



## ALSTON MOOR PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of Alston Moor Parish Council held on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> October 2020 at 7pm, held remotely on zoom.

**Present:** Cllrs: M. Denoual, A. Green, E. Grew, C. Harrison, A. Holt, M. Hanley, H. Ho, L. Seaton, Z. Robson.

**Apologies:** none.

**Absent:** none.

**Declarations of interest:** none.

1. A minutes silence was held in remembrance of Margaret Bell, former chair and parish councillor for many years. Cllr Hanley paid tribute to her pivotal role in bringing the town hall back to life, fundraising skills and dedication to Alston hospital.

Letters of resignation were read from Tim Haldon, Ron Robinson and John Glendinning. Ray Miller and Alix Martin read their own resignation letters. Alix Martin stated her letter will be placed in the public domain.

The clerk was asked to minute that those remaining are disappointed to have lost so many councillors who have served for so long and well. Cllrs Grew, Hanley and Harrison stated that they have decided to stay on but hold similar sentiments to those who resigned.

### **2. Appointment of chair and vice-chair**

**Resolved** to appoint Cllr Holt as chair. Proposed by Cllr Green and seconded by Cllr Robson. (6+3-)

**Resolved** to appoint Cllr Green for vice-chair. Proposed by Cllr Holt and seconded by Cllr Grew. (nem con)

### **3. Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the parish council meeting held on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2020 be approved as a correct record. Proposed by Cllr Green and seconded by Cllr Ho. (5+ 2- 2 abs)

### **4. Update on Alston Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan**

Eden's Conservation Officer reported that she is resuming the character appraisal and management plan for Alston Conservation Area. The appraisal is a tool to demonstrate the area's special interest, explain the reasons and effects of designation to residents and users, and is a material consideration in planning decisions.

The management plan provides guidance and proposals to channel development pressure to conserve the special quality of the conservation area and is adopted by the local planning authority as a Supplementary Planning document.

Alston's Conservation Area was designated on 27<sup>th</sup> May 1976, although a character appraisal and management plan has not yet been published. The area was added to Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register 2016 due to a number of factors having a negative impact on the character of the area, including the replacement of traditional sash windows with modern materials, deteriorating buildings and shopfronts, vacant buildings, the loss of the cobbled setts and a fall in visitor numbers

The first stage of the desktop research stage of the appraisal has been carried out, and six individual character areas reflecting the different phases of development identified.

The next stage involves field investigations to assess the current condition of the conservation area, looking at the type, quality, materials and features of the buildings, as well as looking at the public realm to record street furniture, ease of movement, views and landmarks. Also, the extent of the loss of traditional features and materials, areas for potential enhancement and buildings that may be suitable for listing. A photographic record of buildings has been started. When the results are in, the next stage is to identify management proposals for Alston and to review and amend the boundary if necessary. The draft appraisal then goes for a 6-week public consultation period.

There is an opportunity for residents to get involved in the field investigation and volunteers are welcome. No prior experience is needed and pro-forma sheets for recording will be made available. It is also intended to supplement this work with an on-line survey to gather views. Should this be supplemented with paper copies? Questions were invited.

It was mentioned that while most people are able to fill in on-line surveys not everyone uses a computer so they would need access to a paper version. This could be discussed further with the Post Office as the issues around Covid has complicated matters.

Cllr Hanley volunteered to help out. Information if provided can also be put on the council's facebook page.

## **5. County & District reports**

### **County Council**

*Cllr Driver reported on the following:*

**Hartside & Front Street works** – the community were thanked for their patience over the work on Hartside, which was finished a week ahead of schedule. Work on Front Street started today and is going well. The county are working with businesses on access. Margaret Bell's funeral takes place on Thursday, and some of the work will be held back for this. She will be a real miss to the town, for all the work she did. Also thanks to Gina who worked with the Highways team to arrange extra signage to encourage people to come into the town, which can be re-used during future works.

**Health Scrutiny** – the first on-line public meeting was held looking at winter planning, which is complicated by the pandemic. Much work has gone on locally to make sure the capacity is there and that beds are in the right places. Our area now extends to the north-east, and the aim is to bring support as close to home as can be arranged. There are delays in elective care and long waiting lists to keep under review, but it is not expected that the next few months will be easy.

*Cllr Seaton had to leave the meeting at this point.*

**Covid-19** – there are regular reports on what is happening across the county, with Eden still having the lowest risk. Our area is classed as high risk on the test and trace app because of the proximity to Northumberland. New advice has been released advising that no more than 2 households meet up, although this is not legally enforceable.

**Parish resignations** – thanks to the councillors who have stood down, it is regrettable that this has happened; former members Alix Martin, Ray Miller and Tim Haldon have given a huge amount of support to the Alston Moor Emergency Support Group, which could not have delivered what it did without their input. The remaining councillors were advised that their county councillor will do all that she can to support them, while recommending a period of reflection on what has happened.

*Questions*

The County are trying to get moved the caravan parked with a towbar on the pavement at Jollybeard.

### **District Council**

*Cllr Sharp reported on the following:*

**Community buildings** – updated guidance on re-opening community buildings has been circulated.

**Reports** – circulated for inclusion on the new parish council website.

*Cllr Hanley reported on the following:*

**Reports** – circulated and posted on the website. T

**The general council meeting** received a petition objecting to the planning permission given to Omega Proteins because of the smell emitted from the plant. A motion of no confidence in the leader did not succeed.

**The budget planning meeting** discussed government support for Eden for Covid. Eden had a 5% increase in council tax for the current year but are concerned about residents' ability to pay due to loss of income during Covid. Gross expenditure is expected to be £12.9million, and as the budget will be under pressure, savings will need to be found elsewhere

**Overview and Scrutiny committee** – discussed homelessness, which is low in Eden, but expected to increase at the end of the furlough scheme. Grants have been found to employ two support workers, one to help those who were formerly homeless maintain their tenancies and the other for alcohol- and drug-related issues.

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**Green energy scheme** – Eden was the only council to apply and has been awarded £500k for loft and cavity wall insulation and air source heat for those with an income of less than £30k per annum, which is available until March. It is focussed on three areas including Alston, and eligible people will be encouraged to apply. Officers are looking for events that they can attend to let people know about the scheme.

*Members offered to help publicise the grants when more information is available.*

## **6. Public participation**

**Resignations** – a resident gave thanks to former councillors Wright, Miller, Haldon and Martin and said how concerned they were that they felt it necessary to resign. One member has serious health issues and the constant attacks have impacted on her health and mental wellbeing. Other residents mentioned their sadness over the resignations of long-standing councillors, and that newly appointed Ron Robinson also felt it necessary to stand down. Parish councillors have a privileged position, most are elected by residents who have clear expectations on how councillors should behave. The code of conduct is not always upheld, but ongoing support and training is available.

**Listed building advice** – a request can be forwarded to the Conservation Officer.

**Town Hall matters** – residents were asked to e-mail requests to Cllr Holt for consideration at Town Hall meetings.

## **7. Progress reports**

### **7a/OCT/20 Alston Flood Alleviation planting proposals**

Re: 2/SEP/20 There was a suggestion at the council meeting last month that some measures could be taken to reduce the prospect of flooding in the town from the Mill Race. The clerk suggested that this might be something the council could follow up with the county council officers, but with the understanding that any works would require support and co-operation from landowners and tenants.

It was agreed to ask the County Council what the next steps would be. **Action C1.**

### **7b/OCT/20 Proposed removal of BT phone boxes in Alston and Nenthead**

Re: 8/SEP/20 The request to retain the phone boxes in Alston and Nenthead has been submitted to Eden District Council, who will let us know the outcome in time. Residents were asked to use the phone boxes occasionally.

### **7c/OCT/20 Nenthead Surgery report**

Re: 6c/SEP/20 **Litter bin** - the request for a litter bin near Kings Head has been forwarded to the district council, and Cllr Seaton has assisted by providing photos of the proposed site.

**School playing fields** – awaiting a response from Cumbria County Council on the damaged fence.

**Footpath near Kings Head** – the branches have been cut back by the County Council.

**Memorial seat** – the Newsletter team are considering a seat to commemorate Dick Phillips near the river, and as the council are also considering a seat, potential sites need to be considered. Agenda next month.

**Noticeboard** – the contractor has apologised for the delay, quoting difficulty in obtaining supplies at present. He hopes to start work on the noticeboard next month.

It was reported that people have been posting inappropriate messages on the damaged noticeboard and it is requested that this stop. The notices will be taken down if members are informed.

### **7d/OCT/20 Tyne Willows Recycling Centre**

Prior to March 2020, a discussion had been held with Eden District Council on improvements to the recycling centre at Tyne Willows. The proposals have just come in, with the request that the council considers them urgently. Former Cllr Miller had a concern that the proposed re-siting of the gate would take vehicles onto a softer area.

**Resolved** that Cllr Harrison be delegated to carry out a site visit and any recommendations on the proposed plans be forwarded to the district council. Proposed by Cllr Holt and seconded by Cllr Green. (nem con)

## **8. Council Representatives reports**

### **8a/OCT/20 RHSS report**

Cllr Grew invited questions on the report circulated earlier. She explained that ACT had talked about the Good Neighbour scheme, and a volunteer from Alston Moor Partnership has offered to get it started with a phone help line. It will not be for emergencies, but things like shopping, gardening, and dog walking and

could link up with Local Links when it re-opens. There has been a discussion about involving the church, and members involved in pastoral care see around 25 to 30 residents per week, offering a befriending service. There are also plans to set up a skills bank, which people can contact to find others or swap skills.

Window Wanderland, on the agenda, has also been flagged up for a possible scheme in January. It is early days yet, but they would hope to encourage businesses and residents to light up their windows for others to enjoy.

#### **8b/OCT/20 Alston Hospital Alliance report**

Cllr Grew invited questions on the report circulated earlier. She requested that the council include on next month's agenda a discussion on getting more defibrillators, as she felt it would be an appropriate way to use the funds that were mostly raised by Margaret Bell

### **9. Planning applications**

**9a/OCT/20** 20/0611 Full application. Extensions and alterations to the house and barn with new ancillary store. Priorsdale Farm, Garrigill CA9 3HB for Weardale Estates.

**Recommended** for approval on condition that the Right of Way adjoining the site remains safely open. Proposed by Cllr Grew and seconded by Cllr Green. (nem con)

**9b/OCT/20** 20/0626 Full application. Low level oil storage tank for domestic heating to be sited in the garden on the front elevation with screening. Bankfoot Cottage, Nenthead CA9 3NP for Beechwood Construction – Mr S. Johnstone.

**Recommended** for approval. Proposed by Cllr Denoual and seconded by Cllr Robson. (nem con)

**9c/OCT/20** 20/0648 Full application. Proposed redevelopment of the former Blue Bell Hotel into a four bedroom house, a three bedroom house and a one bedroom maisonette. Blue Bell Inn, Townfoot, Alston CA9 3RN.

**Recommended** for approval. Proposed by Cllr Grew and seconded by Cllr Green. (nem con)

**9d/OCT/20** 20/0649 Listed Building. Proposed redevelopment of the former Blue Bell Hotel into a four bedroom house, a three bedroom house and a one bedroom maisonette. Blue Bell Inn, Townfoot, Alston CA9 3RN.

**Recommended** for approval. Proposed by Cllr Grew and seconded by Cllr Green (nem con)

**9e/OCT/20** 20/0570 Listed Building. The Hive, Nenthead, Listed Building Consent for the retention of 2 no advertisement signs on south elevation and 1 no noticeboard on East elevation.

**Recommended** for approval subject to the application being for this specific advert, with the request that any changes would require a new application. Proposed by Cllr Grew and seconded by Cllr Holt. (6+ 2 abs)

### **10. Window Wanderland scheme**

The idea behind this is for residents and businesses to decorate their windows and light them up over a set weekend, or week to brighten up the streets and encourage residents and visitors to walk around. A website has been set up with more information. It has been suggested that the towns in Eden stagger their times, possibly in January or February. It was suggested that the council work with the Good Neighbour Group to promote the scheme.

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

#### **11a/OCT/20 Government White Papers on planning**

CALC forwarded the following documents:

Changes to the current planning system (the deadline for responses has passed)

Planning for the future - the planning white paper (NALC deadline for responses 15 October)

Transparency and competition: a call for evidence on data on land control (NALC deadline for responses 16 October)

It was noted that there is a lot of detail in the papers, and it was suggested that members individually respond to the questions that are relevant to our circumstances. CALC are offering a planning training course.

#### **11b/OCT/20 Correspondence**

Circulated. (Appendix 2)

## **12. Administration**

### **12a/OCT/20 External auditor's report**

There were no matters arising from the external auditor's report for 2019-2020. The clerk reported that the notice of the conclusion of the audit has been published.

### **12b/OCT/20 Bank signatories**

The clerk reported that the council needs to appoint new bank signatories, as Cllr Green is the only member currently authorised to sign cheques following the resignations.

**Resolved** to appoint Cllr Harrison, Green, Holt and Robson.

The clerk pointed out that she had attempted to ring HSBC to obtain a new mandate on several occasions without success, as their website asks that local government and charity account holders contact them first. Anyone who is not already an HSBC customer will also need to go into the bank with identification.

### **12c/OCT/20 Councillor training opportunities**

Circulated. Some members have already contacted the clerk with requests. It was suggested waiting until new members are appointed before asking for a Code of Conduct training session.

Agreed to purchase for members the CALC booklets on being a good employer and the Good Councillors Guide to Finance and Transparency booklet. **Action C1.**

**Resolved** that councillors can attend as many training sessions as they want. Proposed by Cllr Denoual and seconded by Cllr Grew. (nem con)

### **12d/OCT/20 Proposal to accept the draft scheme of delegation**

An amendment to the scheme was proposed last month, with an agreement that it would be re-considered at this month's meeting.

It was agreed to hold over for further discussion at the next ADP meeting.

### **12e/OCT/20 Council admin.**

The clerk is working, when time permits, on the website to update and replace much of the information that was lost last month when the old website stopped being supported. The new template is one currently used by many parish councils and should be easier to navigate. It has also been possible to set up a members' area. It may be possible to unsubscribe from Dropbox, but this should not be done before the clerk is able to confirm that there will be no problems with file management.

She has signed up for the SLCC conference next week so will try to attend as many sessions as possible, as well as a webinar on GDPR.

### **12f/OCT/20 Notice of National Salary Award 2020-2021**

Notice that NALC have issued the latest pay award which took effect from April 2020.

## **13. Accounts for payment**

The following accounts were for payment:-

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <i>Summary of accounts for payment: -</i>               | £2,490.91 |
| <i>Summary of income received since last meeting: -</i> | £0.32     |
| <i>Summary of accounts paid since last meeting: -</i>   | £1,803.67 |
| RHSS payments   | £23.00    |

As the property management budget will overspend, funding for the tree works needs to be vired from reserves.

**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 Harrison and seconded by Cllr Green (5+ 3 abs)

*The meeting closed at 9.20pm*

Signed: .....

Dated: .....