

ALSTON MOOR PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Alston Moor Parish Council held on Monday, 5th January 2015 at 7.15pm in Alston Town Hall.

Present: Cllrs: A. Martin (Chair), B. Aves, A. Bondi, D. Athey, M. Bell, A. Green, T. Haldon, M. Herdman, I. Johnson, R. Miller, T. Pennell, D. Phillips, P. Thompson.

Apologies: Cllrs: B. Cooper, E. Grew.

Absent: none.

Declarations of interest: none.

County Councillor's Report

Apologies from Cllr Robinson.

District Councillor's Report

Cllr Harrison reported on the following:

Street lights – there is to be a further meeting with Chris Slater to look at the street lights in Alston along the Hexham road missed out of the last site visit due to lack of time.

The paper put together by Cllr Godwin should read in the second from last paragraph that CCC provide most of the lights in Penrith and Brampton, not EDC.

1. Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 1st December 2014 be adopted as a correct record. Proposed by Cllr Herdman and seconded by Cllr Bondi. (4 abs)

1a Eden Housing Association report

Apologies from Carolyn Greenhalgh, due to bereavement Kevan Guest is unable to attend, and as both representatives want to be present it is hoped to re-schedule for the February meeting.

2. Matters Arising from the Minutes

2a/JAN/15 Police report

Re: Police report /DEC/14 It was agreed that it is important that regular patrols continue, especially in Alston and Nenthead, to remind the public of the police presence.

Resolved to write to Richard Quinn to ask what the plans are for Alston now Paul Crabtree has retired. Proposed by Cllr Bondi and seconded by Cllr Aves. (nem con) **Action.**

It was noted that the postbox at Leadgate had the front blown off over the Christmas period, and that postboxes at Slaggyford and Melmberby were also blown up.

2b/DEC/14 Tyne Willows Pavilion toilets

Re: 2fDEC/14 The clerk reported that Peter Shepherd has withdrawn his offer to carry out a CCTV survey of the drains besides the pavilion due to a difference of opinion with some members of the council. Members were disappointed with this decision, as while it is inevitable that there will be differences of opinion between individuals, the parish council as a body represents the community as a whole.

Cllr Bondi offered to write a piece for the next Alston Moor newsletter to try and explain what the parish council is about, and how it tries to represent the broad views of the community. The offer was accepted for the June issue of the newsletter, as the next issue already has an item about the elections.

It was agreed to seek estimates, while noting that this is a specialist service, which only a limited number of contractors could do. As only two local contractors were known it was agreed to let the clerk know if there were any others within a reasonable distance. **Action.**

2c/DEC/14 Firs Wood tree

Re: 2g/DEC/14 The clerk reported that the tree surgeon removed a couple of branches from the damaged tree along the Pennine Way, and has left the brushwood as requested.

2d/JAN/15 Subsidised Bus services

Re: 2h/DEC/14 The clerk reported that she contacted Rory Stewart to ask him to speak with the Secretary of State to get some clarity on the situation over parish councils subsidising bus services. The General

Power of Competence has been mentioned as a way forward, but not all parishes meet the eligibility criteria. Currently Alston Moor does not have enough elected members to qualify.

The County Council have asked the parish council to set up another transport meeting after the precept meeting, and indicated that there may be room for negotiation on membership of the group.

Attempts have been made to contact someone from Hartleyburn parish council, and it is possible they are without a clerk as the former clerk forwarded the request for information about the petition to the chair. Awaiting a response.

Cllr Martin reported that she was asked to speak on Radio Cumbria about the community minibus, which has a number of problems with reliability and breaks down frequently. Another problem is that the County Council wants volunteers to take it for servicing to Penrith regularly, which is a waste of someone's time as it could be serviced locally. It was thought the bus services to Carlisle and Hexham are being well used. The clerk reported that she had discussed the issue of bus passes with the County Council and they suggested that it might help if those that could afford to do so paid the fare. An alternative is to set up a scheme, possibly with the help of Age Concern, to subsidise the buses. Noted that pass holders already have to (*I may be wrong, but I thought it was that many of them did in fact do so – I can't actually see how anyone could be forced to do so, given the national scheme*) pay for one way on the Hexham market bus.

2e/JAN/15 Street lights

Re: 2i/DEC/14 The clerk reported that she contacted Rory Stewart to ask for his support in reviewing CCC's lighting policy for Alston, and he responded that it does seem unfair for the town to be excluded when they have provided lighting on the main roads in Penrith and Brampton.

Resolved to ask CALC what responsibilities are transferred when roads are changed from one category to another, as happened in Alston in 1964 when the B roads were reclassified as A roads. Proposed by Cllr Phillips and seconded by Cllr Haldon. (nem con) **Action**.

Resolved to ask CCC for clarification as to why they have refused to take on roads within Alston. Proposed by Cllr Bondi and seconded by Cllr Haldon. (nem con) **Action**.

Chris Slater from EDC is returning to complete the Alston street light survey this Wednesday, and anyone wishing to attend is welcome.

2f/JAN/15 Ambulance Service

Re: 8/DEC/14 A response was received from Salman Desai who confirmed that all front-line vehicles including RRVs have torches on them. The ambulance that responded to the incident had a torch and the alley lights on the vehicle, but did not feel they needed additional lighting. The crew have reflected upon this judgement following a review of the incident. All ambulances have been checked and carry torches.

Applicants for the Alston ambulance have started their training, but it is too early to provide a definite start date.

2g/JAN/15 Nenthead public toilets

Re: 2/DEC/14 It was noticed during the streetlight visit to Nenthead that the taps for the washbasins were turned off. Cllr Aves reported that a plumber has replaced the taps.

3. Planning

3a/JAN/15 14/1011 Outline application. Outline application for the conservation/replacement of a dwellinghouse. Pastures House, North of Hill House Farm, Garrigill for Mr & Mrs J & L Green.

Cllr Green declared an interest

Recommended for approval. Proposed by Cllr Athey and seconded by Cllr Aves. (2 abs)

Decision Notices

No notices received.

4. Correspondence

4a/JAN/15 CALC – Capping & Section 137 limit

An e-mail was received from CALC.

Capping – the minister made a statement about parishes to invite views on whether the highest spending parishes should be subject to the same referendum principles as the rest of local government. David Claxton pointed out that it is not known what is meant by highest spending parishes although it is likely that the minister is referring to those parishes, which set a band D precept, and are around the level of some district councils. The consultation ends mid-January, so parishes might want to defer submitting their precept to the district council until there is absolute clarity.

S137 – the spending limit has been increased to £7.36 per elector for 2015/16

4b/JAN/15 Government Consultation on Parish Polls

The Government has published a consultation paper on Parish Polls. The paper looks at four main areas:

- (a) increasing the number of electors required to trigger a poll. At present the number is very low and can incur a high cost to a parish council;
- (b) bringing the voting arrangements into line with those of other polls;
- (c) tightening the criteria for demanding a parish poll so that the poll must relate to a parish issue (electors around the country have demanded polls on district, county or national issues);
- (d) raising awareness of the outcome of the poll and other miscellaneous matters.

CALC reported that the proposed reforms seem sensible and they will be submitting a response. Parish councils were also urged to respond by the end of January deadline.

Resolved to support CALC's view as the revision seems sensible. Proposed by Cllr Bondi and seconded by Cllr Martin. (nem con) **Action.**

4c/JAN/15 EDC budget consultation

An e-mail from CALC stated that Eden District Council's draft budget was agreed by the Executive and is now being consulted on until 17th January. Cllr Harrison noted that there is a scrutiny meeting next week.

4d/JAN/15 Literature received

Local Council Review – Winter 2014

Neighbourhood Planning Update – December 2014 issue 4

Connecting Cumbria Newsletter – December 2014

CALC Circular – December/January 2015

North Pennines AONB – Nectarworks (making spaces more pollinator friendly)

5. CCC budget proposals 'Securing your future' public budget consultation 2015/16

Cllr Bondi reported that she was unimpressed that the consultation document talked about figures without providing information about what has been spent before so that some idea of the level of cut proposed was clear. She requested this information at the consultation event in Alston, but so far the County have been unable to provide it, although a number of promises were made. They offered her a meeting in Carlisle with the senior finance office, but she is not prepared to make a special trip to Carlisle for this. With the information available it is very hard to respond.

Resolved that Cllr Bondi would put a response together stating that it was not possible to comment without the required information, for the clerk to forward to the County Council. Proposed by Cllr Bondi and seconded by Cllr Pennell. (nem con)

The consultation document also asked for opinions on whether Cumbria should become a unitary authority, although it was up to the Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP, Secretary of State to initiate procedures. It was agreed that this was too big an issue to discuss in any depth, as there are many different options and opinions and that a 10-minute discussion would be held after the precept meeting next week.

6. Working group to set up actions required in the Financial Regulations

It was agreed that Cllrs Haldon and Martin would look at the actions required in the financial regulations and report back to the next meeting.

7. Working group for Community Warden 2014/15

It was agreed that Cllrs Miller, Aves, Athey and Grew (if willing) would form the working group.

8. Tenders for Henderson's Wood & Firs Walk walling works

Firs Wood walling work - one estimate was received for the work on Firs Wood. Noted that several wallers had been invited to provide an estimate, but had not followed up.

Resolved to hold the estimate over until next month and if no further estimates were received to consider it, with the intention of getting the job done. Proposed by Cllr Miller and seconded by Cllr Haldon.

Henderson's Wood thinning and planting work - the following quotes were received:

Thinning	Revenue	Planting
£3260	£242	£1,060
£7,798	£801	£558
£2750	£250	£507

£800 per day for 15 days maximum - £12,000

Resolved to accept the quotation from T. Father of £2,750 for thinning and £507 for planting. Proposed by Cllr Herdman and seconded by Cllr Bell. (2 abs)

The clerk reported that Mr Father indicated that he would be willing to discuss how the timber should be disposed of, as it might be possible to obtain more for it by involving another contractor. She also pointed out that the Forestry Commission grant would not cover the full cost of the work, and that they had altered the terms of the grant so it was probable that the funding would be reduced. Agreed to discuss funding at the precept meeting.

Cllr Godwin made the general point, as one who sits on grant panels, that there is an expectation now that parish councils provide financial support for projects within their area before a grant will be awarded.

9. Reports from Committees & Council Representatives

9a/JAN/15 Meeting with Job Centre Staff

Cllr Martin reported that she met with representatives from the job centre to find out if the agencies could work together to provide a more efficient service for job seekers. She hopes to meet with the Rural Growth Hub to see if it is possible to hold a works club in Alston, and to provide information locally on what benefits and opportunities are available.

9b/JAN/15 War Memorials update

Cllr Athey reported that an application is underway to the War Memorials Trust for grant funding, and the volunteers are just waiting for all the quotes to come in. However, there is an issue with the wall beside the Nenthall war memorial, which does not form part of the site and cannot be funded. The volunteers want the parish council to ask Cumbria County Council to repair it. **Action.**

9c/JAN/15 Collapsed manholes

It was suggested that this and other urgent highways matters are reported to the Highways Hotline, either directly or through Local Links.

9d/JAN/15 Nenthead Ward Meeting

Cllr Pennell reported that he hoped to get an update from Minco, who had their AGM before Christmas. He thought the report on Nenthead was generally encouraging, but had not gone into a lot of detail. He hoped to get them to the January meeting, or possibly the AGM.

It was noted that as the report seemed positive the potential for new jobs and residents could be used in support of arguments against the reduction of services.

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

Cllr Thompson asked to discuss the issue of assets that have been sold in Alston, and what if anything had been put back into the community. Members observed that they were not certain if there was an argument in this, as the income from the sale of assets across the County gets used for the benefit of the residents of Cumbria. STRPS had benefitted from having the land around the railway handed over to them, but this would not have happened without a sound business plan.

What would be useful is to be aware of which assets have not been sold yet that could be useful for the community.

11. Finance

11a/JAN/15 Balances

The balances as 5th January 2015 were as follows:-

Alston Moor Parish Council tr/ac	£16,747.82
Alston Moor Parish Council bus/ac	£12,259.57
Eden Credit Union	£6,998.00

11b/JAN/15 Accounts for Payment

The following accounts were for payment:-

<i>Summary of accounts for payment:-</i>	£2,783.85
<i>Summary of income received since last meeting:-</i>	£831.56
<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 Herdman and seconded by Cllr Aves (nem con)

The meeting closed at 9.30pm

Signed:

Dated: