



# ALSTON MOOR PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of Alston Moor Parish Council held on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> September 2020 at 7pm, held remotely on zoom.

**Present:** Cllrs: T. Haldon (Vice-chair), M. Denoual, J. Glendinning, A. Green, E. Grew, M. Hanley (apologies for lateness), H. Ho, A. Holt, L. Seaton, A. Martin, R. Miller, R. Robinson (apologies for lateness), Z. Robson.

**Apologies:** Cllrs: C. Harrison

**Absent:** none.

**Declarations of interest:** 7b/SEPT/20 Cllr Ho, 7d/SEPT/20 Cllrs Miller, Robson and Seaton, 7e/SEPT/20 Cllr Denoual.

A letter of resignation was received from Gary Wright, who asked that his reasons for leaving be recorded. They were that he considered the council dysfunctional, with certain members using every opportunity to discredit others, sending a torrent of e-mails, some spiteful. He no longer wishes to be associated with the acrimony that exists.

## **1. Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the parish council meeting held on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2020 be approved as a correct record. Proposed by Cllr Miller and seconded by Cllr Martin. ( 9+ 2 abs).

**Resolved** that the minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> August be approved as a correct record. Proposed by Cllr Miller and seconded by Cllr Seaton. (8+ 1- 2 abs)

## **2. Alston Flood Alleviation Scheme report**

Representatives from Cumbria County Council gave a presentation on the Alston Flood Alleviation scheme report. Flooding incidents since 1961 were summarised, including the event of 2013 affecting 39 properties. Three options to alleviate future flooding have been produced, with none including repairs to the Mill Race, but there is a funding gap of over £1 million. The Environment Agency could contribute between £40-£50k, but only the first and cheapest option, which delivers the least benefits is eligible for GiA funding. The second and third options have more benefits, but cost more.

The study has established why Alston floods, which is due to the topography and high rainfall, but there are not enough properties in the catchment area that flood to meet the funding criteria, unless there is a change to the funding formula.

The Alston study will close and all supporting documents will be held on file by the County Council. However, what can be progressed, subject to discussions with landowners and tenants, is to investigate more natural flood management works. There is the potential for joint funding catchment-based upland woodland planting supported by grants from the Forestry Commission and Environment Agency.

*Questions were invited.*

Since flooding affects properties along the length of the Tyne Valley it was questioned why the remedial work could not be looked upon as a whole. It was explained that areas such as Alston are investigated as distinct communities.

Upland planting has been recommended as a result of wider studies.

It was observed that the closure of Springfield reservoir might have contributed to the flooding issue. The officers explained that the reasons Alston floods are well understood, and what could be done about it, but the funding is not there to carry out the work. The County will continue to try to identify smaller pots of money as part of their work in protecting Cumbrian communities.

The officers were thanked for attending the meeting.

## **3. County & District reports**

### **County Council**

*Cllr Driver reported on the following:*

**Drop in for Front Street** – the Front Street team held a remote drop in session today attended by a small number of interested residents. A question that came up several times was the placement of the panel

which was decided from a traffic management point of view, as tolerances within the binding material would not differ for vehicles travelling downhill rather than uphill. The main scheme will go ahead next year if the trial panel is a success. Conversations also need to be held on marketing and finding innovative ways to manage this unique project. Further information can be found on the Front Street pages of the CCC website; comments can be fed in or e-mailed to Cllr Driver.

**Video report** – members and residents were invited to get back with any questions on the latest video report.

**Covid 19** – the situation is stable with no change in public health advice. Carlisle is in line with the national figures. The focus now is on contact tracing.

#### **District Council**

*Cllr Hanley reported on the following:*

No meetings were attended last month due to holidays.

**Chief Executive** – has handed in her notice and is leaving.

*Cllr Sharp reported on the following:*

**Old Methodist Chapel** – Building control have spoken to someone who works for the owner, and advised that they are looking to get the windows and doors blocked up.

**Business training** – there are free online courses to help businesses restart, details will be forwarded to Alston Moor Business Association.

**Penrith Town Hall re-opening** – from 1<sup>st</sup> September for appointments. Mansion House remains closed. The TIC in Penrith re-opened at the end of August with reduced opening hours.

*A question was asked about when the Alston TIC will re-open.*

A risk assessment for the staff has been done, but Eden is still encouraging people to work from home. The re-opening will have to be organised in conjunction with the Town Hall.

#### **4. Public participation**

*A representative from the Alston newsletter reported that they would like to fundraise for a memorial seat for Dick Phillips, who was involved with the newsletter from its inception. They do not have any funds, but were inviting individual contributions from councillors and the community. The plan is to site a stone bench near the river in Nenthead.*

#### **5. Progress reports**

##### **5a/SEPT/20 Re-opening High Streets Safely**

Re: 5b/AUG/20 The clerk reported that the first claim has been submitted and accepted by Eden District Council. She is unable to attend the meetings due to a timetable clash, but understands that the pavement stencils may not be implemented, as people seem to be behaving sensibly.

