

ALSTON MOOR PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of Alston Moor Parish Council held on Monday 4th April 2016 at 7pm in Alston Town Hall.

Present: Cllrs: A. Martin (Chair), D. Athey, J. Glendinning, P. Godwin, A. Green, E. Grew, T. Haldon, M. Herdman, R. Miller, D. Phillips, A. Robertson, R. Thomson.

Apologies: Cllrs: S. Hill, G. Wright.

Absent: Cllr B. Aves

Declarations of interest: listed under specific agenda items.

1. Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on Monday 7th March 2016 be adopted as a correct record. Proposed by Cllr Robertson and seconded by Cllr Phillips (nem con).

1a Tyne Willows & Appleby Fair – proposal to fence around Alston Community Gym to allow use of the site by travellers and for residents to go to the gym & discussion with Malcolm Blenkinsopp from the traveller community

Cllr Martin explained for the benefit of all present that representatives from the gym attended last month's council meeting to state their concerns about the reduction in income around the time Appleby Fair is on. The suggested action of closing the road is not something that can be done without upsetting many, so Cllr Miller wished to put forward an alternative proposal to fence part of the car park to ensure access to the gym is kept clear. He circulated copies of two options. The first is to put up the fence to leave some car parking and an alleyway for gym users to walk down; the second is to fence straight across the car park. He has spoken to Highways who will be able to get road barriers, so there should be no cost involved.

A letter of support for the travellers to be allowed onto Tyne Willows was received from Alston Moor Business Association, on the grounds that they bring much needed business into the town. AMBA would like to see more of a celebration of the tradition of stopping in Alston on the way to Appleby Horse Fair.

Malcolm Blenkinsopp, representing the travelling community, explained that he lives in Newcastle and has been coming through Alston for the last 29 years, stopping originally at the site besides Spar until it was fenced, and then at Tyne Willows. Alston is an essential stop, as the horses need to rest before going up Hartside. He is in contact with Elaine Lomas from Eden District Council and had not heard that there were any problems with the site; the travellers hope they can continue to use it. The majority are respectable people and put a lot of money into the town through spending in the pubs and shops, and raised £98 for the air ambulance last year. He will ask the travellers to abide by whatever decision is made, and invited residents and councillors down for a cup of tea.

Members explained that there was no intention to stop the travellers coming to Alston, and the bowtops are a welcome sight, but the number of caravans and trailers accompanying them can make it difficult to access the gym. They would like to restrict access to bowtops, but there is awareness that there may be problems with Makepeace's site if the weather is bad again. It was also noted that just allowing bowtops would split up families, as they usually bring along trailers and caravans for other family members.

Although the air ambulance benefits everyone, it would be good if funds could be collected for the Alston ambulance this year.

Malcolm Blenkinsopp said that he will do his best to get the message about bowtops only across, and will speak to people while he is on the site, but once he has moved on it will be difficult to control others. The meeting has been helpful, he attends meetings in Appleby with representatives from the parishes, and some good ideas have come out of them, including allowing horse-drawn vehicles on site at Appleby on the Wednesday to avoid a tailback of traffic on the Thursday. It is just common sense to work together to help each other.

It was suggested by members that it would be useful for a representative from the travelling community to meet with the parish around this time each year.

Resolved to accept the first proposal of fencing and some car parking using fencing from the County Council. Proposed by Cllr Miller and seconded by Cllr Thomson. (1- 1 abs).

It was reported that Eden District Council will provide toilets again this year, and Malcolm Blenkinsopp was asked to let the travellers know that there are no facilities at Moredun Garage as the district council has closed them. The parish council agreed to ask the school to only cut the grass on and immediately around the pitches where they don't want the horses to graze and to leave the verges, as this had been a problem last year. **Action.**

1b Short presentation from Rev. Mark Nash-Williams on the churches of Alston Moor & discussion on request for assistance from Nenthead Church

Rev. Mark Nash-Williams thanked the parish council for the invitation to speak and reminded those present that the church is there for everyone and not just baptised members. The church as a body is a community of people who believe in God, but is also a part of the wider community. St Augustine's is the biggest building in Alston, and the church is open every day for people to use. The vicar's role is to serve and support the community, be involved in weddings and funerals, visiting the sick, the hospital and schools. Church members work for justice and peace, help out with food banks, Christians against poverty and charitable giving.

The parish is part of the Diocese of Newcastle, which is the biggest geographically in the country, and has six church buildings within the parish to maintain, without financial support from the government or national organisations. A leaflet was circulated with a summary of the accounts. Alston benefitted from a legacy, but Nenthead has very little income.

A representative from St John's at Nenthead explained that very few people go to the church, they would like to do more for the community, including events for children, but are hampered by lack of funds to purchase costumes or decorate the church at Easter.

Cllrs highlighted the issue for the parish council in that the public generally think of churches as being financially independent, and there are the other denominations to consider. It was unfortunate that an application letter went astray and was not received until after the precept meeting. A separate but important issue is planning the precept budget, and it was suggested that groups should be encouraged to attend a council meeting around September or October to discuss what would be fair to fund.

Resolved to make a one-off donation of £100 for church activities in Nenthead. Proposed by Cllr Green and seconded by Cllr Godwin. (nem con)

Resolved to hold a pre-precept meeting to discuss a funding policy for the future to avoid making ad hoc donations. Proposed by Cllr Martin and seconded by Cllr Haldon. (9+ 1- 2 abs)

2. Progress Reports

2a/APR/16 Condition of Tyne Willows Car Park

Re: 2c/MAR/16 A Letter of thanks was received from Alston Moor Fitness Club was received for the work Cllr Athey has done on the potholes on Tyne Willows Car Park.

2b/APR/16 Proposed Haggs Mine Water Treatment scheme – planning application and open meeting

Re: 6/MAR/16 The clerk reported that representatives involved with the scheme are willing to meet with the parish council and residents at an open meeting to discuss the planning application. Although she was told that the timetable is for the plans to be submitted the second week of April, with the consultation period expected to be between 22nd April and 20th May. 28th April is the preferred date for a meeting with the residents, but we are awaiting confirmation. Cllrs were urged to attend when the date is confirmed, and a potential clash with other meetings was flagged up.

Several residents have written to express their concerns, and one resident has provided a list of questions she would like answers to. (Papers circulated earlier).

The clerk was asked to request a copy of the results of the questionnaire circulated at the consultation event.

2c/APR/16 Dene House street light

Re: 8/MAR/16 A response has not been received yet from Eden District Council.

2d/APR/16 Periodic Tree Survey

The clerk reported that the tree survey has now been completed, and a number of trees in need of felling or attention identified, but nothing that appears to require immediate attention, so there should be time to prepare tender documents with the aim of felling diseased trees next winter.

The notes accompanying the report pointed out that the survey took longer than envisaged, nearly 7 hours due to the difficult terrain and the need to inspect almost all the mature trees. It is only a Public Safety survey, although it gave an impression of the woodland management that is needed. The priority is to deal with the immediate survey report and then look at general management.

Although not part of the survey, footpath conditions are not bad, other than the surface of the causeway under Tyne Bridge. There is a small area at the edge where surface stones have broken off and floodwater has added to the erosion, and should be dealt with within the next 12 months. The clerk was asked to follow up with the Environment Agency. **Action.**

There are several points arising from the tree survey:

- *It may be necessary to purchase large scale maps as the maps held by the council are not to scale and are not large enough.*
- *The council should be aware that H&S tree surveys are not an exact science and strong winds and heavy rains can bring down apparently healthy trees. In the case of the AMPC woods a balance has been made between public safety and woodland conservation. For example small branch dieback, which is not unusual in exposed situations, has been generally ignored. These are unlikely to cause significant injury.*
- *There are two species, which need particular attention in Firs Wood: one is the mature Norway Spruce, mostly towards the town end of the wood. These are mostly showing signs of butt-rot which will be weakening them. Further advice is being sought. The other species is the mature beech mostly in the area by the Dooker. Both these groups of trees need particular monitoring at this advanced stage in their lives.*
- *One Sitka spruce has blown down in a boggy area in Henderson's Wood. The fallen tree is no problem where it lies, and given the unusual winter conditions it is good that there were no more.*
- *Not really an H&S issue, but the dumping of garden and domestic refuse below the Youth Hostel has worsened, and is blighting that area.*

It may be possible to obtain maps from the internet. Rev. Nash Williams offered to send information.

It was suggested getting a no tipping sign for the area around the Youth Hostel.

3. Progress reports from working groups and council representatives

3a/APR/16 Garrigill Ward Meeting

The meeting has been arranged for Monday 11th April. 7pm.

3b/APR/16 Alston Town Hall trustees

It was reported that the Brownies and Guides would like to use the Town Hall on Mondays from September onwards, and the trustees are willing to accommodate this, but will mean that the parish council has to consider alternative arrangements. There are possibilities such as moving to other venues or changing the meeting day.

Resolved to consider in principle alternative days or venues. Proposed by Cllr Martin and seconded by Cllr Robertson. (1 abs)

3c/APR/16 Nenthead Annual Ward meeting

Cllr Phillips reported that the Ward meeting received reports from local organisations. The school was unable to attend, but has invited two councillors to visit the school.

There will be a celebration of the 200-year anniversary of the Vieille Montagne company's involvement with Nenthead in August, which will bring international visitors to the village.

3d/APR/16 Alston Market

Re: 15/MAR/16 Cllr Miller confirmed that none of the stalls were present over the bank holiday weekend.

4 County Councillor's Report

Apologies from Cllr Robinson.

District Councillor's Report

Cllr Hymers reported on the following:

Eden - £75k grants have been agreed by the LEP to assist flooded areas to hold events to boost tourism and business. Appleby and Pooley Bridge were major beneficiaries.

There are plans to increase the campus size of Newton Rigg, who are working in partnership with Eden District Council, on developing an area for specialist food producers and other specialist companies. A provisional date of 23rd September has been set for a joint seminar.

Alston Moor, High Mill – the District Council has been given a few months to explore potential uses for the building, before it is put on the open market, and they have pledged £20k to match Heritage England funding for a complete ground survey and feasibility study of the site.

Cllr Robertson noted that High Mill is a Grade 2* building of historical importance and of wide interest as Smeaton designed it, so has potential to become a destination for visitors.

Garrigill – could the ward meeting become an annual event.

Training opportunities – Alston Moor Partnership are offering specialist building courses which can be run in Alston if 10 or more people are interested.

Cllr Godwin reported on the following:

Counter terrorism measures – Cllr Godwin attended a briefing, and pointed out that it can happen anywhere, so the message is that if anyone sees anything they are not happy about they should ring the police on 101. She was asked to write a paragraph for the newsletter. **Action.**

5. Planning

5a/APR/16 16/0201 Full application. Proposed goat stable. Foulard Cottage, Nenthead CA9 3LP for Mr A. Vallance.

It was observed that the application made no mention of how many goats would be kept in the shed, which could be relevant as the property has neighbours on either side.

Recommended for approval. Proposed by Cllr Green and seconded by Cllr Herdman . (4+ 8 abs) The clerk was asked to include the voting figures with the report to Eden District Council.

5b/APR/16 16/0223 Full application. Tree Works (CA) Fell trees T1 Ash, T2 Sycamore, T3 Sycamore, T4 Spruce, T5 Horse Chestnut, T7 Chestnut (due to their condition), T6 Beech – Crown lift to a height of 10m, Fell tree T8 Sycamore due to damage caused to boundary wall, Garrigill Conservation Area. St John's Church, Garrigill CA9 3EB for Mr Stephen Porteus – St John's DCC.

An amendment was made to the original proposal to approve the application.

Recommended for approval, with the request that consideration is given to replacing the same number of trees that are felled with native species. Proposed by Cllr Grew and seconded by Cllr Haldon. (6+ 4- 2 abs)

Decision Notices

None.

6 The Roof of England – Marketing Alston Moor

A representative from Epiacum reported that she has attended the Alston marketing forum for a number of years and heard about the Roof of England initiative from the owner of the Chatterbox Café in Weardale. He runs a cycle event and aims to make the North Pennines a visitor destination, with Alston as the capital, with the area marketed as the Roof of England and for towns and villages within the area to work together.

The Alston Moor marketing group have been thinking about how to bring visitors to the area, regenerate business and to look at the town through visitors' eyes and ask how it can be made a better place. Parking is a big issue, and there are ideas on how parking can be made easier for visitors, perhaps through improved signage. Other ideas are to provide bunting in the colours orange, green, yellow and purple, and to support planting around the town.

Epiacum now has the full support of the Heritage Lottery to develop their site, and hope to have a car park open by the end of May. Although outside of Alston visitors to Epiacum may want to include a visit to the town.

Cllr Phillips reported that he tried to get people to call the area the Roof of England about 25 years ago, but there was no support then and 'England's Last Wilderness' was taken up instead; a strapline that was abandoned within a couple of years.

It was agreed to support the idea of the Roof of England in principle.

A comment was made about properties in the town that have been allowed by absentee landlords to become derelict, as this brings down the overall appearance of the town, but is not something the parish council has any power over.

7. Discretionary services report from Eden District Council

The report was circulated and noted.

8. Community Warden contract & specific requests for tasks

It was agreed that the contract should specify that it is an extension of the original contract and will be reviewed each year.

9. Planning for the Annual Parish Meeting

The Police and Crime Commissioner candidates have been invited to the Annual Parish Meeting, and to date two of them have confirmed attendance. The clerk will follow up with the others. Residents want to know what the precept is to be spent on, so Cllr Martin is gathering information for a chart and will invite residents and organisations to a pre-precept meeting, probably around September. Local organisations have been invited to give short reports including the League of Friends and the schools.

10 Consultations & Correspondence for information

10a/APR/16 Audit of parish council accounts & interim review

A letter was received from BDO confirming that the annual audit will take place on 25th July 2016, and the public are entitled to inspect the accounts between 27th June and 5th August 2016. This year the parish has been randomly selected for an intermediate review, which requires the council to submit detailed information including confirmation that an annual risk assessment has been carried out.

10b/APR/16 CCC – Letters relating to the precept

A letter of thanks on behalf of the Gala Committee for the donation to Alston Gala was received from Cllr Miller, Chair of the Gala Committee.

A letter was received from a local resident objecting to the 54% rise in the parish council precept. The clerk reported that a suggestion has been made to provide a detailed explanation of where the parish precept is to be spent, and to try and explain that the difference in magnitude between the different levels of local government mean that parish spending will always mean that the parish will fluctuate more widely when compared as a percentage.

10c/APR/16 Notices of events/meetings

Nenthead Ward meeting - 23 May

10d/APR/16 Information received during the last month

NALC Legal briefing – the S 137 expenditure limit for 2016/17 is £7.42.

Revision to Financial Regulations – the clerk reported that she was preparing a draft and would circulate it before the next meeting for consideration.

Local Council Review Spring 2016

Eden Community Fund

11. Items for next month's agenda and urgent business

11a/APR/16

Woodland tree survey.

12. Finance

12a/APR/16 Bank statements

The statements as of 4th April 2016 were as follows:-

Alston Moor Parish Council tr/ac	£6,688.16
Alston Moor Parish Council bus/ac	£12,670.62
Eden Credit Union	£7,008.58

12b/APR/16 Accounts for Payment

The following accounts were for payment:-

<i>Summary of accounts for payment :-</i>	£174.01
<i>Summary of income received since last meeting :-</i>	£50.09
<i>Summary of accounts paid since last meeting:-</i>	£907.54

Cllr Green declared an interest.

Resolved that sufficient funds are held in balances for the clerk to be authorised to settle all the accounts listed during the coming month (appendix I). Proposed by Cllr Robertson and seconded by Cllr Herdman. (nem con)

The meeting closed at 9.35 pm

Signed:

Dated: