



# ALSTON MOOR PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of Alston Moor Parish Council held on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2022 in the Masonic Hall at 7pm.

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

**Apologies:** Cllr: P. Best

**Absent:** none

**Declarations of interest:** none

## **1. Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the parish council meeting held on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> November 2022 be approved as a correct record. Proposed by Cllr Robinson and seconded by Cllr Robertson. (11+ 2 abs)

## **2. Update from Fairhill Recreation Grounds on funding and progress with the bike track**

Linda Farrar reported on behalf of Fairhill Recreation Grounds that the group are just waiting for one grant to come in from Frieda Scott which would hopefully bring the total funds raised to £47k, enough to commission the work. However, they also need funding to apply for planning permission and year 1 maintenance contract costing £1,500 plus detailed drawings of the track in situ and drainage plans which come in around £3,200. They also want to hold an open day of exhibition riding costing around £1,300 so are asking the council for up to £6,000. She explained that she had discussed with the clerk the possibility of the council invoicing directly for the works to enable them to reclaim vat on these items.

Ideally work can start in March if they can agree the contract as soon as possible.

In response to a query, it was confirmed that funding from the precept which is generally available from May would be too late to commission the work in the spring.

The chair thanked LF for the update, noting that the council had funding for the project on the agenda for discussion.

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

### **Chair's report**

The chair wished everyone a merry Christmas and happy new year.

### **County Council**

*Cllr Driver reported on the following:*

**Grisedale Croft** – work has commenced on a generator. It is a silent model to avoid causing a noise nuisance for Church Road residents.

**Emergency hubs** – discussions between the county and high-level NHS officers are to continue to enable residents to use the hospital as a hub if the power is lost.

**Felled trees Nenthead** – a resident reported that a tree had been taken out from the area behind the school playing field. Initial investigations suggested it was not the county council (note: later confirmation was received that they had removed the tree for safety reasons).

The resident is interested in setting up a residents' group to look after the woodlands, and council officers can be asked about progressing this idea.

**Nenthead fountain** – an officer from Neighbourhood Services will reach out to Nenthead Community Group to see if they can help with finding funding for the repairs.

### **District Council**

*Apologies from Cllr Sharp.*

*Cllr Hanley reported on the following:*

**Planning** – Cllr Hanley has now come off the planning committee but attended the last meeting which included details of the dismissed appeal for Blueberries. The inspector did not accept that the café was not economically viable.

**EDC Council meeting** –a no confidence leadership challenge was rejected. Costs for the renovation of Voreda House have increased substantially due to finding asbestos in the building. Penrith Leisure Centre needed additional funding due to an increase in energy costs.

*A question was asked about the need to fund Penrith Leisure Centre and not sports facilities around the district. The member was advised to ask Cllr Sharp who sits on the relevant committee.*

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

*A resident questioned whether a decision had been reached about funding held in reserve for devolved services.*

No decision has been made and no further funds put aside for public toilets. Cllr Hanley reported that the parishes that had taken on their public toilets were unhappy about the situation. Those parishes that have not accepted the public toilets will not be forced to take them on, and it is likely that WFC will put any decisions on the back boiler for several years.

*A question was asked about the school playing field fence which has been down for about three years. Cllr Driver will follow up with officers. The clerk had been in contact with the school, on the advice of officers but nothing further had happened.*

*Nenthead Community Project thanked the council for the Christmas lights donation and asked if it had been possible to find out anything about the ownership of the Nenthead Fountain as there may be questions about ownership when applying for grants.*

It was suggested there was a possibility it had reverted to the Catholic Trust, but this has not been confirmed.

*A representative from AMBA reported that 40 of the Christmas trees are up on display with a few more to go up tomorrow. It was agreed that Nenthead will take responsibility for 5 – 6 trees and a similar offer is to be made to Garrigill. This leaves 40+ trees for Alston. AMBA has 7 people who have been involved with the trees and who may be available next year to share their knowledge. Wright Bros have been approached and are willing to store them for the immediate future. The brackets for the trees were made by Cllr Green and remained the property of AMBA so they could be taken down and re-allocated if the property owner no longer wanted to take part in the scheme.*

*If the council does not want the flower tubs AMBA will approach the adjacent shops and assign them to them if they are wanted.*

*Alston Moor Partnership has offered to take on the Visit Alston website.*

*Other matters are the shelters which are now repaired thanks to the grant from EDC. AMBA has also received 15 applications for funding available due to the dissolution. They will be reviewed, and a decision made on Thursday. It is unlikely they can all be fully supported so will look to make partial payments where possible.*

The meeting re-convened.

Cllr Grew reported that she is asking Garrigill Village Hall about taking on 4 trees and lights.

Members asked that it be recorded that the parish council and town appreciated the work done by AMBA over the years.

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

##### **5a/DEC/22 Re-distribution of assets from Alston Moor Business Association**

Re: 4a/NOV/22 *See public participation report from AMBA.*

AMBA have confirmed that Alston Moor Partnership are interested in taking on the visitor website and have suggested that the prospective purchaser of High Mill might be willing to store the trees. Wright Bros have also offered to continue to store them if the council agrees to take them on.

##### **5b/DEC/22 Costings for flagpole besides Alston Town Hall**

Re: 5c/NOV/22 Additional costings have been sought for the proposed flagpole. The council were advised that fibreglass is the most durable option and that it should have an internal halyard as the site is accessible by the public. One company supplies detailed installation instructions as the council are advised to use local contractors due to the cost of sending someone out.

EDC confirmed that full planning permission is required, but there is a 50% discount for parish councils.

Cllr Robertson reported that he met with an officer from Eden District Council to discuss the location of the project.

#### **Quote 1**

- 6m flagpole £430 + vat. Carriage £35 + vat
- 7m flagpole £465 + vat. Carriage £279 + vat

#### **Quote 2**

- 6m flagpole £398 + vat. Carriage £38 + vat
- 7m flagpole £472 + vat. Carriage £338 + vat

Both companies can supply a flag if required.

**Resolved** to accept the second quote for a 6m flagpole from the Windsock Company. Proposed by Cllr Harrison and seconded by Cllr Robinson. (11+ 2 abs)

#### **5c/DEC/22 Old Primary School Site visit**

Re: 12e/NOV/22 Several councillors attended the site visit and were able to provide the architect with some of the history of the site and importance to the community. Several potential uses were flagged up, but the owner will need to consider commercial viability. In the meantime, it may be possible for the Fire Service to use the site for training if insurance details can be agreed with the owner.

Members observed that it was a positive that the new owner was interested in the community putting forward ideas for using the building. A copy of the community plan was presented to the architect, who was also advised of the proposed extension to the Conservation Area.

#### **5d/DEC/22 Missing footway light in the Butts**

The owner of Cross View recently contacted the parish and county council to enquire about the Victorian style light that had been taken down by Eden District Council following damage to the pole. She hoped it could be re-instated and upgraded. An enquiry has been sent to EDC to ask if they have it in store. If it is possible to locate, they will have to re-instate it and CCC will need to be asked about replacing the light fittings.

Cllr Hattersley reported that parked vehicles in the Butts and around the entrance from the Market Place are blocking access for the ambulance. This has happened on more than one occasion. Agenda for the next Traffic Management meeting. **Action CI.**

#### **5e/DEC/22 Update on 16+ grant funding for transport from SKS**

Re: OCT/22 An e-mail was received from the Chair of SKS school governors requesting a correction to the report on 16+ transport. The grant was provided by Eden District Council to provide post 16 transport to New College, Durham, who have offered free bus passes from Stanhope to Durham to students travelling from Alston Moor. No other colleges in the area were offering funding for post 16 transport. The funding was spent in line with the terms of the grant offer and was supported by our MP.

The transport provided has 16 seats with only one spare for SKS students and the wider local community. It allows students to access agricultural courses at Houghall College and came about because Durham CC brokered additional services from Stanhope due to the additional students coming from Alston Moor.

Noted. The clerk will let the school governors know that the council thanks them for the update, but that the minutes accurately reported the meeting with Eden District Council. **Action CI.**

#### **5f/DEC/22 Letter of thanks from SKS School Council**

A letter was received from the school council thanking the parish for sponsoring the away team sports kit. Students wore the kit at an away event and were proud to wear it. Sponsorship from the community has enabled the school to purchase all the kit they needed and have funds in reserve for replacements.

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

#### **6a/DEC/22 Warm Hubs**

Cllr Miller reported that three warm hub events have run in the town hall on Mondays. There have been different faces but between 36 – 40 people attended with numbers increasing each week. People enjoyed the space, chatted and took part in bingo sessions. Donations helped with paying for refreshments which are provided for free, and several people came forward to help. There should be enough funding to take the scheme through until April.

#### **6b/DEC/22 Nenthead Ward**

The Nenthead cllrs reported on the last ward meeting.

**Planning** - a discussion about the planning application for the Miner's Arms took up most of the meeting.

**Mine treatment scheme** - the Environment Agency and Coal Authority held an open session in the village hall. *Plans for the Nenthead scheme were circulated.*

Residents are concerned about the potential smell and disturbance to wildlife as the site is an area where red squirrels live, and breed, plus the ground is used by skylarks. The CA was asked if they have considered that given the location the reed beds could freeze in winter. There are also worries about noise from the pumping station which is to be sited close to some properties.

The intention is to apply for planning permission next year. Both the EA and CA were invited by members to contact the parish council to set up a meeting; the clerk confirmed she had not been contacted. **Action Cl.**

It was re-iterated that the parish council supports the Nenthead community over the objections to the proposed mine treatment scheme.

**CCC access land** - it is understood that the re-claimed mine heaps opposite Hillersdon Terrace are owned by the county council with permissive access for pedestrians. The gate and stiles are in poor condition and need repairs to improve access to the site.

**Hillersdon Terrace sign** – a mistake in signage for Vicarage and Hillersdon Terrace has resulted in a spare Hillersdon Terrace sign, and an offer from the district council to put it up to the front of Hillersdon Terrace if the council and owner of the proposed site are agreeable. The clerk reported that the ward chair was concerned that a sign would encourage delivery drivers to use the track, registered as a footpath, with the likely outcome that they would get stuck. It was agreed to refer to the ward meeting.

**Action Cl.**

#### **6c/DEC/22 High Mill**

Cllr Robertson reported on a site inspection last week. The potential new owner has a lot of interest from people wanting workshop space, but there is work to do on the space first. The only interest the council has is in the water wheel. Alston Moor Partnership are to discuss the structural survey and valuation for insurance purposes, and until the meeting has taken place there is no further update.

#### **6d/DEC/22 AMRD Group**

There were no reports from the meeting.

#### **6e/DEC/22 Alston Moor Area Planning**

No members of the council were present at the meeting.

### **7. Planning applications**

#### ***The meeting closed for public participation.***

*A Nenthead resident stated that on behalf of a number of members of the community that they wished to object to planning application 22/0867 to change the Miners Arms to a residential dwelling. The objections were:*

- The application stated that Nenthead is served by other social facilities. This is factually incorrect as The Hive is a café and arts centre with very limited opening hours, and Overwater Lodge is a small restaurant again with limited opening times. They cannot be described as equivalent social facilities.*
- Villages need a pub at their heart as a community asset and welcoming hub for residents and visitors; the village is dying economically as visitors pass by instead of stopping.*
- Nenthead is on the C2C cycle route with potentially large numbers of visitors; without a pub for food and accommodation they do not stop.*
- The property has been advertised for sale for a period, including during lockdown, and has been marketed with a residential estate agent rather than a specialist commercial agent and is only advertised on their website. The evidence submitted with the application does not demonstrate that an attempt has been made to market the property as a viable business.*
- At least two parties have shown interest in running the pub as a viable business, but this has not progressed.*
- An application is being prepared to retain The Miners Arms as a community asset.*

*A second resident spoke about his attempt to get a consortium together to buy the pub, and their research confirmed that the business could be improved.*

*The Ward is planning to hold an extraordinary meeting within the next couple of weeks.*

#### ***The meeting re-convened.***

Members confirmed that as a rule the council is opposed to the conversion of business premises to residential. It was noted that there are similarities with the situation in Garrigill and it may help to apply for

the pub to be listed as a community asset. The 'for sale' advert suggests that it is already a residential property.

Cllr Hanley in his capacity as a district councillor reminded the meeting that if a planning application goes to committee, and only a few are decided this way if there is controversy, it is important that the objectors go to the meeting. This includes representatives from the parish council.

**7a/DEC/22** 22/0867 Full application. Change of use of public house (Sui Generis) and annex to a dwelling (C3) and annex. The Miners Arms, Nenthead, Alston CA9 3PF for Mr M. & Mrs A. Baker.

**Recommended** that the council recommends refusal for the reasons stated by Nenthead residents and recommend that the marketing of the property as a business continues for an extended period. Proposed by Cllr English and seconded by Cllr Robinson. (12+ 1abs)

**7b/DEC/22** 22/0841 Non-material amendment to change the colour of the windows and doors from hard wood effect to anthracite grey attached to approval 19/0863. 2 Joseph Gardens, Nenthead, Alston CA9 3LU for Mr S. Richardson.

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

**7c/DEC/22** 22/0588 Tree works at garage workshop, opposite Village Hall, Bridge End.

The clerk reported that an e-mail from the applicant had been received shortly before the council meeting requesting that the parish council revise their original comments which were based on a report of a squirrel's drey in one of the conifers that has now been confirmed as a bird's nest.

She explained to the applicant that it would not be possible to add the request to the agenda at this late stage but could pass on this information to the district council.

#### **8. Decision on acceptance of Alston Moor Business Association's Alston town Christmas trees and flower tubs**

It was stated that the council needs to be confident they will be able to put up and take down the trees, and as it is necessary to enter premises to connect the electrics and put the trees up at height there were concerns about using volunteers. Agreed that the council would need to find a suitably qualified contractor who is equipped to carry out the task. Some of the former AMBA members are willing to help, including the treasurer. It is designed to be self-financing as the businesses are charged for the trees and lights, but not the brackets.

**Resolved** to accept the town Christmas trees from Alston Moor Business Association, and to consider the need to employ a contractor. Proposed by Cllr English and seconded by Cllr Davies. (nem con)

**Resolved** that it would be preferable for AMBA to allocate the flower tubs to individual shops. Proposed by Cllr English and seconded by Cllr Grew. (nem con)

#### **9. Request from Cumbria County Council to re-allocate £16k to the Heart of the Pennines Forest Project if it is not viable to plant trees on the tenanted land above Highlands**

This request is related to the appraisal carried out for Alston on the Mill Race, where unfortunately no GiA viable scheme could be achieved. The findings were presented to a parish council meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2020. The team advised that should FCERM funding criteria change, or an available budget found there is an 'on the shelf' scheme ready to go. This remains in place.

Currently £16k funding is available for upland planting on the land, which is part of the Fairhill Estate holdings, but at the time the tenant farmer was reluctant to accept the planting as he farmed cattle on the land. The county now needs to know if it is possible to carry out any planting and if not, would the council be happy to see the funding re-allocated to the Heart of the Pennines Forest project which is working on increasing tree cover across the AONB.

Cllr Harrison reported that he had spoken with the tenant who confirmed that he would be willing to accept a woodland pasture scheme, which involves planting 30 trees per ha in metal cages with two posts which protect the trees from damage by cattle.

**Resolved** to advise Cumbria County Council that the tenant on the Fairhill Estate land is willing to accept a woodland pasture scheme, and to ask them to ensure that any planting is done with the co-operation of the tenant to avoid obstruction to paths. Proposed by Cllr Harrison and seconded by Cllr Grew. (nem con)

#### **10. Alston Moor Research & Development Group request**

A meeting of this group was held last month (report circulated). They are working on a project with the aims of:

1. Reducing health inequalities by creating co-produced, community-led interventions to enhance support for health and wellbeing in Alston Moor, North Cumbria
2. Co-producing knowledge to inform the design of future community-based health and wellbeing interventions.

The intention is to seek funding for the project, but at this stage they would like to formalise the involvement of the parish council so are asking if the council would want to be a named partner and a member of the steering committee to support the design and delivery of the project.

Cllr Hanley reported that the focus of the project is supporting the needs of young people. The project has a huge remit.

**Resolved** to accept the offer from Alston Moor Research and Development group to become a named partner and for current members Cllrs Hanley and Miller to represent the parish council on the steering group. Proposed by Cllr English and seconded by Cllr Robinson. (nem con)

## **11. Consultations & Correspondence**

### **11a/DEC/22 Correspondence – Appendix 1**

No comments received.

### **11b/DEC/22 Observations on the Alston Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan**

A number of concerns were raised about the extension to the Conservation area with the point made that property owners purchased their building or land outside of the conservation area boundary, and if included would now find they were subject to additional restrictions. The issues around window treatment are an example, and there was general dissatisfaction with the lack of clarity over planning decisions.

**Resolved** to object to the extension of the conservation area. Proposed by Cllr English and seconded by Cllr Miller. (11+ 2-)

## **12. Notification of precept requests for consideration at the precept meeting**

A list of organisations with new or amended requests was circulated. Alston Moor Markets and Alston Live have not re-applied and the council are waiting to hear back as to whether Alston Moor Federation wants to ask for funds for a fire show in 2023. The clerk queried whether a fund should be started for improvements to Tyne Willows Car Park.

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

<i>Summary of accounts for payment:</i>	£1,723.94
<i>Summary of income received since last meeting:</i>	£599.91
<i>Summary of accounts paid since last meeting:</i>	£968.89

**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 Miller (12+ 1 abs)

**Resolved** to accept the financial statement for Q2. Proposed by Cllr English and seconded by Cllr Davies. (12+ 1 abs)

## **14. Decision on viring funds from either general reserves or re-allocation of public toilet reserves to assist the bike track at Fairhill Recreation Grounds to go ahead in Spring 2023 if required**

It was noted that if it is possible to invoice directly for some of the works the council could reclaim vat on their contribution towards the project.

**Resolved** to take up to £6k from general reserves to contribute towards planning fees, one year's maintenance contract and the open day event for the bike track at Fairhill. Proposed by Cllr Harrison and seconded by Cllr Hanley. (nem con)

## **15. Acceptance of Internal Auditor's half year report**

The council were advised that action that is needed to update dated policies. It was agreed that the clerk will check if amendments are needed before a meeting of the working group is held in the new year.

**Resolved** to accept the half year report from the internal auditor. Proposed by Cllr Davies and seconded by Cllr Robinson. (nem con)

**16. Report on Q2 banking checks**

Cllr Cooper confirmed that he had inspected the banking arrangements and there were no issues. The report was too late for inclusion on last month's agenda.

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

**17a/DEC/22 School sign lights**

As the flashing lights for the school sign are still outstanding a request for an update is to be made at the next Traffic Management meeting.

**17b/DEC/22 Vandalism to Firs seat**

It was reported that the seat in memory of Vince Peart has been vandalised again, with the arms taken off. No action is required from the council.

**17c/DEC/22 Alston Moor Foodbank**

A representative from the Foodbank will attend the January council meeting.

**17d/DEC/22 Use of e-mails**

Cllr Ho is to be invited to provide dates of her availability to enable the Finance working group to convene so she can explain what is causing her problems. Members have received around 800 e-mails from Cllr Ho this year.

*The meeting closed at 9.30pm*

Signed: .....

Dated: .....