

CALDBECK PARISH COUNCIL

Note of informal Zoom Meeting 23 September 2020 4:00 pm.

Cllrs Attending: Tim Cartmell (Chairman), Norman Atkinson, John Brown, and Alan Tyson.

Also Attending: Mike Johnson, County Councillor and Acting Leader Allerdale Borough Councillor, Tony Annison, Allerdale Borough Councillor, Simon Smith (Clerk).

1. Heskett Lonning Footpath

Mike Johnson explained that he had asked Peter Knapton, Allerdale Estates Manager, to progress discussions with landowners, prior to Allerdale issuing any Footpath Creation Order. The intention was to meet the Hodgsons first and then the Mounseys. Mike Johnson confirmed that he would be happy to attend any meeting arranged if Peter Knapton thought his attendance was required.

2. Caldbeck Public Toilets

Following on from the footpath discussion, Mike Johnson confirmed that work on the transfer of Caldbeck public toilets to the Parish Council was currently on hold pending Allerdale's discussions with the Hodgsons.

Allerdale was not in a position to reopen the public toilets. The Clerk was seeking quotations from commercial firms.

3. Provision of new waste bins in the Parish and littering concerns

The Chairman had requested bins from Allerdale to support Mark Binney's Lengthsman's work, two green waste bins in both Caldbeck and Heskett Newmarket and a general waste bin in Caldbeck. Allerdale had declined, stating that bins were only supplied to properties or churches/village halls. The Parish Council was looking for pragmatic solution and had suggested that the extra bins be assigned to the Chairman's and Alison Young Poole's properties, although that may mean that the two properties had extra bins. The Clerk was asked to forward Mike Johnson the correspondence so that he might help.

4. Street Lighting

The Clerk reported that Tim Marsters had formally complained about the Parish Council's handling of the reinstallation of the street light which he considered amounted to harassment of his parents. The Clerk had sent his response to Tim Marsters on 19 September. The Marsters were considering the Clerk's findings and could decide whether to ask Allerdale to investigate the complaint further. It was recognised that Mike Johnson and Tony Annison would not be able to comment given the possibility of Allerdale investigating the complaint. However, Mike Johnson believed that where street lights or other utilities were moved at the request of property owners, the costs of removal and any reinstallation would normally fall to the property owners. If Allerdale were asked to contribute to reinstallation costs, there would need to be good reason why the property owners were not meeting the full costs.

Mike Johnson explained the reasoning behind his recent letter where Allerdale had decided not to press ahead with charging town and parish councils for electricity for street lighting which had been expected in April 2021. The charging policy was very much the previous administration's and the new administration considered the charges should be scrapped as they impacted significantly more on rural areas. The Clerk noted that the Parish Council has already made budget provision for the charges as they have been flagged up for some years.

5. Parish Maintenance

Norman Atkinson raised concerns about Heskett Lonning, the most important stretch of Highways in the Parish, which was often used as a temporary diversion if other roads were closed. The recent serious cycling accident was most likely related to pot holes/state of the road and the County Council may be facing legal action and significant costs. The planned limited patching and surface dressing was not a solution and ideally the full length from Caldbeck to Howbeck required proper resurfacing. The Parish Council therefore wanted to ask Mike Johnson and Tony Annison for their support in lobbying Highways for significant investment on improving Heskett Lonning from Caldbeck to Howbeck. Mike Johnson was sympathetic as there had been some questionable decisions in recent years leading to upgrades of the highway which were little used compared to Heskett Lonning. However, he said Highways would look at the entire network and if there was already a reasonable route to a village, it was unlikely that a second route would receive significant upgrade.

Discussion turned to the responsiveness of Highways to comments from the Parish Council. Matt Bish provided excellent service, responding promptly to any questions and progressing work speedily albeit there were funding constraints. In contrast it was very difficult to get answers from Highways signage officers where the request for warning signs at Faulds Brow and Wath Brow were very long standing items and had been ongoing for more than 3 years. Highways East had also marked up Bank End Lane but had not responded to questions about what was planned and when and why such a relatively minor road would receive attention when other more frequently used roads were in worse condition. It was agreed the Clerk should write to Mike Johnson highlighting the differences in responsiveness across Highways so that he could raise the issues with Angela Jones. Parish Councillors agreed the Clerk should add concerns about Hesketh Lonning so that Mike Johnson might also lobby Angela Jones for additional funding.

The meeting ended at 4:30pm