

## ALSTON MOOR ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Minutes of a meeting held on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> April 2018 at 7.30pm in Alston Town Hall.

**Present:** Cllrs: T. Haldon (Chair), A. Martin, T. Haldon, A. Hewison, R. Miller, H. Ho, County Cllr C. Driver, District Cllrs P. Godwin & L. Sharp & 9 members of the public.

**Apologies:** Cllrs: E. Grew, G. Wright, D. Phillips, & members of the public including Rev M. Nash Williams, J. Hodgson & B. Grew.

### **Minutes of the Last Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> April 2017 were approved as a correct record. Proposed by Cllr T. Haldon and seconded by A. Bondi.

### **1. Matters Arising out of the Minutes of the last AGM**

**Re: 4a League of Friends** – noted that no-one present could give an update on what was happening at the Cottage Hospital. The Alston Alliance team has at least 4 local members on the group and will have a key role in taking matters forward. Those present expressed disappointment about the hospital closure.

### **2. Report from Alston Moor Parish Council**

The annual report for 2017/18 was circulated.

*Questions from the floor were invited.*

No questions were received. The clerk was thanked for her work over the year.

### **3. Reports from County, District & Parish Councillors**

#### **3a County Council report**

*Cllr Claire Driver reported on the following:*

**Front Street cobbles** – the road had to be made safe, but following a Traffic Management meeting, chaired by Cllr Driver, it was realised that more had to be done than simply replace the damaged cobbles with tarmac. A steering group has been set up to work with officers and the project management team, who put out to tender a scheme which has a much wider public realm scope than simply replacing the cobbles. The tender was awarded to Mott McDonald, who have a lot of experience in this field, and with complex funding packages. The next stage is to invite the community, sometime in May, to a drop in session to discuss what they would like to see happen to Front Street. Although the planning stage can be relatively quick, it will take time before the work can be carried out as a funding package has to be put together.

**Top school** – the project has not made as much progress as hoped, but it is a key project and the project team are working with the youth group and gym who are both interested in having a base in the building. They will be meeting with the assistant director of property for further discussions, and have met with other Cumbrian members to discuss schemes they are running. It is an exciting project with potential to work with the wider health and welfare system.

**Snow survey** – Cumbria CVS are currently recruiting for a Community Resilience Co-ordinator, which will be a two year full time post with the aim of making a bridge between the high level strategic planning and the community level. The survey is to help identify gaps in provision, and it is hoped as many as possible will take part. There is to be a multi-agency cold weather debriefing next week in Penrith. These efforts should be an opportunity to look at what improvements can be made. The highways teams were congratulated on working above and beyond what might be expected of them in challenging conditions during the bad weather.

**Hartside road repairs** – work has been delayed due the first sub-layer failing, leading to discussions with the contractor, and no further work can be done until an agreement is in place. Closure is planned to take place between 8.30am and 5.30pm with the road open during the weekend. *A request was made for a full update on the state of the roads in the area and the schedule for repairs. Also, that once the Front Street road closure is complete the verges on the diversion around Blagill be re-instated.*

**Front street** - the work is on schedule and should be finished towards end of the May.

**Replacement cobbles** – decisions on selecting the right material and workforce have to be made, and there is also a process to go through on determining what the community want. It is unlikely to

be done this financial year. However, work on the old potato market could go ahead earlier, as the County Council are looking to work with the Townscape Heritage Initiative. CD said that it is important to protect Alston's heritage and the Front Street project could be a means of leveraging in more funding to include work such as improving the lighting. It is likely the County Council will adopt some of the town centre lights, restoring some of the historic lighting columns and bringing them up to dark skies standards. Another aim is to re-instate the stand pipes in Front Street.

### **3b Eden District Council report**

*Cllr Pat Godwin reported on the following:*

**Footway lights** – Eden District Council are hoping that devolution of services agreements will be in place by May 2019, to enable them to bring the adopted lights up to standard. Alston Moor Parish Council has signed up to the agreement in principle. Other districts such as Copeland decided to switch their lights off, so with the hand-over Alston will at least be able to keep some lights. Footway lights are difficult for district councils to maintain, and with concerns over what would happen should unitary authorities be created a decision was made to hand over the lights in good condition with LED bulbs that should be easier to maintain.

**Public toilets** – the district council would also like to hand over the public toilets in Alston, as has already happened with the toilets at STRPS, Garrigill and Nenthead. They are all run on different models, but the devolution process has enabled them to be retained. No decision on taking them on has been made yet by the parish council.

**Eden District Council Local Plan 2014-2032** – it has not been adopted formally as it has to go before parliament, which should happen soon. The Local Plan states how many new houses can be built in Alston and Nenthead. Garrigill does not have a housing allocation, but this does not mean no houses can be built if there is a good enough case for development. Alston's preferred option is for a site near Potters Lonning, with space allocated for business premises at High Mill and Skelgillside. One policy unique to Alston allows for sympathetic development on the footprint of derelict properties in the countryside.

**Neighbourhood planning** – the district council are willing to work with any parish wishing to produce a Neighbourhood Plan, which can set out areas for spatial planning wanted by the community. Alston Moor is already a designated area, and anyone interested in getting involved was invited to contact Cllr Godwin.

**Friends of Alston Cemetery** - this group are in contact with the district council, meet with them and encourage them to keep the cemetery in good condition. They have made progress on improvements.

**Committees** – Cllr Godwin sits on the Human Resources panel which receives and deals with complaints. They have also been involved recently in recruiting a new chief executive.

*Cllr Lissie Sharp reported on the following:*

**Committees** – Cllr Sharp sits on the Licensing committee, the Environment and Economy scrutiny committee and the Community Housing fund board.

