



ALSTON MOOR PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of Alston Moor Parish Council held on Monday 7th August 2023 in Alston Town Hall at 7pm.

Present: Cllrs: R. Miller (Chair), A. Bondi (apologies for lateness), E. Edgar, A. Green, E. Grew, H. Ho, A. Martin, D. Monk, A. Robertson, R. Robinson.

Apologies: P. Best, B. Davies, M. Hanley, G. Ransom.

Absent: none.

Declarations of interest: Cllr Miller 14/AUG/23

1. Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the parish council meeting held on Monday 3rd July 2023 be approved as a correct record with the following amendment: 6a/JUL/23 – the date should read 17th August. Proposed by Cllr Robinson and seconded by Cllr Martin (nem con)

2. Discussion with Eline Malleret on Alston Conservation Area Appraisal & Management Plan

The clerk reported that the Conservation Officer explained that the publication of the CAAMP has been delayed so she has cancelled and will re-arrange the meeting after it has been published.

3. Chair & District reports

Chair's report

The chair thanked everyone who had been able to attend the meeting with the new clerk last week.

WAFC

Apologies from Cllr Hanley who had submitted reports on Eden Locality Board, WAFC Delivery Plan discussion and CAFS Solar Made Easy presentation.

Cllr M. Robinson

WAFC Delivery Plan – our elected representatives intend to stand up for our residents and make the council understand how far away Fellside is and that it needs to get a fair share of the funding.

Questions

The funding allocation is £1k per member, but community organisations have other pots of money they can apply to. The Borderlands funding has been allocated; some is going to the University of Cumbria. The importance of having a business case ready cannot be overstated, and Cllr M. Robinson will be happy to work with local organisations.

Written reports are posted to the parish council website.

4. Public participation

A resident reported that ash dieback has affected many of the ash trees alongside the highway, including some young trees. There is also a problem along the Wardway as the trees planted by ECCP have started to overhang the road.

It was confirmed that WAFC are discussing what to do about managing ash dieback. These issues can add to the next Traffic Management meeting agenda.

A second resident asked about the Community Plan and what had been done for young people.

The Community Plan was produced by AMP and is on their agenda for updating. The timeline for action was affected by both Covid, and a lack of response from the community.

One of WAFC's priorities is young people and there is 0-19 funding available for projects. Those interested in youth will need to get their plans ready.

A Nenthead resident reported that there is to be an open public meeting to discuss the Miners Arms and asked if the parish council would be willing to apply to add it to the Community Asset register.

To add to next month's agenda.

A fourth resident reported concerns about the amount of dog poo on Fairhill, including on the new bike track and asked the parish council to spearhead a campaign to encourage dog owners to behave responsibly.

The actions that can be taken include getting leaflets distributed, reporting irresponsible dog owners to the dog wardens at WAFC and taking photos of dog poo to post on Facebook. The council organised a poster competition with the junior school several years ago which was quite successful and could be tried again. Agenda for next month.

5. Progress reports

5a/AUG/23 Handover arrangements for Parish Clerk

Re: 5a/JUL/23 The Staffing Committee agreed that the current clerk would remain in post for half her usual hours for two months from the start of the new clerk's contract. Should it be needed, she will be available until the end of the financial year for up to 8 hours per month. I. Johnson has also agreed to provide internet support if needed for up to 8 hours per month to the end of the financial year.

An informal meeting was held with the new clerk who has confirmed she can start from 1st October subject to receiving her contract in advance.

A draft contract agreed by the Staffing Committee was forwarded to the HR company for comment and can be sent out when confirmed by the Staffing Committee.

5b/AUG/23 Planning training session

Re: 12/JUL/23 Cllr M. Robinson followed up the request for councillor training and was sent an e-mail from the Development Manager of the Penrith Office stating that he had forwarded the request to the appropriate officer to see what can be arranged. He suggested that they may hold sessions in Penrith and invite representatives from each parish and town council.

5c/AUG/23 Tree survey

Re: 5e/JUL/23 No response was received from the contractor to the request for an updated electronic version of the tree survey, so a scan of the paper copy was made and circulated along with Alston Moor Federation's tree survey of Tyne Willows. The main issue for the council to consider is the progress of ash dieback disease which is affecting a number of trees on the playing field and in the woods.

It was suggested that the parish tree representatives consider the surveys and report back to the council.

6. Reports from representatives

6a/AUG/23 NWAS working group.

The meeting has been cancelled again.

6b/AUG/23 Alston Cottage Hospital Working Group

An initial meeting has been held but there is nothing further to report.

6c/AUG/23 Alston Moor Area Planning (AMAP)

The last meeting was cancelled.

6d/AUG/23 Alston Moor Emergency Response Group (AMERG)

The next meeting will be held next week.

6e/AUG23 Nenthead Ward

Minutes of the meeting were circulated. No action to report.

6f/AUG23 Nenthead Mine Water Treatment works

To hold over as Cllr Ransom was not present.

6g/AUG23 Alston Moor Partnership (AMP)

Cllr Bondi reported that the Partnership had a presentation on thermal imaging cameras and there will be further training for two more people. There is to be a meeting in late spring on solar energy. AMP are arranging a heritage festival between the 8th and 17th September with a display on the town heritage scheme, tours organised by STRPS, and the owner of High Mill is willing to open the wheelhouse. Discussions with WAFC are ongoing about AMP involvement in part of the High Mill complex and the need to generate income. They are looking for new directors and will have an AGM in late September.

6h/AUG23/23 Environment Agency request for Tyne Willows

Cllr Miller reported that he met with a representative from the EA last week to discuss a request to put up a wooden fence to keep people away from the weir. This follows a fatality on another site. The fence will extend for 20m from the shed as close to the riverbank as possible. They aim to have the fence up by October, with a security camera on site, but may put up temporary fencing initially.

Resolved to support the request for a wooden fence to restrict access to the weir besides the gauging station on Tyne Willows. Proposed by Cllr Miller and seconded by Cllr Green. (9+ 1 abs)

7. Planning applications

7a/AUG/23 22/0582 Full application. Variation of condition 2, (plans compliance) for amendments including internal alterations attached to approval 19/0604 (revised scheme). High Mill, Northern Units, The Butts, Alston for Mr Peter Olive.

It was noted that the application is for retrospective planning permission.

Resolved that no comment be made. Proposed by Cllr Miller and seconded by Cllr Green. (9+ 1-)

7b/AUG/23 23/0215 Full application. Creation of new farm track. Hudgill Rigg, Alston for C. Greenhow.

Resolved that the parish council are unable to comment as there is no detailed information on where the track is to meet the public highway, which is a matter of concern for public safety. Proposed by Cllr Bondi and seconded by Cllr Robertson. (8+ 2 abs)

7c/AUG/23 23/0387 Full application. Change of use of agricultural land to equestrian. Field adjacent to 2 Sunnyside, Nenthead CA9 3AE for Mrs L. Peacock.

Recommended for approval. Proposed by Cllr Grew and seconded by Cllr Robinson. (9+ 1 abs)

7d/AUG/23 23/0507 Prior notification for the demolition of bastle house building. Low Park, Alston CA9 3BD for Mrs Paula Topping.

Recommended for approval as the applicant has looked at various means of saving the building without success and it has been fully recorded for posterity. Proposed by Cllr Grew and seconded by Cllr Bondi. (8+ 2 abs)

7e/AUG/23 23/0520 Full application. Change of use of agricultural land to cemetery for natural burials. Bridge End Farm, Leadgate Road, Alston CA9 3BJ for Mr & Mrs J.C. Williams.

It was noted that a previous application had been withdrawn as the original site was too close to a neighbour's bore hole. The current site is high above the river and the owners have been advised it meets the criteria for a burial ground.

Recommended for approval. Proposed by Cllr Miller and seconded by Cllr Robinson. (8+ 2 abs)

8. Purchase of Tyne Willows Defibrillator

Cllrs Monk and Grew reported that they had reached a decision on the best option for a defibrillator and cabinet for Tyne Willows pavilion. This is the Cardiac Science Powerheart G5 CPRD fully automatic AED cost £1230.00 (vat inclusive) and the AED protect outdoor cabinet locked at £540 (vat inclusive).

Noted that there may be a delay on delivery as there is a national problem with obtaining parts for defibrillators.

9. Parking issues & proposal to apply for Henderson's Garage to be added to the list of Community Assets

The clerk reported that an e-mail was sent by a resident concerned about several traffic related issues including parking, speeding vehicles, noise levels and yellow lines that have not been replaced yet. The clerk wrote back to explain that some of the issues are the responsibility of the police and highways authority, but that the parish council would very much like to assist with identifying options to improve parking and other traffic related issues.

A suggestion had been made by members that if it were possible to obtain the Henderson's Garage site which is currently on the market it could provide space for parking. It is also understood that the Fire Service are looking for an alternative site for the Alston Fire Station – the clerk has written to the Police & Crime Commissioner to enquire about their interest.

The chair reported that he contacted one of the owners to explain what the application for adding to the Community Assets list would mean as he did not think it right to progress it without their permission. They want to consult the others and mentioned that there are some aspects to the site that any prospective purchaser should be aware of. Agenda for the next meeting.

10. Request from BT for a wayleaves agreement to erect 4 telegraph pole across Tyne Willows from the pavilion. Proposal to object due to the proximity to the football pitch/sporting activities.

An e-mail was received from Alston Fitness Club stating that they had heard Openreach have reached an agreement with a property to connect to the gym via the entrance road. However, the council has not heard back formally from BT so a decision on whether to object is still needed.

The clerk declared an interest as a neighbour.

Resolved to object to the proposal due to the proximity to the football pitch and sporting activities. Proposed by Cllr Miller and seconded by Cllr Grew. (9+ 1 abs)

11. Ownership of Nenthead Fountain

Cllr Robertson reported that he had spoken to the clerk from Middleton-in-Teesdale who searched their old documents but found nothing to identify ownership of their fountain. A car park was created in the 1980s and the fountain moved. It was understood to have been given to the community and there seemed to have been no formal adoption and no questions asked about ownership, the parish council consider themselves the custodians. It has been renovated twice and is in working condition although the water was turned off during covid. There has never been any deliberate damage.

Nenthead Community Group's difficulty is that they do not own the fountain which is stumbling block for any applications. They are willing to look for grant funding and organise the repair work but not to deal with ongoing maintenance.

Cllr Robinson reported that the group have carried out a lot of research. New members requested that he circulate a copy of the report and potential funders. **Action RR.**

Members expressed concern about the potential cost of insuring the fountain. It was suggested asking Middleton-in-Teesdale what it was costing them to insure their fountain.

The clerk reported that the fountain has been included on the council's asset register since councils were asked to produce one. It was renovated with grant aid in the early 1980s at the request of Nenthead residents, but the minutes of the time noted the council had not been able to establish ownership. An emergency repair to the leg and canopy was commissioned several years ago. The issue of ownership arose when funding was lost for the Old Potato market when no records could be found, and it seemed the right thing to do to try to establish ownership of the fountain. Adverse possession was considered but as the fountain is on the highway verge it is not an option. The clerk then contacted highways for advice. Highways do not own the fountain but would be willing to enter into an agreement with the council.

Resolved to apply to highways for a Memorandum of Agreement for the Nenthead Fountain and for Cllr Robinson to circulate the background information and costings. Proposed by Cllr Miller and seconded by Cllr Robinson. (9+ 1 abs)

Note: after the meeting the clerk found the original e-mail, which stated it should be an Indemnity Agreement, which differs in meaning from a Memorandum of Agreement.

It was suggested that the clerk from Middleton-in-Teesdale could be invited to a meeting.

12. Proposal to put together a presentation on Alston Moor

Cllr Martin reported that Barrow councillors had been invited to Alston by Cllr Hanley, as the community at the other extremity of WAFC. She proposed a short presentation about Alston Moor for the WAFC councillors and officers to explain that we are not just a tourist town, but a working community that needs more jobs, housing and good service provision. This might help our WAFC councillors when they are standing up for our area.

Resolved to ask Cllr Martin to make a start on putting together a presentation assisted by Cllr Bondi and Cllr M. Robinson. Proposed by Cllr Miller and seconded by Cllr Grew (nem con)

It was pointed out that the presentation must be focused and include information on industry and give the reasons why certain projects are wanted so that the WAFC councillors on the Locality Board can promote the ideas to cabinet.

13. Proposal to set up a working group for assisting with grant funding

Cllr Miller reported that his proposal would be to set up a team of people willing to apply for grants and assist with putting business plans together for community groups on Alston Moor, ideally with the skill sets required for this task.

Grants are frequently opened with tight timetables, so opportunities are missed unless there is already a business plan in place.

It was observed that a lot of work must be put in writing business plans and people will need to co-ordinate and pull together to succeed.

Resolved that Cllr Miller could go ahead with trying to set up a working group. Proposed by Cllr Miller and seconded by Cllr Martin. (nem con)

14. Community Grant application from Alston Gala on behalf of Alston drama to run drama and arts sessions for young people during the school holidays

The application is for hire of Alston Town hall at a cost of £180.

Cllr Miller declared an interest as a committee member of Alston Gala.

Resolved to offer funding of £180 to Alston Gala on behalf of the Alston drama to run drama and arts sessions during the school holidays. Proposed by Cllr Grew and seconded by Cllr Robinson. (nem con)

15. Proposal to sign the Civility & Respect Pledge from NALC

Although the last council resolved that they would not sign the Civility & Respect pledge at the October 2022 more than 6 months has passed so the matter can be re-considered.

Resolved to sign the Civility and Respect Pledge. Proposed by Cllr Bondi and seconded by Cllr Martin (9+ 1 abs)

Cllr Ho left the meeting.

16. Proposal to join the Rural Villages Services Group

Cllr Bondi reported that she had hoped to attend the National Rural Conference but was advised that the offer of free attendance is only open to members of WAFC. The cost for parish councillors is £50 per session. Parish Councils could join as members of the Rural Villages or Rural Market towns.

The group lobby for better rural services and would enable networking with other parishes. Membership costs for a community our size is £70 per annum.

Resolved to join the Rural Villages Services Group. Proposed by Cllr Bondi and seconded by Cllr Robinson. (8+ 1-)

It was agreed to include attendance at the National Rural Conference on the agenda for next month.

17. Consultations & Correspondence

17a/AUG/23 Correspondence – Appendix 1

The clerk reported that there was also a letter of thanks from Alston Gala for the precept donation.

18. Recommendations from the DGP working group

18a/AUG/23 Proposal to accept the draft Scheme of Delegation

Resolved to accept the Scheme of Delegation. Proposed by Cllr Robinson and seconded by Cllr Grew. (8+ 1 abs)

18b/AUG/23 Proposal to accept the first draft AMPC Action Plan

Resolved to accept the AMPC Action Plan with the addition of the presentation to WAFC. Proposed by Cllr Robinson and seconded by Cllr Miller. (8+ 1 abs)

18c/AUG/23 Proposal to update the Community Grants Policy

Resolved to accept the update to the Community Grants Policy. Proposed by Cllr Miller and seconded by Cllr Robertson. (8+ 1 abs)

19. Accounts for payment (Appendix 2)

<i>Summary of accounts for payment:</i>	£777.88
<i>Summary of income received since last meeting:</i>	£441.89
<i>Summary of accounts paid since last meeting:</i>	£1,005.81

Resolved that sufficient funds are held in balances for the clerk to be authorised to pay the invoices listed in appendix 2. Proposed by Cllr Green and seconded by Cllr Miller. (nem con)

Note: the full list of payments is attached to the signed minutes.

20. Banking check report

Cllr Robinson reported that there were no anomalies in the banking arrangements which were signed off.

Resolved to accept the Financial Statement for June 2023. Proposed by Cllr Miller and seconded by Cllr Robinson.

21. Confirmation of bank signatories and addition of new clerk to HSBC & Unity Trust bank accounts
Resolved to re-confirm that Cllrs Miller, Davies, Green, Hanley, Ransom & Robinson. The current clerk C. Johnson to remain and the new clerk L. Nicholson to be added when she takes up the post. Proposed by Cllr Miller and seconded by Cllr Robinson. (nem con)

22. Agenda items for next meeting and urgent business
No additional requests.

The meeting closed to the public to consider quotes for Garrigill Village Green car park.

23. Quotes to re-tarmac Garrigill Village Green car park
One quote was received, and a second contractor provided a price but stated they would be unable to carry out the work due to retirement.
Resolved to ask Highways if they would be willing to take on the project on behalf of the parish council. Proposed by Cllr Miller and seconded by Cllr Green. (nem con)

The meeting closed at 9 pm.

Signed:

Dated: