

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish of Alston Moor
22 April 2024, 7.00pm at Alston Town Hall

PRESENT: *Councillors* Alice Bondi, James Crick, Brian Davies, Elaine Edgar, Elaine Grew, Holly Ho, Alix Martin, Raymond Miller, Dee Monk, Graeme Ransom, Ron Robinson, Alastair Robertson

Other local electors: Ian Gray, Jacky Hewison, Ken Little

APOLOGIES: Paul Best

1. Welcome and introductions

RM explained that AB would be taking the minutes.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the last meeting of the Parish Electors
AR propose, EG seconded – a majority who had been present approved.

3. Parish Council and Charity Reports

Parish Council Chair's report

RM reported that it had been another strange year for him and the council. The former clerk, Chris Johnson, retired last September. A new clerk, Lindsay Nicholson, was appointed, but sadly she has resigned. RM thanked both former clerks for all the work they did. The parish council has had to act quickly and now have a locum clerk in place, ready for the May meeting. Advertising for a new clerk will happen soon. £30,000 has been given out in precepted donations.

Alston Town Hall

The Chair, RM, reported that Alston Town Hall is going from strength to strength, with all rooms currently rented out and good use of the main hall and meeting room. The Warm Hub has again been a great success with over 40 meals being provided every Monday with help from a small grants from the Cumbria Foundation, a charity in Windermere [*we really need to name them*] and the League of Friends. Thanks were extended to all. A new chair lift is in the process of being installed, to replace the lift which is getting old and costly to maintain. There is a possibility giving the kitchen a makeover, and perhaps getting the clock working again. Usual maintenance continues. The members of the Town Hall Trustee are happy with the progress being made.

Fairhill charity

The charity is being used regularly, particularly with applications to help with the cost of living crisis. It is available to anyone who needs it.

4. Questions and Open Discussion

Jackie Hewison queried the lack of charities present and wondered why there hadn't been more publicity. It was pointed out that there were posters on all three noticeboards as well as online.

JH then asked what else the parish council had done?

EG pointed out the ongoing meetings about the future of the hospital; work to retain the ambulance, but with NWS dragging its feet and only one EMT left, the ambulance will go. We need the numbers of community first responders to increase. More defibrillators have gone in.

AM added that the council is consulted on many planning applications but it is Westmorland and Furness (W&F) who make the actual decision. Ken Little queried whether parish councillors had had training in planning matters, and EG said that this has been attempted but things are currently rather confused at W&F. AM pointed out that there is a statutory duty for parish councils to advise on planning, and can be very annoying when we're ignored.

JH raised the issue of the mast on the top of Hartside. AR pointed out that it is not in our parish council area, although we were asked to comment by Melmerby. Discussion then moved to the use of uPVC windows, and Ian Gray said that it was a key issue that in the case raise, something different had been done to what had been agreed by W&F Planning. EE said that the council recommended against the appeal in the interests of fairness. EG clarified that, concerning the two buildings in the Butts being queried, wooden windows and garage doors as they had originally been were what was agreed but the owner did something different. AR spoke about the problems he had, and that it is the Conservation Officer who makes the final decision. RM reminded everyone that we hadn't wanted to extend the Conservation Area, but W&F have done so anyway. Ian Grey pointed out that the Conservation Officer advises, but can't override the Planning Officer.

Ian Grey asked about the plans for the gym. It was explained that as the owner, we put the plans in as requested by the gym, but W&F want many investigations before proceeding further. RM felt that all that was wanted was a block of toilets and changing rooms, and the plans the gym has presented are based on ones produced 20 years ago and are far too ambitious.

Jackie Hewison asked about the road down to Tyne Willows, and was told that the parish council agrees that work is needed and will happen.

Parish councillors also pointed out that the council had arranged for the Christmas trees and had repaired benches, particularly one on Garrigill green.

The meeting closed at 7.45.

