

## ALSTON MOOR ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Minutes of a meeting held on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> April 2015 at 7.30pm in Alston Town Hall.

**Present:** Cllrs: A. Martin (Chair), B. Aves, M. Bell, A. Bondi, B. Cooper, E. Grew, R. Miller, County Cllr M. Robinson, District Cllrs P. Godwin & C. Harrison, & members of the public.

**Apologies:**, PC Bowyers B. Craven, N. English, I. Johnson, J. Glendinning, J. Hodgson, R. Thompson, S. Gilbertson.

The meeting opened with the chair thanking everyone on the district and parish over the past four years. Several people intended to stand down, including Margaret Bell, who has been an active member for many years helping with the Town Hall and hospital campaign. Tony Pennell, who engineering expertise has been invaluable over the mill race, snowplough and highways issues, and Brian Cooper, whose common sense approach has been especially helpful over financial matters and risk assessments. District councillors Chris Harrison, who is standing down, Pat Godwin, who hopes to be re-elected and County Councillor Mary Robinson were all thanked for giving their time and assistance to the parish council.

### **Minutes of the Last Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 28<sup>th</sup> April 2014 were approved as a correct record. Proposed by Ray Miller and seconded by Brian Aves.

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

There were no matters arising.

#### **2. Reports from County, District & Parish Councillors**

**2a County Council report** – Cllr Mary Robinson reported on the following:

**Bus services** – the loss of subsidies for the buses has brought about a reduction in services and is an issue that is not easily solved. The Community Minibus is now based in Alston and available to residents who have signed up to use it, but more people are needed as volunteer drivers.

**Austerity measures** – it is probable that local government will continue to be hit financially, and as a result more demand on the parish council to increase the precept for specific projects.

**Traffic Management Group** – Alston Moor is the only area in the county to hold meetings to discuss a variety of traffic management issues with representatives from the county, district, parish and police. A recent recommendation has been to extend the speed limit to the Leadgate road end.

**Footway lights** – the county and district are working together to look into the possibility of the county taking over the street lights on Front Street.

**Grant funding** - local members have a say in applications for grant funding, and this year over £50k has been allocated, with priority given to 0-19. Funding from the county can be used as matched funding with Eden's Community grant fund.

**2b Eden District Council report** – Cllr Godwin reported that it has not been an easy year as the council has taken a financial hit, and are considering what can be done through the community and parishes. She is a member of the Scrutiny Review group and has been made aware of many issues, one major concern is the misuse of alcohol in older age groups, leading to a number of health issues. Footway lights are an ongoing concern due to the high cost of replacements, and the district council has been involved in a review, with a report to go to committee later in the year. Transport to school is another difficult subject, and it is still unclear what funding will be available for young people travelling to William Howard.

Eden's Local Plan is to be reviewed and updated, with consultation starting in June 2106. There is an opportunity for Alston Moor to be treated differently from the rest of Eden.

**2c Alston Moor Parish Council** – Cllr Martin reported that the Annual Report has been circulated and invited questions from the floor. There being none she thanked the Community Warden, Vince Peart for his excellent work in keeping on top of the rubbish, and for encouraging others to volunteer their help.

### **3. Report from local organisations and charities**

**3a Alston Cottage Hospital League of Friends** – Sheila Hodgson reported on a successful year of fundraising with the Christmas coffee morning and summer fair being well attended. They also receive donations from individuals and groups, and are planning Ride and Drive events in June and July this year. The League has purchased equipment for the kitchen, and contributed towards the cabinets to house the defibrillators in Alston, Garrigill and Nenthead.

In the current climate it is difficult to recruit staff, but the staff at Alston Cottage Hospital continue to maintain an efficient and effective service. The hospital has seen improvements, with new beds and a refurbished kitchen meeting government guidelines.

Members attended several meetings about ambulance provision, and are delighted that North West Ambulance Service (NWAS) have agreed to provide an ambulance for Alston, which they hope to see fully functioning this year.

**3b Fairhill Recreation Grounds** – Pat Godwin reported that she was asked to read a written report from Norman English, beginning with an invitation to attend the AGM next week. Finances over the past 12 months were steady, new members have joined the committee bringing new ideas for fund raising. They ended the year with a profit of around £700, but there is no room for complacency as much of the equipment is in need of repair.

They were assisted last year by the probation service, which was invaluable as there is a lack of volunteer workers, and with 3 long standing trustees retiring there are now only two members with more than 2 years' experience.

Plans for a bike track and skate park are on hold until funds can be sourced, and high priority has to be given to a secure lock up to hold machinery and equipment. Any help in sourcing a steel container would be welcomed.

The Bowls Club, whose buildings and land do not belong to the Trust, have asked for assistance in encouraging new members to join. They are affiliated to the England association and have stable finances, but membership is falling and they would like people to use the facility.

**3c Alston Moor Schools Working Group** – Wendy Smith explained that she was invited to chair a working group to look at the different ways the schools could operate on Alston Moor. The group involves the chair of the parish council, head teachers, and local authority representatives. They have two key principles: to ensure high quality good education for all children and to ensure Alston Moor remains a sustainable vibrant and lively community.

The group takes advice from experts on legal and financial matters. They met in February and there is a great willingness to work together for the good of the children. The governing bodies have been invited to meet on 20<sup>th</sup> April for a question and answer session, and to look at how the schools might work together. The Alston Moor federated governors will be voting on whether they are minded to extend the federation to include Samuel King'

s School. Although the SKS governors have already voted to be part of the extended federation the invitation to join has to come from the existing federation.

An informal consultation took place last October, Wendy's role is to support, advise and help the group as an independent chair with no hidden agenda. She added that a lot is going on in the background, and she will let the parish know about the outcome of the vote.

**3d Alston Moor Partnership** – Jennifer Campbell reported that she is the project manager for the Townscape Heritage Bid. In January this year the draft bid was finalised and submitted to the heritage lottery, who were very positive, agreeing that it could be submitted in February.

The bid is for 1.3m of grant funding which is to be put towards a number of different projects included improvements to town centre properties, enhancement of the public realm, heritage skills training, including specialist skills such as working with lime mortar, events and fairs.

The Heritage Lottery board meet on the 2<sup>nd</sup> June to consider the application, which so far has received positive feedback. Jennifer is dealing with queries, and is developing a procurement framework to make sure local people can be involved. She is planning an open day for contractors with the aim of identifying any skills gaps, and is keeping communication going with property owners, as well as liaising with partners. Partners included Alston Moor Parish Council, the North

Pennines AONB Partnership, Alston Moor Business Association, Samuel Kings School and other local heritage and lottery projects.

**3e Alston Moor Fitness Club** – Kirk Pennington reported that 2014 was a steady year with a thriving community of fit people taking advantage of the extra opening hours. However, the club is struggling financially with a loss of around £600 last year, which is not sustainable. She encouraged people to join. Membership has been kept low to encourage people to join and all ages are welcome, with one session per week for young people and sessions for the Over 60s on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

They are looking at ways to increase revenue to keep the gym going, and obtained grant funding in September 2014 of £10k to replace aging equipment. The gym is now a hire point for the electric bike scheme, and looks after the recycling centre for Eden District Council. There is quite a problem with fly-tipping and they are considering installing CCTV to catch offenders.

Cllr Robinson suggested the gym apply again to the 0-19 fund for young people.

**3f Churches Together** –Les Wallace reported that the Church of England, Catholic and Methodist clergy meet twice a year and have recently welcomed Rev. Mark Nash Williams to the parish. Events in the parish include ecumenical Lent walk, Christian aid and a united carol service. The Methodists hold a Monday fellowship and share premises with the Catholic Church. Les will be re-locating in August to Langwathby to be closer to the centre of the circuit, now that the two have amalgamated. His post is as a rural manager, with the Methodist circuit staffed by Les part time and Mary Elliott, who is retired.

**3g Friends of Alston Town Hall** – Richard Turner explained that the Friends' purpose is to raise funds to support the Town Hall. Last year all three England football matches were shown, as well as the World Cup final, which generated income. Funds were spent on hiring the hall and on equipment and a 21-gun salute to mark the start of the First World War They also purchased flower boxes and flowers for the front of the building. Balances currently stand at £424.

Alston Community market is organised by Local Links and they have donated £1,000 to the town hall, as well as other organisations including the War Memorial appeal, and Alston pre-school playgroup. It is hoped the market will continue to thrive as it brings in a steady income.

**3h Fairhill Estates Charity** – the trustees received four applications for assistance this year and decided to help with three, giving out £1,164 in donations. The charity can help with a variety of financial problems such as household bills, funeral expenses, and unexpected household repairs. Help is usually in the form of a one-off payment. The income comes from land rented out and shares, and is divided between the Fairhill estates charity, Alston Educational Endowment and the Garrigill Educational Endowment.

**3i Police report** – a written report was received and questions invited.

**Speed limit at Nentsberry** – it was suggested that there should be a speed limit here as it is a hazardous spot with poor visibility. Although it has been discussed before at Traffic Management meetings it could be re-considered if the meeting so wished.

**Resolved** to request that consideration is given to a 40 mph speed limit between Nenthall and the bridge. Proposed by Cllr Aves and seconded by Cllr Athey. (3 abs)

**3j STRPS** – a written report was received from Brian Craven confirming that STRPS has acquired the Quarry Pool site from Eden District Council. Subject to funds becoming available they intend to improve and landscape the site, with the idea of providing a circular walk from Quarry Wood alongside the railway to Quarry Pool and then back along the riverbank once the retaining wall repairs are sorted.

**3k Alston United Charities** – a written report was received from Jackie Hodson who stated that the charity had received three requests for help, and the trustees decided to help all three. They have posters around the town and in Garrigill and Nenthall, and a small article in the February edition of the parish news. They encourage people to let them know about anyone they feel could be helped.

The trustees meet three times a year in January, May and September with the next meeting being 5<sup>th</sup> May. Urgent requests can be considered.

**3I Friends of Alston Cemetery**

Sheila Hodgson reported that they are a very small group, who are in contract with Eden District Council and can advise them of any problems that may arise. She is happy to be contacted by anyone noticing anything wrong, for example grass cutting was flagged up as a problem, was reported and improvements made. An area for natural burials has been allocated now. The cemetery is a beautiful place, and the Green Flag award is deserved.

**4. Introductions from parish council candidates**

Cllr Martin reminded those present that parish and district elections will be held in May, and for the first time in many years there will be elections in Alston and Nenthead. She was pleased more people have stood and encouraged everyone to use their vote.

The meeting closed at 9pm