



# ALSTON MOOR PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of Alston Moor Parish Council held on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> March 2022 in the Masonic Hall at 7pm.

**Present:** Cllrs: N. English (Chair), P. Best, B. Davies, A. Green, E. Grew, M. Hanley, C. Harrison, S. Hattersley, H. Ho, R. Miller, G. Ransom, A. Robertson, R. Robinson.

**Apologies:** Cllrs: B. Cooper, I. Lindley.

**Absent:** none

**Declarations of interest:** 10/MAR/22 Cllrs English & Ransom & 14b/MAR/22 Cllrs Miller & Ransom.

## **1. Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the parish council meeting held on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> February 2022 be approved as a correct record. Proposed by Cllr Davies and seconded by Cllr Robertson. (8+ 5 abs)

## **2. Front Street tree planting**

Stephen Beimers spoke about a proposal for tree planting in Front Street he put forward 8 years ago that was not progressed. He was asked recently about what might be possible now and produced costings based on current prices, which come in around £1,190 per specimen tree. The costings are for trees with a 6" girth and includes a tree guard. Suitable trees include London plane, lime, or hornbeam. The Urban Tree Challenge Fund could be considered for grant funding of up to 50% for urban or semi-urban settings with a population of 2,000, there is a possibility Alston might be eligible.

Members discussed whether there might be any suitable sites within the town centre, expressing concerns about potential damage to the cobbles, infrastructure, and property from tree roots. Mr Beimers stated that if concrete rings were used this would force the roots down lower and avoid damage.

Potential sites might be the grass area in front of the Town Hall, below at Townfoot, or Blackhouse Corner. It was noted that when consulted on potential schemes for Townfoot residents voted in favour of leaving this site as it is.

The parish council does not own any land within the town centre, so the County Council or EDC would need to give permission. Cllr Driver suggested by e-mail that any proposals should be discussed with the new unitary authority as part of the next phase of Front Street regeneration.

It was agreed that the potential for tree planting should be investigated further as there is also the suggestion from last month for a specimen tree for each community for the Queen's Jubilee.

Agreed to set up a working group with Cllrs Hanley, Robinson, and Hattersley.

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

### **Chair's report**

Nothing of note to discuss.

### **County Council**

*Apologies from Cllr Driver who will put together a video later this week.*

### **District Council**

*Cllr Sharp reported on the following:*

**Budget** – remains the same with no cuts to services and funding to support local communities with extra to play areas and community events including the Queen's Jubilee.

**War in Ukraine** – anyone wishing to donate can go to the EDC website which has a list of places to donate to. The Men's Shed group have agreed that the annexe can be used for short term collections, but there is no intention to start this as goods cannot be transported on. There are places in local towns for anyone wanting to donate physical items.

**Youth employment hub** -for 16-24s not in education or training, the aim is to help young people onto a career path and to develop life skills. A rural outreach worker has been employed who will come out to Alston.

**Fuel grants** – the government grants of £150 council tax rebate for properties in the A-D bands should be received by direct debit.

*Cllr Hanley reported on the following:*

**Health & Wellbeing Forum** – the North Cumbria Recovery College recovery policy is expanding face-to-face and online courses which can help develop emotional resilience to manage the many issues people face. They are thinking about finding a venue in Alston to run some of the courses.

**Planning Committee** – the meeting discussed an industrial building proposal in Appleby which the planners are confident will not impact on the old railway line to Keswick, and the creation of a car park at Long Meg.

**Health Scrutiny Committee** – recruitment of staff was discussed and the difficulty of not being able to replace GPs following retirement. This is in part due to the government decision to put a cap on training doctors at 4,500 per year (Ireland, a much less densely populated country trains 1,300 per year), but now around 37% of all doctors come from outside the UK.

**Garden waste bins** - it was decided to hold back on purchasing more until after LGR.

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

Held over until agenda item 10/MAR/22.

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

##### **5a/MAR/22 Support for retaining Alston's Ambulance**

Re: 5b/FEB/22 A meeting of SAMS was held last week attended by Cllrs Grew, Ransom and the clerk. The group has serious concerns that NWS intends to go ahead with the purchase of the RRV before the financial year end with no details provided of the type of vehicle, no firm long-term commitment to the vehicle and a failure to consult the wider community. The council have been asked by SAMS to write to our MP to ask him to halt the progress for the immediate future, with the same letter going to NWS.

SAMS do not think the timing is right for holding a meeting, either with the council or with the public so plans have been put on hold for the time being. A factor influencing this is that Neil Hudson MP is coming to Alston on 1<sup>st</sup> April for talks with the EMTs.

It was confirmed that the chair has been invited to meet with Neil Hudson. Cllr Ransom reported that he has investigated RRV ambulance services throughout the county and has not found any that operate without a paramedic.

It was stated that the only benefit seems to be that one person can go out with it, but there is a strongly held view that two people should respond to call-outs. Cllr Hattersley reported that the EMTs are told they take longer to respond, but the CFRs are always called 10-15 minutes before them.

**Resolved** to write to Neil Hudson MP to ask him to use his influence to halt the lease of an RRV until further investigations have been made. Proposed by Cllr English and seconded by Cllr Miller. (nem con)

##### **5b/MAR/22 Tyne Willows picnic benches & seats**

Re: 4a/FEB/22 The picnic benches and seats have been ordered from Broxap and NBB. There will be a delay on the benches due to availability issues, but the seats should be delivered over the next few weeks. As it will not be practical to have them delivered to the playing field, they will go to the Town Hall for temporary storage until a volunteer is able to install them.

Cllr Harrison offered to store the seats until they can be installed and Cllr Robinson to help install them.

**Action CH & RR.**

##### **5c/MAR/22 Tree works**

Re: 17/FEB/22 Michael Collins Gardening Services were informed they have the contract for tree works and should be able to start work this month.

#### **6. Reports from representatives**

##### **6a/MAR/22 Alston Alliance**

No meetings have been held. Cllr Grew reported that letters have been sent out from the Alston Practice to explain the changes now it has been taken over by CHOC. The main change is in the administration, with a new HR model of working. CHOC will cover holidays and sickness so the practice will not be without doctors, and there are 2 advanced nurse practitioners. There should be more to report next month after the group meeting.

##### **6b/MAR/22 Alston Ambulance**

Cllr Grew reported on changes to the management of defibrillators which have been added to the national database. Guardians will be notified whenever a defibrillator is taken out. NWS will continue to take responsibility for the replacement of pads and batteries.

The letter from Gene Quinn of NWS was discussed. The parish council's position is that the ambulance should remain on Alston Moor and that a RRV would not be acceptable without ECFRs. No-one has yet been able to train to this level on Alston Moor, as the course is to be slightly different and has not yet been agreed at national level. It was also thought that anyone wishing to become an EMT must be medically trained. The 14 week course will be a mixture of practical and on-line training, which is quite a commitment to ask of volunteers.

The CCG said that NWS will never say there will be no changes in the future (the concern being that a leased RRV may be taken away at some point). They want to know what the parish council thinks is a realistic time frame to commit to and when to carry out a review. Agreed to add to the next council agenda. Although SAMS asked the parish council to hold back on a meeting with NWS, they do need to provide answers to the questions the community has and as a public body the council should be given answers.

**Resolved** to invite NWS to the April or May council meeting and to ask them to follow this by facilitating a public meeting. Proposed by Cllr English and seconded by Cllr Grew. (nem con)

#### **6c/MAR/22 Nenthead Ward**

Cllrs Robinson and Robertson reported that they have continued with meetings at the Hive but have nothing new to report. The noticeboard is good quality, but unfortunately is not fit for purpose where it is sited as it is not standing up to the winds, so needs either strengthening, replacing, or relocating.

Agreed that Cllr Best would be asked to advise. **Action PB.**

The clerk reported that a resident suggested that it might be moved in front of the community shop.

#### **6d/MAR/22 High Mill Waterwheel working group**

Cllr Robertson reported that along with Cllr Miller he met with representatives from Alston Moor Partnership and agreed that they would look at the waterwheel as a first step for a larger project. AMP are meeting on the 21<sup>st</sup> March and will discuss becoming the lead body on taking on ownership with support from the council. An update will be given to the April meeting.

They discussed a wish list to get the wheel fit for opening, with Cllr Robertson to meet up with the owner to measure up so that costings can be looked at. The EDC proposal from 2017 has been dismissed as the costs were exorbitant.

If anyone missed the site visit and would like to look at the building Ian Grey will be happy to show them around.

It was confirmed that the council is not interested in getting involved in anything more than the waterwheel.

#### **6e/MAR/22 Tyne Willows pavilion working group**

Cllrs Miller, Davies and Best along with the clerk met with representatives from the gym and SKS to discuss proposals to extend the gym and replace the changing rooms and toilets. A copy of the draft plans was circulated for information only as they are not yet ready for public viewing. At this stage they are just looking for support, which the working group confirmed was already in place for changing rooms and toilets.

District Cllr Sharp offered to speak with the representatives as there may be funding opportunities she could assist with.

CCTV was also discussed as the gym are considering a new system, which could include an extra camera for the recycling centre that could be monitored as a stand-alone through an app, to avoid privacy issues for the gym.

#### **6f/MAR/22 Appleby Fair travellers**

The Tyne Willows Pavilion working group also met with the police and EDC to discuss arrangements for Appleby Fair. Plans for Tyne Willows will be the same as last year, but with a specific request from the gym to keep the entrance clear as it had been obstructed last August. This must be done through physical measures – dumpy bags were suggested. Toilets will be provided through a new contractor. There will be a police presence on the market cross, reduced to half an hour with details on the Appleby Fair website.

### **7. Planning applications**

**7a/MAR/22** 22/0008 Full application. Demolition of rear extensions and construction of new extension and alterations, including change of use of redundant barn to guest accommodation and storage area. George and Dragon Inn, Garrigill CA9 3DS for Mr T. Holmes.

**Recommended** for approval subject to confirmation that adequate provision is made for car parking as the proposals may put additional pressure on the limited public car parking provision. Provision should also be made for the additional noise pollution from the air source heat pump and fan, which could impact upon neighbouring properties. Proposed by Cllr Grew and seconded by Cllr Green. (nem con)

**7b/MAR/22** 22/0028 Variation of condition 1 (plans compliance) for the retention of design amendments including dormer and roof light alterations, attached to approval 15/1104. Whitburn Cottage, Alston CA9 3DA for Mr B. Marks.

**Recommended** for approval. Proposed by Cllr English and seconded by Cllr Miller (11+ 2 abs)

**7c/MAR/22** 22/0090 Full application. Variation of conditions 3 (occupation period). 5 (holiday letting) and 7 (second residence) to allow for a longer open season for up to 34 static caravans, attached to approval 08/0180. Re-submission of 21/0376. Horse and Wagon Caravan Park, Nentsberry, Alston CA9 3LH for G. Miller.

A copy of a letter of objection from the Nentsberry Community Group was received. The objections included the view that the proposals were not compatible with the Eden Local Plan Objectives 10.11 and 17 and especially Objective 11 of achieving an acceptable balance between essential development and maintaining the amenity of settlements and the countryside. Other concerns are that extending the season would encourage residential/second home status rather than holiday use and increase all year round traffic. The site has a long planning history of refusals.

**Recommended** for refusal. The council supports the objections raised by the Nentsberry Community Group. Proposed by Cllr English and seconded by Cllr Robertson (10+ 1- 2 abs)

**7d/MAR/22** 22/0071 Erection of a replacement café and associated works. Hartside Café, Alston CA9 3BW. Although the application is outside the parish boundary the clerk was contacted by a resident from a neighbouring parish to ask if the council wanted to comment as some residents in the Eden Valley had objections to the proposals.

Agreed to make no comment.

## **8. Planning for parish council projects for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee**

Cllr Robinson reported on his research into memorabilia for the children and suggested giving each a 50p Jubilee coin (legal tender). The cost is £3.99 in a plastic wallet or £7.99 in a case. As there are 302 children registered at the surgery it was suggested that 320 of the coins in the plastic wallet should be purchased. Cllr Robinson offered to buy a stamp to personalise the coins, and it was suggested that he ask Alston Moor Historical Society if their new Market Cross logo could be used.

**Resolved** to purchase 320 Jubilee coins and label with the new logo. Proposed by Cllr Miller and seconded by Cllr Best. (nem con)

It was suggested that the coins could be handed out at the school, and that the chair attends an assembly. Cllr Robinson then reported on the 3 specimen trees proposed last month. He has spoken with Hodgson Bros who are willing to provide a plinth for a brass plate to be worded with the name of the tree, the place, and the date of the Queens Jubilee.

A potential site for the tree for Tyne Willows is near to the gauging station where some of the diseased ash trees are to be removed. It was suggested that a willow tree might be appropriate. Permission needs to be obtained from Garrigill Recreation Grounds to plant a tree there, and the Nenthead cllrs were asked to recommend a site for the next meeting.

No decision was made over the suggestion to buy 70 trees for people to plant.

**Resolved** to buy established trees for each ward. Cllr Robinson to be asked to source the trees with the aim of planting before the Jubilee, but later if not practical. Proposed by Cllr Miller and seconded by Cllr Robertson (nem con)

It was agreed that an application could be made to the EDC Jubilee grant fund when this opens.

## **9. Request for support for an Observatory at Alston Moor Golf Club**

An e-mail was received from a representative of Alston Moor Golf Club about proposals for an observatory and astral photography for stargazing events at the Club, which has exceptional dark sky quality on a par with Kielder. The project is being supported by Eden District Council executive members and officers, our district councillors, and the head from SKS. The request is for a letter of support, financial support is not needed.

It was reported that planning advice has been sought from EDC, who could not see any problems with the proposals and that the neighbours have no objections.

**Resolved** that the parish council will support the proposal for an observatory at Alston Moor Golf Club. Proposed by Cllr English and seconded by Cllr Miller. (nem con)

#### **10. Request for support from Alston Moor Market for a market on Front Street opposite the Market Cross**

An e-mail was received from a representative from Alston Moor Market to explain that they propose to hold a street market on Front Street on the last Saturday of every month from April to September. This follows on from the successful markets held during 2021, which drew in number of visitors and up to 18 traders. They were held on the cobbled area up from the Co-op towards the Old Potato Market, a temporary site, and it is envisaged that the market would be held on the cobbled parking area opposite the market cross from 2023.

To achieve this Eden District Council will need to be petitioned to lawfully authorise the market so that Cumbria County Council can progress with a permanent Traffic Order to make it an official market area on the last Saturday of each month from April to September. Consultation is a requirement for Traffic Orders and the parish council were invited to consider supporting the initiative.

*Cllrs English and Ransom declared a non-pecuniary interest.*

The meeting was closed to allow a resident to speak.

*It was explained that the reason for the request is that the cobbled area Alston Moor Market has identified as the best site within the town is that it is owned by Cumbria County Council as part of the highway, so a permanent traffic regulation order is needed for no-parking on market days to be enforceable. Although Alston has held markets in the past there is no record in the archives that it had a charter so it has to be applied for, which may take 2-3 years so for the next 2 years the market will be held at Fairhill.*

The meeting re-convened.

**Resolved** to support the request to hold a street market in Front Street. Proposed by Cllr Robinson and seconded by Cllr Davies. (11+ 2 abs)

#### **11. Approval of update to risk assessments review**

**Resolved** to accept the review of risks (1) and assets (2) carried out by Cllrs Miller and Robertson assisted by the clerk. Proposed by Cllr English and seconded by Cllr Grew. (12+ 1 abs)

#### **12. Priority actions arising from risk assessments**

##### **12a/MAR/22 Potholes – Tyne Willows car park**

Cllr Miller reported that at the risk review meeting they had discussed tarmacking the area but having heard the plans for the gym this suggestion would be put on hold. However, there is an urgent need to deal with the potholes. In the past volunteers have filled them in regularly. It was noted that some of the damage is caused by the lorries used to access the recycling centre.

Cllr Robinson offered to ask Hodgson's if they could supply hardcore for volunteers to use. **Action RR.**

Agreed to hold back on installing the matting stored by Cllr Harrison as the plans for the gym may need the gate to be moved again.

##### **12b/MAR/22 Rent review Tyne Willows gardens**

Rents are currently £18 per year and have increased every so many years by £6.

**Resolved** to put the garden rent up to £24. Proposed by Cllr English and seconded by Cllr Grew. (12+ 1 abs)

##### **12c/MAR/22 Appointment of Nenthead councillor to liaise with Nenthead Community Projects**

The clerk reported that Cllr Lindley has offered to be the representative.

**Resolved** to accept the offer by Cllr Lindley to liaise with Nenthead Community Projects. Proposed by Cllr English and seconded by Cllr Grew. (nem con)

##### **12d/MAR/22 Liaison with Alston Town Hall re: next insurance agreement**

Councils are advised to review their insurance provision regularly and the 5 year agreement with Zurich will be coming up for renewal. Although the parish council side is straightforward the Town Hall has not been valued for many years and to keep costs down the insurance is shared with the Town Hall. It was suggested that the Town Hall Trustees contact the district valuer about a valuation.

### **13. Consultations & Correspondence**

#### **13a/MAR/22 Correspondence (Appendix 1)**

Circulated with the minutes. No comments were received.

#### **13b/MAR/22 Complaint about potholes on Tyne Willows car park**

A letter was received from a resident concerning the number of potholes on the car park next to the recycling centre and the potential danger to users. She pointed out that the council has allocated funding towards CCTV at the Community Gym for next year but nothing for repairing the car park. Discussed under agenda 12a/MAR/22.

#### **13c GLEAM – Defra consultation on the use of off-road vehicles on green lanes**

An e-mail was received from GLEAM to alert parish councils to a consultation by Defra which included a section on the use of off-road vehicles on green lanes, both BOATs and UURs. This issue has been discussed on numerous occasions at Traffic Management meetings and noted that the current legislative framework for controlling the use of recreational motor vehicles does not stop the damage being done to the fabric of the routes or protect non-motorised users from public nuisance. The cost of repairing the routes falls to the Highways.

Members commented that this issue is brought up regularly at Traffic Management meetings, especially over the Wardway which sustains regular damage from vehicles, and stone walls have been dismantled by off-roaders to fill in the ruts.

**Resolved** to respond to the survey to support legislation to control the use of recreational motor vehicles on green lanes. Proposed by Cllr English and seconded by Cllr Grew. (nem con)

### **14. Accounts for payment (Appendix 2)**

<i>Summary of accounts for payment:</i>	£410.00
<i>Summary of income received since last meeting:</i>	£0.00
<i>Summary of accounts paid since last meeting:</i>	£1,933.61

**Resolved** that sufficient funds are held in balances for the clerk to be authorised to settle all the accounts listed in appendix 2. Proposed by Cllr English and seconded by Cllr Davies. (nem con )

#### **14b/MAR/22 Request for Ambulance Funds**

A request to allocate the Ambulance funds to SAMS group to assist with legal fees for campaign for sustainable services on Alston Moor was received. However, it has not yet been possible to get a bank account set up, so the funds would have to be paid to a member of the group. The council are holding £1,237.47 in the ambulance fund.

*Cllrs Ransom and Miller declared an interest as members of SAMS.*

**Resolved** that when the bank account has been formally set up the parish council will be happy for the funds to go to SAMS. Proposed by Cllr English and seconded by Cllr Davies. (9+ 1- 3 abs)

### **15. Report from Finance Working Group on recommendations**

The chair reported that the council has too much money in HSBC, so the working group discussed alternative banking arrangements.

**15a/MAR/22** Recommended that the council moves £30k to the Unity Trust bank and the precept funding from the next financial year.

**Resolved** to move to Unity Trust Bank. Proposed by Cllr English and seconded by Cllr Davies. (nem con)

**15b/MAR/22** Recommended that £40k is moved to a deposit fund with the Cumberland Building Society.

This action would not be possible as the Cumberland Building Society are not accepting new applications.

Cllr Ho reported that she had looked at other councils that have investment strategies and would forward this information.

**15c/MAR/22** Recommended that funds held in the PCCU account be transferred to a deposit account.

**15d/MAR/22** Recommended that the council amend the Financial Regulations and Advisory Committee ToR to formalise the decision recorded in the council minutes that members will carry out quarterly banking checks on a rotational basis.

**15e/MAR/22** Recommended that a short summary balance sheet is produced, in conjunction with the detailed balance sheet.

**15f/MAR/22 Recommended** that Finance is included in the remit for the DGP Committee, and any discussion held after Staffing to reduce the requirement for additional meetings.

**Resolved** to accept the recommendations from the Finance Working group except for 15b/MAR/22. Proposed by Cllr English and seconded by Cllr Davies. (9+ 2- 1 abs)

**16. Appointment of Cllr Ransom to Alston Ambulance meetings to replace Cllr Hanley**

**Resolved** that Cllr Ransom would be appointed to Alston Ambulance meetings as the second representative. Proposed by Cllr Miller and seconded by Cllr Robinson. (nem con)

**17. Agenda items for next meeting and urgent business to report**

Housing – request to discuss second home and holiday accommodation and properties that have been allowed to fall into disrepair.

*The meeting closed to public to consider a report on Tyne Willows garden valuations.*

**18. Tyne Willows garden valuations**

Cllr Robertson reported that a working group including Cllr Robinson, Cllr Ho (observing) and the clerk had measured up all the garden plots owned by the council and allocated a price for each based on the total value of the land as valued by the district valuer which came in at £21,750. There are 7 gardens in total, with the steepest and most overgrown being inaccessible.

**Resolved** to write to each property owner with an offer for them to purchase their plot on condition that they are responsible for all legal fees. Proposed by Cllr English and seconded by Cllr Robinson. (nem con)

*The meeting closed at 9.45 pm*

Signed: .....

Dated: .....