria Highways reported that information about Snow Champions is on the County Council website. It was suggested that if volunteers come forward the parish council might consider buying a footway grit spreader and 3T grit bin as Kirkby Stephen parish council have done. Prices for the hand spreader range from £300 to £900.

Cllr Cooper reported that former highways officer Rob Lawley had offered to supply the equipment if volunteers could be found, and remembered that a discussion had been held about where to put the equipment. The clerk was asked to look back through the minutes and report back. **Action.**

13. Replacement handrail – Old Methodist Church – Chapel Lonning

Cllr Thompson was reminded that the parish council needed his declaration of interests form and a copy of his public liability insurance, before he could carry out the work.

14. Community Warden contract

6 applications were received and it was agreed to interview all applicants on Thursday 19th March. The interview panel agreed to meet at 5.30pm for a 5.45pm start and to ask all applicants to confirm that they understood the post was for a self-employed person and either had public liability insurance or could show awareness of how to obtain it.

15. Tyne Willows – Appleby Fair planning/mole activity/potholes

It was agreed to put planning for Appleby Fair on the agenda for the April meeting.

Cllr Miller reported that there were a number of potholes on the access road, and a considerable amount of mole activity on the field.

It was agreed to ask Cllrs: Miller, Athey and Thompson to discuss what needed doing amongst themselves and to report back to the next meeting. Any action over the moles must be done in a safe manner. **Action.**

16. Reports from Working Groups & Council Representatives

16a/MAR/15 Risk assessment report

The draft risk assessment was circulated.

Resolved to accept the risk assessment report. Proposed by Cllr Phillips and seconded by Cllr Athey. (nem con)

17. Items for information/next month's agenda/urgent business

None received.

18. Finance

18a/MAR/15 Balances

The balances as 2nd March 2015 were as follows:-

Alston Moor Parish Council tr/ac	£13,006.47
Alston Moor Parish Council bus/ac	£12,659.57
Eden Credit Union	£6,998.00

18b/MAR/15 Accounts for Payment

The following accounts were for payment:-

<i>Summary of accounts for payment:-</i>	£5,064.60
<i>Summary of income received since last meeting:-</i>	£0.00
<i>Summary of accounts paid since last meeting:-</i>	£108.40

Resolved that sufficient funds are held in balances for the clerk to be authorised to settle all the accounts listed during the coming month (appendix I). Proposed by Cllr Haldon and seconded by Cllr Grew. (nem con)

The meeting closed at 9.20 pm

Signed:

Dated: