

## Alston Moor Parish Council

### Chair's Report to Council - October 2018

#### 1. Visit to Appleby Town Council meeting 19<sup>th</sup> Sept

I attended Appleby TC meeting as a member of the public to look at the way another Council carries out its business and to see if any lessons may be learned.

Appleby TC has three principal committees; Finance, Planning & General Purpose, and Property. These meet, one after another, during the week before the main TC meeting. All three committee meetings together take about 1½ hours. There are 16 Councillors in total. The principal committees have nine members, the Mayor & Deputy Mayor are *ex officio* members of all committees.

The main TC meeting is held in the Council chamber in the Moot Hall. It is a historic and formal setting, with the Mayor (Chair), Deputy Mayor and Clerk sitting at a raised bench at one end, and Councillors sitting at desks, facing inward down either side. There are chairs for members of the public in the middle space. The meeting begins with the Mayor being led in from the Robing Room, by the Mace-Bearer and the Chaplain, while Councillors stand. The Chaplain reads a short prayer.

Most of the Agenda for the meeting is in the form of motions to 'approve and accept' reports. At the meeting I attended there were minutes from the Finance, Planning, and Property committees, and reports from the Clerk, Mayor, County & District Councillors, Police and outside bodies (all of these had been sent out with the agenda). The chairs of each committee answered any questions arising from the committee minutes. Most of the minutes and reports were approved without much discussion. When there are subjects of particular importance, the Clerk puts these on the agenda as separate proposals. This month three options to refurbish and extend the Moot Hall were brought forward with the proposal that they go to public consultation.

The Council's tradition of members standing when asked to speak by the Chair, is usually, but not completely respected.

The meeting lasted just over an hour.

The whole meeting is considerably more formal than AMPC councillors may be used to. According to the Clerk, the committee meetings tend to be more 'lively'. All the minutes and reports are available on the Appleby Town Council web-site.

I plan to attend the Appleby committee meetings next month as well as one or two other Parish Councils.

2. The Chair of Alston Moor Business Association (AMBA) has suggested that the chairs or vice-chairs of AMBA, Alston Moor Partnership, and the Parish Council should meet informally from time to time, perhaps monthly. This will be to keep all three organisations informed of each other's plans and aspirations, to avoid conflicts and to seek out areas where the organisations can co-operate.

3. I met Sebastian Green, the Weardale Estate land agent at Ashgill on Thurs 6<sup>th</sup> Sept. Weardale Estates are the owner on the land around the waterfall at Ashgill.

They discussed the suggestion that the (currently private) footpath from the road by Ashgill Bridge to the waterfall should be adopted as a public foot path. Mr Green said that the Estate would agree to this, if, in return, the Parish Council supported their wish to have the current public foot path from Ashgill Farm to Waterfall Cottage (No. 302008) , de-registered, i.e. making it into a private path.

Background information;

- If the path were adopted as a right-of-way, Cumbria CC Highways would have ( some ) responsibility for its maintenance, though how much they would actually do is questionable.
- Path 302008 passes through the farm yard at Ashgill and the Estate are concerned about the safety of walkers when farm machinery in moving around this area.
- Gorge walking groups use the current private path, and make it wet and slippery. Path 302008 offers an easier route to the waterfall than steep and uneven current path.
- The costs of adopting and de-registering paths is not known. We would hope that the P.C. and the Estate each pay their own costs.
- An alternative option would be for the P.C. to 'claim' the footpath as a right of way, as we can prove that it has been used by the public for over 20 years. This would probably be opposed by the land owner. The costs of such a claim are unknown, and may involve unpredictable legal costs

RECOMMENDATION – that the Clerk confirm the costs involved, and reports to a future meeting.