

## Completion Report Alston Moor Parish Council Working Group

### Community Support Funding – Volunteering Project

#### Background

At the Alston Moor Parish council Precept meeting held January 2018, it was resolved to allocate £4,875 for a Volunteer Organiser.

‘The request from Alice Bondi (a director from Alston Moor Partnership) was for funding to appoint someone to co-ordinate voluntary activities, doing the tasks that volunteers are reluctant to do. AMP did not necessarily want to manage the project but would be willing to work alongside the Parish Council on a steering group. There is big concern amongst organisers that no new young people are coming through to volunteer to replace aging members. Another concern is that as soon as someone is paid to do something, the volunteers melt away. It would not be an easy job as the organiser would have to be clear about their role of finding recruits without doing the job themselves’. **(extract taken from AMPC minutes January 2018).**

In April 2019 a proposal was put forward by Cllr Denoual that the new council due to be elected in May, look towards establishing a working group to progress the project.

Members of volunteer co-ordinator group (as it was named), were appointed in May 2019. The working group was established and met for the first time in September 2019, where a chairperson for the group was appointed. Minutes of the working group would be provided for full council by Parish clerk. Terms of reference were agreed in line with our working group policy.

#### Progress timeline

Early on, the working group identified that rather than trying to recruit a paid individual, it would be wise to look towards seeking a group/individual to undertake this work as a community support initiative. In the October AMPC placed an advert locally and on social media, for a lead on the project to support community volunteering. By December, initially 3 expressions of interest were received. (Alston Moor Partnership, Paul Dyke, Nick Mason).

In January 2020, the working group agreed to put forward a recommendation to AMPC, that Volunteer Co-Ordinator funding and role be changed. On 3<sup>rd</sup> February, AMPC approved the re-named ‘Community Support Fund’ The precepted funding that had been allocated would be made available to fund volunteering support namely the volunteering project. At this stage, only 2 parties remained interested in the volunteering initiative. The working group agreed to invite the interested parties to submit a written proposal for consideration and to invite them to meet with the working group for informal discussions.

On 14<sup>th</sup> February 2020, Alston Moor Partnership advised that they no longer wished to put forward a proposal to the working group.

The working group received an outline proposal from the one remaining applicant - Nick Mason and met with him to discuss his ideas. It was resolved to put forward the group's recommendation that AMPC accept the offer put forward by Nick Mason, to set up a constituted group, who would be awarded the full funding amount to support the proposed volunteering project.

In March 2020 AMPC resolved to accept the working groups recommendation. And approval was given for the working group to move forward and manage the next steps.

In May, Nick Mason contacted Chris Johnson (Clerk) to ask if he could now move forward with the project. Work on setting up the Charity had stalled due to the Covid 19 outbreak and he was keen to make progress.

Work was undertaken to put together a grant release form, which would need to be submitted once details of the proposed Charity set up was confirmed and registered with the charity commission. The application form was agreed under delegated powers, it included sections to provide details of the proposed charity and its purpose, bank details and a requirement that the applicant provides AMPC with quarterly update reports on the use of the grant funding and the work undertaken. A copy of the approved form has been sent to the applicant. (The form needs to be completed to allow release of funding/ grant). The councils grant policy terms were included. (actions undertaken for the working group under delegation were ratified at AMPC meeting June 2020).

#### Progress update - Establishing a constituted group

5<sup>th</sup> May 2020 working group and Clerk were provided with an update, advising that Nick Mason was now in a position to apply to Charity Commission to set up a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (C.I.O),

'It is proposed that the initial structure will have five trustees and alongside that a broader advisory group acting as support. There will be strategic leads on specific areas. Some of the initial areas to be considered for development and support of volunteering (both existing and new), have been identified. Volunteering, community outreach, education and training, climate and environment, heritage and history. Working towards the outline proposal that was submitted.

Each lead will champion volunteering development and support through their existing networks and areas of specialism/interest. With a view to then moving on swiftly to set up a structured volunteering and citizenship programme. This is to be the first milestone for the work of the new constituted group'. **(Extract from email update during lockdown)**

At the working group meeting, Nick Mason mentioned that he would welcome the support of our working group and invited members to become involved with the new group, he would welcome representation on the broader advisory group for any of us with an interest. This would also assist with providing regular updates directly with AMPC. The broader advisory panel will be a flexible network, without the formality of a regime of regular meetings, but for those who are interested and able to provide input.

The chair of the working group provided a verbal update to full council on the volunteering project, outlining AMV developments to date, at the AMPC meeting held July 2020.

Due to lockdown it has only been possible to conduct limited work on the initial development of this project. Alston Moor Volunteering (AMV) as it will be named have started work on the review of volunteering aspirations/recommendations in the community plan and are drawing up an action plan based on that, whilst starting to network with existing local groups. Proposed charitable objects include the advancement of citizenship and community development for public benefit, through the promotion of volunteering and community outreach.

This will give flexibility to focus on achieving many of the aspired outcomes for volunteering activity described in the 2019 Alston Moor Community Plan. The full application with Charity Commission is still being processed, this provides accountability, transparency and advantages in promoting and seeking funding to support the local voluntary sector. This fundraising strategy will not dilute but will complement existing activity to bring more essential resources to those in our community with an interest in volunteering, providing opportunities not covered by existing local organisations. A small group of initial Trustees have been identified, which would be supported by a broader advisory group drawn from the community. At least two Parish Councillors have expressed interest in supporting the development of increased volunteering activity to support the older and more vulnerable people in the community.

There has been continued conversations with some of the senior leaders at Alston Moor Federation about the introduction of a community outreach programme to engage young people in structured volunteering opportunities on Alston Moor. This will also involve working with Alston Moor Partnership to ensure the focus is maintained on the community plan objectives, so it is aligned with key partners. AMV would like to involve more people in the life and development of community and give them the opportunity to be involved.

Once registration is complete the new entity will align with National Council for volunteer organisations and Cumbria CVS to access strategic support and resources.

The latest information I have received is that work continues, and that new charity is still going through the registration process. The Parish Clerk has yet to receive the completed documentation for the community support funding (grant). Once this is received, I understand funds can be released. I have asked Nick Mason to keep us updated as and when he has more information.

I would like to thank the working group for their work and commitment to this project, despite not all members being in favour of the original initiative for which precept funding was set aside back in January 2018, we have moved forward positively from that and with the councils support, the recommendation for the community support funding (grant) set aside to fund this initiative was ratified. The outcome being a community lead initiative to support both existing and new volunteering opportunities. The working group having completed its work, is now able to stand down.

The new charity through its work, should fit well alongside another recently approved initiative, which is to establish a community awards scheme, which I hope we as a council will start work on soon. This new project has already been allocated to Advisory, development and policy working group to progress.

Cllr Maxine Denoual - 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020