**Old Methodist chapel** – the condition of this building has become a concern and it has now been confirmed that the planning department has instructed the legal department to serve a S215 notice requiring the owners to carry out a number of actions. Other potentially dangerous properties can be reported if members of the public are concerned.

**Other tasks** – these include contacting departments within Eden on behalf of residents with various problems or complaints including issues with dog fouling and street cleaning. She is also involved in supporting the development of local food production initiatives, a community housing project and other local initiatives. She sits on the Dementia Action Alliance steering group for Alston, the Neighbourhood Plan team, and is working on issues around tourism and the local economy.

## **4. Reports from local organisations and charities**

**4a Alston United Charities** – a written report was received and read. The charity meets in January, May and September, but can respond quickly to urgent applications. They were able to help towards travelling expenses, fees, computer and safety equipment, allocating a total of £1,059.

**4b Alston Alliance** – members fought extremely hard to save the hospital beds, and had even considered taking legal action, but despite their efforts and those of the community, the decision has now been taken to close the beds. Prior to this, staffing issues made it impossible to remain open and the hospital was temporarily closed last year. The nursing team used the time for training in community-based work. This along with clinics should save journeys to other hospitals. It was reported that the nursing team have said the community care is working well.

There are now two hospital beds at Grisedale Croft, and plans to improve the rooms to bring them up to standard. This is only possible because Alston still has its County Council run care home, and procedures are being put into place to deal with incidents now there are no overnight nursing staff.

Plans are going ahead for a pilot project using video links for follow up appointments with consultants, which should save journey times. It is understood that a similar project is underway in Cornwall.

A community drop-in session is to be organised for residents to find out what is happening and give their views.

**Questions/comments**

It was pointed out that operations of all types used to take place at the Cottage Hospital, and that it was a waste of the facility to close the beds. Noted that more things should be happening with the video link and new clinics.

The heavy snow put the new system to the test, with nursing staff still able to attend people in their homes.

Mention was made that not all patients are elderly and younger people might not be happy to be in a hospital bed in a care home.

Noted that palliative and end-of-life care is an area the team have focussed on with part of the process understanding what happened before. While few are happy with the current situation it is better than it might have been. Much has been achieved so far, and there will be more to do as situations change.

**4c Alston Moor Historical Society** – this is a success story. The society was mothballed, but revived in 2016 to apply for a Heritage Lottery Fund grant to host a commemorative weekend for the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of the Vielle Montagne Zinc Company of Belgium. This was a great success, attended by guests from Belgium, France, Germany and Italy and has led to the twinning of the Nenthead Mines Conservation Society with its counterpart in Italy.

There was a follow up conference held in Belgium attended by a number of nationalities, and which demonstrated the potential for attracting international interest in Nenthead.

A problem emerged for the Historical Society's archives which were about to be made homeless last September, but were saved by the offer of six months rent free use of an office in the Town Hall. Many donors of local records feel strongly that they should remain in Alston, so there is a need for them to be cared for in a secure environment. The parish council agreed funding to pay the rent for the next year, which is a small cost to each household, and has provided the Town Hall with a good tenant, enabling the records to remain in the heart of the community.

The archives are open to the public most Saturdays, and a team of volunteers are working to bring people into the Town Hall and to get information out into the community with mobile displays based on archive material and regular updating of the website.

**4d Alston Ambulance** – a 2<sup>nd</sup> tranche have had driver training, so there should be around 15 people able to be part of the team. The ambulance is now running 50% of the time and could in theory get up to 75% in time.

**4e Fairhill Recreation Grounds** – they had been short of volunteers, but now have at least 5 people with children under the age of 11 on the committee. They continue to run a lotto, and manage the annual bike ride. The grass has to be cut, and voluntary tidy-ups carried out, the last one attracted around 13 people. They also work with the probation service on projects. Storage facilities are desperately needed, but the problem is cost, so a container is a possible option.

**4f Alston Moor Federation PTA** – has carried out a number of well received activities including a murder mystery night, bingo and fire show which were well received. The duck race and barbeque will take place on 14<sup>th</sup> July. Funds go towards enhancing students' experience, and could include residentials, container gardening equipment and plants. The group is active and developing rapidly.

**4g Schools re-organisation** –Co-location for Alston Primary School, the playgroup and SKS has been achieved, with everyone moving in together in November, when work on site finished. There is just some decorating to complete. Moving school was not easy, but the children have settled down and the primary spaces are working well. Nenthead school is going well.

There has been interest from outside of the school, with the director for Education in Northumberland looking to see how it is going, and officers from Cumbria taking an interest in seeing if it could be done elsewhere. Cumbria Police have chosen SKS to be the first school to get involved in becoming junior police.

**4h Volunteer meetings** – Cumbria CVS have organised a volunteering event in June in the Masonic Hall. It will be a drop-in for anyone interested in finding out more about volunteering opportunities.

The Community Plan work has involved meeting local groups and a recurrent theme has been the need for someone local to dedicate time to organising volunteers and telling people about the opportunities. The parish council has put funding aside to fund someone to do this work.

**4i Grisedale Community Garden** – there is a need for more volunteers to help out with the garden. 4 new seats have been put in, the AGM is to be held on 6<sup>th</sup> June, and a plant swop planned for May in St Augustine's.

**4j Community Plan** – groups on Alston Moor have been contacted to find out what people like and don't like about Alston Moor, with the findings feeding into the plan. One thing that has stood out is that the big annual events such as the galas, and fire show are really important for community cohesion.

Public consultations have also been taking place on Saturdays in the Town Hall, and at Nenthead Community Shop. The next stage will be writing up the first draft, with meetings to discuss and refine the findings.

The meeting closed at 9.15pm