Cllr Driver reported that the website had been much admired by the other RHSS groups, being the first one up and running. Most of the local businesses have engaged with it and are keeping the information on opening times up to date. The map is going to print this week and will be distributed to business to display. AMBA are leading the project and are incorporating the map into a leaflet for distribution to campsites and other tourist businesses. Thanks to the group for their hard work.

##### **5b/SEPT/20 Volunteering Project**

Re: 7/AUG/20 An e-mail was received from Nick Mason, lead for the Volunteering Project, to ask what action was required, so it was suggested he get in touch with the chair of SKS school governors and report back. The chair responded that the project is not a high priority for the schools at present, with all the work that has had to go into re-opening. His view is that the Project Co-ordinator should do the first stage of the work without setting up a formal organisation, after which a decision could be made on the next action. The schools involvement can be discussed at this stage.

Cllr Denoual reported that she gave a verbal report to the July meeting, and has circulated the written report which can be posted to the website when it is up and running.

##### **5c/SEPT/20 Wardway Memorial Seat & Parish Seats Project**

Re: 7/AUG/20 The family were in touch to say that they were happy with the proposed location for a memorial seat on the Wardway, which replaces a damaged seat that was removed several years ago. Over the last few months a project has been underway to photograph all the seats within the parish. Several of the wooden seats are now badly located or damaged beyond repair and should be removed.

There are some such as the seat on the Blagill road near Mount Hooley that just need a small amount of attention. Two of the stone benches are missing, one that used to be part way up Haggs Bank, and the other on the Pennine Way below Scilly Hall.

It was observed that a request could go out to see if there was anyone willing to volunteer to carry out straightforward repairs, if they are willing to do a simple risk assessment. Noted that the seat near Rock House has been repaired, with lyrics carved into the backrest, using wood from the former Wrights Garage.

## **6. Council Representatives reports**

### **6a/SEPT/20 Alston Hospital Alliance report**

Cllr Grew invited questions on the report, which will be available on the website or contact the clerk for a copy.

### **6b/SEPT/20 Traffic Management report**

There were no questions on the report circulated by Cllr Grew.

### **6c/SEPT/20 Nenthead Surgery**

A surgery was held last month with the following matters for the parish council's attention.

**Playing fields** – a resident contacted Cumbria County Council and has not received a response about damaged fencing, which they would like removed to make the woodland more accessible. They had also reported a dead tree near the road at risk of damaging a nearby oak tree. Both seats on the site are damaged. The site is also very damp and would benefit from improved drainage.

*(Note: The clerk reported that several years ago the site had been considered for drainage improvements under a grant scheme and inspected by a County Council officer, with the conclusion that drainage would be costly and might not be effective.)*

To report fencing and dead tree. **Action CI.**

**Community Warden** – request for litter clearing and weed spraying.

**Footpath maintenance** – Kings Head path is slippery with overhanging trees and bushes. It was agreed that the path is part of the highway. To report. **Action CI.**

**Dog fouling** – request for a litter bin as there is an increasing problem around Kings Head corner. The clerk reported that she has some posters produced by school children, which could be used. Cllr Seaton offered to check the site to see if there was anywhere suitable for a bin. **Action LS.**

## **7. Planning applications**

**7a/SEPT/20** 20/0552 Full application. Rebuild dwelling and change of use of agricultural land to residential use. High House, Hard Edge, Nenthead CA9 3PR for Mr A. Wood.

Noted that the site has been derelict for a long time and would be a good candidate for renovation.

**Recommended** for approval. Proposed by Cllr Holt and seconded by Cllr Seaton (10+ 1- 2 abs)

**7b/SEPT/20** 20/0555 Full application. Extension for machinery. Alston Bowling Club, Garrigill Road, Alston CA9 3UB for Mr N. English.

*Cllr Ho declared an interest.*

**Recommended** for approval. Proposed by Cllr Green and seconded by Cllr Seaton. (10+ 2 abs)

**7c/SEPT/20** 20/0575 Tree works (CA) Removal of willow tree. Dorville, Front Street, Alston CA9 3SG c/o agent Mr M. Collins.

**Recommended** for approval. Proposed by Cllr Green and seconded by Cllr Robinson. (8+ 4 abs)

**7d/SEPT/20** 20/0549 Reserved matters. Reserved matters application for access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale attached to approval 17/0398. Land at Nenthead Village centre, Nenthead for A. & J. Seaton.

*Cllrs Miller, Seaton and Robson declared an interest.*

**Recommended** for approval. Proposed by Cllr Holt and seconded by Cllr Robinson. (8+ 2abs)

**7e/SEPT/20** 20/0580 Full application. Change of use of land to allow the siting of 3 no. yurts and 3 no camping pods with associated infrastructure including a communal shower/toilet block, internal footpaths and a package treatment plant. Land at High Galligill Farm, Nenthead CA9 3LW for Addis Town Planning Ltd – High Galligill Farm Ltd.

*Cllr Denoual declared an interest as a neighbour.*

Concerns about the water supply were mentioned, with the possibility of some properties being on spring water with an irregular supply.

The original proposal to recommend approval was amended.

**Recommended** for approval subject to satisfactory arrangements for fresh and foul water. Proposed by Cllr Green and seconded by Cllr Seaton. (11+ 1 abs)

**7f/SEPT/20 20/0586** Full application. Extension of the existing house, the conversion of the existing garage into a bedroom and modifications to the drive to provide a further car parking space. Lowbyer Cottage, Alston CA9 3JX for Ms J. Langhorne.

**Recommended** for approval. Proposed by Cllr Green seconded by Cllr Robinson (12+1 abs)

#### **8. Response to BT proposed phone box removals**

A response was held over from the last meeting to check the usage figures. The phone box in Alston town centre was used twice in an average month and the one in Nenthead had no calls.

**Nenthead phone box** – it was suggested that Nenthead residents should be encouraged to make occasional phone calls from it.

**Resolved** to ask that the phone box be retained as mobile reception can be poor, and in an emergency visitors could struggle to call the emergency services. In addition weather conditions on Killhope can be extreme. Proposed by Cllr Haldon and seconded by Cllr Denoual. (nem con)

**Alston phone box** –

**Resolved** to ask to retain the phone box and for members to send any comments to the clerk before the deadline. Proposed by Cllr Holt and seconded by Cllr Robinson.

*Cllr Seaton had to leave the meeting due to work commitments.*

#### **9. Memorial Seat for Dick Phillips request from Alston Newsletter**

The Alston Moor Newsletter team are considering a seat in memory of Dick Phillips, and wanted to ask if members would be willing to contribute as individuals. It was agreed that anyone wishing to contribute could contact the organisers. With all the work Dick had done for the parish it was suggested that the council pay for an additional seat, possibly replacing one of the damaged ones.

**Resolved** that the council would organise their own seat and that individual members could contribute towards the newsletter seat. Proposed by Cllr Miller and seconded by Cllr Holt. (nem con)

#### **10. Request from SKS to use Henderson's Wood for a forest school on Monday afternoons**

A request has been received from Alston Moor Federation to use Henderson's Wood for a forest school on Monday afternoons between 1 and 3pm. It would be for around 10 children from the reception class.

**Resolved** to grant the request subject to AMF sending a copy of their risk assessment. Proposed by Cllr Haldon and seconded by Cllr Holt. (nem con)

#### **11. Consultations & Correspondence**

##### **11a/SEPT/20 Correspondence**

Listed in appendix 3.

**CALC Local Government re-organisation in Cumbria** - The government are actively driving a devolution agenda across the UK, which is likely to result in the reform of the existing two tiers of local government. There are various options currently under discussion including all the present councils being replaced with one or two unitary authorities providing public services and the creation of a combined authority to receive the additional powers.

CALC's Executive Committee has agreed an 'Interim Position' statement (circulated) and would like to hear the views of parish councils.

It was observed that the centralisation of power will mean that places like Alston will lose representatives, and influence, so any proposal for a unitary authority is unlikely to be good for the area. Another concern is that Cumbria is too large for one unitary authority and should be divided into two. The town hall in Penrith would go, with Alston most likely to be in the Carlisle area, leading to concerns that local views will be swamped and democracy reduced.

##### **11b/SEPT/20 Request for warning 'horse' sign on B6277 near Golf Club**

Cllr Holt reported that a resident had asked for a warning sign about horses on the road near to the Golf Club, as she was concerned about anti-social driving.

It was mentioned that there are horses and riders on all the roads around Alston, so if one was put up there could be more requests.

Agreed to put the request to the next Traffic Management meeting and to let the resident know that if the request is granted, signage can be a slow process. **Action CI/AH**

## **12. Administration**

### **12a/SEPT/20 Proposal to accept the draft Scheme of Delegation**

Cllr Haldon reported that he had prepared a scheme of delegation for the parish council, which explains the powers delegated to the clerk and committees, but not working groups. He recommended that the council adopt the scheme.

Cllr Holt reported that there was no issue over appointing a separate chair and secretary for the Town Hall, and the Town Hall could continue as before without appointing a separate sub committee.

It was observed that the scheme did not require the Town Hall to set up a committee, but set out the terms should it be decided to do so, and an amendment to 3b ii stating ... the Parish Council (Town Hall) may appoint a Town Hall Committee ... instead of 'shall' would clarify this.

**Resolved** to take out the reference requiring the Parish Council (Town Hall) to set up a separate Town Hall sub-committee and to bring the document back to the next meeting. Proposed by Cllr Holt and seconded by Cllr Robinson. (7+ 5 abs)

### **12b/SEPT/20 Website compliance & request to purchase Office 2019**

The website accessibility regulations come into force on September 23<sup>rd</sup>, and are intended to make the contents of a website accessible to people who are blind, hard of hearing, have difficulty in using a mouse or keyboard or have learning difficulties. The clerk started work on checking accessibility, but ran into difficulties. The 'plug-in' used by our website stopped being supported last month, which has resulted in the loss of all links to files. Our web designer has given us one of the latest plug-ins (Elementor) that will enable us to re-configure the website, which the developer updated but is not fully functional. The intention is to set up the website with the template style used on sites that were most liked by the ADP working group, and to set up a members-only section for files that do not need to be publicly accessible. The clerk reported that the council needs to acknowledge that this is a time-consuming task.

Accessibility has two strands - the website and site contents. PDFs need to be checked for accessibility and the old version of Office does not have this function, so we are unable to meet the first requirement on the accessibility statement. The council may want to consider whether to purchase the subscription version of Office 365 costing £7.90 per month, which includes updates. The one-off purchase for business use is around £250 but will not have the upgrades.

**Resolved** to purchase a subscription to the latest version of Office. Proposed by Cllr Holt and seconded by Cllr Robinson. (nem com)

There was a discussion on what to do about the website, and the clerk reported that a volunteer has offered to work on it using the same template the ADP working group preferred. This could result in a significant cost-saving to the council. Agreed to move on to the next agenda item and discuss progress at the next ADP meeting.

### **12c/SEPT/20 Use of Alston Town Hall address for Alston Moor electronic newsletter**

Cllr Holt reported that he had suggested the newsletter uses the parish council's address for the newsletter, following a decision by the Town Hall to ban non-tenants from using the address. Cllr Martin reported that the newsletter had started life as a project promoted by the Volunteer Co-ordinator working group, and taken forward by volunteers from Alston Moor Business Association.

A proposal to formally take over ownership of the newsletter was withdrawn, as it is already supported and run by volunteers who are happy to continue.

**Resolved** that the newsletter should not use the parish council's address. Proposed by Cllr Robson and seconded by Cllr Green (7+ 5- 1 abs)

### **12d/SEPT/20 Proposal to consider council contracts/subscriptions at November council meeting**

The clerk suggested presenting the annual list of contracts and subscriptions to November council meeting to allow consideration of any changes before the precept meeting.

Cllr Ho spoke on concerns about Dropbox, which the clerk stated were unfounded as the subscription was agreed several years ago, and recorded on every financial report submitted for the council's approval.

Cllr Holt offered to put together a proposal for Dropbox.

### **12e/SEPT/20 SLCC Clerk's training festival in October 2020**

The Society of Local Council Clerks hold a national conference each year, but are having to hold it remotely and have reduced the cost to members considerably, to £25.

**Resolved** that the clerk could attend the National Conference. Proposed by Cllr Haldon and seconded by Cllr Robson (nem con)

**13. Agenda items for next meeting**

A request was made that agenda items are put forward as a written proposal that enables the council to make a decision on them.

The clerk reported that Eden District Council's new Conservation Officer would like to attend the next council meeting to discuss the Alston Conservation Area appraisal.

**14. Accounts for payment**

The following accounts were for payment:-

<i>Summary of accounts for payment: -</i>	£448.68
<i>Summary of income received since last meeting: -</i>	£146.50
<i>Summary of accounts paid since last meeting: -</i>	£1,303.74

**Resolved** that sufficient funds are held in balances for the clerk to be authorised to settle all the accounts listed in appendix 6. Proposed by Cllr Robinson and seconded by Cllr Haldon. (7+ 5 abs)

*The meeting closed to the public to discuss the next item.*

**15. To received Method Statements for tree works on Tyne Willows, Henderson's and Firs Woods and Garrigill Village Green**

One method statement was received from Michael Collins. The other contractor invited to submit a statement had not responded.

The clerk pointed out that it would be necessary to vire funds from reserves as there are insufficient funds in the property management budget.

**Resolved** to accept the quote of £6,000 from Michael Collins. Proposed by Cllr Miller and seconded by Cllr Grew. (7+ 4 abs 1-)

Cllr Grew reported that the seat around the lime tree on Garrigill Village Green is not included in the works, and that one joiner has shown interest in quoting. He is looking to see if he can source antique English oak to match the existing materials.

*The meeting closed at 9.30pm*

Signed: .....

Dated: .....