



ALSTON MOOR PARISH COUNCIL MINUTES

The minutes of the proceedings of the **MONTHLY MEETING** of Alston Moor Parish Council held on **Monday 1st December** at 19:00hrs in Alston Town Hall.

Present:

Councillors:

Cllr. Miller, Cllr. Bondi, Cllr. Robinson, Cllr. Monk, Cllr. Edgar, Cllr. Crossley, Cllr. Davies, Cllr. Robertson, Cllr. Martin, Cllr. Best, Cllr. Grew, Cllr. Ho & Cllr. Green. (both arrived 19.03hrs).

Clerk/RFO:

Claire Thomson

Members of the Public: 2 plus Unitary Cllr. Mary Robinson

- 2526/156 To receive **apologies & consider approval of the reasons** given for absence
Cllr. Hanley was delayed in returning from Ireland, so was unable to attend.
- 2526/157 **To record all votes on every agenda item by name to make it clear what you vote whether it's for, against or abstain. It will be recorded in the minutes by your name next to what you voted for, this is in our Standing Orders, Section 3 Paragraph 5**
- 2526/158 **Declarations of interest & requests for Dispensation**
1. **To receive declarations of interest for agenda items** – See 2526/172.2
 2. **To receive dispensation** –All Cllrs. have dispensation from May 2025 to April 2027, for any business relating to Alston Town Hall.

Resolved: Recorded in minutes 2526/12.3 that the Council delegates the power to grant dispensations to the Clerk. The power rests with the relevant authority under section 33(1) of the Localism Act 2011 and the basis is set out under section 33(2).

2526/159 **Minutes of the Last Meetings of Alston Moor Parish Council**

The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Monday 3rd November 2025 & 12th November 2025 were considered.

Motion: To authorise the chairman to sign, as a correct record, the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 3rd November 2025. Proposer: Cllr.

Robertson, Seconder: Cllr. Davies, Vote: Favour - Cllr. Miller, Cllr. Bondi, Cllr.

Martin, Cllr. Grew, Cllr. Robinson, Cllr. Monk, Cllr. Crossley, Cllr. Edgar. Against – None. Abstain - Cllr. Best, Cllr. Grew.

Resolved: to accept the minutes of the previous meeting on 3rd November 2025.

Motion: To authorise the chairman to sign, as a correct record, the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 12th November 2025. Proposer: Cllr.

Robertson, Seconder: Cllr. Robinson, Vote: Favour - Cllr. Miller, Cllr. Martin, Cllr. Robinson, Cllr. Robertson, Cllr. Davies, Cllr. Best. Against – None. Abstain - Cllr. Monk, Cllr. Grew, Cllr. Edgar, Cllr. Bondi, Cllr. Crossley.

Resolved: to accept the minutes of the previous meeting on 12th November 2025.

Cllr. Ho & Cllr. Green arrived.

2526/160 **To consider matters arising and actions required**

2526/161 **Public Participation (Timed item 15 minutes)**

Ian Grey was invited to talk about the recent meeting at The Hive in Nenthead about the Hags Bank Water Treatment saga. Ian Grey said that, not surprisingly, the Hags Bank work, is still not fully operational, as ponds 1 & 2, were promised to be operational six months ago, are still not running. Now this

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is due to be switched on in February or March, then it will be monitored for its effectiveness before any further stages are introduced, like the Nenthead Mines section. This will be beneficial, giving time to work to stop this. Ian Grey also mentioned that the Coal Authority has now admitted that the purpose of this project is to avoid the cost of dealing with heavy metals at the Port of Tyne, instead of what they had said about it being to aid/encourage/protect the flora & fauna in the area; it was pointed out by several councillors that this was known before the work ever started. This was a key part of the initial objections put forward as Nenthead would be the area to suffer the impact of the work with no benefit to the area or the community.

It was asked if there may be a case or some leverage on a claim on inconvenience for the community as there is no immediate benefit for the area. This could be looked at in the future.

The Chair thanked Ian Grey for the update on proceedings.

2526/162 To note councillor vacancies & review any co-option candidates

One vacancy at Nenthead - no candidates received

2526/163 Chair's Report

The Chair thanked all those who had volunteered in the Christmas Tree & Lights being put up around Alston, thanked Hue Wyatt for the donation of the tree outside the Town Hall & thanked Cllr. Robinson & Hanley for decorating it and co-ordinating the lights going up on the Market Cross & the Town Hall with help from Joseph Wright. The Chair also made comments about the decorations in Garrigill & Nenthead, saying they looking very festive and well done to all those involved.

2526/164 Tenders received for Tree Works on Tyne Willows – The Clerk advised that the 3 tenders received & opened in the closed session on 3rd November were all different, tendering for different numbers of trees since Westmorland & Furness's report had been too general. The Clerk only felt it fair to ask the 3 companies to retender for the same trees. All have agreed to re-tender on a set number of trees. The Clerk is meeting with each company to get this carried out hopefully before the next meeting.

2526/165 Westmorland & Furness Councillor's Report – Cllr. Hanley was not present so Cllr. Mary Robinson reported that the next Place Action Group (PAG) meeting will be in Melmerby next week, focusing on the results of the housing survey and the priorities for moving forward next year. Again, there is a new round opened for the identification of potential housing sites within Cumbria, as the uptake especially in the Eden area, was poor. Unfortunately, there may be delays of up to four years on developing this. A Bill is coming forward early in 2026, and then Westmorland & Furness Council needs to get going and build some homes. It was noted that it is frustrating for developers trying to get the go-ahead for small developments when things seem to be slow in progress. £6 million was taken from Westmorland & Furness Council's rural budget by the government last year, as it had been announced that the government's focus is on areas of urban deprivation, not rural deprivation. So, there may be potential of another massive, £15-20 million cut in this next year's budget, which will impact across the board on services provided. It is concerning that this happens just as Westmorland & Furness Council have been making inroads on crucial services

R Miller



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like rural transport. Cllr. Mary Robinson thinks that the nine parishes of this ward could work together to lobby to maintain the services we have kept rather than being lost due to cuts.

Nenthead Ward Meeting - Cllr. Crossley reported that people had been invited to come and find out about the generator, so now Nenthead had a group of people who can assist in using the generator when it is needed. There have been several AGMs – the Village Hall, Nenthead Community Projects, and the Community Snowplough. Cllr. Crossley asked about the progress of the fence at the War Memorial; the Clerk advised it still needs to be checked with the Conservation Officer, and the Clerk is trying to get a response as quickly as possible. The drain at the Village Hall that had been causing an issue has now been sorted. The cobbles in front of the Hive, that had been removed, now have been replaced with tarmac. Westmorland & Furness Councillor Mary Robinson says the cobbles will be replaced in the spring. This is to go on Traffic Management agenda. Repairs at the toilets were done badly and now must be put right. The toilet committee was advised to go back to those who did the work originally.

Police Report – No monthly report from Cumbria Police had been received at the time of the meeting. The Clerk said it will be circulated as soon as it is received.

2526/166

Letter handed to Cllr. Ho in 3rd November's meeting - The Chair invites Cllr. Ho to speak about this as she had expressed a strong insistence for this to be discussed in public.

Councillor Ho was unwilling to say anything regarding this other than ask whether it was legal and imply that this was illegal. The Clerk along with others pointed out that the letter concerned the **legal obligation** for all councillors to have a dedicated device & email. It was stated, again, that this had come from central government and not a requirement from Alston Moor Parish Council. Again, it was explained that **all** councils and parish councils must adhere to this, that it was essential for all councillors by the time of the submission of the AGAR (Annual Governance and Accountability Return) in April 2026 to comply with this. The letter explained to Cllr. Ho what was required and noted her refusal to engage with offers of assistance since April 2025 to the present day. She continued to insist that she could use her own device, despite not understanding the requirement for everything to be stored in the cloud etc. Cllr. Mary Robinson also tried to explain this to Cllr. Ho, advising what requirements Westmorland & Furness have to access their files and that they are stored on the cloud and not on the devices, but it appeared that Cllr. Ho still did not grasp this concept. Cllr. Mary Robinson advised that not all parish councils have changed yet but will be doing so early next year to comply when the AGAR is due. Cllr. Mary Robinson said she would not like to think of the implications & consequences if any parish didn't comply with this by April 2026. The Clerk also agreed with Cllr. Mary Robinson on this. Assertion 10 must be fully implemented and so devices must comply. Again, it was suggested that Cllr. Ho gives a date that is convenient for her to come to the parish office with her device so it can be checked to see if it is compliant to the requirements needed. It was also suggested that her son be present to help and assist in this. This has been left for Cllr. Ho to arrange a suitable date with the Clerk.

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- 2526/167 Date set for Precept Meeting – 12th January 2026**
- 2526/168 Draft Budget** – As in the previous meeting, the Clerk explained that spending this financial year was greater than previous years due to several factors including increased overheads. She explained that additional finances must be put aside for Tree Works & Elections, suggesting that these are put as “Earmarked” along with others, so only used for those purposes. Annual subscriptions along with other overheads have increased in cost for this next year. Careful planning was needed to ensure that the Council has a healthy budget to carry out what is required throughout the next financial year along with some additional funds for unforeseen expenses that may crop up, as in the case this year. This will impact on the precept figure put forward to Westmorland & Furness Council at the end of January 2026, which will be reflected in the contribution on the council tax bill for the next financial year. A draft budget plan was issued to all councillors present at the meeting for them to take away and look at. Precept applications have been received and will be distributed to all councillors later this month, final decisions will be made on 12th January 2026 in the Precept Meeting.
- 2526/169 Policies** – Cllr Monk advised that no further policies had been completed
- 2526/170 Committees, working groups & consider any actions required**
2526/170.1 Committee – Development, Governance & Personnel (DGP) – which includes staffing – Clerks Appraisal report – attached at the end of the minutes.
2526/170.2 Group Representatives
Alston Moor Partnership – The AGM was held and there were 3 speakers. A new Director has joined the Partnership Board.
Alston Moor Traffic Management Group – The next meeting is on 16th January 2026.
NWAS Alston Moor Working Group – They have welcomed 2 new skilled workers, who will be known as Community Ambulance Responders for the ambulance car and Cllr. Monk was hoping to also join as a in the coming weeks.
PAG (Place Action Group) – updated in Cllr. Mary Robinson’s verbal report & the next meeting is on 11th December.
Tyne Willows Management – A meeting with the working group will be arranged for phase 2 discussions in the new year.
AMERG – The generator in Alston has been checked and is now all ready if and when it is required, along with the generators at Nenthead & Garrigill.
Hospital Group – No update
Tree Wardens – No update
- 2526/171 Planning Applications & Decisions**
2526/171.1 Applications received
2025/2245/HOU The Cottage Loaning Head Garrigill CA9 3EY – renovation & extension of existing dwelling to form an accessible dwelling.
Cllr. Grew said that she had never seen such a well thought-out application since sitting on the council; it showed total empathy to the requirements.
Motion: to agree & accept the planning application. Proposed: Cllr. Grew
Seconded: Cllr. Bondi. Vote:- Favour - Cllr. Miller, Cllr. Martin, Cllr. Robinson,

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Cllr. Robertson, Cllr. Davies, Cllr. Best, Cllr. Monk, Cllr. Grew, Cllr. Edgar, Cllr. Bondi, Cllr. Crossley. Against – None. Abstain – Cllr. Green, Cllr. Ho.

Resolved – to agree to the planning application.

2025/0464/FPA Firs Edge Alston Youth Hostel The Firs Alston CA9 3RW – Variation of condition 2 (approved plans), removal of porch & garden room & addition of re-designed porch. Colour change of timber cladding & windows.

Motion: to agree the changes to the approved plans. Proposed: Cllr. Robertson

Seconded: Cllr. Grew. Vote:- Favour - Cllr. Miller, Cllr. Martin, Cllr. Robinson, Cllr. Robertson, Cllr. Davies, Cllr. Best, Cllr. Monk, Cllr. Grew, Cllr. Green, Cllr. Edgar, Cllr. Bondi, Cllr. Crossley. Against – None. Abstain – Cllr. Ho

Resolved – to agree to changes

2526/171.2 Decisions – None

2526/172

Finance Reports & Accounts

No finance reports & accounts were circulated prior to the meeting as the statements were not available. The Clerk advised that the information would be circulated via email on Tuesday.

2526/172 1. Current Balance of the Community Account as at 30/11/2025

Report to follow on 2nd December 2025.

2526/172 2. Consider payments for approval – Cllr. Robinson declared an interest and did not vote.

28.11.2025	£80.00	Brackets for xmas trees	Allan Richardson
28.11.2025	£7.98	Xmas lights/baubles	Ron Robinson
28.11.2025	£320.00	Strimming around Pavilion	Simon James Gardening Services
28.11.2025	£78.00	PAT Testing xmas tree lights	Alston Community Workshop
28.11.2025	£276.00	Storage of xmas trees/lights	Creators Cortex
28.11.2025	£495.00	Emergency Tree work	Collins Gardening & Tree Services
28.11.2025	£163.11	Maintenance	Jewson Hexham
28.11.2025	£62.64	Maintenance	Alston Natural Stone
28.11.2025	£57.97	Xmas lights & transformer	Ian Grey

Motion: to approve invoices for payment.

Proposed Cllr. Green Seconded Cllr. Miller Vote – Favour Cllr. Miller, Cllr. Martin, Cllr. Robinson, Cllr. Robertson, Cllr. Davies, Cllr. Best, Cllr. Monk, Cllr. Grew, Cllr. Green, Cllr. Edgar, Cllr. Bondi, Cllr. Crossley. Against – None Abstention – Cllr. Ho .

Resolved: Clerk to pay invoices.

2526/172 3. Approve any payments required between meetings – The Clerk advised that she had received an email from the handyperson but he had not attached his timesheet. The timesheet also included costs of a post & concrete (£25) This would be the only invoice to pay that she was aware of.

