

ALSTON MOOR ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Minutes of a meeting held on Tuesday 25th April 2017 at 7.30pm in Alston Town Hall.

Present: Cllrs: A. Green (Chair), A. Martin, T. Haldon, S. Hall, R. Miller, C. Harrison, H. Ho, S. Hall, D. Phillips, County Cllr M. Robinson, District Cllrs P. Godwin & T. Sheriff & members of the public.

Apologies: Cllrs B. Aves, D. Athey, E. Grew, & Rev M. Nash Williams.

Hustings for the County Council Councillor

Prospective candidates Claire Driver, Alan Marsden, Mary Robinson and Walter Walker took part in a lively questions and answer session.

Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 18th April 2016 were approved as a correct record. Proposed by Alix Martin and seconded by Chris Harrison.

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

Nentsberry speed limit request - a speed survey was commissioned as part of the ongoing accident remedial study by the TDA (Traffic Data Unit). Less than 1% of vehicles exceeded the speed limit, with an average speed of 51mph. The survey was carried out during the summer at peak times. Highways suggested that peoples' perception of speed may be the issue, as the complaints mentioned the noise nuisance, which could lead them to think speeds were greater than they were in reality.

Devolution of services – Dick Phillips pointed out that the District Councillors' report stated that there would be no requirement for parishes to take on services if the parishes did not want to. This is relevant, as the District has more recently become more insistent about passing responsibility for services on to parishes.

2. Report from Alston Moor Parish Council

The annual report for 2016/17 was circulated.

Questions from the floor were invited.

None received.

3. Reports from County, District & Parish Councillors

3a County Council report

Cllr Mary Robinson reported on the following:

Success Regime – she has worked alongside the League of Friends and the community group challenging the Success Regime around the consultation and recommendation to close the medical beds in Alston. She spent a full day at the Health Scrutiny Board meeting in Carlisle and was totally frustrated with the decision not to refer the decision to close the medical beds in the community hospitals to the Secretary of State.

Community Transport Group chair– she argued the case for the minibus to come to Alston Moor against competition from across the county. It needs to be used or it will be sent elsewhere. Thanks to David Athey, who has taken on most of the driving.

Traffic Management Group - this is attended by local representatives including the parish council, who meet with Highways, the Police and Eden District Council to provide a joined up approach to highways and traffic related concerns across the moor. Discussions include speeding issues which are an ongoing concern.

Meetings & issues – she attends parish council meetings and will take forward to the County any concerns raised. This includes the proposals from the Coal Authority about the project to clean up the Nent, which is a County Council planning consideration.

Other representation – she sits on the Adult Scrutiny which covers adult services, elderly care and the new Integrated Care Communities proposals for people to remain in their own homes as long as is physically possible. She chairs the Carlisle and Eden Community Safety Partnership, which aims to reduce crime and re-offending, and make our communities safer places to live. She also attends the Crash Reduction Partnership, with representatives from the Police, Highways, Highways

England, and County Council, with a remit to reduce the number of killed and seriously injured on the roads.

Questions were invited

Mary Robinson was thanked for her interest in Alston Moor and service to the community.

3b Eden District Council report

Cllr Pat Godwin reported on the following:

Human resources and appeals – she sits on this panel which has been busy as three key directors left during the year, which has resulted in a lot of work.

Footway lights - continues as an issue, but there is a programme of repairs which will be rolled out in time. Anyone can all in to Local Links to report an out of order light. She reminded those present that the only lights which can be kept are those on standard columns. The lights on buildings and telegraph poles will be taken out when they fail. In addition the District Council officers conducted site visits with parish council representatives to agree a programme of footway light reductions.

Devolution of non-statutory services – which includes footway lights. Devolution will not be forced onto parish councils, but the thinking behind it is that by 2020 the County grant will go to zero, and if services are not affordable, passing them on to the parishes may be a way of preserving them.

Local plan – this will provide the housing allocations for the next 30 years. Land for housing in Alston and Nenthead is included, and can be checked on the website.

Friends of Alston cemetery – it has the Green Flag award. The Friends meet with officers twice a year for a walk around and to raise issues. The central path is being improved a bit at a time. The group is open and will welcome new members.

Cllr Tommy Sheriff reported on the following:

Meetings – he sits on the planning committee, housing and community, and environment and economy scrutiny committees.

Electronic planning – Eden aim to digitalise all planning applications, doing away with the paper copies sent to parish councils. The issues are that internet connections for many areas are not good. There are a number of logistics to work though, including access to equipment, and the reservations of parishes, including Alston Moor who are happy with the current system.

Residents might be interested in knowing that Cybermoor post planning reports on their website at the same time as the district council as well as police reports.

Cllr Mary Robinson reported on the following:

Footway lights – there are issues in that the footway lights are not all in the places where they are most needed. Cllr Robinson stated that she has asked questions about the lack of clarity over the issue and has received an inadequate response. The proposal to devolve the lights to parish councils is unlikely to be sustainable, despite the offer of funding on a sliding scale for the next five years. Eden does plan to repair out of order street lights on the approved list.

Future of Alston Cottage Hospital – Eden put forward a motion of unanimous support for the cottage hospital, which was sadly disregarded by the Success Regime. The intent now is to focus on the League of Friends plan, ensure it is assessed properly and set up in parallel with current services.

4. Report from local organisations and charities

4a Alston Cottage Hospital League of Friends – Malcolm Forster reported that it was widely felt to be an unfair decision by the Success Regime to close the hospital beds, as there was no option in the consultation paper to keep the beds.

A briefing paper on the current situation was circulated. There is a staffing crisis due to the resignation of two members of staff, so the 6 inpatient beds at the Cottage Hospital have closed temporarily. Thanks have to go to the dedication of the remaining staff, but it was not sustainable to try and maintain the same staffing level. They will remain in Alston delivering a more comprehensive community-based service, which will enable more people to receive the care they need at home. The staff will also continue to run the nurse-led treatment centre, the outpatient department and the day hospital.

Provided new staff can be recruited, the NSH Foundation trust will re-open the beds, and in the meantime the working group are continuing with their proposal for a new model of care and are in

discussion with Cumbria Partnership NHS, but it will take time and commitment to achieve a successful outcome.

4b Hospital Campaign Group – Alix Martin reported that she attends the League of Friends meetings as parish council representative, but is also involved in a separate working group with the aim of getting a fully functioning hospital up and running again. The group have discussed taking legal action against the Clinical Commissioning Group to stop them taking away the medical beds. This is an expensive option, but costs could be reduced if someone eligible for legal aid files the charge. Initial enquiries are being made to a barrister, and if it is decided to go ahead with legal action, requests for the local and wider community to help with the costs will have to be made.

4c Alston Ambulance Service – Rick Shaw reported that the first team is up and running, providing a significant amount of cover. The second cohort are going through training and should finish towards the end of May, after which it should be possible to provide full cover.

Questions

There was a question about the application process, as some people had applied but heard nothing. Rick Shaw explained that there has been a national change to the training, and in future it will not be possible to deliver training in the same way, as applicants will need to undergo a full time course. There are enough people for now, but the new training policy will necessitate a complete re-think.

Another query was about transporting patients, but this is dependent upon the patient being seen and assessed by a healthcare professional. If appropriate the Alston team will be able to transport the patient.

4d Alston Moor Schools Federation – Ian Johnson reported on all the Alston Moor schools.

The primary schools – in both schools the children are working hard and the staff positive, having undergone a period of transition during the last three years, with staff changes, maternity leave and the absence of a deputy head. Both primary schools have work to do around standards, partially because of the transitions, but are catching up.

SKS – is rated as a good school, with lots of positives. People were invited to read the report on the website. Parents should be proud of the current generation and the manner in which they are going about their work. Ian Johnson said that SKS students had been labelled unfairly, their behaviour is exemplary on the whole, and their contribution very positive.

Questions

A question was asked about the use of volunteers. People are very welcome to work with the children as the more contact they have with the community the better. Anyone interested will have to go through checks, but if interested please get in touch with the school.

Another question was about the relocation. The governors reached a decision earlier this year, planning permission was granted, and funding approved by the Country Council to re-locate Alston primary school and playgroup to the SKS site. The site will be improved to suit the needs of children of all ages, and as the school was built to hold up to 350 pupils, the space will be significantly better than the current primary school, with improved access to specialist areas such as science. The space has been divided so that the younger children will not come into contact with the seniors, while allowing for a transition for the upper junior classes.

Merging the physical site of the two Alston schools will support both budgets, as both schools are struggling with finance, and will enable them to come up with a three year plan, with the aim of achieving a sustainable model. There are no plans to make any changes to Nenthead primary school, which is in credit. It needs a certain number of children to be viable, but at the moment all is well.

The contract for the work was awarded to Jacob Stobbard, who have done preliminary work inside the building, and will be on site full time until the work is complete by the end of August. Ray Miller and the caretaker helped staff and students to clear and move rooms, so that the areas the contractors need to access are clear and do not get in the way of the smooth running of the school. In answer to a further question Ian Johnson pointed out that the school had no obligation to go to consultation, but the governors were committed to having people's views taken on board.

No provision has been made for the needs of disabled pupils. The issue is that funding follows the pupil, and currently there are no disabled children requiring access. It seems counterproductive, but is the way schools are funded, and disabled provision is a matter for the County.

4e Alston Recreation Grounds – due to time constraints Pat Godwin submitted a written report. Besides the annual fundraising events, a coffee morning, sponsored walk and bike ride, a new source of income was the Fairhill Lotto. There is still time this year to sign up for £10. The parish council gives a donation to help with running costs, and the Probation Service Community Payback Team have been a great help in cutting the grass, tidying branches and other maintenance tasks. The Ariel slide is being repaired and should be fully functional soon. However, they are desperately short of trustees and volunteers to help out, especially anyone with children or an interest in ground maintenance.

4f Alston Moor Partnership – Alice Bondi explained that she is the membership director of the Partnership, and is involved with putting together a new Community Plan to replace the old one which ran out last year. As part of this work she and other volunteers are meeting with local groups to gather some initial thoughts on key things people want to see happening over the next 5 – 10 years. This is the initial stage of the work; there will be meetings and discussions later to bring everyone together around specific topics.

4g Alston Local Links – Elizabeth MacDonald submitted a written report. Local Links were busy again. They are involved in taking bookings and helping organise trips for the Community minibus and the day-trippers as well as selling tickets for the regular bus to Carlisle during school holidays when the normal service bus doesn't run. There was also a successful trip with Wright Bros Coaches to Edinburgh Christmas markets.

Knit and Natter takes place on the first Tuesday of the month, and the reading group on the first Thursday. There are quarterly flower display workshops and a sing-a-long for young children on Tuesday mornings. Local Links are also hosting a Police Desk with PCSO Dean Raines on the last Wednesday of the month.

4h Alston Moor Remembers – grant funding from the War Memorials Trust and funds raised locally from businesses, coffee mornings and other fund raising activities including donations from the WW1 exhibition in Local Links enabled restoration work on the Alston War Memorial. Thanks go to Alston Natural Stone for their work. There just remains some work on the lettering to complete the project. Funds raised amounted to £10,140.

Work is still to be done on the Nenthall Memorial so fund-raising is ongoing. The WWI exhibition is to be updated this year to commemorate the centenary of Passchendaele, the Third Battle of Ypres and new files that are still being added. All money from donations will go to the restoration fund.

4i Alston Moor Makers Market – is held monthly on the first Saturday of the month from March to December. It is going well with money raised from the raffle and awards from the organisers going to local good causes including Santa at the Market Cross, Grisedale residents' outings fund, the Hub museum and Alston Gala.

The meeting closed at 9.30pm