Motion: to approve invoice from parish handyperson.

Proposed Cllr. Miller Seconded Cllr. Green Vote – Favour Cllr. Miller, Cllr. Martin, Cllr. Robinson, Cllr. Robertson, Cllr. Davies, Cllr. Best, Cllr. Monk, Cllr. Grew, Cllr. Green, Cllr. Edgar, Cllr. Bondi, Cllr. Crossley Against – None Abstention – Cllr. Ho .

Resolved: Clerk to pay invoice, once received.

2526/173

Note the status of assets & consider any action required

1. To form a working group – a meeting on 19th January 7pm via Zoom.



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Tyne Willows Playing Field – Clerk got confirmation that no power is being supplied to the lights. Cllr. Robinson insisted that the actual light housing also needed checked to ensure there was not electricity stored in the housings. The Clerk was asked to ask the electrician if they could do this. The Clerk advised that no tenders had been received from any local contractors/business yet.

Firs Woodland Walk - Clerk is awaiting response regarding siting the sign at Brewery Bridge.

Pavilion – nothing to report.

Seats & Benches – The Chair reported that the wooden benches around the side of Alston Town Hall were rotten and had been removed due to safety issues. Cllr. Miller proposed that 2 new recycled plastic benches should be sought to replace these.

Motion: to ask the Clerk to source prices of benches for the next meeting.

Proposed: Cllr. Miller Seconded: Cllr. Robertson Vote: Favour - Cllr. Miller, Cllr. Martin, Cllr. Robinson, Cllr. Robertson, Cllr. Davies, Cllr. Best, Cllr. Monk, Cllr. Ho, Cllr. Green, Cllr. Edgar, Cllr. Bondi, Cllr. Crossley Against – None Abstention – Cllr. Grew .

Resolved: Clerk to obtain prices of recycled plastic benches.

Bus shelters - ongoing, to continue in the new year.

Notice Boards – nothing to report.

Defibrillators – Cllr. Monk confirmed all are up-to-date but Garrigill's will need replacing in the future.

Nenthead Fountain – The planning department have requested a site map of the fountain. Cllr. Robertson advised that Countryside Consultants can obtain this for a small fee of £25-£30. The Clerk thought that she could also get this for around that cost.

Motion: to get a site plan purchased either by the Clerk or Countryside

Consultants. Proposed: Cllr. Miller Seconded: Cllr. Martin Vote: Favour - Cllr. Miller, Cllr. Martin, Cllr. Robinson, Cllr. Robertson, Cllr. Davies, Cllr. Best, Cllr. Monk, Cllr. Grew, Cllr. Green, Cllr. Edgar, Cllr. Bondi, Cllr. Crossley Against – None Abstention – Cllr. Ho .

Resolved: to obtain a site map

Footway Lighting – on going

Christmas Trees & Lights – nothing to report.

2526/174 **Note status of Open Spaces/ Trees & consider any action –**

Tree retendering – see 2526/164.

2526/175 **Correspondence – Received**

1. **Bus shelter/stop at Fairhill & larger buses to be provided** – an email was received from a local resident who stress that there would be a benefit for a bus stop to be placed in the Fairhill area to aid those who lived at that part of the town. Also they mentioned that there had been an issue with the buses provided not being able to seat the number of users on several occasions resulting in people being left or unable to get home/stranded. They believed that the contract was for a 22 seater bus but only a 16 seater was being provided. This has been taken up by Cllr. Hanley but he was not in attendance so no comments could be made. This is to go onto the Traffic Management Agenda for the new year.
2. **Area known as “the shelters” by the Potato Market** – this area has no known owner and therefore no one is responsible for this area. A local

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resident has been trying to find out who owns this area of land/property but has come up against a brick wall, so to speak. They are concerned that the shelters need some loving attention to keep them in good order for use by the community. Some time ago some work was carried out on the shelter's but this was from an external source, as discovered in the meeting, not related to the parish council or as it was then, Eden District Council. Some more discussions are needed before any formal decisions can be made regarding this. This is to go on the Traffic Management Agenda for the new year.

2526/176 Items for the Next Meeting of the Parish Council

Nothing mentioned in meeting

2526/177 To consider any councillor or officer training

None

2526/178 Date and Time of Next Meeting – 5th January 2026 at 7.00pm. Meeting to be held at Alston Town Hall.

2526/179 Exclusion of public & press (Public Bodies Admission to Meetings Act 1960)

Resolve to close the meeting at 20.37hrs

2526/180 Close Parish Council Meeting

Meeting closed 20.37hrs

Please note: all Parish Council meetings are open to members of the Public.

Chair Signature:

R Miller

Date:

5/1/2026

Clerk Signature:

Clare Monson

Date:

5/1/2026